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NON-ICT EXECUTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF, AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS, ICT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:

DO THEY INFLUENCE THE OUTCOMES OF SUCH PROJECTS?

A Thesis
Submitted in Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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(November 2006)

DISCLAIMERS

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Gillian Reid
October 2006

ABSTRACT

There are many issues involved in implementing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) projects in general, and infrastructure (ICT/I) projects in particular. Failures are still common despite advances in project management tools, and increased ICT sophistication. Executive sponsorship and support is acknowledged to make a difference to the success or failure of these kinds of projects. Little has been written on the views of non-ICT executives about the issues they have with ICT/I projects, which have particular challenges because of their highly technical nature.

This research sought to develop a theory not only about **what** the issues are, from the non-ICT executive perspective, but also **how** these issues appear in, and may affect the outcomes of, such projects. An interpretive study using single units of analysis within multiple cases, to build an inductively derived theory, was the approach chosen for this research. An adapted grounded theory analysis, following the original Glaser and Strauss (1967) philosophy, was used to analyse data extracted from interviews with fifteen chief executives or equivalents. Three themes arose out of this process:

- Executive Perceptions of ICT/I
- Strategic Alignment of ICT/I projects
- ICT/I Project Outcomes

The themes had quite strong connections between them. Jargon Barriers between ICT staff and these executives, affected the executives perceptions of ICT/I and were strong contributing factors for a poor strategic alignment between ICT/I projects and business goals. The poor alignment was primarily caused as a result of low levels of executive engagement with these projects, because they couldn't understand the "techno-speak" of their ICT people. The consequence was consistently low satisfaction with ICT/I project life cycle outcomes. There was a very real difference between the satisfaction levels of executives who had made definite efforts to overcome, or deal with, the ICT/I jargon barriers, and those who hadn't. there was a very real difference

between the satisfaction levels of executives who had made definite efforts to overcome, or deal with, the ICT/I jargon barriers, and those who hadn't.

The substantive theory developed from this work is that:

Jargon barriers created by ICT staff generate poor relationships between ICT staff and their executives,

which in turn can cause low levels of executive engagement with their infrastructure projects,

and consequently affect executive perceptions about the outcomes of these projects..

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their generous contributions to the success of this thesis:

My two supervisors, Dr Cathy Urquhart and Professor Michael Myers, especially Cathy whose wisdom, guidance, and direction, were critical to the successful outcome of this work.

The fifteen executives who so graciously agreed to be interviewed as participants in this study. I am enormously grateful for their willingness to give up time in their busy work schedules to talk so freely about their views of this part of their organisational environment.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to three people. Firstly, to my parents, who steadfastly believed throughout my whole life that I could achieve whatever I set out to do. They made great sacrifices to get me started on the road of lifelong learning, and were supportive and proud of every milestone I reached. I am deeply grateful for that.

Secondly, to my husband Maxwell, whose unfailing support over all the years of my study, has absolutely brought me to this place. I could not have done this without him.

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