A Finger on the Pulse of PROFILE

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Agenda

Definition of the System

End-users’ Expectations

Potential Problems

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Applied Solutions
What Kind of Information for MIS?

- Clerical & Service Staff
- Supervisory managers
- Middle level managers
- Top managers
What Kind of Information for MIS?

Policies

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Goals

Business Purpose
What Kind of Information for MIS?

- Transaction Processing
- Management Reporting
- Decision Support Systems
What is the Good Information?

- type of business information,
- level of aggregation,
- feeding frequency
End-Users Expectations

- access
- data exploration
- parameterization
- quality of data
- circulation of information
Potential Problems

- goals and objectives
- technical aspects of the system
- human factor
- flexibility
- false assumptions
- implementation
- ....after the installation
How to Avoid Problems?
Basic stages

Survey → Study

Evaluation → Selection

Prototype

Study → Evaluation

Selection → Prototype
Why MDDB Server?

Intelligent Aggregation
Quick Data Access

Products
Time
Clients
Category
Geography
Why AppDev Studio?

Components:

- SAS/IntrNet
- webAF software
- webEIS software

Minimizes programming
offers flexibility
decreases administration costs
Thank you for your attention
A Finger on the Pulse of PROFILE - the MIS System at the Bank BPH HypoVereinsbank Group

Information and data are the organization’s most important asset. Over the years, data processing systems have evolved into management information systems, and management information systems have evolved into decision support systems and expert systems. In the recent past, computers were also used to make expert systems applying such techniques as artificial intelligence.

The purpose of information systems is to supply to the appropriate managers or decision makers with proper information at the right time. First, let’s try to explain what “right” means in the above definition.

For Whom? What Kind of Information for MIS?
Top managers need information that is highly summarized, future-oriented, and external as well as internal. The information is supposed to support strategic planning.

Middle level managers need information that is summarized but it still contains enough details to allow effective control. Such information has a past orientation to describe recent business activity. The middle managers rely more on the internal type of information than on the external one.

Supervisory managers need information that is up-to-date since they use it to control day-by-day business operations. They are supported by the transaction processing information system.
All managers can make use of appropriate management reports which, as a matter of fact, differ only in their level of detail. All managers make decisions – some of them operational, some of them tactical, and some other strategic. Management reporting applications can be designed for managers at all levels of an organization and cannot be considered as separate systems. MIS and DSS systems are built on the transaction processing (they share the fundamental data).

What is the Good Information?
Effective information systems should produce information that is timely, accurate, flexible, reliable, simple, and complete, yet, concise. It is very difficult to estimate the proper amount of information (the level of aggregation, the type of business information, the feeding frequency) and one can say that it is all the same dangerous to possess too much information as too little.

Sometimes a data element could be of interest if it were retrieved on a regular basis (false information is even worse than the lack of it), but in fact it is either not collected at all or collected only optionally. Optional collection does not necessarily mean “killing” data since publishing of incomplete data in a natural way forces users to change the appropriate procedures in order to improve the data quality.
End-Users Expectations
Information systems are always meant to be used by merit workers rather than by system designers. Therefore, actual users should somehow take part in the development stage and in the test phase and it is very important to obtain their agreement as to particular solutions.
The most common users’ expectations are:
✓ to access data and reports as quickly as possible
✓ to get a friendly interface
✓ to obtain the same business results independently from the fact who prepares the reports
✓ to be able to easily parameterize the system and to administer the dictionaries and the meta-base
✓ to achieve the high quality of data
✓ to avoid the circulation of information in a non-electronic form
✓ to explore data with ease

One cannot promise too much. Instead, one should convince the user that the new system will rather support the executive decision making than making decisions by itself. The system will deliver powerful information provided the right procedures are preserved and the proper administration takes place.

Potential Problems
There are some problems and circumstances particularly important for the design and implementation of MIS, namely:
• the lack of goals and objectives for the MIS
• the lack of involvement of managers at all organization levels
• too much emphasis put on technical aspects of the system
• not enough emphasis attributed to the human factor
• the lack of flexibility of the MIS
• false assumptions made by data processing professionals in developing the MIS
• inability of the data processing personnel to understand the needs of management during the design stage
• an inadequate or misdirected implementation of the MIS
• inadequate control and ineffective evaluation and maintenance of the MIS after it has been installed

How to Avoid Problems?
Prototyping is an excellent approach to design and to implement an information system. The emphasis is put on construction of a working model of the final system as soon as possible. The prototype can be refined and developed until the final version of the information system is completed. The prototyping method helps managers to understand better the capabilities and imitations of an information system and makes their expectations more realistic. One can also find some time to do the benchmark tests (to compare different tools, select hardware, establish the right configuration etc.).
A SAS Solution for Report and Application Distribution

Since the Reporting Systems for Central Bank were built in the SAS environment, it was natural to choose the same environment for MIS. Although the modules SAS/EIS and SAS MDDB Server had not been used to develop the reporting system, they became crucial for MIS, thus allowing one to prepare the multidimensional aggregates and explore them interactively. However, the right choice of tools that would enable a large number of users the fast access to data turned out to be a real challenge. Following the recommendation of the SAS consultants, who cooperated by the preparation of the technical feasibility study we decided to use the AppDev Studio and to exploit all of its components i.e.,

- SAS/IntrNet software,
- WebAF software (Java Integrated Development Environment),
- WebEIS software (Java base OLAP reporting).
This solution possesses all the desired features: interactivity, flexibility and availability and it offers both robust data and compute services. It enables one not only to query data but also to analyze, exploit, and report on them using proven SAS functionality (e.g., drill-down or a variety of reporting styles). Last but not least, thanks to the use of Intranet and “thin” client technology, the cost of the solution has turned out to be relatively low. Hence, when the system is ready and it is being tested by the users, there are no more doubts that it was the right decision to apply the SAS tools.