

Firm Organization and Information Technology: Micro and Macro Implications

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40 years to today

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 - Dramatically changing the labor market.
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 - How do firms organize production?

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 - Two types of capital used:
 - IT capital *only* by managers.
 - Production (non-IT) capital *only* by production workers.
 - Study effect of IT instead of international trade.

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- Closer to Garicano&Rossi-Hansberg (2006), except here:
 - **Capital adoption** function of IT price, not exogenous parameters.
 - Calibration, not “illustration for maximal visibility”.
 - Production function → capital-labor elasticity, productivity, etc.
 - Change in wage *levels* as IT price falls.

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 - Production function → capital-labor elasticity, productivity, etc.
 - Change in wage *levels* as IT price falls.
 - No worker-firm assignment problem.

TALK OUTLINE

- Model
- Within-firm wage reallocation when IT prices fall.
- Indirect IT capital-plant labor elasticity
- Empirical analysis
- Macro implications
- Conclusion

Related Literature

- Hierarchies: Garicano, (2000), Antras et al, (2006), Antras et al, (2008), Caliendo and Rossi-Hansberg, (2012). Caliendo, Monte and Rossi-Hansberg, (2014), Fuchs et al (2015), Santamaria, (2017).
- Labor Markets: Autor et al. (2003), Autor and Dorn, (2013). Acemoglu and Restrepo, (2017,2018a&b), Hemous and Olsen (2016).
- Wage Inequality in Organizations: Akerman et al, (2015), Gaggi and Wright (2017), Bloom et al. (2017), Bloom et al. (2014), Garicano and Hubbard (2016).
- VA concentration: Autor et al (2017), De Loecker, Eeckout and Unger (2020).
- Labor Share: Karabarbournis and Neiman, (2012). Oberfield and Raval, (2014). Santaaulalia-Llopis et al, (2015), Grossman, et al, (2017). Lashkari et al. (2018).

MODEL

Preferences

- CES demand for variety ω : $q(\omega) = Dp(\omega)^{-\rho} \alpha(\omega)$

where $\alpha(\omega)$ is the appeal of ω .

- $\alpha(\omega)$ is the source of heterogeneity in the cross-section of firms.
- $\alpha(\omega)$ drawn from a lognormal distribution.

Workers

- Supply labor: 1 unit inelastically. Wage rate is w .
- Workers homogenous ex-ante but different skills and occupations ex-post.
- Learning an interval of knowledge of length z , requires cz teaching time:
 - cost to agent is $= wcz$.
 - agent receives from firms $w + wcz$.
- Ex post: different occupations but same *net* compensation (w)
→ workers indifferent across occupations.

Firms

- Each entrepreneur has product with α , the demand shifter. No entrepreneur entry.
- **Today: Simplest model:** firm with two layers ($L = 2$):
 1. Production level workers: encounter and solve problems: layer 1.
 2. CEO: solve problems with IT: layer 2.

Firms

- Each entrepreneur has product with α , the demand shifter. No entrepreneur entry.
- **Today: Simplest model:** firm with two layers ($L = 2$):
 1. Production level workers: encounter and solve problems: layer 1.
 2. CEO: solve problems with IT: layer 2.
- Intuitions are similar for more complex firms with number of layers $L \in [2, 3, 4]$:
 - Extra layers are managers and specialize in solving problems like the CEO.

Firms: Production Level: Layer 1

Production workers:

- Production layer input bundle: $y_1 \equiv \underbrace{\left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}}}_{\text{Chosen by firm}}.$
- Mass of problems equal to y_1 .
- Total *potential* output is Ay_1 ; where A is productivity.
- Workers can deal with y_1 problems, but can solve only a fraction: those they know.
- *Realized* output = $Ay_1 * \underbrace{\text{Fraction of Solved Problems}}_{\text{Worker-Knowledge: firm choice}}.$

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- *Realized* output = $Ay_1 * \underbrace{\text{Fraction of Solved Problems}}_{\text{Worker-Knowledge: firm choice}}$.
- Which problems are solved? = $\underbrace{\text{What knowledge do agents acquire?}}_{\text{Chosen by firm}}$

Firms: Production Level: Layer 1

- Problems arise from CDF: $F(z) = 1 - \exp(-\lambda z)$.
- Law of Large Numbers: the realized distribution of problems is also $F(\cdot)$.
- Production workers learn how to solve interval of knowledge: $[0, z_1]$:
 - All problems in $[0, z_1]$ are solved; production realized: $AF(z_1)y_1$.
 - Problems in $[z_1, \infty)$: passed to upper layer: CEO.

Firms: CEO: Layer 2

CEO:

- Specializes in solving problems:
 - Deals unsolved problems from layer 1: those above z_1 .
 - Attempts to solve all of the unsolved problems:
 - Ex ante, the CEO does not know if she knows the solution.
 - Learns interval $[z_1, z_1 + z_2]$: the solved problems at layer 2.
- Firm needs managerial inputs to attempt those problems...

Firms: CEO: Layer 2

CEO:

- Firm needs managerial inputs given by ...

$$\underbrace{1 + Bk_L^{\beta_L}}_{\text{CEO time + IT capital}} = \underbrace{\left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}} (1 - F(z_1))}_{\text{Unsolved problems at layer 1}}$$

- Realized production:

$$q = AF(Z_2) \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}}$$

where:

- $Z_2 \equiv z_1 + z_2$
- Note: $F(Z_2)$ is the fraction of problems solved by organization.

Cost Minimization for L=2 Organization

$$C(q; \theta) \equiv \min_{\{k_l, n_l, z_l\}_{l \in 1,2}} n_1 w_1 + p_1 k_1 + w_2 + p_2 k_2$$

$$\text{s.t.} \begin{cases} q = AF(Z_2) \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}} \\ 1 + Bk_2^{\beta_2} = \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}} [1 - F(z_1)], \\ z_l > 0, l = 1, 2. \end{cases}$$

where:

- k_l price is p_l .
- n_l compensation is $w_l \equiv w(cz_l + 1)$.
- $\theta =$ set of all prices.

Profit Max

Problem of α firm:

$$\pi(\alpha) \equiv \max_{q(\alpha)} p(\alpha)q(\alpha) - C(q(\alpha); \theta)$$

subject to $q(\omega) = Dp(\omega)^{-\rho} \alpha(\omega)$,

- D : aggregate demand shifter, taken as given.

Profit Maximization

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$$\pi(\alpha) \equiv \max_{q(\alpha)} p(\alpha)q(\alpha) - C(q(\alpha); \theta)$$

subject to $q(\omega) = Dp(\omega)^{-\rho} \alpha(\omega)$.

Solution:

- $p(\alpha) = mMC(q(\alpha); \theta)$

where m is the markup.

Organization, Knowledge Reallocation, and IT price

Optimal Knowledge:

- Trade-off between layers 1 and 2 knowledge:

$$\underbrace{wcn_1}_{\text{MC of } z_1} - \underbrace{\frac{\overbrace{p_2}^{\text{Cost per problem}}}{\beta_L B k_2^{\beta_L - 1}} \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1 - 1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1 - 1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1 - 1}} \lambda \exp(-\lambda z_1)}_{\text{Savings in Managerial Inputs}} = \underbrace{wC}_{\text{MC of } z_2}$$

Change in Mass of Problems

Organization, Knowledge Reallocation, and IT price

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Proposition 3: Optimal Reorganization of Knowledge:

- A reduction in p_2 (IT price) makes layer 2 relatively cheaper \rightarrow
 - in layer 1: **decrease knowledge and wages**: supported by empirics.
 - in layer 2: increase knowledge and wages.

IT Capital and Production Labor Elasticity

DEFINITION: The IT capital-to-production-labor elasticity for **layers** $l > 1$, when p_{IT} changes is:

$$\varepsilon_{n_1, k_l} \equiv - \frac{d \log \left(\frac{k_l}{n_1} \right)}{d \log \left(\frac{p_2}{w_1} \right)} \Bigg|_{q=\bar{q}}$$

for fixed output \bar{q} , when all other inputs are allowed to adjust.

- Captures reorganization.
- A long-run elasticity:
 - Calibrated to 1980-2015.
 - Calibrated using long-run σ_l , the within layer elasticity.
- I obtain $\varepsilon_{n_1, k_2} > 1$: **Substitution**, $\forall L = 2, 3, 4$.

Indirect Substitution of IT Capital and Production Labor

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- IT capital and production labor are substitutes:
 - Despite capital-labor complementarity in each layer: $0 < \sigma_l < 1$
 - Not a parametric assumption about substitution.
 - **Endogenous** substitution is due to knowledge reallocation: $\frac{\partial z_1}{\partial p_2} > 0$
 - Test in the data using wage impact of IT price!
 - Existing evidence is in line with decline in w_1 when p_{IT} falls.
- Firm organization matters for factor substitution inference.

Problem for any organization complexity, $L \in 2, 3, 4$

$$\pi(\alpha) \equiv \max_{q(\alpha)} p(\alpha)q(\alpha) - C(q(\alpha); \omega)$$

where

$$C(q(\alpha)) \equiv \min_{2 \leq L \leq 4} C_L(q(\alpha); \omega) \quad \left. \vphantom{\min} \right\} \text{NEW: } L \text{ Choice}$$

and

$$C_L(q(\alpha); \omega) \equiv \min_{\{k, n, z\}_{l=1}^L} \sum_{l=1}^L (n_l w(cz_l + 1) + p_l k_l)$$

$$\text{s. t. } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} q(\alpha) = AF(Z_L) \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}} \\ \left(k_l^{\frac{\sigma_l-1}{\sigma_l}} + n_l^{\frac{\sigma_l-1}{\sigma_l}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_l}{\sigma_l-1}} = \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}} [1 - F(Z_{l-1})], L > l > 1 \\ 1 + Bk_L^{\beta_L} = \left(k_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} + n_1^{\frac{\sigma_1-1}{\sigma_1}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_1-1}} [1 - F(Z_{L-1})], \\ n_L = 1 \\ z_l > 0, \forall l \geq 1 \end{array} \right\} \quad \text{NEW: Intermediate Layers}$$

Links to Macro Trends

The trends in the data:

1. Aggregate labor share decline. Karabarbounis and Neiman, (2012), Autor et al, (2017), Oberfield and Raval, (2019), Santaaulalia et al (2020), Grossman et al. (2018)
2. Labor share of routine (nonroutine) occupations is declining (rising), IMF (2017).
3. Value added increasingly concentrated in large firms. Autor et al, (2020).
4. Increasing aggregate mark-up: due to large firms, De Loecker, Eeckout and Unger (2020).

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The question:

- What are the implications of firm organization with IT for these trends?
 - Production side discipline is required for inference about demand elasticity.

Calibration for 1980-2015

Observed macro trends require **two changes**:

1. Lower IT price: today 1/3 of price in 1980 (BEA).
2. Lower demand elasticity: consistent with De Loecker, Eeckout and Unger (2020).

Counterfactual exercises

A IT price decline produces :

- Micro: decline of production workers' wage in large firms (Song et al at QJE)
- Macro: decline in wage bill share of routine, along with increase of non-routine share (IMF).

B Lower demand elasticity causes:

- Macro: labor share decline
- Macro: VA concentration in large firms
- Macro: Rising markup

Empirical predictions (II): Data match on IT price

Table reports the sign of variable change due IT price decline:

	Model				Data		
	A. Firm-Layer Level						
	Layer				Layer		
	1	2	3	CEO	1	2	3
Moments							
w_l	-*	-	+	+	-	+	+
$\frac{n_l}{\sum_{j=1}^L n_j}$	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
$\frac{w_l n_l}{\sum_{j=1}^L w_j n_j}$	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
				B. Firm Level			
$\frac{\sum_{l=2}^L k_l}{n_1}$			+			+	
Z_L			+	*		+	
$\frac{\sum_{l=1}^L p_l k_l + w_l n_l}{p(\alpha)q(\alpha)}$			+			+	
L			+			+	

*: result is a proposition

Conclusion

- A firm organization theory with a well-specified role for IT.
- Implications for:
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 4. Macro implications: factor shares, value-added reallocation to large firms, rising markup.

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APPENDIX

Calibration

Parameter	Value	Description	Source/Target
Calibrated Externally			
$\hat{\Delta} p_1$	0	Change in capital price at layer $l = 1$	Eden&Gaggl (2018)
$\hat{\Delta} p_l, l > 1$	-2/3	Change in capital price at layers $l \forall l > 1$	Eden&Gaggl (2018)
σ_1	0.87	Capital-labor elasticity at layer $l = 1$	Raval (2010)
$\sigma_l, l > 1$	0.36	Capital-labor elasticity at layers $1 < l < L$	Raval (2010)
Calibrated Internally			
ρ	markup table	Demand elasticity, distribution	Labor share of VA, top firms' average, 1980&2015 Slope(log(Markup),log(TFP)), 1980&2015
β_L	0.51	Capital exponent at layer L	Slope(log(FC),log(VA))
B	5	TFP of CEO IT capital	P75/P25 FC distribution
c	0.1	Employee training cost	Labor share of cost, average
λ	1	Mean of problem CDF, $F(\cdot)$	Slope(log(Capital-Labor Ratio),log(VA))
A	5	TFP	
μ_α	5	Mean of α	
ξ_α	2.4	Standard deviation of α	Employment share by firm size (7 bins)
w	2	Wage rate	
p_1	0.001	Production-level capital price	
p_2	25	IT capital price	

NOTE: $FC \equiv \frac{\sum_{l=1}^L p_l k_l}{\sum_{l=1}^L n_l w_l}$, VA= value-added, $\hat{\Delta}_x = (x_t - x_{t-1})/x_{t-1}$

Calibration of demand elasticity: production-side discipline

$$\underbrace{\frac{\sum_{l=1}^L w_l n_l}{p(q)q}}_{\text{Labor share of VA}} = \underbrace{\frac{\sum_{l=1}^L w_l n_l}{C(q)}}_{\text{Labor share of cost}} \underbrace{\frac{C(q)}{qMC(q)}}_{AVC/MC} \underbrace{\frac{1}{m}}_{\text{Inverse of markup}}$$

1. Cross-section:

- Markup m rises with size (De Loecker & Warczinsky 2012; Autor et al 2020).
- Labor share of value added falls with size (Autor et al 2020).

2. Over time:

- Markups increase more for higher percentiles (De Loecker, Eeckout and Unger 2020).
- Labor share in large firms falls over time (Autor et al 2020).

Markups in calibration

Consistent with De Loecker, Eeckout and Unger (2020)

	DEU			Calibration			Elasticity, ρ	
	Markup			Markup			1980	2015
	1980	2014	% Change	1980	2015	% Change	1980	2015
Min				1.33	1.4	5.00	3.81	2.47
P50	1.2	1.2	0.00	1.33	1.48	10.84	3.97	3.04
P75	1.28	1.50	17.18	1.34	1.51	12.67	3.94	3.15
P90	1.5	2.5	66.66	1.35	1.54	14.44	3.95	3.26
Max				1.36	1.68	23.81	4.01	3.5

Calibrated moments

Moment	Model	Data	Data Source
Labor share of VA, top firms' average, 1980	0.52	0.51	ADKPV
Labor share of VA, top firms' average, 2015	0.43	0.43	ADKPV
Slope(log(Markup),log(TFP)), 1980	0.37	0.3	De Loecker and Warzynski (2012)
Slope(log(Markup),log(TFP)), 2015	3.76	3	Imputed
Slope(log(FC),log(VA))	0.07	0.02	Raval (2019)
P75/P25 of factor cost distribution	1.20	2.1	Raval (2019)
Labor share of cost, average	0.73	0.7	Imputed
Slope(log(Capital-labor ratio),log(VA))	0.07	0.15	Raval (2010)
Employment share by firm size (7 bins)	$R^2 =$	0.76	BLS

Untargeted Moments

Moment	Model	Data	Data Source
Panel A. Aggregate moments			
Revenue concentration, CR4 % change	28	10.25	ADKPV
Slope($\log(\text{CR20}), \log(\text{Aggregate labor share})$)	-0.43	-0.9	ADKPV
Aggregate labor share, % change	-10.06	-28.69	Kehrig and Vincent (2014)
Aggregate markup, % change	10.99	16.13	DEU
Routine aggregate share of wage bill, % change	-0.21	-30.36	Eden and Gaggl (2018)
Nonroutine aggregate share of wage bill, % change	16.32	10.83	Eden and Gaggl (2018)
Panel B. Firm-level moments			
P50 Real wage, % change in firms with 100 to 1000 employees	4.86	31	Song et al (2019)
P50 Real wage, % change in firms with 10,000+ employees	-2.81	-7	Song et al (2019)
P75 Real wage, % change in firms with 10,000+ employees	17.29	64	Song et al (2019)
Highest real wage, % change in firms with 10,000+ employees	12.02	137	Song et al (2019)

Counterfactuals: IT vs Demand Elasticity

Table values relative to the baseline in %:

Moment	IT Price	Demand Elasticity
Panel A. Targeted moments		
Labor share of VA, top firms' average, 2015	121	99
Panel B. Untargeted moments: Aggregate		
Revenue concentration, CR4 % change	14	94
Slope(log(CR20),log(Aggregate labor share))	-11	106
Aggregate labor share, % change	-2	100
Routine aggregate share of wage bill, % change	211	-177
Nonroutine aggregate share of wage bill, % change	211	-177
Panel C. Untargeted moments: Firm-level		
P50 Real wage, % change in firms with 100 to 1000 employees	-74	174
P50 Real wage, % change in firms with 10,000+ employees	212	-112
P75 Real wage, % change in firms with 10,000+ employees	43	71
Highest real wage, % change in firms with 10,000+ employees	42	49

Sales reallocation with lower demand elasticity?

$$\varepsilon_{r,\rho} \equiv \frac{\partial \log(r)}{\partial \log(\rho)}$$

	Organization		
	$L = 2$	$L = 3$	$L = 4$
$\varepsilon_{r,\rho}$	-5.7	-4.4	-3.5

Lesson: Reallocation of sales to large firms due to their larger decline in ρ .