

In a
**Gazette
MINUTE**



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*President
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Tell us about your background.

I'm an industrial psychologist by training. I was an academic in my first career...first as a professor of industrial psychology at Ohio State University in the 70's and then as a professor of management in the business school of the University of South Carolina in the 80's. Now I spend a good deal of time helping higher education institutions make their ERP implementations succeed.

What can an industrial psychologist bring to an ERP implementation?

Two things. The people problems on an ERP project are as daunting, if not more so, than the technical challenges. I mean poor communication, resistance to change, silo effects, lack of engagement and consensus. There are also a variety of project management problems and leadership challenges. These are exactly the problems that an industrial psychologist is trained to address.

What's the second item in the secret sauce for ERP success?

We're comfortable designing metrics for tracking and controlling projects. We also know how to present these metrics to executive decision makers in a way they can understand and follow. One method that works well in ERP is an executive dashboard (complete with dials and gauges and other intuitive graphics). A dashboard dramatically and instantly shows the progress against the schedule and progress against the budget at any moment.

What projects are you working on presently?

We're helping the Tennessee Board of Regents carry out simultaneous, full-suite SunGard ERP implementations on 19 campuses throughout the state. Our role as program manager is to keep them on track and on budget. This project involves weekly system-wide status reports, monthly executive dashboards for university presidents and system executives, and intervention on individual campuses when needed. We are also helping Brown University implement a SunGard BANNER system. We just finished helping the University of Pittsburgh implement PeopleSoft.

What are some common causes of project failure?

Understand that ERP will likely be the most complex technology project a university has ever undertaken. It affects all the major stakeholders. Of the many potential pitfalls, I'll highlight three: inadequate resource allocation; silo loyalties; missing leadership skills. People are the principal resource. How do they do their 'day jobs' and provide significant help to the project? With such strong silo loyalties on many campuses, project team members must learn to wear an "enterprise hat" rather than a "department hat." Although we work in higher education, it's all too common to encounter campuses where subject matter experts have not been trained as managers and leaders.

How can they be successfully overcome?

It can be an absolutely rewarding experience for all involved. The problem-solving organizational development experience is often cited later as the turning point in the project.