

VOL. 12, NO. 2, April 2009

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SPECIAL ISSUE "INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH IN BRAZIL"
GUEST EDITORS: CARLO GABRIEL PORTO BELLINI AND RITA DE CÁSSIA DE FARIA PEREIRA

EDITORIAL PREFACE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN BRAZIL

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Brazil is clearly one of the leaders in the new economy, but it is a country of sharp contrasts. If the Brazilian economy developed greatly in the last years and IT adoption is reported to have boosted labor productivity, it should be expected that the country invests heavily in IT research and development. But this seems not to be true. The guest editors discuss the status, difficulties, and progress of IS research in Brazil and introduce the very first special issue on Brazil. In spite of the difficulties, they were able to attract high quality articles.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MATURITY BETWEEN BUSINESS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL

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Brazilian Industry has sought to adjust to the laws and acts of corporate governance and strategic management practices arising from the new national and international economic reality. One of the emerging elements is Strategic Alignment (SA). The present study sought to identify the level of maturity and the order of importance of the criteria that promote SA between Business and Information Technology (IT), as perceived by business and IT executives. The findings indicate that elements such as "Communication", "Skills", "Scope and Architecture" are of greatest importance and most promoted within firms. Though equally important, the management element "Competency/Value Measurements" was found to be less promoted.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND ITS ANTECEDENTS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CONSTRUCTS AND RELATIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND BRAZILIAN LITERATURE

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In this study, the authors conduct a review of the international and the Brazilian literature on business-IT strategic alignment and present a critical analysis of fundamental problems observed in the field. They argue that conceptual shortcomings, such as the lack of clarity in constitutive definitions of the alignment construct and the plethora of often overlapping antecedents, restrain systematic knowledge development. They propose a conceptual definition of business-IT strategic alignment, striving for clarity and parsimony, and highlight its distinction from the definition of operational alignment. The antecedents are analyzed so as to formulate a conceptual model for the nomological network that links these constructs.

E-GOVERNMENT AND THE INFLUENCE OF POWER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

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Information infrastructures are important for implementing e-government solutions for enterprise activities and for society in general, thus being essential for global IT solutions. This study analyses the development of an information infrastructure with special attention to the influence of power. This infrastructure was implemented by the State of São Paulo in Brazil. The infrastructure's institutionalization and further development was influenced by powerful or empowered agents that used it as a controlling or empowering tool. Hanseth's infrastructure theory is the theoretical basis employed to study the process, complemented with an adaptation of the circuits of power framework that was used to study the effects of power upon this infrastructure's development.

THE ROLE OF ICT IN HELPING PARALLEL PATHS CONVERGE: MICROCREDIT AND CORRESPONDENT BANKING IN BRAZIL

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Two important phenomena in the financial sector have drawn attention in recent years: on the one hand, microcredit is growing; on the other hand, correspondent banking (CB) outlets have risen to prominence, with particular success in Brazil. This paper argues that information and communication technology (ICT) applications have the potential to help these two movements, until now tracing parallel paths, to converge. The authors apply an emergent conceptual framework that combines three theoretical lenses: social shaping of technology, structurationist view of technology and contextualism. The result is an original reading of the possible combinations of CB and microfinance in Brazil and the expectation that the multilevel framework might help to understand similar complex phenomena in other Latin America contexts

THE EXPERT OPINION: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. JULIANA S. HERBERT, CEO, HERBERT CONSULTING

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Herbert Consulting is a Brazilian company established by Dr. Juliana Herbert in August 2007. Its focus is on training, consulting, and appraisal activities on software process improvement. Dr. Herbert discusses with JGITM the Brazilian software industry, its growth and distribution, and its role in South America and the world economy.