Chapter 6
E–Readiness in Governmental Public Service Institution:
Lessons Learnt

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study revolves around a governmental public service institution, which receives public and government money that it invests. There were several challenges associated with the implementation of the IT system to improve public service. It was found that the organizations need, in the contract, to have the qualifications of the vendor's staff, and agree that prior approval for any change of staff or new recruitment would be agreed beforehand. This is because the vendor's staff had a high turnover. Experienced staff, which were agreed upon by the organization, were assigned to the project for a short time, only at the beginning of the project. The lack of positive relationships between different groups in the organization caused resistance to the required changes in structure and processes. Because key staff considered keeping knowledge and experience to themselves as a job security tool, they were not forthcoming in cooperating with the project team. This was complicated by the almost complete absence of systems' documentation, and the little documentation that did exist was obsolete or not comprehensive.

The void of decisive leadership by top management allowed the conflicts between different entities in the organization to go on in an increasing mode until the end of the project, which had a negative effect on the project success. The new system design was not successful in resolving the ownership of the data within the organization. This was an issue that caused user resistance to the project.

INTRODUCTION

This case study revolves around a governmental public service institution, which receives public and government money which it invests in. The organization is subject to the supervision of a government Minister who chairs its Board of Directors which also consists of a representative from three ministries, and the national chamber of commerce, the trade union federation and three expert members. The assets owned and managed by the organization are equal to about US$10 billion and yearly revenue equals about US$1 billion. The organizational structure of the Institution consists of five main sectors; General Administration Sector, Servwork Sector, Automation Sector, Investment Sector, and Public Service Sector.

The organization was among the first in the country to be computerized and the first to depend heavily on IS/IT in conducting its work processes. This was a strategic decision made by the founding chairman in 1979. Not long after the formation of the organization, the old/current system was built, in the early 1980s, by an international software development vendor that trained the newly hired staff who had no previous computer skills or knowledge. The training was system-specific that enabled the staff to take-over the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the system. The system was mainframe-based using COBOL and VSAM and sequential file types for batch processing. Around the mid-1980s a large 'stand alone' personnel information system was developed, based on an inverted-relational database management system, to accommodate about 800 employees. The users of all the organizational information systems are about 90% of the organization's staff (more than 700 employees). In the mid-1980's there was a complete change of the top management, where a different team replaced the founding chairman and his team. This new team remains in charge of the organization until the current time.

Sequence of Events

In 1992, the organization planned to open a branch to provide services to the public in another location in the country and relocate the training department and image file-storage on remote sites. At that time, the organization was facing the problem that the computer master-file had reached the maximum record size allowed by

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