

# Chapter 14

## User-Driven Documentation Building for the ERP System

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### ABSTRACT

*Contemporary enterprises use IT tools to support almost every type of business activity. The vast majority use very large business applications called Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. Such applications can be of great help, both for managers and regular staff members. The downside is that such systems are very complicated and they are a subject of frequent changes. Thus, they can be a source of many problems due to the necessity to continuous learning how to properly use them. The authors propose the usage of the Enterprise Social Software (ESS) in order to help users in their efforts toward finding good source of information. Applications such as wiki, RSS, blogs, tags, and discussion forums can be very effective in collaborative knowledge creation and in knowledge sharing. The authors discuss the possibilities of using such tools in building user-driven documentation for an ERP system.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the past few years there has been a big hype about social media and social software. Mostly, it was related to social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace. However, many researchers explore the ways how enterprises can benefit from incorporating social software into their routines. Because social interactions are very important for every human being, it is not surprising that the findings of the research projects are mostly promising. Enterprise Social Software (ESS) become one of the most important tools in terms of collaboration (i.e., crowdsourcing), knowledge management and in the area of supporting innovation.

In this chapter, we decided to address the problem of enhancing user experience in the ERP system. For the sake of simplicity and better management of change process during the lifecycle of the ERP system many users are excluded from the process of designing of business processes that are supported by the ERP system. Frequently an average user barely understands of what is the goal of the certain process that he or she is supposed to carry out. The other scenario comprises situation when user has (after a certain period of time) forgotten the reason why he or she has to fill the specific document form field. The usual way of resolving that sort of problems is to ask the key user or contact the implementation company for

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some guidance. We propose using social software system to support getting explanation of the goal of the business process and the way how this process should be properly handled in the ERP system.

This approach has certain advantages over the other ways of supporting users. In wiki system everybody can add, delete or modify content. Everybody in the enterprise means co-worker. Usually the implementation of any specific business process in the ERP system concerns a limited number of people, who deal with the same problems, use the same terminology, and probably even know each other. In other words, we might say that they comprise a community, which is built based on the similarity of the organizational roles of their members. Using social software system users can provide explanation for themselves. It is supposed to work as a self-service system.

This solution can be perceived like an internal governing, risk and compliance system. Every user can get better understanding of business processes that he is carrying out and he can contribute with his own experience and interpretation thus helping with building an enterprise knowledge base. When there is a change in the policy of the company and this change implies the change of the procedures for the users of the ERP system, social software can be used as a media for communication with employees. It can be also used as a knowledge base about different regulations and risks related to conducting specific business processes.

The chapter is divided into several sections. First section describes a motivation for undertaking of research project. It serves also as an explanation of the goals of this chapter and what we expect to achieve.

In the second section, we provide a literature review on the subject of user experience in the ERP systems and the enterprise social software. We present different kinds of ESS and how an enterprise can benefit from using it to support collaboration and communication between employees.

Third section presents and includes the description of a proposal of the solution to the presented problems and a real world example, showing the application of the postulated approach. It covers the details about the tools being used and the general architecture of the solution.

The chapter is summarized in the fourth section. The contribution and limitations of the research are there presented.

## **BACKGROUND**

In contemporary ERP systems, more and more emphasis is placed on collaboration. The growing interest in collaboration comes from the bigger awareness of the importance of social factor in the execution of business processes. Moreover the new generation of users has much more interest in the collaboration tools because of the wide proliferation of so-called social media (Jackson, 2010). Majority of young people have been accessing their social networking accounts every day. Wikipedia has become one of the most important sources of information for nowadays Internet users (Rainie & Trancer, 2007). Their presence in the social media is affecting their expectations about working with the information systems. On the other hand, the nature of the ERP system compels every employee using it to collaborate with the others, especially during implementation phase (Daneva, 2008). The need for collaboration comes from the complexity of business processes. When business processes are complicated, the ERP software used in the process is also complicated. A multitude of tasks to be performed by the users of the ERP system causes difficulties in task execution. The users have to learn more and more in order to be able to fulfill their tasks. They have to learn how to use the system and what are the new functionalities being offered. When we consider it with the necessity of work under time pressure, an average ERP user has been experiencing a lot of

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