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Chapter XIII

A Critical Success Factor's Relevance Model for SAP Implementation Projects

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Abstract

This chapter presents a unified model of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for ERP implementation projects and the analysis of the relevance of these CSFs along the typical phases of a SAP implementation project. The Accelerated SAP implementation methodology (ASAP) is used as the SAP implementation reference method. Using Process Quality Management method, we derived a matrix of CSFs versus ASAP processes. Then, we evaluated the CSFs relevance along the five ASAP phases, specifically of

those ones related with the organizational perspective. The main advantage of our approach is that we unified previous lists of CSFs for ERP implementation projects and we establish the CSFs relevance according to the implementation processes that should be made in a typical SAP implementation project. These findings will help managers to develop better strategies for supervising and controlling SAP or other similar ERP implementation projects.

Introduction

Despite the benefits that can be achieved from a successful Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems implementation, there is already evidence of failure in ERP implementation projects (Davenport, 1998). Too often, project managers focus on the technical and financial aspects of a project and neglect to take into account the non-technical issues. To solve this problem, some researchers are using a Critical Success Factors (CSFs) approach to study ERP implementations. According to Rockart (1979), CSFs are “the limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful competitive performance for the organization”. CSFs are based on the assumption that a limited amount of criteria, critical of the outcome of a project, can be identified, and that these criteria can be manipulated by managers (Wit, 1998). Thereby, they are a tool for forecasting and managing projects. The management of CSFs in ERP implementations is a thorny issue in ERP research. There is the practical and academic evidence that CSFs do not have the same importance along the various phases of an ERP implementation project (Esteves & Pastor, 2001). Markus and Tanis (2000) advert for the need to define success along the different phases of the ERP lifecycle. They argue that no single measure of ERP systems success is sufficient for all the concerns that organizations’ executives might have about the ERP system experience, and that different measures are needed at different stages in the systems lifecycle. Thus, we attempt to develop a theoretical framework that describes this distribution along the ERP implementation phases. Several academic studies have been published related to CSFs identification but there is no evidence of studies related with operationalization and management of these CSFs.

We agree with Ward (1990) in that CSFs are not, in themselves, directly manageable. Rather than the CSFs, it is the processes that define what a

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