

Triple Strategy Revisited and Upcoming Changes

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The Author

Prof. Dr. Hans Ulrich Buhl (✉)
 FIM Research Center Finance &
 Information Management
 University of Augsburg
 Universitätsstraße 12
 86159 Augsburg
 Germany
hans-ulrich.buhl@wiwi.uni-augsburg.de

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The Triple Strategy 2009–2013

- By combining the German-speaking WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK, the English-speaking Business & Information Systems Engineering (BISE), and the practice-oriented Wirtschaftsinformatik & Management (WuM) the downward trend in the number of submitted papers and of subscribers could be stopped.
- In the first half of 2013, the number of downloads of WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK rose by more than 500 %, compared to the first half of 2008, the year before the strategic re-orientation.
- By the end of the year of BISE's introduction, downloads rose to a level of 75 % of the number of downloads of WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK in 2008, its 50th year of existence. In the first half of 2013, they rose by a further 800 % compared to the first half of 2009.
- All in all, articles in BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK are meanwhile downloaded more than 12.000 times per month.
- Since 2007, the impact factor of BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK rose by more than 300 % to 1.200 in 2012.
- However, we so far have not achieved to pile up a backlog of fully accepted papers published “online first” due to the constantly low acceptance rate slightly below 20 %.
- Thus the continuous rise of submitted papers remains an important aim which can only be met when both the German-speaking BISE community and the English-speaking IS community, respectively, increasingly submit their best articles to BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK.

After two years of shared activity, it has been the custom in our journal that the duties of the Editor-in-Chief will move over completely to Martin Bichler as of 2014-01-01 and the responsibility for all contents will be with him and his colleagues. Therefore, I would like to take the opportunity in this last issue of my period of office to compare the objectives of the triple strategy for the internationalization of the journal, developed in 2007 and 2008 and instantiated from 2009 onward, with the current status quo, summarize the results of the last years, and give my cordial thanks to all who participated.

During the Editorial Board Meeting in Braunschweig in 2012, I was re-elected as Editor-in-Chief for another two years. In addition, Martin Bichler was elected as Editor-in-Chief for three years with the mandate to promote the evolutionary development of the journal. For this purpose, it was decided during the Editorial Board Meeting in Leipzig 2013 to structurally change the Editorial Board and the Departments, as has already been reported in the editorial of issue 4/2013 by Martin Bichler, Armin Heinzl, and Robert Winter in their roles as Vice-Editors-in-Chief (Bichler et al. 2013). I am glad to see that the journal and the triple strategy effective from issue 1/2009 will not only be consistently continued, but also doubtless successfully advanced with fresh ideas. Additionally, I would like to thank the three already named and my colleagues Peter Buxmann (State-of-the-Art) and Günter Müller (Information Systems Engineering) for their commitment as Department Editors, their excellent cooperation, and their trust. Only due to their support and our mutual agreement on the aspired short review cycles as well as our common focus on rigor, relevance, and the tradition of BISE research in the German-speaking countries, the department structure, which renowned colleagues had advised against, could successfully be introduced and implemented in 2010. Moreover I would like to express gratitude for persistent good cooperation to the Section Editors Elmar Sinz (Catchword), Armin Heinzl (Profile), and Peter Loos (Discussion), as well as to Detlef Schoder for managing the website.

By the time I took over the duties of Editor-in-Chief from Wolfgang König from 2006 onwards, the enormous efforts during his period towards the improvement of

scientific quality were already showing rich fruit. Thus the journal WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK was one of the few German-speaking journals included in the Impact Factor by Thomson Reuters. In 2008, it was ranked as the best German-speaking business economics journal in JOURQUAL, the official ranking of the German Academic Association for Business Research (VHB), evaluating more than 1,600 international journals. Despite these strong points and the success in the German-speaking area, the journal WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK was faced with a dilemma.

On the one hand, universities in German-speaking countries – parallel to many other countries – took their bearings for the criteria for appointments of professors in accordance to the long-established custom in Northern America, and thus relied on publications in highly ranked, mostly English-speaking journals, causing the pressure to publish to rise greatly, especially for upcoming researchers. Due to the lack of an internationally renowned journal for the publication of design-oriented research, more and more authors turned to research methods favored by internationally established journals. As a result, the number of submissions decreased, even though the scientific quality of the journal rose.

On the other hand the published papers became increasingly demanding to understand for readers from practice due to the rising requirements on scientific quality (Buhl et al. 2012b). Much effort was taken not to lose the readership from practice. Thus, articles were not only assessed by established researchers but also by experts from practice to assure the scientific papers' practical relevance beside rigor. Also new categories were established, to especially cover the needs of readers from practice. Nonetheless, a relatively slow but continuous loss of subscribers could not be held up in a surrounding of generally shrinking markets. The journal boasted more than 4,000 subscribers in its prime, but the balancing act between highest scientific quality and the wants of practice became ever more difficult to perform. Apart from these developments, criteria for success issued by the publisher changed considerably at the time. For instance, download numbers and world-wide digital distribution of the journal gained in importance in the context of increasing digitalization.

To meet these challenges, the so-called triple strategy was launched, which was intended to transfer the advantages of the journal WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK and its topics for the German-speaking area into the international area by means of its English-speaking twin issue Business & Information Systems Engineering (BISE). At the same time the Wirtschaftsinformatik & Management (WuM) was supposed to address the readers from practice. The aim here was to link tradition and future, to combine rigor and relevance, and to stabilize the number of subscribers from science and practice through a clearly target-oriented strategy (for an extended history of the journal, cf. Buhl et al. 2012c; Hasenkamp and Stahlknecht 2009). This aim was also the guideline when efforts were made in the first years of the triple strategy to unite rather than separate the German-speaking community with the WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK as its central publication.

In implementing the triple strategy from the issue 1/2009 onward the circle of Editors wanted “to align the journal with the increasing importance of international research, to establish a unique platform for our rather design science-oriented research, and thus to address all techno-economically oriented readers and authors” (Buhl 2009, p. 1). As explained in more detail in the editorial of issue 1/2009, the focus should be on the transport and development of “the field’s and journal’s strengths to the international world without neglecting their position in the German-speaking countries” (Buhl 2009, p. 2). To make this possible, the financial support from practice was indispensable, in addition to the commitment of publisher and Editors. My most cordial thanks therefore go to the sponsors of the triple strategy, Allianz, Commerzbank, McKinsey, SAP, and Telekom Innovation Laboratories (T-Labs). Only with the help of their support, for example, the one-to-one translation of the German articles of WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK into English became conceivable, which resulted in a common impact factor for BISE/ WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK. Without the relentless commitment of Ulrich Hasenkamp and his team in Marburg the bilingual issue of the journal could not have been accomplished. For all this and the active support in designing and implementing the triple strategy I express my grateful thanks. Thanks go as well to the speakers of the special interest group “Business Informatics” (GI-FB WI) of the Gesellschaft für Informatik e. V. (GI), their presidents and managing directors and to the speakers of the section “Information Systems” (WKWI) of the VHB for their continuous support and their close alliance to our journals. My special thanks go to Robert Winter, who

succeeded in winning over two of the above-mentioned sponsors and who has intensively accompanied the idea of the triple strategy from its beginnings and still continues to do so.

How did the journal develop so far in view of the aims of the triple strategy put down in the editorial of issue 1/2009? Due to their focus on rigor and relevance there was and is much interest and support in the worldwide community for all three journals. All in all, the downward trend in the number of submitted scientific articles and of subscribers could be stopped due to the combined efforts of the German-speaking WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK, the English-speaking BISE, and the practice-oriented WuM. In 2010, by the way, WuM was awarded best newcomer by “German Business Media”. Despite this success and the fact that since 2006 the number of articles in assessment processes has increased continuously, we have not succeeded in building a backlog of finally accepted articles published “online first”. This is mostly due to the fact that the acceptance rate has been stable at just below 20 % since 2009, even though articles are only refused when it is obvious that the requirements of the journal in regard to rigor and relevance will not be met even after a pre-assessment by the involved department editor and additional constructive assessments and revisions. Thus, in the future, the increase of submissions remains an important task, which can only be met if both the German-speaking BISE community and the English-speaking IS community file their respective best papers with BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK. In regard to a firm establishment in the German-speaking area one can note positively that beside the now stable number of subscribers also the download numbers, which continuously gain in importance, have risen significantly. Thus the number of downloads of WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK in the first half of 2013 compared to the first half of 2008, the year before the strategic re-orientation, increased by more than 500 %. At the same time BISE could successfully be positioned internationally as English-speaking pendant.

Thus the number of downloads of BISE at the end of the year of introduction 2009 amounted to 75 % of the level of WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK at the end of 2008, the journal’s 50th year, and more than 75 % of these downloads originated from non-German speaking countries. In the first half of 2013 compared to the first half of 2009, the number of downloads of BISE again rose by more than 800 %. All in all, articles from BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK are meanwhile downloaded more than 12.000 times per month.

Lastly, this success can be seen in the citations of our journals, which mark an internationally still significant success factor for scientific journals, although this is subject to critical discussion (cf. Buhl et al. 2012a). Therefore, I am exceedingly pleased that with an impact factor of 1.200 in 2012 a significant step towards positioning the journal among the top international journals could be taken. Thus BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK were clearly able to keep track with the European market leaders, for example the European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS) or the Journal of Strategic Information Systems (JSIS) with impact factors of 1.558 and 1.500, respectively (Tab. 1). Overlooking the North American top journals, such as MIS Quarterly (MISQ), Information Systems Research (ISR), Journal of Management Information Systems (JMIS), or Journal of the Association of Information Systems (JAIS), one can note that their respective impact factors compared to 2007/2008 have declined between 20 % and 43 % (Tab. 1).

Table 1 Impact factors (IF) development of international top journals 2007–2012

Journal	Change from 2007 until 2012	IF 2012	IF 2011	IF 2010	IF 2009	IF 2008	IF 2007
BISE/WI	305 %	1.200	0.810	0.880	0.692	0.541	0.296
EJIS	119 %	1.558	1.500	1.767	1.200	1.202	0.710
JSIS	111 %	1.500	1.457	2.900	2.212	1.484	0.710
MISQ	–20 %	4.659	4.447	5.041	4.485	5.183	5.830
ISR	–25 %	2.010	2.146	3.358	1.792	2.261	2.682
JMIS	–33 %	1.262	1.423	2.662	2.098	2.358	1.870
JAIS (since 2008)	–43 %	1.048	1.667	2.217	2.246	1.836	–

Especially remarkable, on the background of **Tab. 1**, is the impact factor's increase of BISE/WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK by more than 300 % since 2007. Apparently the goal of closing in on the high end of international top journals seems closer than ever, at least when taking the impact factor for measure. Beside the excellent work of authors and assessors, this can be attributed to a considerable extent to the appointment of BISE as the first AIS affiliated journal in 2010 and to the intensive marketing efforts of the authors on international (e.g., ICIS, ECIS, and AMCIS) and national conferences (e.g., WI – International Conference on Wirtschaftsinformatik, MKWI – Multikonferenz Wirtschaftsinformatik). For its kind support I wish to express my special thanks to the Association for Information Systems (AIS) and in particular Marco De Marco, Jan vom Brocke, Pete Tinsley, and all conference chairs of these conferences. Thanks for their commitment go likewise to all national and international members of the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board, all (Guest) Editors of the special focus issues, authors, reviewers, readers, my employees supporting my work as Editor-in-Chief, the publishers, and all those who had a part in this success story.

In 2008, as depicted above, the prospects of the solely German-speaking WIRTSCHAFTSINFORMATIK appeared dim and even the worst case of losing not only contact with international standards but also the support of the publishers seemed possible. This trend was turned around and positive developments were made possible by introducing the triple strategy in 2009 and the combined efforts of the entire community. Despite the success shown above, we still have a long way to go in the years to come to establish the journal solidly in the high end position of the international journal environment. For this I would kindly like to ask all of you for your support and express my wishes for future success to Martin Bichler and his team.

Prof. Dr. Hans Ulrich Buhl
Editor-in-Chief

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