

: *What do managers need to know about DSS?*

by Dan Power

Editor, DSSResources.com

All managers need to master the what, when, who and why of computerized decision support systems (DSS). Managers need less knowledge of the where and how of DSS. First, managers need to understand what the concept of a Decision Support System means today. The concept has broadened over the past 40 years to encompass a wide variety of information technologies that support decision making including systems to provide business intelligence. DSS technologies have improved and the need for them has increased. Managers are encountering complexity, ambiguity, volatility, rapid change and higher levels of risk. To cope effectively, managers have an obligation to shareholders to learn about and understand computerized decision support systems (DSS). Managers must know much more about information technology decision support solutions than when they were beginning their careers.

Decision support research and development has a long history and often the concepts of decision support, decision support systems or the acronym DSS are more understandable and intuitively descriptive than related terms like analytics, business intelligence and knowledge management. The basic philosophy of DSS is to support managers with technology and software. Managers are better at dealing with novel, unexpected decision situations than automated decision making system. Once managers grasp this philosophy of decision aiding and the decision support concept, then some examples of decision support systems can make the various DSS categories and types more concrete.

Managers need to be able to provide peers with examples of decision support systems. Because DSS are built using reasonably sophisticated information hardware and software technologies, managers need more than basic computing hardware and software knowledge. Managers often need to provide input to hardware and software choices. Today at a minimum, managers need to be able to operate and maintain the software environment for a personal workstation.

Managers need to master DSS software products relevant to their jobs and in some situations managers need to be able to develop small-scale DSS applications. There is a need for "end user" development of small-scale DSS and preparation of special decision support studies. Because enterprise decision support systems are built primarily for managers and knowledge workers, managers **MUST** be involved in building and managing them.

For many reasons, managers need to understand the upside benefits and the downside risks of

: *What do managers need to know about DSS?*

building specific DSS. Decision support systems can solve problems and create new problems. Managers need to know enough to make intelligent and informed DSS design, development and implementation choices.

Managers need to know how to learn about decision support applications and know when and how to ask for help about decision support issues. So what else do managers need to know about DSS?

Check the following additional topics to begin a journey to effectively deploy computerized decision support systems:

[What is a DSS?](#)

[What is Business Intelligence?](#)

[What is a modern decision support system?](#)

A version of this response first appeared in Power, D., "What do managers need to know about DSS?" DSS News, Vol. 1, No. 8, August 28, 2000. Most recently updated October 2, 2011.

Author: Daniel Power

Last update: 2011-10-02 06:34