

IFIP 8.6 2013 Panel: Final Plenary

The Information Technology Paradox: Why Some Companies Succeed and Some Fail?

Panel Co-Chairs

Professor Dave Wastell
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Panelists:

Professor Sarv Devaraj
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Dr Amany Elbanna
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Professor Michael Myers
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While spending on information technology (IT) continues to be on the rise, the connection between spending and performance remains nebulous. While some firms have experienced phenomenal success due to their technology investments, others continue to struggle. Indeed, in some situations, the mismanagement of IT has led to the bankruptcy of some firms. It is against this interesting backdrop, that we pose the question of interest to this panel, “Why do some companies succeed and some fail?” We believe the answer to this question is multi-faceted, and insights can be obtained by examining this question through various lens.

From a managerial standpoint, IT has to compete with other initiatives to secure funding. It is, therefore, necessary for IT initiatives to demonstrate objectively the benefits that will accrue to the organization. The complexity of demonstrating such benefits arises from a range of issues such as the difficulty in isolating the payback from other initiatives, the lag effect from delayed payoff, intangible benefits, the indirect nature of payoffs, and the need to coordinate efforts among business partners. The panel will discuss such challenges in measuring the payoff from IT investments.

In responding to the theme of the conference, the panelists will discuss reasons for the success or failure of IT investments. The discussion will be based on empirical evidence, using insights from cases; there will be a focus on analytical models, building on conceptual and theoretical arguments, and our aim is to offer directions for future research

Professor Deborah Bunker will argue that systems success (and failure) is a direct consequence of the effectiveness of collaboration and change management processes to mitigate the disruptive effects of systems implementation in organizations, against what is (almost always) a complex business environment. Effectiveness of collaboration and change management is dependent on: 1) Identification of the key issues surrounding the implementation of disruptive systems, that form a barrier to multiple (and often diverse) organisational stakeholder collaboration and change management; and 2) Development of methods, frameworks and approaches to mitigate these barriers and facilitate more effective collaboration and change management, both within and between organisations.

Professor Sarv Devaraj will articulate his reasons for success/failure based on his research and meta-analysis on IT payoff (published in Information Systems Research) and his book on Measuring Business Value of IT. He will present the concept of complementarity as a critical factor driving the success of IT investments.

Dr Elbanna will argue that success and failure is a judgment outcome, representing points of views of particular groups. She will discuss the strand of research that has examined these notions from different perspectives within the same organization. This will show the chasm between different groups within the organization. She will further argue that it is only through crossing this chasm that a collective view of IS requirements and roles could emerge.

Dr Linda Levine's discussion will focus on identifying patterns of failure. Why are we still experiencing many of the same problems we saw 25 years ago? She will present an example of "pattern of failure" based upon her experiences with actual programs, This example uses systems thinking concepts to analyze dynamics observed in software development & acquisition practice. She will also share a related archetype that was designed to characterize and help manage this recurring pattern of counter-productive behavior in business and industry.

Dr Ravishankar Mayasandra-Nagaraja intends to draw on his recent fieldwork and offer the following arguments about why some IT initiatives can end up as spectacular failures. In the case of the private sector, irrational exuberance about strategic IT investments can blind managers to organizational cultural forces that are severely misaligned with the objectives of the IT. Managers tend to (a) under-estimate the detrimental impact of power asymmetries, status differences and vested agendas of organizational actors and (b) over-estimate their own capabilities and competence to manage the trajectory of IT initiatives. In the case of the public sector IT projects, especially in the Indian context, very often the IT infrastructure completely outpaces the institutional infrastructure. Dr Ravishankar would argue that many ambitious public IT projects are restricted to playing an 'informational role' due to the weaknesses inherent in broader society-level institutions.

Professor Michael Myers will review some of the lessons learnt from more than 20 years research on the implementation of information systems in organizations. He will particularly focus on why some organizations fail.

Dr Shirish Srivastava will argue that assessing success and failure of e-government initiatives is a challenge for various reasons: (1) Definition of e-government success/failure of e-government is ambiguous; (2) Which level of analysis to consider for assessing e-government impact – individual, state, country or corporate?; (3) What are the variables defining e-government success?; and (4) Who assesses the success of e-government?

About Panel Co-Chairs

Professor David Wastell
Professor of Information Systems
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David Wastell is Professor of Information Systems at Nottingham University Business School. His current interests are in public sector reform, neuroscience and social policy, technological innovation and cognitive ergonomics. David's ideas about design and the managerial role are set out in a book published in 2011, entitled: *Managers as designers in the public services: beyond technomagic*. He is currently President Elect of the UK Academy of Information System and vice Chair of IFIP WG8.6.

Dr Yogesh K. Dwivedi
Senior Lecturer (Information Systems and E-Business)
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Yogesh K. Dwivedi is a Senior Lecturer in Information Systems and E-Business at the School of Business, Swansea University, Wales, UK. He obtained his PhD and MSc in Information Systems from Brunel University, UK. He has co-authored several papers which have appeared in international referred journals such as CACM, DATA BASE, EJIS, ISJ, ISF, JCIS, JIT, JORS, and IMDS. He is Associate Editor of EJIS, Assistant Editor of TGPPP, Managing Editor of JECR and member of the editorial board/review board of several journals. He is a member of the AIS and IFIP WG8.6.

About Panelists

Dr Deborah Bunker
Associate Professor in the Business Information Systems
The University of Sydney Business School, Australia



Deborah Bunker is an Associate Professor in the Business Information Systems discipline and the Director of Doctoral Studies for the University of Sydney Business School. She is immediate past President, Australasian Association of IS and current Vice Chair, International Federation of Information Processing Working Group 8.6 on Innovation, Diffusion, Transfer and Implementation of IS. Deborah is currently leading a major research project, in disaster management. This project aims to identify and enhance information systems factors that impact emergency services agency collaboration. Research outputs from this project are specifically focused upon assisting government, business and communities to collaborate for crisis management purposes by improving: information and process design; IS risk and inter-organisational management practices; and management of current and emerging information technologies.

Professor Sarv Devaraj
Fred V. Duda Chair Professor in Business
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Sarv Devaraj received his PhD in Business Administration from the University of Minnesota. He has worked on projects in healthcare management, sustainability of operations, business analytics, and technology management. In the field of service quality, Dr. Devaraj conducts research on consumers' perception of service and product quality. Dr. Sarv Devaraj has worked or consulted with several companies including Trinity Health, Memorial Health System, Honeywell, and Infosys Technologies. His research has been published in premier journals in the fields of Information Systems and Operations Management. He has also won several Best Paper Awards at international conferences. He is serving as or has recently served as Associate Editor for several journals in Operations Management and Information Systems. He is co-author of a book published by Prentice-Hall / Financial Times on Technology Payoff. Dr. Devaraj co-founded a healthcare software company that specializes in transition of care issues.

Dr Amany Elbanna
Senior Lecturer in Information Systems
Royal Holloway University of London, UK



Dr Amany Elbanna is a senior Lecturer in Information Systems at Royal Holloway University of London. She earned her PhD in Information Systems from The London School of Economics and Political Science. Her research interests are in the collective organizing of action and innovation in information systems development and implementation. She has studied the implementation and project management of systems in different organizational contexts and recently its relationship with business innovation and value creation. Her articles have been published in the European Journal of Information Systems, Journal of Strategic Information Systems, Journal of Information Technology, Information Technology and People, Communications of the AIS, Journal of Actor Network theory and technological innovation in addition to many papers in leading conferences.

Dr Linda Levine
Independent Researcher & Consultant, USA

Linda Levine is an Independent Researcher & Consultant and a Senior Principal Research Fellow affiliated with the Discipline of Business Information Systems at The University of Sydney. She is an experienced Organizational Transformation Professional and leader with deep expertise aligning people capabilities, processes, and tools to attain business objectives and support a culture of development and growth. She uses learning models and systems thinking to support strategic objectives and identify potential innovation and improvement targets. From 1991- 2012, she was a senior member of the technical staff at Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute. Her research is wide ranging but consistently focuses on socio-technical systems, archetypes and patterns of failure, and diffusion of innovations. She holds a PhD from Carnegie Mellon University. She is a member of the IEEE Computer Society, Association for Information Systems, National Communication Association, and cofounder and past Chair of IFIP Working Group 8.6 on Diffusion, Transfer and Implementation of Information Technology. Contact her at llherself@gmail.com

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M.N. Ravishankar is a Reader in Globalisation & Emerging Markets at the School of Business and Economics, Loughborough University, UK. His research interests span cultural conflicts in the implementation of strategy, offshore outsourcing of work and IT-enabled transformations in emerging markets.. His research articles have been published in journals such as *Information Systems Research*, *European Journal of Information Systems*, *Journal of Information Technology*, *Omega* and *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*.

Professor Michael D. Myers
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University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand



Michael D. Myers is Professor of Information Systems and Head of the Department of Information Systems and Operations Management at the University of Auckland Business School. His papers have appeared in a wide range of journals, conferences and books. Professor Myers currently serves as Senior Editor of *Information & Organization*, as Senior Editor of *Pacific Asia Journal of the AIS*, and as Editor of the *AISWorld* Section on Qualitative Research. He previously served as Senior Editor of *MIS Quarterly* from 2001-2005, as Senior Editor of *Information Systems Research* from 2008-2010, and as Associate Editor of *Information Systems Journal* from 1995-2000. He also served as President of the Association for Information Systems (AIS) in 2006-2007 and as Chair of the International Federation of Information Processing (IFIP) Working Group 8.2 from 2006-2008. He is a Fellow of the Association for Information Systems.

Shirish C. Srivastava
Associate Professor of the Operations Management and Information Technology
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Dr. Shirish C. Srivastava is a tenured associate professor at HEC, Paris. Prior to joining HEC, Dr. Srivastava has lectured at the School of Business, National University of Singapore and holds a Ph.D. from the same university. His research has been published in several international refereed journals such as *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *European Journal of Information Systems* and *Journal of Information Technology*, among others. He has also authored several book chapters. He currently works on the editorial board of several journals such as *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, *European Journal of Information Systems*, *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, *The Journal of Information Technology Case and Application Research* and *The Journal of Indian Business Research*. His research interests include IT-enabled offshore sourcing, e-government, virtual worlds and technology strategy.