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# THE NOLAN STAGE MODEL: A DEBATE

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• N E W D O C •

## PANEL 9

### THE NOLAN STAGE MODEL: A DEBATE

**Panel Chair:** Peter Weill, University of Melbourne, Australia

**Panelists:** John L. King, University of California, Irvine, USA  
Richard L. Nolan, Harvard Business School, USA

The Nolan Stage Model first appeared in the literature in 1973 and was described and enhanced in several articles in subsequent years (1974 and 1979). Perhaps more than any other, the Stage Model has had a profound impact on the thinking of information systems practitioners and academics. The Stage Model has been applied to a broad range of topics ranging from describing the total IT investment growth in an organization to modelling the effectiveness of chargeout policies.

The Stage Model has not remained static but evolved along with the technological and organizational phenomena it describes. New stages were added and the model refined during its use as both a descriptive and predictive tool.

The validity of the Stage Model has been tested in a number of ways. Practitioners have tested its usefulness as a tool to help manage the introduction and use of information systems in organizations. Nolan, Norton and Company have used the model as a consulting tool and assessed its effectiveness in many organizations. Researchers have assessed the theoretical and conceptual basis for the model and performed careful empirical evaluations.

The objective of this panel is to debate the validity and usefulness of the Stage Model and compare it to other evolutionary models of organizational change. The format of the panel will be that of a debate with opening statements by each of the speakers followed by replies.

The first speaker will be Richard Nolan who will address the development of the Stage Model and its application to the "DP, Micro and Network Eras." Richard will also reflect on the use of the Stage Model by Nolan, Norton and Company's consultants in a variety of companies.

The second speaker will be John King who will ask not only whether the Stage Model is a "good" story but also whether it is a useful one. Does it tell us not only what happens but why? Does it provide predictive power and, if so, is that power broad and general or specific? Also, does the model tell us what to do? Finally what is the appropriate place for such models in IS research?

After these opening statements each speaker will reply. The audience will be encouraged to participate in the form of comments, questions and a discussion of the issues and challenges raised.