A TYPOLOGY OF CONFIGURATION AND GROWTH PATTERNS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL IT SERVICE FIRMS (SUMMARY)

Olivier Witmeur
Solvay Business School, Belgium, owitmeur@ulb.ac.be

Recommended Citation
Witmeur, Olivier (2008) "A TYPOLOGY OF CONFIGURATION AND GROWTH PATTERNS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL IT SERVICE FIRMS (SUMMARY)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research: Vol. 28: Iss. 13, Article 9.
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol28/iss13/9
SUMMARY

A TYPOLOGY OF CONFIGURATION AND GROWTH PATTERNS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL IT SERVICE FIRMS

Olivier Witmeur, Solvay Business School, Belgium

Principal Topic

Research on the growth of entrepreneurial ventures has proliferated over the last two decades. Unfortunately, existing research work lacks integration, pays insufficient attention to connection with theory and should be more longitudinal. Configurational approach and process research hold considerable promises in order to move beyond these limitations. The objectives of this paper are, on the one hand, to propose one typology of strategic configurations and one typology of growth patterns, both based on configuration and process theories, in order to explain the development of entrepreneurial ventures over time and, on the other hand, to clarify how and why Entrepreneurial IT Service Firms (EISF) change or do not change business model over time and grow accordingly. EISF have been chosen because they represent a well defined sample that deals with one clear-cut growth strategy question, i.e. to focus on services delivery or to move towards a software business model.

Method

The typologies are derived from theory and then tested qualitatively. To do so, we first propose a conceptual framework that combines configuration with process theories. Second, we capitalize on existing research and practical literature to develop typologies of configurations and growth patterns of EISF. Third, we perform four in-depth case studies of Belgian EISF. Fourth, we compare the typologies with cases and discuss limitations.

Results and implications

We propose two typologies with 7 strategic configurations and 5 growth patterns that are supported by cases studies. It suggests that EISF move from configuration to configuration and that changes are driven by multiple processes of variable relative importance over time.

For researchers, the implications are twofold. First, it confirms the relevance of configuration and process theories to explain growth patterns of entrepreneurial ventures and their heterogeneity. Second, while current research in entrepreneurship mainly offers taxonomies, we propose a theoretically deducted typology of exploratory nature. For practitioners, this paper highlights key success factors in the development of EISF and suggests an analytical framework that can help entrepreneurs when they balance growth strategy options.

CONTACT: Olivier Witmeur; owitmeur@ulb.ac.be; (T): +32.475.68.62.50; (F): +32.2.650.40.50; Solvay Business School - ULB, 50 av. F. Roosevelt – CP141, 1050 Brussels, Belgium.