



Chapter X

**Framing Leadership
Issues for System
Developers**

Gayla Jo Slauson
Mesa State College, USA

Chad Grabow
Mesa State College, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter combines the concepts of leadership through “framing,” as discussed in books such as “The Art of Framing,” published in 1996 and written by Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr, with the development of information systems. It provides a brief explanation of the frame theory of leadership and discusses how this theory relates to information systems. The authors propose that students in management information systems degree programs need to be made aware of the leadership potential of the information systems through which members of organizations communicate. Effective use of information systems to lead people in contemporary organizations is so far lacking in curricula, and the authors hope that this chapter may begin to remedy this situation.

INTRODUCTION

Today's systems analysts serve as leaders in ways that they may not realize. By controlling access, form, and distribution of information in organizations, analysts provide frames for people to organize and interpret many organizational issues and events. In their roles as "framers," analysts help to shape the perceptions of people in the organization and help to direct their ways of thinking. Information systems serve as tools for the management of meaning. Managers may give analysts the authority to decide what a set of reports from a system will look like, which interfaces will be used, what data will be collected and maintained in a database, who will be provided with access to the data, how access will be implemented, which information will be protected, how it will be protected, and how well. Perhaps more importantly, systems developers may decide which data will not be collected, disseminated, stored, or secured. Delegating such tasks has far-reaching implications within organizations. Systems analysts and developers need to be cognizant of their leadership roles in modern business. They must realize how their "framing" of information affects decision making and shapes organizational cultures. Information technology education must include this topic for prospective system developers.

Curriculum for MIS (Management Information Systems) or CIS (Computer Information Systems) programs can and should be adapted to include discussions and projects that take students beyond merely a basic understanding of traditional managerial roles and skills. According to Alvin Toffler, the advanced global economy and workplace are incapable of functioning without computer systems (Toffler, 1990). In contemporary organizations with intranets, telecommuters, online reporting mechanisms, virtual hours, instant feedback, and email conversations, systems developers as well as the managers they develop systems for need to understand how to use information systems to communicate and to lead. Students who expect to develop computer systems need to understand what leadership is and how it can be facilitated through the purposeful design and use of information systems.

BACKGROUND

Theories of leadership have not traditionally been joined with the implementation and design of information systems, although the control of information and the control of technology were considered potential sources of power, even before computer systems were commonly used by most organizations (Crozier, 1964). Additionally, most leadership theories stressed the importance of excellent communication skills as characteristic of leaders. Leaders communicate vision (Smith, 1997, p. 114). To the extent that computer information systems have become the primary means of communicating in many organizations, traditional theories of leadership might provide support for those who wish to lead through the use of these systems. However, current authors observe that the leaders of today will need to develop different skills than leaders of the past, including "an ability to develop and convey a shared vision, ... comfort and confidence with technology, (and) ... competence in systems thinking" (Marquardt & Berger, 2000, p. 1).

Current books on effective management techniques require leaders to manage information as well as people, presumably through the ubiquitous computerized information systems found in most contemporary organizations:

As more companies realize that the key resource of business is not capital, personnel, or facilities but rather knowledge, **information** and ideas, many new ways of viewing the

6 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/framing-leadership-issues-system-developers/7337

Related Content

Time Travel Into a New Age of Business Education

Yogesh Rao (2021). *Research Anthology on Business and Technical Education in the Information Era* (pp. 1-23).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/time-travel-into-a-new-age-of-business-education/274351

ERP Education: Hosting, Visiting, and Certifying

Andrew Stein, Paul Hawkingand Brendan McCarthy (2007). *Enterprise Systems Education in the 21st Century* (pp. 41-51).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/erp-education-hosting-visiting-certifying/18493

Equity Pedagogies for Inclusive Online Classrooms in Higher Education

Ieda M. Santosand Wenli Wu (2022). *Handbook of Research on Future of Work and Education: Implications for Curriculum Delivery and Work Design* (pp. 379-399).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/equity-pedagogies-for-inclusive-online-classrooms-in-higher-education/288175

The Future of Transversal Competencies in Higher Education Assessment

Jean Cushenand Lauren Durkin (2022). *Handbook of Research on Future of Work and Education: Implications for Curriculum Delivery and Work Design* (pp. 253-268).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-future-of-transversal-competencies-in-higher-education-assessment/288167

Business Graduate Skills: Competency-Based Model

Silvia Olivares Olivares (2015). *Diverse Contemporary Issues Facing Business Management Education* (pp. 25-51).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/business-graduate-skills/117351