

Chapter 51

Preparing People to Manage, Support and Use Enterprise Systems in an Arabian Gulf Context

Hamed Salim Al-Hinai
University of Sunderland, UK

Helen Edwards
University of Sunderland, UK

ABSTRACT

Preparing organizations and assessing their readiness to implement enterprise systems is a growing agenda in information systems research. This chapter examines the challenges that face the preparation of organizations' stakeholders in managing and supporting the implementation and using enterprise systems in an Arabian Gulf context. The chapter points out the major issues that have been identified by enterprise systems' professionals such as: lack of business and IT strategies, continuous top management support, insufficient training, inefficient communication procedures, inefficient change management and cultural barriers. To overcome these challenges, the chapter suggests that the preparation should not be limited to end users since the preparation of other stakeholders, such as top managers, project manager and project teams, is essential to successfully implement and use the enterprise system. Based on insights gained by empirical research with enterprise systems professionals, the chapter recommends a number of factors that need to be considered. These have been grouped into the categories of: organizational, managerial, technical, external, and human/social factors.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years we have witnessed a growth in information systems research focused on preparing organizations and assessing their readiness to implement enterprise systems. This concentration of research could be attributed to the high demand and investment into the implementation of enterprise systems around the world, coupled with the various challenges and issues that have led to high failure rates.

Technical factors tended to be the main focus of early research of enterprise systems. However, more recent investigations of enterprise systems' critical success factors (CSFs) have revealed the importance of the human domain in managing and supporting the implementation, and in using enterprise systems. In particular, researchers have investigated the attitudes and behavior of enterprises systems' stakeholders in accepting and using these systems, with especial interest given to end users. We may surmise from this that the human domain is a crucial domain that needs to be carefully considered in preparing to manage and support both the implementation and use of such systems.

This chapter considers this human domain, but specifically within the context of enterprise systems implementation in the Arabian Gulf. Although many of the challenges that have been identified might seem similar to those faced by organizations in other parts of the world, the severity and criticality of these factors differ from region to region and country to country.

The chapter makes explicit the range of major stakeholders' categories that are involved in enterprise systems implementation, such as: top management, project manager, project teams, key users and end users. It then also examines the factors that have been known to be relevant in the Arabian Gulf context. The list of issues include: lack of business and IT strategies, disturbed top management support, under-skilled resources, inefficient communication procedures, inefficient

change management and inadequate training. The factors presented and discussed in this chapter have been identified by both a thorough review of the research literature and empirical data collected from stakeholders involved in enterprise systems within the Arabian Gulf. These factors, that influence the preparation of stakeholders, have been classified into the categories of: organizational, project management, technical, external and human/social.

BACKGROUND

Enterprise systems, such as E-Government, enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM) and data warehouse systems are complex solutions that seek to integrate the different functions in an organization into appropriate business processes. Their aim is to provide holistic integrated, dynamic cross-departmental business processes that enable the organization to cut down the time required to complete identified transactions or processes (Aladwani, 2001; Appuswamy, 2000). Where this aim is realized the benefits to the organization are often in improved customer service (and streamlined processes); for instance, the customer no longer has to wait in long queues or visit different offices in order to complete his transaction (Appuswamy, 2000). Such integrated systems can cover functions such as finance, procurement, supply chain, maintenance, human resources, etc (Abdinnour-Helm, Lengnick-Hall, & Lengnick-Hall, 2003). The integration is not limited to functions but can also draw in the wider sociotechnical system which includes the integration of data and people within the organization. In such cases the transparency and availability of information to decision makers in the organization is tremendously improved. The promised benefits of enterprise systems have led to high investments by organizations around the world in order to introduce these systems: either to get a competitive edge in their marketplace,

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