Collective Attention to Digital Transformation
how Smart Organizations use IT

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What is attention?

An integral part of countless mental operations –

including understanding, memory, learning, reading emotions in other people –

critical to the agility in life and excellence of what we do

What is attention?

Effort of attention as “the essential phenomenon of will”

William James, American philosopher and psychologist (1890)
What is organizational attention?

the “noticing, encoding, interpreting, and focusing of time and effort by organizational decision makers on issues and answers”

What are the limits of attention?

“What information consumes is rather obvious:

*it consumes the attention* of its recipients.

Hence a wealth of information creates a *poverty of attention*…”

Herbert Simon,
Nobel Laureate economist
Digital Transformation and Attention Overload
Consequences of attention overload for individuals

1. Difficulty in making sense of situations.
2. Lack of engagement with problem solving.
3. Decision fatigue.
4. Compulsion for specific information and information sources.
5. Vulnerability to manipulation.

*Creativity and learning impairment*
Consequences of attention overload for organizations

1. Difficulty in interpret and respond to complex, dynamic, ambiguous environment.

2. Inability to understand systemic consequences of decisions.

3. Over-reliance on best-practices and consulting services.

4. Inability to anticipate impactful events.

5. Employees behave opportunistically and act in a self-serving manner.

Loss of productivity and rigid performance.
Organizational attention: a distributed capability
Theoretical foundations


Collective attention and mindfulness

**Strategy**
- Main perspective
- Dictates what is considered relevant to attend to
- Defines the pattern of collective attention

**Structure**
- Distributes attention
- Allows for internal perspectives
- IT systems automate collective attention

**Communication**
- Engages the attention
- Shapes perspectives
- Allows for selective attention

**Culture**
- Constrains attention
- Shapes perspectives
- Limits structural and communicative options

Individual and IT as the locus of attention

Organizational mindfulness

STABILITY | VIVIDNESS | COHERENCE
Studying organizational mindfulness in Management and Information Systems


Collective attention and mindfulness

- There is a call for the development of theory to explain how IT impacts organizational attention.
- The use of IT may create attention overload or guide collective attention in unintended ways.
- Attention overload or fragmented attention will impair organizational decision.
Organizational mindfulness refers to the extent to which an organization captures discriminatory detail about emerging threats and creates a capability to swiftly act (change) in response to these details.

Organizational attention – the construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL ATTENTION</th>
<th>Stability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effort investigating</td>
<td>Deep and undistracted attention to issues and responses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>issues &amp; action</td>
<td>Attentional discipline over time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>alternatives</td>
<td>Accurate analysis of situations. Enhanced ability to remember.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adherence to routines</td>
<td>Too much adherence to routines: excessive and rigid performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge Codification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STABILITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searching Intensity</td>
<td>Enhanced ability to detect problems and opportunities in the</td>
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<td>Ability to identify non-</td>
<td>periphery of the main focus of attention.</td>
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<td>salient I&amp;A</td>
<td>Freedom from existing schemes and conceptual labels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to improvise</td>
<td>High capacity to create complex understandings and a clear</td>
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<td>insights into situations.</td>
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<td>VIVIDNESS</td>
<td>Vulnerability to distraction and manipulation.</td>
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<td>Ability to reconfigure</td>
<td>Good balance between top-down attention (strategy / planning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>competences</td>
<td>and bottom-up attention (distributed experience).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adherence to</td>
<td>Good balance between external and internal focuses at all levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>collaborative decision-</td>
<td>of the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>making</td>
<td>High levels of motivation and cooperation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of</td>
<td>Difficulty in nurturing the diversity of perspectives.</td>
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<td>communication channels</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>COHERENCE</td>
<td></td>
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Organizational mindfulness in the IS field – a new proposal

**IT USE**
- Depth of Use
- Extent of Use
- Exploratory Use

**ORGANIZATIONAL MINDFULNESS**
- Preoccupation with failure
- Reluctance to simplify
- Sensitivity to operations
- Commitment to resilience
- Deference to Expertise

**ORGANIZATIONAL ATTENTION**
- Effort investigating issues & action alternatives
- Adherence to routines
- Knowledge Codification
- Searching Intensity
- Ability to identify non-salient cues
- Ability to improvise
- Ability to reconfigure competences
- Adherence to collaborative decision-making
- Effectiveness of communication channels

**STABILITY**

**VIVIDNESS**

**COHERENCE**

**Triangulated attention**

**Required adjustments to attention**

**Shared perspectives**
Thank you for your attention!

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