Information, Organization, IS & Business Performance

The University of Reading Business School is conducting original research into the interaction between business strategy, the nature of the information processed by an organization, the organization's structure and the style of the Information Systems (IS) that are implemented.

The focus of the research is *the business unit*. In a small or medium sized company this may be the whole organization, or it is a (semi-) autonomous subgroup within a larger organization. We are interested in the business unit's strategy, its marketplace, customers, and the kind of information processed to deliver its products and services. The questions concern the business unit's organization and the nature of the information systems used by *operational staff (those involved in the design, development and delivery of products and/or services to customers) and their managers*.

We hope that you will be willing to contribute to the research by taking a short time, to fill in this questionnaire. It should not take longer than about 15 minutes. Once completed please return it to us at the above address. Further details of the research can be found at http://www.wisty.plus.com

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the research, please tick the box on the last page.

Thank you for your support.

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1 About the Business Unit

Please answer the following questions about the strategic Business Unit for which you work

1.1 What is the main business of the Unit? ....

....

1.2 Approximately how many employees work for the Business Unit?

1.3 What is the annual revenue of the Business Unit?

1.4 The strategy of the Business Unit

Listed below are extreme forms of three strategies utilized by firms. Each of these strategies is neither better nor worse than another. Businesses may utilize a combination of the three strategies. Please estimate the extent to which your Business Unit utilizes each of these strategies. Please assign a total of 100% between the three strategic positions:

[%]

Operational Excellence
The Business Unit intends to lead its industry in price and ease of doing business. Management continuously seeks ways to minimize overhead costs, to eliminate intermediate steps, to reduce transaction and other "friction" costs, and to optimise business processes across functional and organizational boundaries. The Business Unit focuses on delivering high volume products or services at competitive prices with minimal inconvenience for the customer. It profits from its ability to compete on price from a best in class cost base.

+

[%]

Customer Intimacy
The objective of the Business Unit is to continually tailor and shape products and services to fit an increasingly fine definition of the customer. Each Customer is treated as special and the product or service delivered is created or adapted to fit their particular need. The business spends now to build long term customer loyalty and looks at the customer's lifetime value to the company, not the value of any single transaction. The business capitalises on its long term relationship with the customer to maximixe its share of the customers expentiture.

+

[%]

Product Leadership
The objective of the Business Unit is to lead the market with state-of-the-art products scnd services. The Unit is creative, and commercialises new ideas quickly. Business and management processes are designed to minimize time to market. The business relentlessly pursues new solutions to problems. The business capitalises on the premium price that leading edge products and services can command in the marketplace.

=

100%

Fold

Fold

2 The nature of the work done in the Business Unit, its customers and operations

For the following six questions please circle the most appropriate answer

2.1	The typical financial value (£) of a transaction with the customer is	Less than 10	10 to 100	100 to 1000	1000 to 10,000	10,000 to 100,000	100,000 to 1M	More than 1M
2.2	The number of transactions a typical staff member is involved with simultaneously is	1	2	4	8	10	20	>20
2.3	The time taken to complete a typical transaction with a customer is	Less than 1 hr	Less than 1 day	Less than 1 week	Less than 1 month	Less than 3 months	Less than 1 year	More than 1year
2.4	How many staff are involved in a typical customer transaction?	1	2	4	8	10	20	>20
2.5	The typical time taken to introduce a new product or service offering is	Less than 1 month	1 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 months to 1 year	1 to 2 Years	2 to 5 Years	More than 5 Years
2.6	The proportion of the functions of the products or services supplied to the customer that is sourced from external suppliers is	Less Than 10%	10% to 25%	25% to 40%	40% to 60%	60% to 75%	75% to 90%	More than 90%

For each of the following questions please respond to the statement by circling the number that you feel is the most appropriate response.

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
2.7	Our existing customers are quite diverse in their requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.8	The Business Unit deals with a large number of different customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.9	The Business Unit does a high volume of transactions each day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.10	We have a large number of suppliers of material, parts or equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.11	A typical transaction with a customer will involve a number of people with different expertise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.12	Operational Staff need to be highly trained or educated to do their job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.13	The Business Unit devotes a significant proportion of its resources to researching and developing new product and service offerings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.14	The Business Unit introduces a significant number of new products each year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.15	The majority of new products introduced are provided by external suppliers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.16	Each time we do business with a customer we customize the product or services to match the customers needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.17	In doing their jobs from day to day operational staff generally have to adopt multiple different methods or procedures to do their work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.18	Operational staff encounter wide variety in the tasks, customers or things in their working day?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.19	The work of operational staff is repetitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.20	Operational staff have different types or kinds of work to do every day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3 About the Business Environment

In this section please circle the answer that most closely corresponds to your opinion as to the way the Business Unit interprets and reacts to its marketplace and competition.

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
3.1	Our firm rarely changes marketing practices to keep up with the market and competitors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.2	The rate at which products become obsolete is very high (as in fashion goods and semiconductors).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.3	Actions of competitors are easy to predict	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.4	Demand and customer taste is easy to forecast	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.5	Our production technology or delivery methods change very little over time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.6	We have a large number of competitors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.7	There is a variety in competition including some from other industries in the form of substitute products and services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.8	We deal with a large number of new customers each year.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.9	Customer demand in the market is quite diverse in its needs/ requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4   About the Business Unit's Management

In each of the following sections please respond to the statements by circling the number that you feel is the most appropriate response. In this section *top management* refers to the most senior management team in the Business Unit, and/or any higher levels of management to which the Business Unit reports.

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
4.1	New product introduction decisions are made only by top management.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.2	Capital budgeting decisions are usually made only at the top management level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.3	Pricing policies are set only by top management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.4	Decisions to attempt penetration into new markets generally are made only by top management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.5	Decisions on major changes to (including new introduction of) processes are made only at the highest management level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.6	Personnel policy decisions are usually made by top management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.7	Rules and procedures in our firm are very clearly documented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.8	There is always an extensive reliance on rules and procedures to meet operating emergencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.9	Violation of the documented procedures is not tolerated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.10	We manufacture and market a large number of distinctly different product lines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.11	Our methods are diverse to meet the needs of various product lines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.12	Our marketing strategies and tactics are diverse.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.13	Interdepartmental committees are set up to allow departments to engage in joint decision making	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.14	Temporary Task forces are often set up to facilitate interdepartmental collaboration on a specific project	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.15	The Unit has liaison personnel whose specific job it is to coordinate the efforts of several departments for purposes of a specific project.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4.16   The number of distinctly different departments in the Business Unit is ☐

5   The Business Unit's Information Systems

This section explores the way in which staff utilize the Business Unit's IT systems. Please circle the number that represents your opinion of the way in which operational staff and managers use computers in their day-to-day work. For the purpose of this section specialized terminals (e.g. POS terminals) should be included as computers.

Desktop computers/terminals used by operational staff and their first line managers	Never	Rarely		About half the time		Mainly	Only
5.1 Are used to access centralised applications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.2 Are used to run a suite of office applications (WP, Spreadsheet etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.3 Are used to run locally other applications provided by central IT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.4 Are used in conjunction with specialised applications specific to the function of the particular group within which the user works	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.5 Are used to run specialised applications defined by the user	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.6 Are used to access Data and Services on the Internet/Intranet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.7 Are used to access data held centrally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.8 Are used to access data held within the workgroup	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Desktop computers used by managers	Never	Rarely		Some of the time		Mainly	Only
5.9 Are used to access centralized applications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.10 Are used to run a suite of office applications (WP, Spreadsheet etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.11 Are used to run locally other applications provided by central IT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.12 Are used in conjunction with specialized applications specific to the group the manager supervises	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.13 Are used to run specialized applications defined by the manager	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.14 Are used to access Data and Services on the Internet/Intranet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.15 Are used to access data held centrally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.16 Are used to access data held within the workgroup	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6   About the contribution of the current Information Systems to the Business Unit's performance

Please evaluate what you feel is the contribution of the current Information Systems to the Business Unit's overall performance in the following areas

		Strongly Supports			Neutral			Seriously Hinders
6.1	Profitability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.2	Revenue growth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.3	Staff Productivity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.4	Competitive Advantage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.5	Operating Cost	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.6	Quality of Decision making	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Very satisfied			Neutral			Very Dissatisfied
6.7	What is the overall level of satisfaction in the Business Unit with the current information systems?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7   About the performance of the Business Unit

Please evaluate the Business Unit, relative to your major competitor, on the following performance measures. For each item, please circle the number that best represents your opinion of the Unit's performance over the last year

		Much Higher than Competitors		About the Same		Much lower than Competitors
7.1	Earnings growth rate	5	4	3	2	1
7.2	Sales growth rate	5	4	3	2	1
7.3	Return on investment	5	4	3	2	1
7.4	Return on sales	5	4	3	2	1

8   About You

8.1 Please circle the one role definition that most closely identifies your position in the Business Unit

The senior manager of the Business Unit reports to you	A
You are the most senior manager within the Business Unit	B
You report to the most senior manager in the Business Unit	C
You report to another member of the Business Unit's senior management team (not the most senior manager)	D
You work within the Business Unit	E

8.2 Please circle the one role definition that most closely identifies your relationship with the Information Technology used within the Business Unit

The senior IT manager of the Business Unit reports to you	F
You are the most senior IT manager within the Business Unit	G
You work within the IT department of the Business Unit	H
You are a user of IT (not part of the IT Organization)	I

The identifying information in the next section is optional. It would however be of great use if we were able to follow up the survey if necessary.

Name

Job Title

Address

Phone

E-mail

Or attach a business card to the completed survey

- Would you or your organization be willing to take part in a short interview session to support the research further and allow us to develop the findings of the survey? (Please circle)   Yes   No

- Please tick if you would like to receive a copy of the summary report once completed (1st half 2006)

<u>Please return the completed questionnaire to the address on the first page</u>

Thank You for your Time and Support.

If you have any questions or would like further information on the study please E-mail - p.r.cook@reading.ac.uk