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## Chapter VI

# Enterprise Systems and the Challenge of Integrated Change: A Focus on Occupational Communities

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### Abstract

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*While the business press is awash with claims that investing in enterprise-wide systems is the key to delivering superior economic performance, unfortunately it appears that reaping the benefits of such IT investments is fraught with difficulty. Indeed, the introduction of IT into work organisations is generally marred with persistent reports of underperformance and failure. This chapter critiques the nature of this dilemma and in particular explores the role of diverse occupational groups in its perpetuation over time. This dilemma is sustained over time by the behavioural patterns of diverse occupational groups that have vested but divergent, interests in exploiting IT. Executive management tend to view the introduction of IT as an economic imperative while IT specialists tend to view it as a technical imperative. The coalescent nature*

*of these two imperatives is such that the human and organisational aspects of IT related change are frequently marginalised and ignored. Achieving a more integrated approach to the introduction of IT is inordinately difficult since the narrow perspectives embraced by the executive and IT communities do not naturally attend to change in an integrated manner.*

## **Introduction**

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While the business press is awash with claims that investing in enterprise-wide information systems is the key to delivering superior economic performance, unfortunately it appears that reaping the benefits of such investments is fraught with difficulty. Indeed, the introduction of enterprise systems in work organisations is generally marred with persistent reports of underperformance and failure. This chapter critiques the nature of this dilemma and in particular explores the role of occupational communities in its perpetuation through time. The chapter concludes by way of noting that effecting an integrated approach to the introduction of enterprise systems that accounts for economic, technical, human, and organisational facets of change is inordinately difficult since the requisite knowledge and expertise are widely dispersed among diverse occupational communities.

## **A Historical Dilemma**

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Undoubtedly, the influence of computer based information systems has been pervasive throughout the last four decades. A brief historical tour bears witness to such pervasiveness: from electronic data processing in the 1950s, data processing in the 1960s, management information systems in the 1970s, strategic information systems in the 1980s, to enterprise systems, electronic business, electronic commerce, and electronic government in the 1990s and 2000s. Each decade has witnessed rapid advances in technological innovation which when combined with pivotal administrative innovations have offered the promise of major benefits at multiple organizational and inter-organizational levels.

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