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Editors' Comments

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Editors' Comments

SPECIAL ISSUE ON "NEW IS LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR A DIGITAL WORLD"

In the digital world of 2011 and beyond, we see information technologies increasingly embedded in organizations' products, services, processes and decisions. Trends in the use of the Internet for multimedia, scalable platforms, social media, analytical software, wireless technologies, internetworking, and new human sourcing arrangements are changing the way business is conducted. Collectively, these trends indicate that there is greater potential to leverage the advantages of digitization.

But what is the role of managers and executives? What does this mean for IS leadership roles in the company? Who should be responsible for leveraging emerging technologies? Are there new ways to manage IT and business relationships to create digital value?

These are questions faced by organizations today and, as can be seen through the articles in this Special Issue, the answers are not easy. Greater digitization in the form of applying new technologies and different forms of embeddedness present unique challenges for IS leadership that require deliberate attention to issues of governance, strategy, and management of resources. Even the now familiar "calls" for the alignment between IS and business present major challenges that are exacerbated by digital transformation.

A simple depiction of the evolving IS leadership challenges can be seen through the various manifestations of digitization itself. On the one hand, digitization involves far-reaching, scalable, integrated platforms that need to be managed as a critical resource—efficiently and effectively. On the other hand, digitization implies the consumerization of technologies like wireless devices and social media, which foster independence and innovation, and yet need to be harnessed to align their use for the organization's greater good. The data, information and knowledge generated and transferred through digitization also need to be leveraged well, which

involves getting people engaged in "good digital practices."

This *MISQE* Special Issue highlights the opportunities, challenges, and changes to IS leadership brought about by digitization. It also highlights possible directions for the resolution of these challenges and the leveraging of opportunities for organizational value creation. All four papers in this issue draw copiously from field-based research that reveals the challenges faced by IS-leadership (largely at the C-level) and some ways that companies deal with them. The authors of each paper also delineate guidelines for companies that transcend the specific contexts they studied.

The papers we selected are also deliberately diverse in examining different manifestations of digitization. The first paper (Kohli and Johnson) examines how leadership transformed operational processes in a company with limited IT experience within a traditional industry. The second paper (Kettinger, Zhang and Marchand) describes how IS leaders can be information stewards that foster a culture that improves information usage in companies. The third paper (Hansen, Kraemmergaard and Mathiassen) describes a process that enables IS and business leaders to collectively bridge gaps and think strategically about digitization. Finally, the fourth paper (Deans) describes different leadership models that share governance for an emerging set of consumer-oriented digital technologies (i.e., social media).

While these four articles deal with different aspects of leadership, there are some consistent themes that emerge. With the increasing embeddedness of IT in organizational products, services, processes, and decisions, it is clear that *the CIO cannot lead the organization's digital initiatives alone*. Strong partnerships between the CIO and other C-level executives, particularly the CEO, are critical for success—whether it is to informate (Kettinger, Zhang and Marchand), to leverage social media (Deans), or to succeed as a latecomer (Kohli and Johnson). To help their companies leverage information for superior business performance, CIOs and CEOs must share responsibility for the creation of an information culture in the organization (Kettinger, Zhang and Marchand). For strategic and transformative business

initiatives, CIOs and CEOs must develop a shared understanding of digitization and its impact on the business (Hansen, Kraemmergaard and Mathiassen). For technologies like social media, high levels of IS control may not be desirable and joint governance with the content area (i.e., Marketing) is important (Deans). Even in implementation decisions on balancing the need for efficiency with agility, a close CEO-CIO working relationship is desirable (Kohli and Johnson). The most successful cases present synergistic partnerships between the CIO and executives who appreciate how digitization could create value.

The four articles provide recommendations for CIOs and executives alike on the nature of partnerships required, the type of executive involvement, a shift in the skills required, alternative governance structures, and specific CIO actions that enable orchestration of these partnerships. Implicit in these recommendations is that to leverage digitization for organizational advantage, executives must also proactively acquire skills that are necessary to partner in these landscape-shifting IT initiatives.

Another theme is the importance of how CIOs can take on the *role of a business technology strategist*, playing an instrumental role in helping the company get better positioned in the digital economy. To do so requires that the CIO have the requisite strategic IT and business knowledge, political savvy, and interpersonal skills. While some companies (e.g., in latecomer industries) need the CIO to focus on provisioning technology services first and strategy second (Kohli and Johnson), in other cases the importance of these roles may be reversed (Deans). It is critical that for the role of business technology strategist to be leveraged, the CIO and CEO should have common understanding of the strategic role of IT in the company as well as the value-adding potential of IT (Hansen, Kraemmergaard and Mathiassen). If that is not possible, the CIO might need to adopt a different leadership approach (Kettinger, Zhang and Marchand).

It is apparent that with digitization come both opportunities and challenges. It might be very difficult for a CIO to leverage digitization from a position where there is little buy-in at the C-level, regardless of whether the role of IT is utilitarian or strategic. However, the multifaceted nature of the CIO's job could be greatly facilitated by creation of an *engaged leadership* model for IT, where the CIO can orchestrate the role of digitization in the company with strong involvement of other executives.

Eventually, IT embeddedness creates a need for greater ownership across the organization. Such a *"big tent" approach* to IT fosters inclusiveness and greater harnessing of IT talent that could lead to greater organizational innovation. Below, we briefly describe the four papers in this Special Issue.

The Kohli and Johnson article is written collaboratively by an academic and IS executive. It draws on the leadership experiences of Encana Oil & Gas—in an industry going through market volatility, and one that is a latecomer to digital transformation. They provide answers to the intriguing question of how executives can orchestrate digitization to be a front runner in a latecomer industry. The article describes how Encana built its digitization infrastructure, how it orchestrated its organizational resources, and how it maintained level-headed focus at the leadership level. The lessons they provide for CIOs and CEOs are helpful to any organization embarking on a large digital transformation initiative.

According to Kettinger, Zhang, and Marchand, digitization implies that the "volume, velocity, and variety of data are growing at unprecedented rates" and transforming the vast amounts of data into useful business insights is a critical challenge facing organizations. These authors argue that CIOs, along with business executives, can be instrumental in helping their companies build a strong information orientation (IO) culture that focuses on leveraging information for organizational value. The authors present a four-quadrant framework of the leadership roles that CIOs and business executives can adopt to improve their company's information orientation. This leadership-positioning framework offers a contingency view that can help CIOs diagnose their specific leadership challenges in implementing information orientation initiatives in their organizations. The four quadrants represent different combinations of leadership for IO initiatives provided by the CIO, business executives, or both, and the unique challenges entailed in each. The authors offer guidelines and recommendations based on the CIO's specific quadrant in the framework.

The Hansen, Kræmmergaard and Mathiassen paper addresses the challenge of developing shared views among IS and business leaders in order to adapt quickly to digital transformation. The authors designed a Participatory Process Model that they applied in two Danish municipalities to develop shared views among leaders in a high complexity IT environment. They describe the experience and provide practical lessons and recommendations.

These lessons and insights are particularly helpful for organizations in which IS and business leaders want to rapidly seize digitization opportunities as the business environment changes more and more quickly.

Digitization has spawned social media that is transforming the way people interact with each other. Deans examines leadership for social media based on interviews with CIOs, Chief Marketing Officers, and other C-Level executives. She describes four governance models, their challenges and outcomes. Based on this assessment, the author offers leadership dimensions necessary to become a "social business," as well as recommendations for CIOs on collaborative governance.

We hope that these papers will be useful to our CIO readers and other executives in their organizations, and provide some thoughtful "can use this on Monday morning" take-aways. We also hope they will pass them on to their lieutenants and second line. In addition, since these articles are based on in-depth first-hand field work, the richness of the cases that they draw on serve as very useful exemplars for educational use, especially for MBA, other Master's, or executive courses. Finally, we also believe that these papers can open new research vistas for our academic readers in the area of IS leadership models as they expose new concepts tied to practice such as engaged leadership models, information orientation, CxO relationships, shifting CIO/CxO roles and skill sets, and shared governance models that can be theoretically developed as we move further into the digital age.

We would like to thank the reviewers and authors of the Special Issue for their hard work and dedication. The insightful feedback provided by the reviewers and the authors' responsiveness to this feedback made the Special Issue possible. Our gratitude also goes to the *MISQE* Editor-in-Chief, Carol Brown, who has been instrumental in this process—from inception of the special issue to the final editing of the papers.

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Guest Editors

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Please join me in extending our thanks to the three guest editors for this Special Issue: Varun Grover, Elena Karahanna, and Omar El Sawy. This initiative began over a year ago as they first planned the 2010 SIM/*MISQE* Academic Workshop held in St. Louis prior to the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) on the Special Issue theme: *New IS Leadership Roles for a Digital World*. The four research articles published in this issue were selected by these editors from a peer review process of all papers formally submitted last February by workshop participants as well as other researchers.

As this issue goes to press, we anticipate interacting with academic researchers from across the globe at the pre-ICIS 2011 SIM/*MISQE* Academic Workshop to be held in Shanghai, China, on Sunday December 4th. The theme this year is *Enterprises and People on the Move: Managing Mobility for Business Value*. This year's workshop participants as well as other researchers are invited to submit papers on this same theme for the December 2012 *MISQE* Special Issue. The program chairs for the Shanghai workshop who are also serving as the 2012 Special Issue guest editors are Dorothy Leidner, *MISQE* senior editor, Shan Pan of National University Singapore and Juliana Sutanto of ETH-Zurich.

Interested authors are encouraged to see the Call for Papers on the *MISQE* home page as well as review the style guidelines and recently published *MISQE* research articles available at: www.misqe.org. Similar to other research articles accepted for publication, the selected Special Issue articles will be those that meet the *MISQE* mission of disseminating research results "in a manner that makes its relevance and utility readily apparent" to a senior IS executive audience.

As the 10th publication year of *MISQE* draws to a close, we wish to once again extend our sincere gratitude to all of the academic researchers across the globe who make this journal possible—Authors, Editorial Board members and other Reviewers, Special Issue Guest Editors, and all of our Senior Editors.

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Editor-in-Chief