Chapter XV

Analyzing Different Strategies to Enterprise System Adoption: Re-Engineering-Led vs. Quick Deployment

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Abstract

The literature on enterprise systems (ES) adoptions suggests that companies use different strategies; some opting to re-engineer business processes up-front, while others employ a quick deployment strategy on the assumption that organizational change will follow. In this chapter, we explore how these two different strategies play out in practice and also consider the factors that influence which approach is taken. We use exploratory data from interviews with consultants from XYZ who have been involved in multiple ES implementations in external companies as well.
as interviews with project members involved in an internal ES implementation in XYZ. Analysis of the data suggests that some level of re-engineering is an inevitable outcome of ES implementation. However, attempts to re-engineer up-front is difficult and can be problematic. Much of this stems from how the ES is actually used versus its envisioned (or planned) use. The implications for post-implementation exploitation opportunities are explored.

Introduction

Enterprise systems (ES) are being widely adopted by organizations in all types of industry and geographical locations (Robey, Ross, & Boudreau, 2002). The rationale for adoption is that such systems have the potential to allow for the integration of business functions and so facilitate strategic organizational change (Sawyer & Southwick, 2002). However, past research has demonstrated that such systems often do not deliver the hoped-for benefits (Parr & Shanks, 2000; Sauer, Liu, & Johnston, 2001; Scott & Vessey, 2002). Indeed, ERP implementation projects are associated with high levels of failure and user resistance (Aldwani, 2002; Scott & Wagner, 2003). Nevertheless, while failure and project abandonment does occur, most companies persevere to the extent that they get a working information system (Wagner & Newell, 2006b), even though they may be using less of the functionality than anticipated, at least initially, so that they are not fully exploiting the integrating potential of the software (Wagner & Newell, 2006b). It is important, therefore, to consider why companies are able to exploit more or less of the functionality of an ES. In this chapter, we explore this by focusing on different approaches to ES implementation that companies can adopt.

Background Literature

In terms of these different approaches to ES implementation, we can contrast two adoption strategies—a re-engineering-led versus a quick-deployment strategy. In the front-loaded re-engineering model, companies re-design their business processes before implementation, with a view to designing new processes that will enable the organization to take maximum advantage of the integrating potential of the technology (Newell, Huang, & Tansley, 2004). On the other hand, the quick-deployment strategy supposedly eliminates this re-engineering phase and focuses on a speedy deployment of the standard “vanilla” ES package (Nah, Zuckweller, & Lau, 2003); that is the package as pre-configured by the software vendor to fit their particular
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