



Chapter I

A Concept for the Evaluation of E-Commerce-Ability

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ABSTRACT

This chapter develops a concept to evaluate the e-commerce-ability of a corporation and applies the framework to basic roles of the e-commerce environment. The concept comprises two components. A four-dimensional framework is proposed which can be used to represent the degree of external coordination; the degree of alignment of business toward organizational and cultural rules of the networked economy; the degree of orientation toward customer needs; and the degree of systematic and integral use of information and communication technology (ICT). Based on this framework, an evaluation approach is presented that supports a maturity analysis.

INTRODUCTION

While many companies are still implementing or improving their Internet-facilitated e-commerce activities, a new wave of technology-driven innovation has arrived: Mobile (M-commerce). Enabled by the progress in wireless technology and the increasing number of mobile devices, expectations are high again. We deduced from our current research that electronic forms of buying/selling (i.e., e-commerce including m-commerce) can only be successful if the corporation is structured

according to specific requirements. That means that e-commerce and m-commerce projects are at failure risk if realized solely based on the Internet as a new distribution channel without changing the internal view on customer processes and without restructuring certain elements such as internal processes and structures and inter-business networking.

However, corporations that want to implement successful e-commerce activities first of all need to have a framework for reflecting and analyzing their current status before measures can be defined to achieve e-commerce-ability.

The first step of such a systematic approach has to include not only a framework of dimensions which allows the reflection and analysis of patterns of e-commerce business models or roles, respectively, but also a set of parameters which represents measurable success. We therefore developed a concept consisting of two “pillars”:

1. A four-dimensional framework is proposed that can be used to represent the degree of external coordination; the degree of alignment of business toward organizational and cultural rules of the networked economy; the degree of orientation toward customer needs; and the degree of systematic and integral use of information and communication technology (ICT). Each of the framework’s dimensions is described by a set of characteristics which are used as a metric to render the creation and, moreover, the comparison of the patterns possible. Our hypothesis is that there are success patterns which depend on the specific roles existing in an e-commerce environment.
2. Based on this framework, an evaluation approach is presented that supports the analysis of the corporation based on value-driven quantitative and qualitative parameters reflecting economic success. The concept can be put to use by visualizing the pattern of the respective corporation to be analyzed; comparing it with the success pattern of the role; analyzing the status regarding the important value drivers; identifying the gap; and, finally, defining measures to close the gap.

But before we can start to develop the concept of e-commerce-ability, we have to take a closer look at the terms and models that represent a basis for this chapter. On the one hand, we reflect the understanding of the terms e-commerce and m-commerce. On the other, hand we have to look at existing e-commerce maturity concepts and decide whether they can be used for developing our e-commerce-ability concept.

DEFINITIONS OF E-COMMERCE

The understanding of e-commerce is widespread. A common definition is difficult to give because of many inconsistent approaches (Wigand, 1997). Therefore, a discussion of an appropriate definition is necessary.

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