

Self-assessment questions for session 3

The following are intended as self-assessment questions for the ideas introduced in the second session of the course. These questions are for your own private use and do not form part of the formal assessment for this course.

You should attempt to answer all of the questions. There are no right and wrong answers; the objective of these questions is to get you to think about the issues rather than to provide a definitive solution.

1 Business Strategies and Competitive Advantage

1.1 Strategy

Is there a difference between corporate and business strategy? If so, what is it and which is the most important for the long-term survival of a company?

1.2 Porter and Competitive Advantage

Porter describes two primary strategies to achieve Competitive Advantage - Cost Leadership and Differentiation - together with a number of supporting strategies. Given the complex, dynamic and interrelated nature of markets today, is this simple description still adequate?

2 Business Models

2.1 Types of Business Model

Look at the list of different types of business models produced by Michael Rappa and try to find an example for each of the categories. Do you think there are any models that are missing, or any models that have been duplicated? How often are different types of business model mixed with each other?

2.2 Business Models and IS

To what extent do IT models and business models describe the same thing? What are the differences between specifying what an IS does and what a business needs to do? Is it easier to create a model for a computer system than for a business?

3 IS / IT and the Change / Transformation of Organizations

3.1 Strategic Alignment

In 1993 Brynjolfsson wrote about how investment in IT was not being matched by increases in productivity; in 1997 Ciborra wrote of the repeated failure of attempts to match IT with Business Strategy; in 2002, Magretta wrote of business models being used to glorify all manner of half-baked plans - why is it so difficult to align IT and business strategy?

3.2 Organizational Transformation

Look at the different models / descriptions of how it is claimed that technology can transform a work organization: What are the implications of these models for the alignment of IT and business strategy? Do these models highlight any social / ethical dimensions of IT / business strategy alignment? What place should these types of considerations have when thinking about how best to align these two areas of strategy?