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Research
And
Teaching Interests

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Research

In general, I am interested in:

1. why things are the way they are in business, i.e. getting insight into the organizational dynamics which lie behind the current state of things across many organizations,
2. the cause and effect chain between individual competencies, values, and personality traits and business results.

My research work during my consulting and executive career was been oriented to formulating better actions. As a result, much of it was exploratory and intended to shape action, rather than being structured to meet the requirements of hypothesis testing.

Current Research Interests

The Entrepreneurial Mindset

I am intrigued by the psychological underpinnings of the entrepreneurial mindset. In particular, I am interested in determining if there is a discernible difference in the personality characteristics or cognitive processing capabilities among:

- successful entrepreneurs, as defined by the success of the ventures they founded / started,
- unsuccessful entrepreneurs, as defined by the lack of success of the ventures they founded / started,
- non-entrepreneurs, i.e. Individuals who prefer to work in established business or organization.

Modern psychometrics like Myers Briggs Step II appear to be a particularly useful tool for this type of investigation. As well, I think that qualitative research approaches like entrepreneur interviews, 90°-270° peer interviews, and possibly, peer completion of competency profiles could be fruitful research approaches.

Enterprise Level Entrepreneurial Success

Modern entrepreneurs build enterprises to execute their ideas. Such for profit enterprises succeed or fail in a market place. If the enterprise is not-for-profit enterprise, it succeeds or fails in a social or service space. Although an entrepreneurial leader is a **necessary** condition for an entrepreneurial enterprise to succeed, it is not a **sufficient** condition.

There are many other factors that contribute to the success of an entrepreneurial enterprise. Three obvious examples that are often talked about both in the research literature and at gatherings of investors are:

1. the personality and experience of the other members of the management team,
2. the funding available to the enterprise,
3. the nature and response of other players in the entrepreneurial enterprise's market place or service space.

I have formulated a framework for understanding the factors that lead to Enterprise Level Entrepreneurial Success. It is complex. It has 7 first level factors. Each of these 7 is in turn broken down into its own contributing factors. The second level model consists of more than 25 factors.

Jim Collins, in the methodology appendices to his various books, has shown the benefits of an aligned or team approach to researching complex business questions. He organizes his research efforts as projects completed by a research team. He is clearly the lead researcher. But the other members of the team contribute conceptually, as well as doing much of the required work.

In many ways, this approach is analogous to the way in which application software development is done or a building is designed. Software development teams are led by a project managers and a lead application architect, (who may or may not be the same person). Building design teams work under the leadership of a lead architect.

The complexity of the research questions involved in understanding enterprise level entrepreneurial success, and the volume of the research work needed to address them, suit such a multi-researcher response.

I am not in a position to organize such a team approach to address this. In the meantime, I will use the framework I have developed to organize my own work with the entrepreneurship research literature.

The use of video based behavioral cues in personal profiling / self insight / 360° instruments

Current technology (e.g. game development engines, text to voice animated graphic engines) allow much cheaper preparation of video – based “cues” of behavioral scenarios for the use in such instruments. However, there is little to no research that shows if the use of such visual cues depicting behavior produce better or more valid results than the traditional text based word cues. A thoughtfully structured set of experiments could provide useful results on this question.

Performance Management and Staff Engagement

Staff (whether employed or contracted) need to be engaged to productive at their highest level. Performance management is one of the processes used by organizations to engage staff.

Backward looking performance appraisal is the traditional form of performance management used by many organizations. Forward looking performance contracting is newer.

There have been few to no studies comparing the differential effectiveness of these two approaches to performance management in engaging staff. A cursory search in Google Scholar on “personal appraisal” will bring up a wealth of studies and meta studies on its various aspects, but few address its impact on increasing employee engagement. A similar search on “performance contracting” will bring up studies on performance contracting as a means of managing inter-enterprise relationships and contracts but few on its use for managing individual performance and engagement.

Anecdotal evidence and personal executive experience suggests that look forward performance contracting significantly increases staff engagement over backward looking performance appraisal. However, there is little systematic research evidence. This gap can be closed by working both with business students in university and with firms interested in improving their employee engagement.

Video based components in e-learning

Today video based components in e-learning large involve video taping lectures. However, both game development software and text to speech video animation creation software now offer the possibility of creating short, “custom developed video animation” segments for use in e-learning programs at manageable levels of effort and cost.

The cost effectiveness of these tools allow “multiple versions” of such components to be created relatively cheaply and quickly. Different versions, customized to the learning style of the “learner” can now be prepared, and “served” to the user in a way that matches the e-learning program content to the learner’s preferred learning style.

There is little research to show that these approaches have any greater effectiveness than more traditional e-learning authoring techniques. Research on this could have useful implications for the future development of e-learning programs in both educational and professional development environments.

The two following examples are illustrative of some of my past action oriented research work.

Factor Analysis as Part of Internal IT Chargeback System Design

As the head of an IT organization in the early 1980's, I was charged by the CEO to develop a "chargeback system" for cross charging IT services to other departments in the organization.

1. Chargeback for software development was straight forward. We simply instituted time sheet based project level record keeping, We developed hourly rates for a few "labor" types that based on a unit cost analysis of the real and budgeted expenditures of the software development group.

We added a surcharge to these rates for the "hardware and software" used during development to recover full costs from our internal clients for these activities.

We deliberately set these rates so that we would slightly recover our anticipated annual software development department costs to order to reduce the risk of not achieving full cost recovery. The CEO had clearly mandated that this was to be the case.

Consequently, we could provide our clients with a "modest" accounting refund at fiscal year end. As a result, our internal software development and maintenance clients almost always looked "good" on their budget to actual year end expenditures for software development and maintenance.

2. Charging for IT operations and production management was more complicated. The financial and IT operation analysts working for IT started by trying to develop a complex charge book for IT operations services. As the CIO, I stepped in when they talked about developing 100 different prices for these services.

We had extremely good "operating" data on the machine utilization / operating system software work we were doing. Computing devices are good at keeping track of what they are doing. Given this robust data set, I initiated a project to do a factor analysis of it. I have developed experience with multivariate statistical approaches during my doctoral course work at the University of Massachusetts. I thought such tools could do much to help us understand the most appropriate way to deal with such complex and voluminous data sets.

We discovered three broad factors which accounted for almost 90 percent of the variance in this data. These factors were given labels that business professionals could understand and relate to their work.

- Lines of printed output - since there were no personal or departmental printers in those days and all computer printing was centralized to take advantage of high speed printers;
- Volume of information stored on disk – since all information was stored on centrally operated disks directly attached to the mainframe;
- Number of CPU cycles consumed – resulting from the number of times that a particular computer job was run and the size of those runs.

With some financial modeling, we discovered that we could recover all of the costs associated with IT production management and computer operations with rates associated with these three cost factors.

We built the IT operations chargeback model based on them. By implementing a relatively simple job level computing resources utilization tracking application, we could calculate how much of each of these three resources were used by each “submitted” job. These numbers were input into a straight forward departmental computer job cost charging application.

Again, we deliberately set the rates a few percent points higher than we estimated we needed to do full cost recovery. At year end, when we balanced actual IT operations dollars spent against charged back dollars for these services, there was a slight surplus. As a result, our users our business users received a “modest” refund on their year end department financial statement for their use of IT operations resources. These refunds generally had a beneficial impact on their year end fiscal position.

Our IT chargeback system also encouraged intrapreneurial thinking among our users. We discovered that individuals in our business user departments actively considered questions such as:

- Do I run this job – do I really need it?
- Do I keep the information produced by this job, or do I have it already stored as a result of some other job or activity?
- Do I print some or all of the reports that I could produce when I run this job?

These were real decisions they could make to decrease the overall “cost” of running jobs to their department.

The factor analysis was key to avoiding greater complexity in the IT operations chargeback system. I have seen other IT chargeback systems since then that contained rate books with up to 1500 different “prices or rates for IT services”. By and large, such complex internal chargeback schemes frustrate and confuse internal computer users.

Strategic Planning with Senior Organizational Executives

As a consultant, I developed an approach to working with executives involved in strategic planning or strategic problem solving which uses qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Essentially, I develop a form of action research/

The steps in the process are outlined in the following.

Step	Activity	Who was involved	Applied research technique
1.	Confirm scope. Confirm who will be involved.	Business sponsor, e.g. CEO or unit head	
2.	Interview each participant	Individuals (as individuals) from executive team who will be “participants” in the strategic planning workshop	Qualitative – interviewing
3	Write up each interview	Research / facilitator	Qualitative – documentation
4.	Do a theme analysis interview notes to develop a set of “major factor issues” – a single defining sentence or label plus 2 or 3 sentences expanding / clarifying it	Researcher / facilitator	Qualitative – Theme Analysis
5.	Theme confirmation – circulate the themes to the executives involved, asking for comments and feedback on their clarity – make any changes required	Executives as individuals Researcher / facilitator	Qualitative – Theme Analysis
6	Transcribe the themes onto index cards	Researcher / facilitator	
7	Meet with each executive – ask them to rank order the cards	Executives as individuals Researcher / facilitator	Quantitative = ranked ordered themes completed

Step	Activity	Who was involved	Applied research technique
	from most important to least important to the organization in the next 1 to 5 years.		by each participant
8	Using the rank ordered cards, ask each executive to explain in a sentence or two, why they placed each card (theme) where they did in the rank ordered deck	Executives as individuals Researcher / facilitator	Qualitative – Understanding
9	Do a Q cluster analysis, clustering the executives, using the rank order of the themes as the distance measure – essentially get a picture of which individuals were most like one another in the way they ranked ordered these themes	Researcher / facilitator	Quantitative – insight into the potential sub-grouping of the individuals based on the way they ranked ordered the themes. Useful background information for facilitating the actual strategy workshop with the participants.
10	Calculate rank order correlations among the themes – understand how they are related to one another in the views of the executives	Researcher / facilitator	Quantitative – insight into the relationships among the themes
11	Feedback = prepare a report to go to each executive which: - showed how they personally rank ordered each theme compared to	Executives as individuals Researcher / facilitator	Quantitative – allow each individual insight to that person's view of the themes as compared to the group

Step	Activity	Who was involved	Applied research technique
	<p>the lowest, highest and average rank given to the theme by the group.</p> <p>- showed the correlations among the themes</p>		
12	<p>Prepare a wall chart of the themes in most to least rank order, showing lowest rank received, highest rank received and average rank receives</p>	<p>Researcher / facilitator</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>
13	<p>Facilitate the strategic planning workshop, starting with a review of the wall chart from step 12</p>	<p>Executives as a group Researcher / facilitator</p>	<p>Qualitative – group working session</p>

Teaching

Courses That I Could Teach

Because my graduate work was in organizational behavior, and my business experience as an executive or senior consultant in Information Technology, Organizational Change and Talent Management, I can teach a variety of undergraduate courses.

1. Organizational Behaviour
2. Organizational Theory
3. Human Resources Management
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Business and Professional Ethics
6. Management Information Systems Management
7. System Analysis and Design
8. The Internet as a new Business Environment
9. Strategic Management and Policy
10. Project Management, both for project management and information systems

Professional Development Programs that I have Delivered

I have also developed and delivered multiday professional development programs in Interviewing Skills, Facilitating Work Teams, and Business Process Re-engineering.

I have developed and taught a Managing Information Systems For Small Businesses professional development program for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ontario.

I have developed e-learning programs in Interviewing Skills and Feedback skills.

Teaching Interests

As well as being prepared to teach in these areas, I am interested in developing curriculum for and delivering courses in:

- Enterprise Level Entrepreneurial Success
- Organizational Development and Change
- Performance Management in Organizations
- Performance Based Recruiting Approaches
- Turning Around Organizations in Trouble
- Project Management for Agile and Geographically Distributed Teams

blending the latest findings from research with practical experience from business.