

Preface

The motivation for this research project about public Shared Service Centers (SSCs) arose during my work as the Serviceline Leader Performance Management at Deloitte. When my clients asked for advice regarding SSCs, I searched the available literature only to find scant guidance on some of the central issues. What are their comparative advantages and disadvantages vis-à-vis other organizational forms? What are the cost and quality effects of establishing SSCs? Where should they be located? How should they price their services? Should it be optional or mandatory for internal customers to use them? To answer these questions, I embarked on the research project that resulted in this book.

I greatly benefitted from the insights of a number of supporters. First of all, I would like to thank my doctoral adviser at the WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, Professor Peter-J. Jost. He introduced me to transaction cost theory, which I employed to answer my research questions, and was always available to discuss my topic with me. Professor Jost not only served as a more knowledgeable other but also as a role model whom I could emulate upon starting my academic career. I also would like to thank Professor Jürgen Weber for being my second doctoral adviser. My work was mostly written at Harvard University. During this time, I had the pleasure to serve as the Teaching Fellow for the course “Strategic Management for Public Purposes” at the Harvard Kennedy School for three years. The faculty members teaching this course, Mary Jo Bane, Andy Zelleke, and Peter Zimmerman, provided me with invaluable insights about public management and leadership, which helped to crystallize my thinking about the role that SSCs play in the public sector. Professor Gary Orren served as my mentor throughout my time at Harvard and beyond. Jerry Mechling gave me the opportunity to teach sessions in his Leadership for a Networked World executive education program at Harvard, which allowed me to establish connections to many of the organizations that I surveyed for my study.

My wife and Harvard classmate Susan and our sons Adam and Alexander provided me with love and support while writing this book and shared the experience of exploring shared services with me. As a consequence, I dedicate this book to them.

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