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PANEL 16

IT-ENABLED BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION: COMPARING APPROACHES TO THE TRANSFER OF BUSINESS BEST PRACTICES

Chair: **Gunnar E. Christensen**, Norwegian School of Economics and Business

Panelists: **Niels Bjørn-Andersen**, Copenhagen Business School

Dietrich Seibt, University of Cologne

Han T. M. van der Zee, Nolan Norton Institute

The purpose of the panel is to discuss key issues related to the transfer of IT-based business best practices (BBPs) from one organization to others. Generally speaking, consulting firms have focused on BBP transfer as a key element of their business. Researchers, on the other hand, may be concerned about identifying BBPs but the issue of BBP transfer has not been a key research issue.

CEBUSNET is a BBP research and dissemination project funded by the European Union. The goal of CEBUSNET is to enhance the global competitiveness of European enterprises by facilitating knowledge transfer between enterprises. The CEBUSNET approach to the transfer of BBPs is based on a thorough collection, verification, and consolidation of BBP cases from a number of European enterprises. The approach is research-based with emphasis on the collection and consolidation activities.

The panel will compare and discuss different approaches to the transfer of IT-based BBPs. In particular, and based on the assumption that academicians and consultants have different mind sets and values, the panel will compare academic (i.e., the CEBUSNET approach) and consultant approaches to BBP transfer. The discussion will focus on issues such as: What works in one organization will definitely work in other organizations! What are the factors other than IT that should be taken into account? To what extent are BBP transfers industry-specific? Does it make sense to distinguish between a “European approach” and an “American approach”? How do consulting firms collect and transfer BBP knowledge to their clients? Does it take a scientific research approach to ensure that all contingencies are accounted for? Is the CEBUSNET approach a viable approach as compared to the approaches used by consulting firms?

Panelists were carefully chosen to address the above issues. Niels Bjørn-Andersen will share his knowledge and experiences as a researcher as well as a consultant. His main focus will be on organizational learning processes in conjunction with business transformation. Dietrich Seibt, the principal investigator of the CEBUSNET project, will discuss the characteristics of potential European approaches and the role of BBP verification processes. Representing an American consulting firm in Europe, Han van der Zee is in a unique position to compare European and American consulting practices.

From an IS research perspective, the IS implementation research literature is filled with descriptions and explanations of IS successes and failures. Thus, practitioners have access to fairly rich organizations (based on case data) or on average (based on survey data). Despite the fact that the generalizability of research findings normally is a required item of discussion in academic journals, the research literature rarely addresses the issue of transferability of knowledge and experiences, and BBPs in particular, from one organization to another. From a practitioner point of view, this is the key question. As such, this panel attempts to build a stronger relationship between research and practice.