

Preface

Flexibility and agility in business are emerging as key dimensions of business excellence that encompass the requirements of both choice and speed. Both flexibility and agility have been used, in literature as well as practice, in multiple ways and often interchangeably. The growing need of flexibility/agility in business can be seen from reactive as well as proactive perspectives. A business enterprise is supposed to have reactive flexibility/agility (as adaptiveness and responsiveness) to cope with the changing and uncertain business environment. It may also endeavor to intentionally create flexibility/agility as a strategic change by the way of leadership change, reengineering, innovation in products and processes, use of information and communication technology, learning orientation, and so on.

The proposed book is intended to provide a conceptual framework of “Systemic Flexibility and Business Agility” supported by researches/case applications in various types of flexibilities and agility in business.

This book presents selected, reviewed, and updated papers of GLOGIFT 12 conference on the theme of systemic flexibility and business agility that was held at University of Vienna, Austria during July 30—August 1, 2012. These are organized in the form of an edited volume that can serve as a good reference material in the area of creating and managing systemic flexibility and business agility.

The selected papers from a variety of issues concerning the theme of systemic flexibility and business agility are organized into following five parts:

1. Systemic and strategic flexibility
2. Information and business agility
3. Flexibility, innovation and business excellence
4. Flexibility in value and supply chains
5. Financial flexibility and mergers and acquisitions

The first part of the book deals with six chapters on the sub-theme of systemic and strategic flexibility. The first chapter gives an overview of systemic flexibility and agility in business leading to the evolution of a flexibility maturity model. A related concept of managing diversity is treated in Chap. 2 in the context of international information and communication technologies (ICT) project teams. One aspect of strategic flexibility of managing confluence of continuity and change is elaborated in

the context of telecom service providers by delineating elements of flowing stream strategy crystal. Another chapter deals with the interaction of continuity and change with e-government performance. Next two chapters exhibit the implementation of flexible strategy game-card as a performance management framework; one through a case study of a telecom service company and the other one illustrating the effective strategy execution.

Part II, on information and business agility, comprises five chapters. The first chapter in this part takes a case study of Japanese electronics industry to illustrate exploiting economies of scope on 70–30 principle that treats products and services for separate segmented submarkets to be designed 70% in common with remaining 30% for customization. The next chapter links the agile management practice with developing personal flexibility; according to which, flexible and agile management methods require one to react to change at any time of a project's lifecycle. E-learning and knowledge management are important contributors of flexibility that are dealt through a case study of national level repository of knowledge content. The subject matter of the next chapter, in this part, is related to e-governance performance that aims to empirically relate flexibility of processes with performance of e-governance systems. Finally, the stakeholder engagement methodology is applied for the design and development of a workflow automation process for an accounting system in reinsurance domain.

Part III covers the issues interlinking flexibility, innovation, and business excellence. It consists of six chapters; the first one deals with issues of localization, cultural preferences, and global commerce. It discusses cultural differences between nations as per Hofstede's framework and relates it to seven hierarchical layers of localization. The issue of organization vitality is focused in the next chapter; it elaborates the pillars of vitalization as learning, innovation, flexibility, and entrepreneurship illustrated by a caselet-based study. The next chapter deals with designing flexible performance targets and presents a fast innovation model supported by the case study of Toyota as a leader in product development and as a forceful strategic innovator. Building flexibility into product development teams is talked by a new factor named time-bound formulation in the next chapter through a study of 108 teams in public and private sector organizations. Flexibility constructs have not been well represented in business excellence models, which is the subject matter of the next chapter. It captures flexibility dimensions for all the nine criteria of EFQM business excellence framework through semistructured expert interviews. The last chapter in this part takes flexibility as a strategy for reducing cost of renovation in building construction projects.

Flexibility in value and supply chains is the subject matter of Part IV, consisting of four chapters. The first chapter, in this part, takes the case of a beverage giant that implemented flexible systems for establishing visibility across the value chain. Next three chapters cover various aspects of supply chain flexibility. One of the chapters applies total interpretive structural modeling and fuzzy interpretive structural modeling for structural flexibility in supply chains. Another chapter also uses total interpretive structural modeling for evaluating flexibility index of a supply chain. The last chapter in this part considers interaction of flexibility and green

perspectives of supply chain. It uses analytic hierarchy process and interpretive ranking process in this context.

Part V, which is the last one, comprises three chapters in the area of financial flexibility and mergers and acquisitions. The first paper in this part seeks to explore the influence of innovative mode of financing like combination of cash and stock or earn-out offer used in the acquisitions. The next chapter gives multiple perspectives of mergers and acquisitions performance. The last chapter provides a system dynamics model of post merger integration and analyses the post merger integration of Kelvinator and Whirlpool with its real life validation.

We thank all the authors and reviewers whose efforts have made it possible to create this volume. Special thanks are due to Rejani Raghu who helped at various stages in communicating with authors and reviewers, and also provided support in word processing and formatting the manuscript.

We hope that this volume on “Systemic Flexibility and Business Agility” will generate enough interest in the readers to take up research in this up coming area to further evolve and enrich the paradigm of flexible systems management.

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