Accounting & Finance Group (AFG) Seminar
Wednesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 2009

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Finance function services and development of the business partner role: International survey evidence

2.00pm in 8West 1.28

Abstract

A burgeoning practitioner literature advocates the development of a more business-oriented (or business partner) role for the accountant and their integration with operational parts of organisation, thus reducing the traditional scope of the finance function. However, contemporary empirical evidence of the nature and extent of such changes is limited and, because of restricted sample sizes, previous studies have been unable to examine variations in outcome attributable to individual and organisational characteristics or to exogenous drivers of change. This study seeks to address these issues with data on the importance of a wide range of work activities from an international survey of management accountants with a sample of over 3,800 respondents conducted in 2007. We establish a conceptual framework highlighting three broad types of service supplied by the finance function, including “business support”, cognate with the accountant acting in the business partner role, and show that these are consistent with the pattern of observed importance ratings through factor analysis. The overall ranking of activities within these types indicates that services associated with the traditional role of the accountant dominate. Nevertheless, in accordance with expectations, the importance of the “business support” service is highly sensitive to organisational size, the respondent's seniority and their relationship to the finance function. By contrast, proxy measures of previously suggested drivers of change (extent of economic globalisation in the country of operation and sectoral competitiveness) are not found to be consistent predictors of service importance. The findings are discussed in the context of necessary conditions for development of the business partner role and implications for resource allocation by organisations.

Everyone welcome to attend

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