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Convergence of Products and Services

Products and services are losing their identity and are getting converged

The two major categories of output from a business enterprise, that is, products and services, are gradually losing their identity and are getting converged over a period of time. Previously, there was a separate category of enterprises known as manufacturing set-ups producing consumer durables/non-durables or industrial products. Another category of enterprises was known as service organisations, which used to offer services to customers, such as banking, healthcare, telecom and so on.

Integration of products and services enhances value and gives more options for customization

In order to enhance the value of the output and generating more options for customisation, the product companies started integrating services and service companies moved ahead to integrate products in their offerings. For example, an automobile company, like 'Maruti', not only offers automobiles of different categories but also provides a bouquet of services to customers, such as after sales services, financing, insurance, reverse logistics and so on. On the other hand, a service company, like 'Reliance', is not only offering mobile services but also integrates the handset with the subscription.

The offerings are converging in the form of solutions for various customer requirements

Further, as the services are getting commoditised, standard products are being offered by services companies. For example, financial companies offer various financial products, such as bonds; and insurance companies offer a variety of insurance products. The gap between the so-called products and services is getting blurred and the offerings are converging in the form of 'solutions' for various customer requirements, which may comprise of a variety of products and services.

More and more companies are moving to follow a strategy of providing 'solutions' rather than dealing in specific products and services to both the corporate/institutional customers and individual consumers. Since the requirement of different customers is varied, the 'solutions' would require high degree of customisation and flexibility. Moreover, the value added would be higher in case of solutions than in case of individual products and services, where the margins are shrinking.

A strategy of offering comprehensive solutions requires evolution of strategic networks

The shifting of paradigm towards e-business is facilitating the offering of wider solutions base, which otherwise would have been extremely difficult and costly for a single company to offer. Such a strategy of offering comprehensive solutions, consisting of integration of products and services, calls for the evolution of strategic networks as a delivery mechanism. A variety of organisations having competencies in individual products or services can join hands to form a strategic network that can meet the customer needs in a holistic manner.

A new set of competencies are to be developed to offer highly customized and value added solutions

Thus, a new set of competencies are to be developed which would comprise strategic partnering with other organisations, managing knowledge in the network and developing relationships with customers to be able to offer highly customised and value added solutions in the form of a convergence of products and services.

Sushil

Editor in Chief





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Guidelines for Authors

Aim

The journal is intended to share concepts, researches and practical experiences to enable the organizations to become more flexible (adaptive, responsive, and agile) at the level of strategy, structure, systems, people, and culture. Flexibility relates to providing more options, quicker change mechanisms, and enhanced freedom of choice so as to respond to the changing situation with minimum time and efforts.

It is aimed to make the contributions in this direction to both the world of work and the world of knowledge so as to continuously evolve and enrich the flexible systems management paradigm at a generic level as well as specifically testing and innovating the use of SAP-LAP (Situation- Actor - Process-Learning-Action-Performance) framework in varied managerial situations to cope with the challenges of the new business models and frameworks. It is a General Management Journal with a focus on flexibility.

Scope

The Journal includes the papers relating to: conceptual frameworks, empirical studies, case experiences, insights, strategies, organizational frameworks, applications and systems, methodologies and models, tools and techniques, innovations, comparative practices, scenarios, and reviews.

The papers may be covering one or many of the following areas: Dimensions of enterprise flexibility, Connotations of flexibility, and Emerging managerial issues/approaches generating and demanding flexibility.

Coverage

The journal is organized into various sections to include following types of contributions: Research papers, Short notes/correspondence, Applications and case studies, Book reviews, Book summaries, Interviews and round tables, Information about relevant conferences and seminars, Educational and learning experiments, and any other relevant information related with the theme of the Journal.

Manuscript Submission

Manuscript should be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief electronically through web to avoid delays. Please submit the "Word" file attached to email on the following address: giftjournal@giftsociety.org. At the time of final submission, an autobiographical note and a passport size photograph of all the authors will be required.

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Language

All papers will be published in English and manuscripts must be submitted in that language.

Reviewing Process

Each paper is reviewed by the editor and if it is judged relevant for publication, it is then sent to referees for double blind peer review. The papers are reviewed for relevance, focus on flexibility, innovation, practical considerations, quality of evidence, contribution, methodology, readability,

and organization. Based on the recommendations of the referees, the editor then decides whether the paper should be accepted as it is, to be revised or rejected. The reviewing time will normally be 10-12 weeks.

Manuscript Requirements

Length: No maximum length for a paper is prescribed, however, authors should write concisely.

Title: The title should be brief and typed on a separate sheet.

Format: The paper should have a cover page giving title, author's name, complete address, telephone number, fax number, and email of the author. In case of co-authors, these details should also be provided for each co-author. Correspondence will be sent to the first named author unless otherwise indicated.

The second page should contain the title and an abstract of 100-150 words. It should also include upto eight keywords about the paper. The authors

may attach the category sheet to define the relevant categories to which the paper belongs (available on the website-www.giftsociety.org). The second page should not include the authors name. The paper should begin from the third page.

Headings: should be short clearly defined, and numbered.

Footnotes: should be used only when absolutely necessary and must be identified in the text by consecutive numbers placed as superscript.

Text: The main text should be more readable and mathematical models, if any, should be provided in Appendix. The ideas proposed should preferably be supported by real life case examples from business situations.

Tables and Figures: All tables and figures should be kept to a minimum and numbered consecutively using arabic

numerals. Each table should have a brief title written on the top of the table, and each figure should have a brief caption written on the bottom of the figure.

Photos and Illustrations: must be supplied as good quality black and white original with captions. Their position should be shown in the text by typing on a separate line the words "take in Plate n"

References: to other publications must be in standard style. That is shown within the text as the author's name followed by a comma and year of publication, all in round brackets, e.g. (Volberda, 1997). At the end of the paper a reference list in alphabetical order must be given as follows:

For books: Surname, initials, (year) title publisher, place of publication. e.g. Mckenzie J. (1996) *Paradox: The New Strategic Dimension*, McGraw -Hill, Berkshire.

For journals: surname, initials, (year) title, journal, volume (number), pages. e.g. Volberda H.W. (1997) Building Flexible Organization for Fast Moving Markets, *Long Range Planning*, 30 (2), 169-183.

Proofs

Page proofs for correction of printer's errors only will be sent to the author specified on the typescript. Proofs should be returned to the printer within the specified time period.

Offprints

Twenty offprints of each paper will be provided free of charge to the principal author. Additional copies may be purchased through an offprint order sent along with proofs.

Checklist

- * The paper is original, not submitted anywhere else.
- * The length of the paper is commensurate with content.
- * The title and headings are brief and catchy.
- * The author(s) name and affiliation are given only on cover page.
- * Abstract and keywords are provided.
- * Focus on flexibility in management is kept.
- * The paper incorporates innovative ideas/models in a practical framework.
- * Mathematical models, if any, are given in Appendix.
- * Tables/Figures are properly placed and numbered with brief titles/captions.
- * References are in standard style.
- * Few highlights (8-10) of two-three lines are provided to put in boxes.
- * Few key variables (3-5) are identified for flexibility mapping on a continuum.
- * Some key questions (2-3) are provided to reflect the applicability in real life.
- * Autobiographical notes and passport size photographs of all authors are provided.

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