

ASSESSING ALIGNMENT OF WEBSITES WITH ENTERPRISE SUCCESS

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As web technologies become more advanced and capable of supporting higher level functions, organizations can utilize websites to enhance many organizational activities. However, many implemented websites may not end up with fully supported business strategic objectives. Prior studies found that senior management usually lacked a set of formal processes when measuring the contribution of web initiatives to match their business objectives. Some studies have started to call for web evaluation methods from the organizational view point. Actually, a good evaluation tool which can be used to measure how web designs are aligned with organizational priorities is almost absent in the related literature.

This abstract proposes the notion of organizational critical activities (OCAs) to help businesses align web designs with their priorities, and thus achieve success. OCAs are not just the things included in statements about mission and vision in the annual report. They are those things that senior managers are actively involved with, spend their time on, and regard as the critical factors from operational, tactical, and strategic perspectives. Identifying OCAs provides the opportunity for senior managers to carefully think about their business kernel. This study chose the Federal Tire Corporation, based in Taiwan, to conduct a field research in order to understand how the consideration of OCAs can help organizations measure the effectiveness of their websites in supporting organizational priorities. The case company planned to increase the overseas market share from the original 60 percent to 70 percent. An aggressive marketing strategy was carried out to focus heavily on North American and European markets. Much effort has been put on the expansion of its distribution channels around the globe, especially in North America. In order to fulfill this strategic goal, Federal decided to improve its own website to provide much more critical information and service to attract customers.

Three major objectives were set in this case study: (1) to identify the OCAs Federal has conducted as critical for their success; (2) to understand how Federal supports and undertakes these OCAs; (3) to evaluate how Federal's website supports these OCAs. The research procedure of this case study includes two main steps: OCAs elicitation and web evaluation. In terms of OCAs elicitation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with critical persons in the company. As for web evaluation, the structured evaluation of the Federal website was conducted and then a semi-structured interview with the manager responsible for the site was used to evaluate which and how OCAs were supported by the website. Then, the four quadrants of the importance-performance analysis (IPA) matrix were provided to depict and interpret the alignment of web design with business priorities for revealing important strategic implications. The IPA matrix is a low-cost and easily understood tools. It can be used not only to identify the perceived importance and performance of attributes ratings with two-dimensional grid, but also to analyze the strategies of business decision-making. In recently years, IPA is becoming more

popular and applicable to information system research due to its convenience and useful features.

After the management interviews, we identified five OCAs which had supported Federal's impressive success in the recent years including research and development (R&D), advertising and enhancing brand image, expansion of distribution channels and overseas markets, improving quality, and cutting cost and increasing efficiency. Identifying organizational critical activities provides the opportunity for senior managers to delicately review their business kernel. In order to identify potential improvement of web designs, the approach of IPA is used to analyze the alignment of the OCAs priorities ranked by top managers and supported by the website. The four quadrants matrix helps this study compare the OCAs and translate them into importance and performance perspectives. Each of the OCAs is mapped into the appropriate quadrants. Based on the IPA results, the organization is suggested to allocate enough resources to enhance the web functions to follow OCA priorities. Actually, the website manager can also use OCA priorities to plan the order of new web projects. Owing to the fast-changing environment, the priorities of OCAs may be adjusted from time to time.

In general, most of web evaluation studies are user-oriented, the approach or method for evaluating website from the business' perspective is necessary and valuable. This study proposes a concept of aligning the website functions with the OCAs. However, the effectiveness of alignment still needs further validation. The awareness of the misalignment is a helpful step to refining the design of organizational website. This research also points out several worthwhile implications for both academics and practitioners.