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# EXPLORING STRATEGIC IS PLANNING IN A NETWORK

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## ***Abstract***

*For three decades of research and practice, Strategic Information Systems Planning and Business Network Strategy Planning live apart together. The view of evaluating SISP effectiveness has matured and the evaluation models are validated and well studied. Networks have been increasing and every large organization is involved in several alliances. But still an important change has been left unattended, that is the introduction of information strategy in networks. Still, many organizations continue to use planning as a way to support their decision-making internally without co-operating with their business partners.*

*The evaluation studies of SISP are mainly quantitative and qualitative studies are rare. This study used the internal dimensions and criteria as basis for conducting a qualitative evaluation of SISP in two case studies in professional organizations, one single organization case and one inter organizational case. The results of the first case confirm that the validated criteria provide a good basis for overall evaluation of SISP internally. In addition to the internal theory based evaluation, also an inter-organizational exploration was done to explore the differences and the new evaluation criteria needed. The result is a conceptual interview framework to be tested in practice.*

**An earlier full version of this paper was accepted and presented at ECIS 2007 in Sankt Gallen, Switzerland.**

*Keywords: Inter organizational, SISP, Evaluation, IT governance*

## **COMPRESSED RESULTS**

There is little empirical evidence that describe inter-organizational SISP processes. In this section we describe the processes of fifteen healthcare partners and four knowledge institutes to create a new information strategy for the whole region over a period of six years. This case is derived from a careful document analysis and longitudinal observations of one of the authors. The objective is to get a better view on IOSISP and to derive a research model for further empirical study both in Finland and the Netherlands. Table 3 summarises the variables observed in the case observations

### **IOSISP effectiveness**

The IOSISP effectiveness in the inter organizational exploration was more influenced by the co-operation dimension and therefore it does not seem good to leave this dimension out as was proposed by Lin (2006) A measurement is needed to determine the level of co-operation. Within the process dimensions two agreement dimensions (financial and contractual) are introduced that might be turned into one IO agreements. Furthermore we can argue that IO agreements could be part of the IO co-operation effectiveness dimension. Although analysis was mainly done within the partner organizations, a next generation scenario for the whole network suggests a certain amount of analysis for the whole network. It might be the least important dimension for IOSISP effectiveness but still visible in practice.

Table 1 – Conceptual interview framework for the evaluation of IOSISP.

	<b>Intra organizational</b>	<b>Inter Organizational</b>
<b>Process</b>	Comprehensiveness Formalization Focus Flow Participation Consistency	IO Comprehensiveness IO Formalization IO Focus Organizational centralization (IO flow) (Top Management) IO Participation IO Consistency IO Contingency (Market pressure and more) IO Certainty
<b>Effectiveness and/or process</b>		IO agreements (financial, contractual, juridical)
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Co-operation Alignment Analysis Capability	IO Co-operation IO Alignment IO Analysis IO Capability

#### IO processes

Where the overall IOSISP effectiveness seems to be a redesign of the existing dimensions, the process dimensions clearly change in a network context. For top management participation, the significant influence is confirmed in this study. In literature the relation with capability and alignment is shown but in this study also a close relationship with co-operation is visible. This might ask for a more complete evaluation model. The other process dimensions seem less important than top management participation. Only market pressure seems important in industry as the Taiwan study shows but because this case is in healthcare it is not that recognizable. Within SISP literature the market pressure would be closest to the context or contingency dimension (e.g. turbulence, IT maturity, technical complexity, consensus, significance of IT). We argue therefore to study a dimension IO contingency in stead of market pressure.

#### Future research

Future research has to validate some of the results shown in this study. As the underlying organizational dimensions are thoroughly grounded and validated, only the additional external dimensions have to be proven and completed. This study only showed that they are not yet complete and not on the same level for comparison for this case study. Cooperation between many Universities will create a uniform research area where different authors on information strategy can compare effectiveness and process dimensions.