



Chapter III

Information Systems Development Outcomes: The Case of Song Book Music

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INTRODUCTION

When is an information system development outcome considered a success and when is it considered a failure? What factors contribute to a conclusion of either success or failure? How does the situation arise to create the environment which contributes to the above conclusions? Generally, an information system is considered a success when it does what it is supposed to and/or the user is satisfied with the system's performance in support of the information-providing and decision-making responsibilities. Naturally, this area is fraught with the problems inherent in divergent interpretations of "what it is supposed to do," "satisfaction," and "systems performance." Suffice it to say, when the systems developer and user are in positive agreement about these interpretations, the information system development outcome may be considered successful.

Negative information system development outcomes can be classified as either "completed" or "abandoned" projects. First, "completed" projects result in the implementation of an information system, but either the information system fails to attain initially stated goals or attains the goals after the expenditure of more time and effort. According to Laudon and Laudon (1998), 51% of all corporate software development projects result in costs of two to three times more than the initial budget amount, and eventually may require up

to three times longer than originally estimated to complete. Ewusi-Mensah (1997) reports similar statistics, suggesting, as reported in a study by the Standish Group, that almost one-third of all information system projects are terminated before completion. As well, "... 52.7% of the projects completed are 189% over budget..." (Ewusi-Mensah, 1997:74). Thus, is the project a failure, or was the original estimation simply in error? Should these outcomes be regarded as failures or eventual successes? The answer seems to depend upon the perspective taken by the decision-maker. User satisfaction has been employed to provide a relative measure of an interpretation of success or failure as perceived by users. Second, "abandoned" projects are those projects which are never completed. Unfortunately, while they do not even result in the implementation of an information system, they are the cause of the ineffective consumption of company resources.

This chapter analyses an information systems development project, which is considered by the users to be "completed," yet unsuccessful. Initially, the literature available in the area is presented and reviewed. This review is followed by a description of the McComb and Smith (1991) system failure risk framework, which has been adopted as a means of analyzing the case presented in this document. Then the specific situation is presented with a description of the project and the results. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the framework may be useful in understanding information system success or failure within a small business context.

Before proceeding further it is important to differentiate between the terms "entrepreneur" and "small business." In effect, these terms define businesses from two different perspectives. An entrepreneur, in general, represents an attitude towards business operations. Thus, an entrepreneur will tend to be innovative and take action, which will promote growth of the organization. An administrator, in contrast to an entrepreneur, will tend to carry out assigned duties within the scope of a job description. The term "small business" represents an economic entity (Kao, 1989) of a certain size defined by such factors as annual revenue, size of investment, or number of employees. So, either an entrepreneur or an administrator could operate a small business. A further differentiating factor for a small business is the lack of resources, both human and financial. Malone (1985) has suggested this factor also serves to differentiate how small businesses regard employing technology relative to larger businesses.

BACKGROUND

Research into information system development outcomes can be catego-

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