

ONZIEME RENCONTRE INTERNATIONALE DU GERPISA ELEVENTH GERPISA INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

Les acteurs de l'entreprise à la recherche de nouveaux compromis ?
Construire le schéma d'analyse du GERPISA

Company Actors on the Look Out for New Compromises
Developing GERPISA's New Analytical Schema

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THE IMPACT OF EBUSINESS ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GERMAN AUTOMOBILE SUPPLY INDUSTRY¹

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The automotive industry counts as a pace-maker in the internet-based „Business to Business“. On the one hand, the requirements of modular production suggest the intensive utilization of the internet: especially the typical complex value chain within automobile production requires a high degree of coordination between OEM and first-tier-supplier, but also increasingly between the first-tiers and their suppliers (see Lung/Volpato 2002). On the other hand, and by far more frequent compared to inter-firm cooperation issues, firms make use of the internet in a competitive, market-spreading way. Especially the departments purchase and sales use web-based IT-technology for their supplier- or customer management or to support strategic sourcing-activities (see Chanaron 2001). The developments in the branch raise expectations of long-range variations of inter-organizational structures, of internally-operational flows and of the work-organization due to the forced utilization of eBusiness-technology.

In the context of the sociological research project „eBusiness in the German Automotive Supplier Industry“³ the utilization of eBusiness-technologies in the automobile branch is being examined. The project aims at analysing the primary zones of internet-use as well as the effects on organization and employment. Due to this aim between November and December 2002 approximately 2000 German supplier plants have been interviewed about their web-utilization by means of a representative telephone inquiry. The study focuses on the fields of application as well as the identification of problems concerning introduction, work and organization. In addition the project investigates six firms by means of intensive case studies.

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The Gerpisa-contribution „eBusiness in the German Automotive Supplier Industry“ will examine the following questions:

- ✓ Which strategies do firms pursue regarding the implementation of different types of eBusiness?
- ✓ Which are the primary fields of use and which goals does the new technology fulfil in the different areas? What is the relation between internet and „old“ technologies of B2B-communication?
- ✓ Which effects on inter-firm relations are to be expected?
- ✓ How does eBusiness influence organization, structure and process?
- ✓ (How) Are work-contents and qualification-requirements changing? Which role do the works councils play?
- ✓ The paper consists of two parts. At first (Section 1) – based on a distinction of four different types of suppliers (0.5-tiers, system supplier, module maker and part manufacturer) – we will analyse different forms of eBusiness and the intensity of eBusiness-use. (Which are the basic goals firms hold implementing web-based system?)
- ✓ In a second step (Section 2) the primary effects of eBusiness will be examined on different levels of analysis concerning firms communication and interaction.
- ✓ On the inter-organisational level: How does eBusiness influence the manufacturer-supplier-relation? (How) Are “old” b2b-technologies being substituted by new ones?
- ✓ The intra-organisational level: in small and medium enterprises (SME) the implementation of eBusiness, however, seems less planned and structured – in contrast to larger (0.5- or system-) suppliers. The introduction of eBusiness-applications confronts these firms with enormous challenges regarding their financial and personnel resources as well as technical know-how. As eBusiness-utilization is primarily initiated by OEMs and first-tiers, we hold that module and part suppliers are often forced to use eBusiness. This results mainly from certain structures of power in the supplier-hierarchy. How is the implementation of eBusiness being shaped in those enterprises which initiate eBusiness on an “voluntary” basis in contrast to those firms which are being forced to participate in the eBusiness-business? How do the firms’ structures and work-organization change?
- ✓ On the workplace level, which effects on work-contents, work-organization and qualification of the employees can be recognized?