

concerns are not seen negatively but rather welcomed (Craig & Jutla, 2000)

- An important ingredient in the right cultural mix for successful eBC is leadership from the top and initiatives from employees, together with an atmosphere of open communication, participation, committed cross-functional access to experts, and committed inter-organisational focus (Farhoomand et al., 2004).

Development Level

1. **Learning Capacity:** Successful eBC projects are enabled in organisations that:
 - have a propensity to learn from best practice and customer needs,
 - exhibit learning whereby employees individually and collectively reflect on their past experiences, modify their course when necessary, and discover new opportunities, a new culture of the learning organisation.
2. **Relationship Building:** Successful eBC projects require commitment between partner organisations to use common IT platforms and sharing of corporate information (Oliver et al., 2003).
3. **Knowledge Capability:** Successful eBC projects are enabled in organisations that leverage external information and experts, and focus on core competencies.
4. **IT Leveragability:** Successful eBC involves the coalescence of 'IT' and e-business best practice, whereby IT plays a supportive, but not always commanding role that is linked to the business case for eBC. Balanced consideration of the social, technical, and business value elements should be maintained during implementation (Hesterbrink, 1999).

Management Level

A well-defined transparent management approach should include a documented methodology of change, use objective and quantified metrics showing the value of change, continuously communicate process metrics to senior management, and possess a well-documented rollout of the new e-business design (Dell, 2000, Farhoomand et al., 2004).

To achieve this requires continuous articulation and recognition of the value of reporting results, as well as monitoring each individual's contribution and accountability to the overall company's change effort. At this individual level, concern should be placed on how the eBC will improve employee satisfaction and the quality of work life (Guha et al., 1997).

The nature of change was reported to be participative change resulting in an evolutionary change tactic. This

was viewed as a "waterfall" progression of change, starting with an alleviation of dissatisfaction by employees and eventually working towards a well-managed e-business implementation from: (1) the alleviation of dissatisfaction, (2) with a vision for change, (3) by evolutionary change tactics, and (4) a well-managed process for change (Guha et al., 1997; Farhoomand et al., 2004).

FUTURE TRENDS

While the study used a flat eBC model (Figure 1) where all constructs were considered antecedents to success, a new model (Figure 2) was developed from case the findings. This dynamic model for managing eBC is recommended for use in future studies. It suggests an investigation of inter-relationships between the three levels of strategic planning, organisational development and management, as well between the components embedded within the levels.

The cases presented used an established research framework for gathering evidence to identify the factors for success of an e-business project. This research framework demonstrated its ability to examine complex phenomena. It is seen as evolutionary in nature, and was content driven. It is essentially a diagnostic tool for identifying factors contributing to success of new e-business models. It specifically useful for exploring the phenomena related to the success of learning organisations where the key issues remain as people oriented organisational issues.

CONCLUSION

The results confirm that a successful project was found to have facilitators in all components of the eBC framework, including the change environment and management practice. Further, there is the implication that the least successful e-business projects will have inhibitors in both components, especially in the area of e-business readiness and change management.

While broad generalisations from the four case studies are viewed as premature, various patterns of constructs were developed as indicators that have implications for both research and practice. These patterns represent indicators for: success, failure, a tendency to mediocrity, and variances across B2B interaction, where the latter is regarded as the most significant indicator.

The eBC framework (Figure 1) and associated semi-structured interview protocol was found to be a useful research tool for exploring the complex phenomena of eBC. A new model for managing eBC (Figure 2) is recommended to other researchers in exploring the topic further.

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KEY TERMS

Change Management: The coordination and action by management required to lead the change of organisational systems and structures in order to support a new business activity or effort.

Cultural Readiness: The preparedness of an organisation's culture of its people and processes (past and present) to facilitate or inhibit change.

E-Business Change: The processes surrounding the effective management of different stages of online business development and growth.

E-Business Outcomes: E-business forces change to occur in three corporate domains; technology, process, and people—at strategic and operational levels.

E-Business Performance Gains: The improvement in; corporate resourcing, employee work life and customer satisfaction.

E-Readiness or E-Business Readiness: The preparedness of an organisation's technology, processes, and people to facilitate or inhibit e-business development.

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