

A Taxonomical Study of Agility Strategies and Supporting Supply Chain Management Practices

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Abstract

Since the turn of the century, manufacturing industry has witnessed significant structural changes. Agility, which aims to provide companies with competitive capabilities so that they can prosper from dynamic and continuous changes in the business environment, has become a prevailing manufacturing strategy. However, how to develop a manufacturing strategy based on agility, and how to design and manage global supply chain networks effectively to implement these strategy, are not fully understood.

This thesis presents survey based research that was carried out on a number of U.K. manufacturing companies. The research revisited the taxonomy of agility strategies for manufacturing industry developed by Zhang and Sharifi (2007) and investigated the methods of supply chain management employed by different strategic groups. The findings show that whilst the three broad types of agility strategies discovered in previous work (Zhang and Sharifi, 2007) have remained two sub types of agility strategies have been identified. They are named Responsive players, Quick operators, Quick innovators, Proactive players 1 and Proactive players 2. Responsive players placed a high emphasis on supplier selection related practices; Quick operators placed a high emphasis on sourcing management related practices; Quick innovators placed a high emphasis on relationship management related practices; and Proactive players 1 and 2 placed high emphases on almost all practices.

This research has made contributions to the theory development of agility strategy and has provides a managerial guide with companies to improve the implementation of agility strategies in supply chains.

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