Chapter 3

From Silos to Sharing:
An Institutional Research View of the Conversion to an ERP

Dana L. Dalton
Forsyth Technical Community College, USA

ABSTRACT

This case study describes the events from 2003 to the present surrounding the implementation of a relational student information Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. The introduction and implementation of an ERP to a campus that previously engaged separate stand-alone administrative computer components is indeed a cultural and philosophical shift. Campus leaders must not discount the importance and to some degree, acceptance, of these shifts. Multiple factors have to come together to make the ERP a successful venture. We found that continuous communication and a sense of ownership aided the cultural shift. At the beginning of any institution-wide project, all the stakeholders should have a seat at the table and a role in the decision-making processes. As in any undertaking, best practices and the lessons learned served as both formative and summative types of evaluation in this experience. This case is not meant to serve as a "how to" guide, but a narrative of prominent issues that other institutions may find helpful if a conversion is in their future.

BACKGROUND

A medium sized comprehensive liberal arts institution located in the Southeast is the subject of this case study. This institution started as many historically black colleges and universities (HB-CUs) did as a normal school or training institute. It grew from less than 50 students and became a constituent of a state system of colleges and universities. The institution now enrolls over 6,000 students. This institution has been and continues to be a vital resource as it produces professionals in critical areas of need in the region and state. The institution's transformation from a pen and

paper system of record keeping to a component student, finance and human resource system to the current relational database system since the 1980's is quite extraordinary.

Data, its collection and reporting, have long since been an integral part of the Southeast State System (SESS). As a public state supported system, information and increased need for accountability have been guiding forces. Unit record and other campus data has been collected and reported through various means at the campus to the SESS office. As collection and reporting demands increased in the late 1990's, System Administration Office (SAO) also found it necessary that all institutional research (IR) offices have technical person(s) housed in the office to ensure accurate programming to collect various types of data. As campuses deployed more and more complicated and robust student information systems, this requirement became critical. Adequate and capable administrative personnel are parallel in importance to the data and the systems. Functional expertise is equally important as technical expertise. Professionals who routinely engage in information generation must not only have the capabilities and proficiencies in data extraction, but also have proficiencies in how the data points interact within the repositories, meaning how data behaves across different parts of the system. These interactions are critical pieces in validity and the proper uses of the data.

SETTING THE STAGE

In the early years of 2000, the SESS system, a multi-campus state university, put forth an initiative to move toward an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), environment An ERP is an integrated computer-based system used to manage internal and external resources, including tangible assets (Bidgoli, 2004). Information Resources took charge of leading the effort to ensure the transition of the affected campuses from their current

systems to an ERP system. The majority of the SESS campuses were involved in the conversion. The transition to this ERP will be the basis of the case study, with specifics coming from the lens of one of the institution. The author presents the case study from the perspective of opportunities and threats to institutional research with the functional user in mind. The intent of the case study is not to be a technical report or be process specific. The case study serves to guide and illustrate general concerns and lessons learned surrounding a process leading to the production of information that will lead to data-informed made decisions by consumers.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Selection of ERP

The then President of the SESS entered into a contractual agreement with a major maker of ERPs. This campus-wide system Banner® is touted as world's most widely used collegiate administrative suite of student, financial aid, finance, human resources, and advancement systems. It is a tightly integrated suite of proven, scalable, enterprise-wide applications on a single database, designed to support institutions of all sizes and types. This system uses Oracle®, a major relational database management system as its foundation, one used by both corporation and government agencies.

The aim of a relational system used by the majority of the SESS cluster of universities is to bring standardization and uniformity to the data and subsequent information used by consumers. This standardization will increase the ease and understanding when the SESS compares campus data. Figure 1 shows the home page screen for the Banner ERP, with folders representing the main system modules.

The campuses should give credit to the system office for realizing early the vast scope of this transition and allocating considerable resources

Related Content

Modeling Score Distributions
Anca Doloc-Mihu (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1330-1336).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/modeling-score-distributions/10994

Soft Subspace Clustering for High-Dimensional Data
Liping Jing, Michael K. Ngand Joshua Zhexue Huang (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1810-1814).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/soft-subspace-clustering-high-dimensional/11064

Can Everyone Code?: Preparing Teachers to Teach Computer Languages as a Literacy
Laquana Cooke, Jordan Schugar, Heather Schugar, Christian Pennyand Hayley Bruning (2020). *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age (pp. 163-183).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/can-everyone-code/237420

Transferable Belief Model
Philippe Smets (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1985-1989).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/transferable-belief-model/11091

Intelligent Image Archival and Retrieval System
P. Punithaand D.S. Guru (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1066-1072).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/intelligent-image-archival-retrieval-system/10953