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Prof. Dr. Heiko Gewald was appointed professor of information management at Neu-Ulm University of Applied Sciences in October 2010. His research focuses on outsourcing, service science and health IT. Dr. Gewald graduated in Business Administration at University of Bamberg and holds a European Masters degree at Heriott-Watt University in Edinburgh. He was a Research Assistant at the E-Finance Lab from 2003 to 2006. Dr. Gewald was the first external research assistant nominated by a corporate sponsor of the E-Finance Lab to receive his PhD. His research was supported by IBM.

"I truly enjoyed my time at the E-Finance Lab. The close collaboration and the challenge to bridge the gap between research and practice constantly fostered new ideas. I remember the times as vibrant and the interaction on a national and international level as especially inspiring. I wish the current and future management teams all the best in providing great, rigorous and relevant research for the next 10 years (and thereafter)."

# New Sourcing:
# A Research Agenda Guided by Practice

Outsourcing has established itself as widely accepted management practice to achieve higher levels of corporate effectiveness and efficiency. Researchers have spent considerable effort in studying the outsourcing phenomenon and theorizing about it over the last 20 years. The academic output has been numerous, resulting in well tested theories, frameworks and models as well as advice to practice.

Every once in a while it may be beneficial to reflect the work of recent years and (re-)connect research to practice. In topics like IT Outsourcing and Business Process Outsourcing, industry managers underwent a noticeable learning curve over time and academics need to ask themselves: Are our research topics still up to date or do we need to think about the next stage, a form of next generation outsourcing, which is likely to dominate the outsourcing discussion over the upcoming months and years?

To identify upcoming challenges which could foster new research projects, a thorough discussion with experts in the field based on rigorous analysis of the literature has been conducted. Thirteen sourcing managers took part in structured interviews. The interview partners had an average experience with outsourcing engagements of more than thirteen years and each was currently overseeing several outsourcing engagements. Throughout our extensive discussions four topics of high relevance for practitioners, which are not yet adequately reflected in research, were named recurringly:

- Multi-Vendor Outsourcing and Sourcing Networks
- Cloud Computing and its implications for outsourcing
- Risk Management of outsourcing
- Methods to bridge the offshoring gap

The two predominantly raised topics are briefly presented in the following.

## Multi-Vendor Outsourcing and Sourcing Networks

Over the last years, several companies changed their outsourcing strategy by moving from single large outsourcing contracts into smaller pieces of work, known as selective outsourcing or "outtasking". As a consequence, the handling of outsourcing arrangements changed. Clients need to deal with a larger number of outsourcing-providers, leading towards a multi-vendor outsourcing structure. Therefore tasks shifted from "outsourcing a function" towards "managing the network of outsourcing partners". Practice is looking for effective governance mechanisms to manage multi-vendor outsourcing engagements. As sufficient experience has been built up to manage smaller outsourcing arrangements, the interview partners identified another area for action: building and managing outsourcing networks. This describes the desire to outsource those tasks which actually do not have enough volume to be attractive to an outsourcing provider. By combining several clients into a network and thus grouping volume together it may be possible to create an attractive case for a service provider. The questions for research in this respect are manifold, including governance structures, network effects etc.

## Cloud Computing and its implications for outsourcing

Cloud Computing promises to offer flexible, scalable and cost-effective IT solutions on a pay-per-use pricing. "The Cloud" is one of the burning topics in information technology these days and practitioners see the need to utilize it in their sourcing strategy. However, in its current state Cloud Computing is mainly used as private Cloud (more similar to the corporate data processing center using virtualization techniques). Little is yet known about how Cloud Computing can help to dynamically reconfigure the – partially outsourced – value chain and what the specific advantages are that the Cloud can offer for the outsourcing-client. Including Cloud Computing into the corporate IT and sourcing strategy is still widely an unsolved issue.

Even though outsourcing is present for more than 50 years now it is still an ever-changing area. The aim of this work was to identify upcoming topics for research as guided by the practitioners who want and need to benefit from research outcomes. An earlier stage of this research was presented by Gröh, A.; Gewald, H.; Stuska, T.: Next Generation Outsourcing – A Research Agenda Guided by Practice. In: 16th Pacific Asia Conference in Information Systems, Vietnam, 2012.