Chapter 7.12
An Extended Model of Decision Making:
A Devil's Advocate Workshop

David Sammon
University College Cork, Ireland

INTRODUCTION

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) packages can be described as the most sought after means of organisational transformation and IT innovation since the mid 1990s. Over the past decade, ERP packages have become a major part of the organisational landscape and form the cornerstone of IS architectures for an ever increasing percentage of organisations. Despite the strong push toward enterprise-wide ERP systems in the wider organisational community and the experience accumulated over 20 years of large scale integrated systems implementations, there is, in relation to ERP deployment, a lack of understanding of the specific project management required to counter the difficulties that can arise when organisations fail to ensure that all the required factors of success are present in their projects. Therefore, novel ideas to help managers and project managers to better prepare for enterprise-wide ERP projects are badly needed.

This entry presents a method of practical relevance for organisational decision-makers by introducing the concept of a devil's advocate workshop—reminiscent of Klein's premortem sessions (Klein, 1993, 2002), but tailor-made for large scale Information Systems projects—which leverages the concept of sense-making, in introducing a preplanning "intelligence" phase in any enterprise-wide ERP project life-cycle.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-59904-843-7.ch041

Copyright © 2011, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.

BACKGROUND

There seems to be a misguided perception in the managerial community that ERP packages are the modern day IT silver bullet and this has been revealed notably by Swanson and Ramiller (2004, p. 554) in their award winning MISQ research article titled "Innovating Mindfully with Information Technology," where they reported that by the mid-1990s, ERP was a topic that was being banded about in boardrooms. It wasn't just an information technology (IT) project, but a strategic business imperative… the ERP genie was out of the bottle—every company needed to have an ERP implementation.

However, Swanson and Ramiller (2004, p. 554), borrowing Weick's concept of mindfulness, suggest that adopting organisations entertain scant reasoning for their moves. Especially where the innovation achieves a high public profile, as with ERP, deliberative behaviour can be swamped by an acute urgency to join the stampeding herd, notwithstanding the high cost and apparent risk involved. Indeed, this mindless behaviour in pursuit of "best practise" is the rule. Paradoxically, the argument can also be made that investments in these ERP packages are amongst the most significant an organisation has engaged, or will ever, engage in; and this is not adequately matched by the low level of managerial understanding of the impacts of implementation of such systems on the organisation. This trend supports the contention that the level of managerial understanding of technological innovations is generally low, and that managers need to be empowered and made aware of what is critical for a successful project implementation of ERP applications. Therefore, specific tools and methods must be proposed to provide managers with a means of assessing their organisation's level of understanding before they embark on complex innovating pursuits (for example, enterprise-wide ERP projects) and, from this assessment, to offer the means to improve the starting point.

MAIN FOCUS

ERP projects are highly complex and challenging initiatives to undertake (regardless of organisational size) for reasons relating to: projects being difficult to scope, with issues becoming apparent only once the project is under way, the benefits being nebulous, and the scale of the project being greater than an organisation is prepared for, in implementation. In fact, success has not been easy to achieve and organisations that implement enterprise-wide ERP systems, based on a myopic mindset and only for an immediate return on investment, have been in for a "rude and expensive awakening" (Gargeya & Brady, 2005). Therefore, improving the likelihood of success prior to undertaking a project would prove hugely beneficial to most organisations. In fact, many organisations view their project implementations as failures. However, it has also been argued that the cause of these ERP implementation failures relates to a lack of appropriate culture and organisational (internal) readiness, which, if addressed, is also a feature of the most successful enterprise-wide ERP projects. This readiness is referred to as a "readiness to change" and it has been argued that not enough time and attention has been devoted to the "internal readiness" factor at the outset of an ERP project and the subsequent changes required during the implementation process (Davenport, 2000; Gargeya & Brady, 2005). As a result, an organisation's state of readiness is extremely important in order to undertake an enterprise-wide ERP implementation and, as a result, the awareness of managers should be reflected in the preparations made for the project initiative.

AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS

Very little academic research literature in the enterprise-wide ERP systems area focuses directly on the issue of organisational readiness for enterprise-wide ERP projects. However, numerous

8 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/extended-model-decision-making/48641

Related Content

Management and Control: Organizational Preparedness
(2013). *Managing Enterprise Information Technology Acquisitions: Assessing Organizational Preparedness (pp. 16-34).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/management-control-organizational-preparedness/76972

Convergence in Mobile Internet with Service Oriented Architecture and Its Value to Business
Marco Garito (2011). *Enterprise Information Systems: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools and Applications (pp. 823-834).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/convergence-mobile-internet-service-oriented/48583

Application of FMEA to Study the Risk Perception of SMEs Throughout the ERP Adoption Life Cycle
S. Vijayakumar Bharathiand Kanchan Chandrayan (2017). *International Journal of Enterprise Information Systems (pp. 63-84).*
www.irma-international.org/article/application-of-fmea-to-study-the-risk-perception-of-smes-throughout-the-erp-adoption-life-cycle/182434

Interactive Access Control and Trust Negotiation for Autonomic Communication
Hristo Koshutanski (2007). *Advances in Enterprise Information Technology Security (pp. 120-148).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/interactive-access-control-trust-negotiation/4794

Virtual Local Area Networks
Cam Cullen (2002). *Enterprise Networking: Multilayer Switching and Applications (pp. 48-60).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/virtual-local-area-networks/18415