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PANEL 15

IMPROVING CREATIVITY IN SYSTEM DESIGN

Panel Chair: J. Daniel Couger, University of Colorado

Panelists: Teresa Amabile, Brandeis University
Rolf Smith, Innovation Center, Exxon

PANEL OVERVIEW

Very little has been published on the topic of creativity in system design. Our literature search has identified only five publications in the history of IS that have provided more than a one-half page discussion of the topic. This neglect on the subject appears to result from one or more of the following assumptions by IS management:

1. If organizations hire intelligent persons who have proper systems backgrounds, they will produce creative designs.
2. The designs produced to date exhibit sufficient creativity, therefore there is little need to concentrate on the creativity process.
3. The need for more creative designs will not increase in the era ahead.

Two years of research on the basic literature on creativity (more than 300 references) in other disciplines indicates that there are valid approaches to enhancing creativity. These techniques appear to be transferable to the system design process. They should enhance the quality of design in the era ahead, where the more complex systems are yet to be developed.

PANEL COMPOSITION

The panel is comprised of academicians who are working on creativity, in general and in the IS field, and industry representation from organizations which are involved in improving creativity for IS personnel.

EMPHASIS IN THE PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel will discuss the following topics:

1. **Differentiating the concepts of creativity and innovation.** This is not as straightforward as it might sound. There is considerable confusion concerning the difference between the concepts of creativity and innovation. There are more than 100 definitions in the literature. The panel will clarify these concepts.
2. **Creativity/innovation for the IS field.** The panel will provide illustrations of creativity and innovation in IS. Creativity techniques can be applied in many areas within an IS organization although the system design function has the most promise.
3. **Characteristics of IS personnel that support or inhibit creativity/innovation.** Survey results of IS personnel characteristics related to creativity will be reviewed. Some interesting contradictions were revealed by the survey.
4. **Approaches to enhancing creativity in IS.** Examples of techniques for creativity generation will be provided. Approaches for their application in an IS organization will be discussed, with concentration upon the system design activity.