



Chapter 4

Managing Web Technologies Acquisition, Utilization and Organization Change: Understanding Sociocognitive Processual Dynamics

Mathew J. Klempa
Information Systems Consultant

Abstract

This chapter presents a perspective on web technologies acquisition, utilization, organization change and transformation grounded in Giddens's theory of structuration, i.e., a contextualist analysis. A contextualist analysis is processually based, emergent, situational, and holistic, marrying both theory and practice. This chapter's paradigm affords a substantive analytical tool to the practitioner for understanding and managing not only web-based IT acquisition, utilization and organization change, but all IT-based recursive, organization changes and transformations.

Organization change associated with IT acquisition and utilization is posited as concomitantly necessary. Organization change is recursive, dynamic, multilevel, and nonlinear, i.e., an "enacted" environment. Ever present organization opposing values are treated dialectically, i.e. as paradox, operating simultaneously. The nature of the resolution of such paradox enabled/inhibits reframing, i.e., organization transformation and change. The paradigm presented defines an organization change continuum, delineating four organization responses to contradiction and paradox.

The chapter explicates organization culture and organization learning as

systemic, multiplicative metaforce underpinnings of organization change and sociocognitively-based, recursive, structurational processual dynamics.

The chapter discusses use of the IT acquisition and utilization paradigm for organization diagnosis as well as customization of organization change interventions. The chapter suggests further typologically-based research venues.

Introduction

The truest sayings are paradoxical — Lao-Tse, 6th Century B.C.

In what has become a familiar mantra, business executives are exhorted to jump aboard the WWW bandwagon. A blizzard of “normative” articles promulgate the WWW as the means to deliver competitive gains, speed up business transactions, increase customer satisfaction, deliver superior quality, and lead to improved profitability.

If there is one thing management can count on in today’s world, it’s another person proclaiming the miracle that is the World Wide Web...a whole new arena for organizations to play in The ... opportunities are endless for creative firms willing to redefine ... who they are (Griffith and Palmer, 1999, p. 3,9)

Successive generations of information technology (IT) since 1950 witnessed a halving of the price of computing every 2-3 years, with concomitantly increased functionality — input/output modalities, storage, processing, communications, and migration from mainframe to distributed architectures, e.g., client server (Brynjolfsson, 1993). The United State’s expenditures, 2.8% of GDP on IT, is highest worldwide. Notwithstanding such aggregate IT investment, price performance, and increased functionality, predicted business transformations, i.e., increased productivity and indirect benefits from IT, have not been realized (Morton, 1991). Labeled the productivity paradox, mismanagement of information and technology is cited as contributing to the productivity paradox (Strassman, 1997), (Rai, et.al., 1997), (Brynjolfsson, 1993), (Hayashi, 1997). Technological change has outstripped individual and organization rates of change (Morton, 1991), (Kanter, 1988).

Most Fortune 500 companies are actively trying to figure out the benefits of Internet technology. The biggest challenge for companies involved...isn’t the technology — it’s changing the corporate culture. It requires an organization to be bold... (Haber, 1997, p. 112)

What I want to see from computers is not newer and fancier technology ... but tools that can release the creativity ... of ... people (Hayashi, 1997, p. 47)

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