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Speaker: Omar A. El Sawy, USC Marshall School of Business

Date: Friday, September 18, 2015

Time: 2:00 – 3:15 PM

Location: VMH 1206

Developing the Capabilities for Digital Leadership in Organizational Transformation:
Insights for Practice and Research

Authors: The talk draws on a field case study with Professor Pernille Kremmergaard, Aalborg University, Denmark in collaboration with Henrik Amsinck, Senior VP & CIO, LEGO Group, Billund, Denmark.

Abstract: Every enterprise sooner or later finds itself in the midst of a digitally-intensive business ecosystem with emerging digital platforms, a growing demand for increasingly digital products, and constantly connected customers, partners, and employees. For legacy brick-and-mortar companies to be competitively successful in this new dynamic environment, a major organizational transformation for digitalization is eventually needed and critical. While such transformations are not unusual, it is less clear how an enterprise can effectively nurture digital leadership across the enterprise as they undergo large organizational transformations. What does effective digital leadership really mean? How does an enterprise develop the internal capabilities for digital leadership in organizational transformation? What are the requisite digitalization moves with product ecosystems, in marketing with partners, within the enterprise business areas, and within the IT organization? How do these digitalization moves help enterprises learn new ways of thinking about digital leadership? How does such a vision emanate through the top management team and within all ranks? How does Corporate IT’s structure and role as an orchestrator of digital innovation change? We have tried to better understand these phenomena and questions by drawing on the decade-long digitalization journey and experience of the LEGO Group in Denmark. This talk will draw some lessons for next practices from this case and then also provide some insights for developing theory and further research in IS from the findings. Finally, the talk will address the nature of studies that seek to simultaneously advance practice and theory and how to shape them.

Bio: Omar A. El Sawy is Professor of Information Systems in the Data Sciences and Operations Department at the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California where he has taught since 1983. His interests are in digital business strategy in dynamic environments and he teaches
in the MBA and executive programs. El Sawy holds a Ph.D. from Stanford Business School, an MBA from the American University in Cairo, and a BSEE from Cairo University. Prior to joining USC, he worked as an engineer and manager, first at NCR Corporation, and then as a manager of computer services at Stanford University. He enjoys integrating theory and practice and is a six-time winner of the Society for Information Management’s Paper Awards Competition. From 2001 to 2007, he served as Director of Research at USC’s Institute for Communication Technologies Management (CTM) where he oversaw and led an industry-sponsored research program. He has lectured, consulted, and carried out research in four continents, has been an information systems advisor to the United Nations Development Programme in Egypt, and a Fulbright scholar in Finland. In 2008, he was inducted as a Fellow of the Association of Information Systems.