

## Foreword

It does not take reading this book for long to realise that Laurence Lock Lee is on to something very important. Faced with constant change in degrees of interdependence, upgrades in technologies and what they make possible, together with developments in the IT services market, and shifts in the importance of knowledge, services and intangible assets, the network economy requires serious, and constant, rethinking when it comes to even navigating corporate pathways, let alone establishing any level of control. In such situations the subject of governance—including accountabilities, decision rights the rules of the game, and degrees of regulation—come to the fore. What kind of governance? Are command-and-control models still appropriate?

Narrowing down our questions to the world of sourcing information and communications technologies, Laurence Lock Lee provides a distinctive meditation that endeavours to go beyond merely discerning best practice for IT Governance. In order to do so he draws widely on diverse fields and topics including Intellectual Capital, Intangible Asset Management, social networks and sociology, as well as the more obvious literatures and experiences in Information Technology outsourcing. A real strength of this book is the recognition that changing contexts, and the acceleration of that change has deep implications for how, indeed whether, IT Governance can be effectively pursued. A further strength is the focus on what the author calls a firm's corporate social capital, and how to link that to the organisation's overall performance. Laurence Lock Lee also tackles head on what has been the dominant

trend in IT outsourcing, namely the use of multiple suppliers and the complexity this introduces to managing and governing relationships, and achieving results from any sort of contemporary outsourcing strategy. He also explicitly deals with the crucial, but perennially problematic area of inter-organisational relationships, going beyond mere contractual obligations and compliance to point out how such relationships can be pursued and leveraged. At the same time the author brings in the distinctive attributes of specific technologies, and indeed reflects on the challenges posed by Web 2.0 and coming technologies for future IT Governance.

This book is a mine of information and ideas and provides a real thought piece for those concerned with the never-ending struggle to read themselves into technology trajectories, to invent pragmatic strategies in dynamic complex environments, and, operationally, to get the job done in a way that does not mindlessly apply instant recipes in the vain hope that this will cut through the complexities being experienced. Laurence Lock Lee makes the world seem a more complex and risk-ridden place, but this is an important positioning. Handing over valuable assets and activities to third parties is inherently risky, but to do so when technology is developing so fast, in a business world so uncertain, really does need considerable open-eyed recognition of pitfalls, and much more creativity and flexibility on plotting ways forward. This book will move the boundaries of your vision of IT Governance further; perhaps further than you thought they could go.

*Leslie Willcocks*

*London School of Economics and Political Science, UK*

**Leslie P. Willcocks** is professor of technology work and globalization at the London School of Economics and Political Science, head of the Information Systems and Innovation group and director of the outsourcing unit there. He is known for his work on global sourcing, information management, IT evaluation, e-business, organizational transformation as well as for his practitioner contributions to many corporations and government agencies. He holds visiting chairs at Erasmus, Melbourne and Sydney universities and is associate fellow at Templeton, University of Oxford. He has been for the last 20 years editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Information Technology*, and is joint series editor, with Mary Lacity, of the Palgrave book series *Technology Work and Globalization*. He has co-authored 31 books, including most recently *Major Currents in Information Systems* (Sage, London 2008, with Allen Lee), and *Global Sourcing of Business and IT Services* (Palgrave, London, 2006, with Mary Lacity). He has published over 180 refereed papers in journals such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review*, *MIS Quarterly*, *MISQ Executive*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Communications Of The ACM*, and *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*.