Special Issue on Understanding Strategic Innovation in IT and Business Process Outsourcing

Guest Editors

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With maturity of the outsourcing industry, many firms consider outsourcing of Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled business services as a strategic imperative. In the growing body of literature on outsourcing this strategic perspective has been reflected in several papers published recently in JSIS and other IS journals. Viewed as an integral part of business strategy, outsourcing engagements, partnership and alliances offer client firms multiple sources of competitive advantage, among them innovation. While in the earlier days of outsourcing incremental and operational innovation in business processes was expected from vendors, recent years have witnessed an elevation in clients’ expectation regarding innovation. Innovations in outsourcing partnerships were now to deliver strategic impact and were expected to improve the firm’s business objectives. Strategic innovations in outsourcing were defined as those that significantly enhance the firm’s product/service offerings for existing target customers, or enable the firm to enter new markets.

There are now several examples of such strategic innovations in outsourcing such as Infosys development of new marketing platform using social networks for Diageo or IBM-Vodafone revolutionary supply chain platform to deliver anti-malaria medication in Africa for Novartis.

However, the road to achieving strategic innovation through outsourcing relationship is not easy. As outsourcing engagements are grounded in a formal contract that dictates the terms upon which fees will be exchanged for service, creating and delivering innovation, which is difficult to specify, scope and often manage, present a challenging task. Furthermore, the mentality and behavior of innovators are often different to those who deliver outsourcing services. For example, innovators may be perceived to be entrepreneurial, pursuing emerging ideas and motivated by novelty while service providers are more institutional, structured, and in most cases driven by profit.

Such tensions may give rise to opportunities to advance our understanding regarding the intersection of strategic innovation and outsourcing engagements. In particular,
examining how strategic innovation should be understood within the outsourcing context by assuming the existence of such tensions, dichotomies, differences in mentalities, business objectives, behaviors, organizational arrangements and settings, contractual arrangements, relational governances and attitudes, and performance indicators, from both vendor and client side, may assist advancing our understanding of this phenomenon. This Special Issue aims to address these research opportunities by providing a wide range of themes relevant for the study of strategic innovation in the context of outsourcing.

We invite research articles that investigate this topic from various angles (client, vendor, advisory), different levels of analysis (e.g. outsourcing engagement, firm) and applying different theories and views on innovation. Some of the aspects this special issue takes interest in are:

• What strategic innovation in outsourcing is and how it should be understood in view of existing innovation theories or outsourcing literature?
• How tensions between strategic innovation and outsourcing structures, processes and strategies should be understood and interpreted?
• What are the antecedents of strategic innovation in outsourcing and are these subject of sourcing models?
• What capabilities vendors require in order to deliver strategic innovation in outsourcing?
• What are the relationships between strategic innovation outcomes and outsourcing outcomes?
• How outsourcing could be utilized as a strategic tool to achieve innovation?
• Does strategic innovation change the value proposition of outsourcing at the firm, industry and society level?

We welcome papers from a wide range of disciplines as well as papers based on either quantitative or qualitative approaches. Implications of findings for theory and practice are essential and we encourage papers that extend existing theories.

In addition to the standard double blind review process at Journal of Strategic Information Systems authors may select to use the presentation of their papers at the 8th Global Sourcing Workshop (www.globalsourcing.org.uk/workshop in March 2014) as part of the preparation of their papers for the special issue. However, the workshop and the special issue are not connected and participation in the workshop is not required for consideration for the special issue.

To be considered for publication, papers must be submitted electronically by May 20, 2014. Papers that pass the initial screening will undergo no more than two rounds of revision. Papers not accepted by the end of the second round of revision will be rejected. The authors have three months to revise their paper.
Authors are instructed to follow the Guide for Authors and submission guidelines for the journal at the journal’s website, http://www.journals.elsevier.com/the-journal-of-strategic-information-systems/- choosing "Special Issue: Understanding Strategic Innovation in IT and Business Process Outsourcing" as the paper type in the online submission system.

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