



Its all about business!

The main theme of this issue centres around different aspects of business, for example, the **business** information needs of graduates, marketing a **business** to investors, the **business** records of exporting companies, **business** intelligence in the telecommunication industry and, lastly, efforts to provide a better ICT service to the community and therefore contribute towards improved **business** results (specifically with regard to community or so-called telecentres).

A logical starting point for this issue refers to the business of telecentres. In response to the urban-rural digital divide in South Africa, various public and private sector ICT-related initiatives have been launched to counteract the disparities that characterize this divide. Most of the initiatives have simply been attempts to introduce more ICT infrastructure to a rural area. To a lesser extent, some have also incorporated elements of computer training and actions aimed at using ICTs to promote types of education or information provision in rural areas. Jacobs and Herselman's article on *Integrated service delivery to communities: from model to prototype* is an effort to provide solutions on how a management system can be used as a means of improving the quality of operations and service delivery by community centres through defined guidelines, templates, content and information management. The results of this qualitative research project culminated into a prototype model. Issues identified by the Ikageng Community Centre staff and management with regard to day-to-day operational aspects are addressed in the prototype model of this management model for rural community centres (the Ikageng Centre is situated in the town of Itsoseng, South Africa). It is also stressed that a strong foundation for a successful community centre is the ability to respond to customer demands, and therefore increase its client base, which in return supports the long-term sustainability of the community centre.

Still with developing issues in mind, the next article is by Chachage and Ngulube. Their discussion centres on the current status of the management of business records in a number of enterprises in Tanzania, with specific reference to the area of exporting (*Management of business records in Tanzania: an exploratory case study of selected companies*). The authors argue that every business is involved in the production of records as part of its internal processes. Therefore records management should be one of the key by-products of business processes. Furthermore, businesses keep records to fulfil legal requirements for their operations and to protect the rights of stakeholders. Chachage and Ngulube's research used interviews protocols and observation schedules to collect primary data from nine exporting companies in the Iringa region of Tanzania. This approach confirmed clearly what had been envisaged: that business records, although generated in both electronic and paper formats were not adequately managed throughout a record's life cycle. Their main recommendation is that companies in the Iringa region should embrace the hybrid records model suggested in this article as it strikes a balance between the records life cycle model and the so-called records continuum theory (also discussed in the article).

The article *Using corporate Web sites in Africa to market to investors* by Nel and Baard concentrates on marketing issues. The departure point of their work is that companies around the globe are increasing their use of the Internet to market themselves to both customers (e-commerce) and investors (investor relations). The focus of the research was on establishing

the extent of investor relations via corporate Web sites in Africa. The 40 largest companies in six African countries, namely Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia, were evaluated in this study. It was found that 173 (72%) of the 240 companies that were evaluated had working corporate Web sites. Of these 173 companies, only 78 included a dedicated investor-relations section on their corporate Web sites. Further research is needed in an effort to produce a set of variables to establish a company's level of scope of marketing, as well as a recommended *modus operandi* for companies that would increase their exposure to investors.

Appreciating *global information* on the topics of 'business' and 'information systems' by students from different countries produced some interesting results in a recent project by Hart (South Africa), Pook (USA), Jenei (Hungary) and Jennings (also from the USA). In the research for the article entitled *Importance of global business information: perceptions of students in Hungary, Romania, South Africa and the United States*, authors from different countries administered a questionnaire to 2073 third- and fourth-year students (mainly studying business and information systems) in Hungary, Romania, South Africa and the USA. Hungary, Romania and South Africa were chosen because of their recent significant political changes. Results showed that the South African students displayed significantly more interest in international information to support their business decision-making upon graduation than those of the other countries. Further research is definitely needed to uncover the reason for the striking differences, in all categories of student, between the viewpoints of South African students and those from the other three countries. A very important finding with regard to community development was that it appears as if those who had traditionally been on the negative side of the 'digital divide' most favour the use of global information, and the systems capable of delivering it.

To what extent can informed decisions or rather *business intelligence* in the telecommunications industry lead to higher profits? This was the question asked by O'Brien and Kok in the last article of this issue. Valid answers to this question will not only assist this very specialized industry, but also any other enterprise striving for competitive advantage. The assumption or rather hypothesis of the authors is therefore that business intelligence could be the competitive advantage for organizations to increase profitability. In the research, major service providers in South Africa were investigated, namely Vodacom, MTN, Cell-C and Telkom. The general conclusion of the authors was that business intelligence is essential for the telecommunications industry to remain competitive. This intelligence can improve the decision-making process, which will lead to the organization increasing its profits. Unfortunately the benefits of business intelligence were not fully understood by these organizations. This can be ascribed to a lack of knowledge, a shortage of technical skills in South Africa and a lack of training.

Pieter van Brakel
Scientific Editor

Disclaimer

Articles published in SAJIM are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editor, Board, Publisher, Webmaster or the Rand Afrikaans University. The user hereby waives any claim he/she/they may have or acquire against the publisher, its suppliers, licensees and sub licensees and indemnifies all said persons from any claims, lawsuits, proceedings, costs, special, incidental, consequential or indirect damages, including damages for loss of profits, loss of business or downtime arising out of or relating to the user's use of the Website.

ISSN 1560-683X



Published by [InterWord Communications](#) for Department of Information and Knowledge Management,
University of Johannesburg