

Chapter 5.7

Early User Involvement and Participation in Employee Self-Service Application Deployment: Theory and Evidence from Four Dutch Governmental Cases

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ABSTRACT

This chapter theoretically and empirically addresses the notion that user participation and involvement is one of the important factors for IS success. Different models and studies are reviewed to define and classify types of early end-user involvement and participation. Next, five case studies are presented of Dutch governmental organizations (Ministries) that have recently deployed an employee self-service application. Based on interviews with developers, project managers and users it can be showed that the deployment success of such systems is positively related to the extent of early user involvement and participation. In addition, it was found that expectancy management is important to keep users

informed about certain deployment decisions. In this way, employees can truly use the self-service applications without much support from the HR-departments.

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Dutch House of Representatives asked the Dutch Government questions about their ICT-expenditures. Concerns were raised about how much money was wasted by governmental ICT projects that resulted in failures. The Dutch Court of Audit was instructed to come up with a report on governmental ICT projects and the possible reasons for failures. When the report (Dutch Court Audit, 2007) was finished, it named several difficulties that can be faced when executing ICT

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projects for governmental organisations. Among this list is the impact of the changes caused by the implementation of the IT-system. Users current way of working may be completely changed by changing work processes when the system is introduced. Users therefore need to be informed and trained to completely benefit from the system. Another cause for problems is the need for clear goals and demands. If the software developer does not receive clear demands and wishes, the actual end-product might not be what the government thought it would receive.

In both of the mentioned problems users play an important role in making the system a success. There is already a lot of agreement on the fact that users should be involved to produce usable software programs. It is recommended in ISO standard 13407 to get better insights in the requirements for a software application. Most attention to user involvement is still on the usability testing of systems, which happens on a later stage in the development process. However, the sooner the end-user is involved, the more efficient it is (Noyes et al, 1996; Chatzoglou & Macaulay, 1996; Blackburn et al, 2000).

One of the challenges in involving users in IT developments is the time factor that plays a very important role in governmental IT projects. Most of the decisions to implement or develop new Information Technology have a political background. This means the project will have to be delivered at the end of the current cabinet's term. This introduces a certain pressure for the project to be delivered as soon as possible. This conflicts with the idea that user involvement will take a serious amount of extra time needed in the development of a new system (Grudin, 1991). The systems that have the specific attention of this research on first sight also seem to conflict with this additional time needed in IT projects when involving users. Main reasons for implementing E-HRM systems and Shared Service Centres (SSC) are increasing efficiency and productivity (Verheijen, 2007; Janssen & Joha, 2006). For the current Dutch cabinet this is very important

because it wants to decrease the number of civil servants with a number of 12,800 to achieve a cost cutback of 630 million Euros in four years (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2007).

Another difficulty in the involvement of users is the selection of the right groups of employees to have participating in the project (Grudin, 1991). This is especially true for most governmental organisations, because they employ a large amount of civil servants. As the applications that are the subject of the research are mainly aimed at self-service these are all potential end-users. This is a very diverse group and it can be considered a challenge to make the right selection of users from this total population.

In this paper we address the question which methods are currently used within the Dutch governmental institutions to involve end-users when deploying employee self-service applications. We also investigate the relationship between end-user participation and involvement and the success of such e-HRM applications. Four Dutch governmental organizations (Ministries) are investigated that have implementing employee self-service applications (i.e. e-HRM), which offers the possibility to compare the different development approaches that are followed. Semi-structured and topic interviews were held with stakeholders within the Ministries to explore which methods are already used to involve users in the process of deployment. Their experiences are described and reflected upon at the closing section of the paper.

THEORY

A Review on the Role of User Participation

DeLone & McLean (2003) evaluated empirical testing and validation of their original D&M IS Success Model (DeLone & McLean, 1992) by other researchers and developed an updated

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