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Chapter 13

Systems Analysts' Attitudes Toward Information Systems Development

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Certain researchers argue that systems analysts are too technical, a situation that may contribute to system failures. The results of this study, however, contradict this argument. By applying a framework of Dos Santos and Hawk (1988), analysts were found to have three primary orientations: technical, socio-political, and user. No one orientation dominated. Using the framework applied in this study, managers can consider the analysts' orientations in assigning development activities. Researchers can identify diverse orientations in future studies where attitudes may be significant predictors of system performance or development success.

Researchers and practitioners observe that systems analysts play a key role in systems development success (Lyytinen and Hirschheim, 1987; Markus, 1983; Zmud, 1979). Besides other factors (e.g., organizational management, technology, complexity, political influences), systems analysts' attitudes toward system development are consistently and significantly related to the quality of the final products (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977a, 1977b; Lyytinen, 1988; Zmud, 1979). A diagnosis of the attitudes of systems analysts may provide insights leading to future system success.

Certain researchers argue that systems analysts subscribe to too technical and economic design ideals (Kaiser and Srinivasan, 1982; Kumar and Welke, 1984). Alleged causes of system failures include the analysts' ignorance of social, political, behavioral, managerial, and psychological factors. Suggestions for improvements to system development include

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Table 1: Abbreviated Statements

S1	Positive user attitude towards system
S2	User on project team during system definition phase
S3	Project should be carefully monitored
S4	Prototyping is useful
S5	Good communication is necessary
S6	Steering committee should manage project
S7	Top management support
S8	User on project team during system design
S9	User confident in system analysts
S10	Turnover in IS staff causes problems
S11	Technically competent IS staff avoids problems
S12	Large projects should be split into smaller projects
S13	Quantifiable benefit to projects
S14	Users initiate projects
S15	Realistic expectation from users
S16	Post implementation follow-up
S17	Walkthroughs with user is important
S18	Careful planning for changes for new system
S19	Turnover in top management
S20	IS staff's commitment
S21	Analysts should be in users' area
S22	Projects address important problems
S23	User interface is important
S24	Proper user training on new system
S25	System design should be frozen before programming
S26	Users integral part of development team
S27	IS staff's political skills
S28	The urgency of the systems
S29	Turnover among users leads to lack of commitment
S30	Dealing with many different user personalities
S31	Different personnel should be involved
S32	Use of structure technique is important
S33	Project leader managerial skills

formal training or education of systems analysts in managerial skills, behavioral ideas, and communications techniques (Benbasat, Dexter, and Mantha, 1980; Green, 1989). Others suggest improvements that include use of a socio-technical approach to system design (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977a, 1977b; Davis, et al., 1992; Markus, 1983). These approaches, however, are expensive and largely unproven. What is more important, the implicit assumption of these proposed solutions, that systems analysts have an undifferentiated technical attitude, may be incorrect. To clarify analysts' attitudes, Dos Santos and Hawk (1988) describe a survey study of 30 systems analysts. The study found that some systems analysts had a technical orientation, however, the majority had a user or socio-political orientation.

The intent of this study is to confirm or refute the identification of major attitudes toward system development held by systems analysts as identified by Dos Santos and Hawk (1988). This study will correct problems in the earlier study associated with the small homogeneous sample. Moreover, this study will describe analysts' attitudes, and examine relationships of several demographic traits to analysts' attitudes.

The sequence of issues follows a logical progression to help in addressing the following questions: 1) Do systems analysts possess diverse attitudes toward system development; 2) Which primary attitudes do systems analysts hold; and 3) are analysts' attitudes related to