



## News Release

9<sup>th</sup> March 2011

### ERP systems demand shake up of traditional IT training

New research into training for ERP systems implementation is recommending that a different, more comprehensive approach is needed to the way employees are trained to avoid potentially costly business mistakes.

The Kingston University study points out that employee training is one of the most important critical aspects in successfully implementing an ERP system. But it warns that the traditional reliance on last minute, task-based keyboard training, focused just on ensuring staff can do their jobs after go-live, can be counter-productive.

The report, by Dr Stephen Gourlay, Reader in the Leadership, HRM and Organisation department of Kingston Business School, argues that training has a much wider role to play in positively influencing employees to adopt a complex new ERP system from the outset.

Conversely, the study notes that there are consequences to inadequate training. Poor or insufficient training has been identified as a cause of serious problems, if not failure, in some ERP projects, with additional post implementation training required to rectify issues.

Gourlay reasons that implementing a new ERP system has a huge impact on all areas of an organisation. It entails considerable change in roles, jobs and tasks, so most, if not all, employees, from the boardroom to the back office, will need some training on the system at some stage.

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Gourlay's research recommends that user training is customised as different groups of employees require different types of training at different times. The study has also found that training is more effective if it goes beyond a focus on how to use the system's functionality to include an understanding of how it has changed business and work processes and what effect an individual's actions have on others' work. Research shows this wider approach can help to break old habits and develop employees in new directions.

The report highlights the importance of factoring training in throughout the process, from the early project planning stages, to pre-, during and post-implementation delivery, followed up by refresher training as the system use beds down. As more functionality and modules are added,

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training needs to evolve to ensure continuous improvement in how the system is used to maximise efficiencies for the organisation.

The Kingston research concludes that training is concerned not just with influencing individuals but how whole groups of people approach their work. It suggests that taking a broader, not just task-based, approach also helps both with knowledge transfer between employees and retaining expertise within the organisation.

The report has been sponsored by the IT skills consultancy Optimum. Managing director Sarah Kirk, said: "Our experience has always been that where organisations regard user training as part of their investment in an ERP system, rather than a cost associated with it, they are far more likely to see real business benefits. But we wanted to know if independent research backed that up."

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She added: "The report does support our view that the best results come from a sustained ERP training programme that wins employees' early buy-in and then continues to build their skills as the system evolves."

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