



Chapter XII

A Framework for Monitoring User Involvement and Participation in ERP Implementation Projects

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Abstract

In this chapter, a framework for monitoring user involvement and participation within ERP implementation projects is proposed by using the goals/questions/metrics method. The results of this work are three-fold. First, a literature review is presented on the topic of user involvement and participation as related with ERP implementation projects. Second, a framework for monitoring user involvement and

participation in ERP implementation projects is proposed. And third, a goals/questions/metrics preliminary plan is proposed to monitor and control user involvement and participation within ERP implementation projects.

Introduction

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems are large and complex systems, and their implementation often requires fundamental changes in the way organizations perform their business processes. Introducing and integrating these systems into an organization is not only a significant financial investment but also a significant risk, which requires skills in change management, process redesign, and business project management. ERP implementation success is influenced by a large number of factors, and, most of the time, it is difficult to measure them objectively. Usually, the metrics proposed within ERP implementation methodologies are related with milestones and costs aspects. This is particularly due to the fact that these methodologies follow the common definition of project success—basically to have full functionality delivered on time and on budget. User involvement and participation is one of the most cited critical success factors (CSFs) in ERP implementation projects (e.g., Bancroft, Seip, & Sprengel, 1998; Bingi, Sharma, & Godla, 1999; Esteves & Pastor, 2000; Kale, 2000; Kawalek & Wood-Harper, 2002; Nah, Lau, & Kuang, 2001). User involvement and participation results in a better fit of user requirements achieving better system quality, use, and acceptance (Esteves & Pastor, 2000).

However, during the initial phases—ERP acquisition and early stages of ERP implementation—end-user involvement is not mandatory but a personal decision to get involved or not. Surveys such as that reported in Wilson, Bekker, Johnson, and Johnson (1996) suggest that user involvement is largely confined to analysis and evaluation activities at present with users tending to be passive rather than active participants. In more conventional bespoke development of information systems, the involvement of users is seen as critical to successful implementation (Markus, 1983). However, despite the popularity of user participation, an obvious anomaly is that, even with user participation, resistance still occurs and systems fail (Cavaye, 1995; Olson & Ives, 1981). In the ERP context, Howcroft and Light (2002, p. 75) mention that “end users are crucial in terms of understanding the operational aspects of the tasks performed and as a result their opinion as to the suitability of a product should at least carry equal weight with the opinions of senior management and systems developers.” They also suggest that ignoring their wishes could have potentially disastrous consequences.

The terms *user involvement* and *user participation* have been commonly used interchangeably in information systems (IS) literature (Barki & Hartwick, 1994),

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