INFORMATICS COLLOQUIUM

Speaker:

Dr. Steve Morlidge, Satori Partners, Surrey, UK

Using fuzzy sets to enhance the application of judgement in a business context

Abstract:

Our scientific advances as a species are usually the result of more precise facts and knowledge of more and more things, but we know from our personal experience at home and in our working lives that most of what we deal with is not precise. It is imprecise and fuzzy, made up of shades of grey.

Sometimes this is because we don't have the time or the instruments needed to make precise measurements but there are many things that are impossible to measure precisely (such as thoughts, feelings and opinions) and others (such as forecasts) where we can be precise, but wrong. And often precision doesn't matter for the kind of decisions we need to make.

This talk explores the ideas and concepts designed to help us manage organizations more effectively in the world as it really is - messy, imprecise, uncertain and ambiguous. In other words, how to be roughly right rather than precisely wrong.

The idea of 'fuzziness' and concepts needed to handle it has been around for over 50 years and is embedded in the technology that controls household devices we use every day such as cameras, smart cookers and automatic gearboxes. It is clever stuff, but most of us will never need to know how it works in these applications.

This talk will examine the historical and intellectual context of fuzziness. And it will explore the many ways in which fuzzy methods can be applied to help tackle common place business problems of the sort that we encounter every day…in a way that simple enough to be applied using pen and paper or crude spreadsheets, and without the need for any mathematical training.

Bio:

Steve Morlidge has 30 years of practical experience in designing and running performance management systems in Unilever, including three years as the lead of a global change project. He is a former chairman of the European Beyond Budgeting Round Table and now works as a management thinker, writer and speaker, drawing on his years of experience at the leading edge of performance management thought and practice.

In addition to numerous papers in academic and practitioner journals, Steve Morlidge published Future Ready: How to Master Business Forecasting, John Wiley, 2010, 'The Little Book of Beyond Budgeting', 'The Little Book of Operational Forecasting', 'Present Sense' in 2017, 2018 and 2020 respectively. 'Zen and the Art of Organising Work' was published in April 2021. 2023 has seen the publication of 'Cost Matters' and most recently was the lead author of 'The Viable Map Workbook' which sets out a practical methodology to help people put the principles of Beyond Budgeting to work in organizations.

He is currently working on a book titled 'Fuzzy Business, how to be roughly right rather than precisely wrong'.

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He is on the editorial board of Foresight, a forecasting practitioner's journal published by the International Institute of Forecasting to which he regularly contributes. He is also a cofounder of CatchBull, a supplier of forecasting performance management software and sits on the advisory board of the Beyond Budgeting Institute.

Steve completed his BA at Durham University and is a qualified management accountant (CIMA). He has a PhD from Hull Business School studying the application of systems concepts to the design of complex organizations and is a visiting fellow at Cranfield University and visiting Professor at BPP University.

Date and time: *Tuesday May 27th, 2025, 11.00 am*
Location: *Pérolles 21, room D130, Bd de Pérolles 90, Fribourg*
Contact person: *Prof. Edy Portmann*

The colloquium is free and open to the public.