Chapter 8
A Reflection Upon the Case Studies

Before the Corporate IT Standardization Management Framework is presented, first a summary and cross case analysis of the previous three case studies is given provided.

SUMMARY OF THE CASES

Case Study I (De Facto Product Standards)

Selection: At the head office a Client/Server (C/S) standardization project was carried out within a 2-year timeframe, affecting 10,000 end users of a business unit. Main objectives of the standardization project, which included hardware and software of both front and back end, were 1) to reduce costs of development and support of both hardware and software; 2) to facilitate change flexibility. One of the core components of this program was application software rationalization, which ranged from desktop productivity tools to applications for complex financial transactions. Guiding principle in the application rationalization phase was that only one type of software was allowed, preferably the latest version, unless business functionality was impaired considerably. The balance between functionality and support/

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license costs was the main criterion for putting an application on the list of standard software. The total number of client and server applications was downsized rigorously by approximately a factor 22 (from 6000 to 265). This list of software products and C/S hardware constituted the set of IT standards.

Application & Control: Heavy load applications that used to run on (midrange) desktops were migrated to high-end servers. This server based computing concept allowed running such applications on low-end desktops, which resulted e.g. in low overall hardware purchase and maintenance costs. In line with the observations by Rada and Craparo (2001), a technical review team carried out the verification of the specified IT product standards in projects. Strict conformity to the related service and project management processes were key elements in the successful usage of the set of IT standards. The team also reviewed any upgrades, replacements or patching needed. Standards were reviewed every 2 years and the review process often resulted in a new product that was incorporated in the set of IT standards, reflecting developments in both the technological and business environment.

Case Study II (Informal Process Standards)

Selection: This standardization initiative was launched at the main Software Development department with the aim of bringing about fundamental changes in the way Business and IT developed software products. The goals of the program were to: 1) Improve quality; 2) Increase productivity and reduce costs; 3) Respond more rapidly to change; 4) Improve co-operation between Business and IT; 5) Increase job satisfaction and attractiveness to staff. The company standards consisted of a combination of the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) (Paulk, 1991) and the Dynamic System Development Method (DSDM™). DSDM was used to assist to reach CMM level 2.

Application & Control: In the implementation phase, control of the separate CMM and DSDM projects was merged to increase staff acceptance and to deal with inefficiencies (higher costs). These process standards were implemented accompanied by an organizational change process, which proved to be important for the overall success. The control on these process standards was considered as strict but one was allowed to deviate if certain aspects of the standard did not add value, as long as it was approved by the QA organization. A version for small projects was developed as well as the possibility of tailoring. The idea was first to enforce the standards and exert discipline, then allow tuning and tailoring. A weakness in the implementation was the lack of alignment between Business and IT that negatively impacted on the whole program.

Case Study III (Proprietary ERP Product)

Selection: An ERP HR suite that included core HR processes, was selected by the HR Business as company standard, based on its Best-in-Class rating by the HR profession. This initiative included standardization of data (both syntax and semantics) which is known to be complicated (Boh and Yellin, 2007). The main driver was lack of consistency of HR information in existing HR information systems and the impossibility of proper analysis and reporting. The HR administration was based on dispersed spreadsheet-like tools often lacking historical data. The goals of the global HR IS were: 1) cost savings through empowerment of employees (self service) and consequently a reduction of HR headcount and reduced HR IS costs; 2) provision of quality services that enable the enterprise to improve its HR function; 3) comply globally with legal and fiscal requirements. The standardization process, especially that of the data semantics, turned out to be ineffective as roles and responsibilities between corporate and
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