Chapter XVI

Achieving Strategic Goals: The Role of ERP and the Influence of Use Quality

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the strategic role of an enterprise resource planning system within the International Centre of an Australian University. Several problems with use of the system are identified in the case study. These problems with use quality are a likely cause for the mismatch between what was expected of the system in supporting business strategies and the actual outcome. The users demonstrate an awareness of organisational strategies and goals and consider that the newly-implemented system does not sufficiently support execution of strategy and achievement of strategic goals, or formulation of organisational strategy.
Introduction

Implementation of an enterprise resource planning system (ERP) can be a costly, time-consuming, disruptive, and risky undertaking (Davenport, 1998). Exploitation of information technology (IT) to support business strategies is the concern of an organization’s information systems strategy (Earl, 1989, p. 67).

This chapter discusses findings from an interpretive case study investigating the strategic role of a newly-implemented ERP within the International Centre of an Australian university. The key finding is that users perceive the ERP as not sufficiently supporting execution of strategy and achievement of strategic goals, or formulation of organizational strategy within the International Centre. Several problems with use of the system are identified and are the likely cause of the mismatch between what was expected of the ERP in supporting business strategies and the actual outcome.

The contribution of the ERP to strategy execution and formulation in this case study is explained using an information systems use quality model that identifies problems such as poor requirement and interface quality, poor response times, and lack of availability, as lessening the value of the ERP to the International Centre. A theory-creating approach is taken to explain the contribution of the ERP to strategy as influenced by use quality. The model is a synthesis, guided by issues discovered during the research project, of existing models and literature on information system use quality.

The organizational context or culture, especially social norms and past experiences, appear to influence user perceptions and use of this system. The findings relating to use quality problems are discussed with respect to aspects of organizational context and culture.

Literature concerning strategy in the Australian higher education sector and information systems strategy and planning more generally is reviewed, and the theoretical frameworks are presented. The case study background is then described, and the findings are presented according to strategy, information systems use quality, and organizational context and culture.

Background

The Australian higher education sector is becoming increasingly competitive as federal funding per student diminishes. The case study university recognizes (in a key strategic document) that universities are required to become more business-like, and “to raise substantial funds through student fees, industry
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