
Editorial

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Bibliographical notes: Latif Al-Hakim lectures in management in the Faculty of Business at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. His experience spans industry, research and development and academic institutions. Dr. Al-Hakim was awarded his undergraduate degree in 1968. His Masters (1978) and PhD (1983) were awarded by the University of Wales (UK). Dr. Al-Hakim has published extensively in information management and systems modelling. He is the author and editor of seven books, more than ten chapters in books and more than 60 papers in various journals and conference proceedings. He has also consulted to a number of major industrial organisations in Australia.

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Nilmini Wickramasinghe, PhD MBA researches and teaches in several areas within Information Systems. In addition, Dr. Wickramasinghe specializes in the impacts of technologies on the healthcare industry and various aspects of medical informatics. She is well published in all these areas having written several books, over 50 refereed scholarly papers and encyclopedia entries. Dr. Wickramasinghe regularly presents her work throughout North America as well as in Europe and Australasia. Currently, Dr. Wickramasinghe is the co-director of the Center for Management Medical Technology (CMMT) and holds an Associate Professor position at the Stuart School of Business, Illinois Institute of Technology.

Over the past decade, the issue of trust within organisations, be it inter- or intraorganisational trust has gained increasing importance both in theory and practice (Kramer, 1996). With the advent of technology and globalisation, we see more flexible and autonomous labour relations, continuous change and an increasing virtualisation of organisational forms. Within firms, lateral relationships and alliances are becoming more and more critical to the attainment of successful operations (Sheppard and Tuschinsky, 1996), while new linkages that are being formed are equally vital to the attainment of a competitive advantage (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). Clearly, if such a competitive advantage is to be sustained, the key lies in the developing and fostering of 'trustful' relations between organisational members. Hence, trust especially in the context of virtual organisations is of significance.

In order to encourage research in this important and significant area then, we decided to embark upon the task of co-editing a special issue on Trust in Virtual Organisations. We were most pleased with the submissions we received as they covered many important aspects of trust. Of the eight papers in this special issue, Young provides an excellent synthesis of the literature in the manuscript entitled 'Trust in virtual organisations: a synthesis of the literature'. The paper by Connolly 'Trust and the virtual environment: research and methodological consideration' examines key issues with regard to research methods suited to studying the construct of trust while Gogan's 'Building trust and commitment in a global organisation' examines the need to build trust in a global context. The papers 'Trust enabling decision support system for e-tourism intermediation' by Pettenati *et al.*, 'Modelling trust recognition and evaluation in electronic environment' by Mahmood and 'A multi-theoretical approach for solving trust problem in B2C e-commerce' by Pittayachawan *et al.*, specifically focus on trust issues as they pertain to a particular e-business scenario or context. In addition, we have an example of analysing trust dynamics by Matysiewicz and Smyczek 'Customer trust in virtual environments in service sectors (case study of Poland)' in the Polish service sector as well as an article by Paterson *et al.*, 'Analysing trust as a means of improving the effectiveness of the virtual supply chain' which analyses trust issues in the context of virtual supply chains.

No special issue can claim to be exhaustive in its coverage. Especially when the subject matter pertains to a construct that is so complex and its impact so significant to the attainment of successful operations, we could never hope to cover all the nuances. What we do hope is that our readers will enjoy the compilation of papers we present here, and use this as a starting point to launch their own research journey into understanding

critical issues with respect to trust and virtual organisations. Research that explores the trust construct and its implications particularly in the context of virtual organisations, will only serve to facilitate our understanding and benefit both theory and practice.

References

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