Chapter IV

Personal and Situational Factors as Predictors of End User Performance

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ABSTRACT

End-user computing (EUC) has the potential to enhance productivity. However, for this potential to be realized, end users must learn EUC skills and perform at high levels. Because of the significance of end user performance to organizations, it is important to uncover factors that influence end user performance. However, prior research has relied almost exclusively on person factors to predict end user performance even though several models suggest that both person and situational factors influence behavior and performance. This limitation of previous research was overcome by examining the influence of both person and situational factors on end user performance. The three person factors and four situational factors investigated in this study, together, explained almost 40% of the variance in end user performance. Suggestions to enhance end user performance are offered, and directions for future research are discussed.
INTRODUCTION

The emergence of end user computing (EUC) can be traced to the proliferation of microcomputers, increased organizational computing needs, and the availability of sophisticated user application tools (Shayo, Guthrie, & Igbaria, 1999). EUC has the potential to influence productivity, competitiveness and profits. Consequently, computer literacy requirements have skyrocketed for clerical and support staff (Bowman, Grupe, & Simkin, 1995) and for many middle and senior management positions (Olsten, 1993).

Several scholars have acknowledged end user training as an essential contributor to the productive use of computer systems in organizations (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Davis & Bostrom, 1993; Rivard & Huff, 1988). The practitioner literature also supports the view that training is essential for effective use of computer technology. Testimonials to the importance of training are common features in the popular press (Finley, 1996; Warner & Smith, 1990). Because training can affect the success or failure of EUC in organizations (Bostrom, Olfman, & Sein, 1990; Rivard & Huff, 1988), training employees to use information technology productively has become a high priority in many organizations (Aggarwal, 1998; Finley, 1996). Since the primary purpose of introducing new technology is to improve productivity, organizations expect their employees to learn and apply EUC technology to increase their job performance and contribute to organizational effectiveness.

To date, user satisfaction has served as the most popular measure in the literature for measuring EUC success (Igbaria & Nachman, 1990; Mahmood, Burn, Gemoets & Jacquez, 2000; Munro, Huff, Marcolin & Compeau, 1997). Use of user satisfaction as the primary measure of EUC success is based on the implicit assumption that satisfied users perform better than dissatisfied users (Amoroso, 1992). Unfortunately, evidence to support this assumption is lacking. Equating user satisfaction with end user computing success is problematic because it does not tell us anything about productivity. Munro et al. (1997) aptly noted that a better measure of EUC success than user satisfaction is necessary to justify the substantial investments in end user technologies and in end user training. Given that the primary reason organizations computerize their operations is to improve productivity, competitiveness and profits (Harrington, McElroy & Morrow, 1990), unless end users learn the skills and utilize those skills to improve their job performance, the expected benefits of EUC are unlikely to accrue.

This article is organized into five sections inclusive of this introductory section. A selected review of research on end user performance is presented in the second section. In the third section, hypotheses are developed. The methodology and results are presented in the fourth section. In the final section, I will offer suggestions...
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