Integrating Perceptions of Best Practice: Running an SME Business in the Distinctive COTS Application Software Sector

By

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of DBA, in the Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University. This represents the original work and contribution of the author, except as acknowledged by general and specific references.

I hereby certify that this has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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Date: 25/05/10

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ABSTRACT

How exactly the business managers of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) application software small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) should run their businesses is a particular problem. The market has a number of distinct characteristics and is increasingly competitive. In contrast to their larger counterparts, SMEs often have limited resources and knowledge that can be applied to strategic planning and management activities. A literature review reveals that there is no core body of research, or accepted set of concepts, that specifically address the problem in any great depth. While a wealth of generic business and strategic management reference materials exist, it is unclear exactly what the precise relevance and uptake of these is for COTS application software SME business managers.

This study specifically investigates whether a holistic guiding management framework can be developed for running a COTS application software SME business. A grounded theory paradigm provides the theoretical basis for the research design. This was chosen to foster creativity and ensure the research is not restricted by previous thinking. The results of the research are a new model that provides a single guiding framework for managers running COTS application software SME businesses. This integrates numerous aspects of perceived best practice in a unified and holistic theoretical model. The research contributes to both scholarly and practitioner domains. A more rigorous and scientific approach to software business management theory has been developed. The ability to undertake specialised strategic consulting services for a COTS application software SME business is improved.

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