

Abstract: Requirements and Design of Management Accounting within Strategic Alliances

During recent decades, globalization has created new challenges for companies. Shorter product life cycles or an increasing technological competition are examples for obstacles companies have to deal with. As an answer to these challenges strategic alliances gained in importance. A strategic alliance is a cooperation between two or more independent parties to pursue a set of agreed upon goals by combining their strengths. In many cases studies have shown that alliances do not reach their goals. To influence this situation positively this thesis explores, which role management accounting can play in a strategic alliance.

The Goal of this thesis is to develop a concept for management accounting within strategic alliances. This concept includes recommendations for the aims, tasks, instruments and institutional design of the management accounting. In the first part of the thesis the term strategic alliance is defined. In addition, the phenomenon strategic alliance is discussed in context of considerations of the transaction cost theory, the resource-based view, the principal-agent theory and the game theory.

Furthermore, an analysis of the literature showed that management accounting within strategic alliances is scarcely discussed. Various researchers developed first concepts but there are still research gaps. For example instruments like cost accounting, transfer prices or the budgeting have not been discussed in context of strategic alliances. In Addition, the institutional design of management accounting in this kind of cooperation has not been studied either. A meta-analysis within this thesis which focused on empirical studies came to the conclusion that the issue of management accounting within alliances is not researched adequately.

The final part of the thesis provides a recommendation for a concept for the management accounting within strategic alliances. As primary goal the thesis identifies the coordination of planning, control and information supply. In addition, the management accounting has to support the management. Furthermore, the indirect objectives include all goals of the organisation. The recommendations for the tasks and instruments were structured according to a life cycle view of strategic alliances. The initial stage has been identified as highly important because of its impact on further stages and the overall success of the alliance. Therefore the management accounting has to support the management during the strategic planning and the partner selection by providing helpful strategic instruments.

During the operation stage, the thesis discussed among other issues how instruments like cost accounting, transfer prices or the budgeting can be used in alliances. In conclusion it was found, that the danger of opportunistic behaviour makes it necessary to create information transparency within the cooperation. Without measures like open-book accounting these instruments cannot be used without risk of uncooperative behaviour.

The institutional design of management accounting within strategic alliances has to be discussed for every life cycle stage. During the initial stage the management accounting is done in every company separately therefore it should be situated there where usually the strategic management accounting is done. During the operation stage several institutional designs are possible. This thesis recommends the establishment of a new management accounting department which is resourced with personnel by all management accounting departments of the participating companies and which is focused on alliance issues. Further findings and recommendations can be found in the full thesis.