



Cycle time and industrial marketing An introduction by the guest editor

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This special issue of *Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)* focuses on the increasingly important and understudied area of “cycle time and industrial marketing.” The issue was sponsored by the FedEx Center for Cycle Time Research (FECCTR) in cooperation with the Center for International Business Education and Research in the Eli Broad Graduate School of Management at Michigan State University. Based on the work by the FECCTR:

Cycle time research focuses on reducing the time of organizational processes in ways that cut costs (or opportunity costs), increase quality, and improve customer service.

Briefly, the FECCTR was founded in 1993 as a strategic alliance between The University of Memphis and the Federal Express. The FECCTR sponsors research projects, documents, and develops a body of knowledge about innovative use of information technology and techniques to reduce cycle time, provides best practices in cycle time reduction for various business processes, and disseminates this knowledge through publications (including its own journal, *Cycle Time Research*).

Based on my work on cycle time as a Research Associate of the FECCTR and as Director of the International Business Center at Michigan State University [1–5,7], a sample subjective cycle time scale is provided in the Appendix to this introduction. Most of my work on cycle time has been in conjunction with knowledge management initiatives (in addition to the previous Refs., see also Refs. [6,8]). In all, the common element of all the articles in the issue is helping the marketing manager make decisions regarding cycle time issues in industrial marketing processes. Within the scope of

the special issue, a number of topics were set forth as potential research avenues:

- How to structure industrial marketing processes to achieve cycle time efficiency.
- Strategic aspects of cycle time reduction of industrial marketing processes.
- Technology and its effect on cycle time of industrial marketing processes.
- The use of strategic partnerships to achieve cycle time efficiency.
- Cross-functional integration of activities to achieve cycle time efficiency.
- Market-based organizational learning and cycle time in industrial organizations.
- Supply chain and strategic sourcing activities related to cycle time performance.
- Cycle time and new product development pertaining to industrial organizations.
- Marketing’s role in achieving cycle time performance in industrial organizations.

Many of these topics are addressed in the special issue by a set of excellent established and emerging set of scholars. At the same time, I have included the topics from the original call for papers to serve as “an agenda on cycle time and industrial marketing” that deserve more research attention in the future. Each topic is of great relevance to the practicing industrial marketing manager, as well as scholars in related areas, and should be examined in much more depth than the sample of eight articles can accomplish in one issue of *IMM*. The special issue of *IMM* was implemented to set the tone for research on the topic. In that spirit, each article in the issue is briefly described in the following paragraphs.

In the first article in the special issue, I invited Abbie Griffin (Editor, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*) to address product development cycle time for busi-

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ness-to-business products. As an Editor of *JPIM* and researcher on cycle time issues, Griffin communicates some very interesting information related to the absolute cycle time of product development. Specifically, she uses data from the Product Development and Management Association's Best Practices research to quantify average cycle times for physical goods commercialized by B2B firms.

In the second article, Dan Flint continues the special issue's focus on product development by conceptually examining how firms can improve the probability of new product success and also speed up the process of doing so. Grounded in his work for numerous small and large corporations, Flint proposes a logical and pragmatic framework on how to keep up with changes in what a key customer values, understanding the new product ideation process, and understanding what customers value and how it changes. Of the seven competitively reviewed articles in the special issue, Dan Flint's paper was rewarded with the FECCTR Best Paper Award for "outstanding contribution to scholarly research and managerial practice on cycle time reduction initiatives."

The remaining six articles examine a wide variety of important cycle time issues. Menon, Chowdhury, and Lukas examine the antecedents and outcomes of new product development speed. Bashaw, Ingram, and Keillor examine sales training cycle time for new trainees. Davis, Dibrell, and Janz study the impact of time on the strategy–performance relationship. Lukas, Menon, and Bell report results of a study on product development speed and organizational stress. Gardiner, Hanna, and LaTour present a study on ERP and the reengineering of industrial marketing. Finally, Handfield and Bechtel examine the role of trust and relationship structure in improving supply chain responsiveness.

I hope you enjoy the issue!

Appendix A. The Cycle Time (CT) scale

Item	Description
CT1	The length of the supply chain process is getting shorter every time. Because the primary focus of cycle time performance is the reduction in time it takes from initiation to completion of an organizational process, the objective of this item is to assess the respondent's sense of consistent and constant reduction in cycle time. The foundation rationale for the item is that the reduction in cycle time is an ongoing systematic process that never ends. Improvements can always be made to the existing process.
CT2	We have seen an improvement in the cycle time of the supply chain process recently. While item CT1 addresses the continuous reduction in cycle time, item CT2 measures the cycle time reduction
CT3	based on a time definite interval. Commonly, organizations evaluate their operating behaviors at certain points in time. We are satisfied with the speediness of the supply chain process. Item CT3 measures the cycle time based on the respondent's experience with the organizational process. As such, item CT3 incorporates "speed" as a qualifier to the respondent's level of satisfaction with the cycle time.
CT4	Involving all the participants in decision-making shortens the supply chain process. Item CT4 focuses on the cycle time improvements that may be made if all of the participants involved throughout the process were a part of the decision-making activities pertaining to the process.
CT5	The length of the supply chain process can be shortened by involving all of the participants in the process. Item CT5 addresses the total cycle time of the organizational process, as opposed to examining specific parts of the process, as is the focus of items CT3 and CT4. Thus, item CT5 can be interpreted to mean that involving all of the supply chain participants in at least some parts of the process will reduce the total cycle time of the process.
CT6	Compared with the "old" supply chain process, the "new" supply chain process involving all the participants is faster. While item CT1 addresses the continuous reduction in cycle time and item CT2 measures the cycle time reduction based on a time definite interval, the intention of item CT6 is to assess cycle time improvements over a longer time period – after structural changes have been implemented to involve all of the participants in the process more directly.
CT7	Based on our knowledge of the supply chain process, we think it is short and efficient. Item CT7 asks the respondent to provide their perceptions of the cycle time of the organizational process based on their knowledge of the activities that have to be performed to complete the process. As such, item CT7 provides the respondent a direct opportunity to voice their opinion on the cycle time of the organizational process incorporating

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