

# **The Value-Creation Imperative for the Information System Academy: Lessons from Three Radical (Risky) Projects**

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# The Bottom-Line

- The IS Academy is in need of a revision
  - a *major* revision...
- IS researchers spend too much time on
  - insignificant problems...
  - the wasteful publishing process...
  - the self-fulfilling prophecy of rewards...
- IS researchers spend very little, if any, time on
  - creating value-added research artifacts
  - engaging with stakeholders to make significant differences in practice
  - making the world a better place

# Research Dilemmas

- Rigor versus Relevance
- Publish or Perish
- Quality versus Quantity
- Local versus Global
- Cooperate or Compete
- Contemporary or Classical
- ...
  - The bottom line: these are academic (intellectual) exercises...debating or discussing these just continues to proliferate the nonsense (rubbish!)

# My (Questionable) Suggestions

- Risk-seeking research projects
  - Projects in which even if you fail, there is something of value
- Sharing failures
  - Publishing stories (lessons learned) from failed research efforts
- Building bridges between research and consulting
  - Appreciating knowledge creation and knowledge commercialization
- Broadening our horizons
  - A big-tent approach to stakeholder identification and engagement

# Project 1: Ideas4Innoation

- A study of innovation processes and strategies
  - Gap 1: There is a vast body of literature on innovation, yet organizations continue to struggle to innovate – why?
  - Gap 2: Businesses find “academic writing” on innovation to be simplistic and disconnected from reality
- Approach
  - Industry sponsored research project
  - Collaboration with industry think-tanks (e.g. the American Productivity Quality Center)
  - Global research team (primarily of doctoral students – risk takers!)
  - 30+ case studies on organizational innovation programs
- Results
  - Featured in *Sloan Management Review*, published in leading journals (*Research-Technology Management*, *CACM*, *EJIS*, etc), invited executive presentations in over 40 organizations across the globe...

# Project 2: Information & Terrorism

- A study of information management in international security spaces
  - Gap 1: A lack of research on how information management impacts international security
  - Gap 2: A lot of “politicizing” but very little “science” in the study of terrorist networks
- Approach
  - Secondary data collection and forensic analysis of government reports - WMD non-proliferation
  - Secondary data analysis to build a strategic alliance model to describe collaboration among terrorist groups
  - Agent-based modeling to examine how various strategies impact network resiliency
- Outcomes
  - Papers in premier terrorism (e.g. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*) and public administration (e.g. *Int. J of Public Admin*) journals, presentation at scientific meetings (e.g. ISA annual meeting), fellowships for students (British American Security Information Council) and faculty (Center for International Studies, LSE), jobs for students (Nuclear Threat Reduction Agency)...

# Project 3: Global Text Project

- A study of how we can engage students in knowledge commercialization as they move through higher-education
  - Gap 1: Very little research on students commercializing knowledge as they learn
  - Gap 2: Growing prominence of social networking, web 2.0, and other democratic models of communication among digital natives
- Approach
  - Build a textbook in 10 weeks
  - A Virtual distributed collaboration project with managers and consultants
- Outcomes
  - A textbook (used in SA), featured in *Seattle Times*, *Times Higher Education (UK)*, conference panels, articles in review, students who are energized and believe in the power of education, and YouTube fame...

# Closing Thoughts

- Take risks
  - At the very least, you will enjoy the work more
- There is going to be a changing of the guard
  - Revising metrics and priorities
- The old model is failing (or has already failed)
  - Just look at the writing on the wall
- There is hope for a better future
  - But we must act now

# Questions or Comments

Thank You

For more information: <http://www.kevindesouza.net>