## : Why do some managers resist using DSS?

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Opposing change, especially technology change, is common and often times misguided. Rational opposition to change is needed however, and is desirable. Given that most decision support systems (DSS) have positive benefits, why do some managers resist using them? Is the resistance to decision support systems rational? Can resistance to the system be reduced and overcome? Let's examine seven possible explanations for resistance to building or using computerized decision support (DSS).

First, for many years managers had insufficient computer training and limited incentive to learrn more about information technologies. Because managers are receiving more computer training, and new managers are quite sophisticated in their use of computer software, the magnitude of this problem is decreasing. Providing training to managerial users should be part of a decision support implementation plan.

Second, some managers may be concerned that using a DSS will diminish their status and force them to do clerical work. Using a DSS is not the job of a clerk or personal assistant. Today, companies cannot afford to pay an assistant to help managers use a computer to do their job. Resistance based on status is counterproductive and raises business costs.

Third, using a DSS may be resisted because it doesn't fit a given manager's problem-solving style. Not all managers are fact-based, analytical problem-solvers and decision makers. Some managers rely heavily on intuition rather than analysis. While this is true, managers should use both analysis and intuition in solving problems. A good DSS can help manager's who rely on intuition to make a final decision to get and consider the facts.

Fourth, using a DSS does not fit with the manager's work habits of verbal and nonverbal problem solving in face-to-face meetings. DSS should not and cannot replace all face-to face meetings. Communications-driven DSS are an adjunct to traditional meetings, and other DSS can often be used in a face-to-face meeting.

Fifth, DSS models, interfaces, and systems are sometimes poorly designed. Poor design is a

problem, but not an inherent problem. Managers need to be involved in building
DSS, and more resources need to be focused on DSS design and development.

Sixth, some managers argue that building and using a DSS is expensive, unnecessary and
time-consuming. Using a DSS does not need to be time-consuming or tedious
or difficult. DSS can actually save managers time and speed up decision
processes.

Seventh, information overload is a major problem for people. Managers
already receive too much information, and some DSS increase the overload.
Although this can be a problem, DSS can help managers organize and use
information. DSS can actually reduce and manage the information load of a
user. A good design reduces the cognitive load.

Many of the seven reasons cited above for resisting a DSS are excuses and
rationalizations rather than meaningful objections. To gain
advantages from DSS, project champions and DSS developers need to overcome the
objections of managers who resist the use of DSS.

Finally, companies must determine who they want a proposed DSS to
support and what result they want from using the new DSS. For example, an
interorganizational DSS should offer customers value. Value can be improved
service, new products, lower product or service costs, or customization. Often
these benefits come from an increase in short-term costs to the DSS provider,
but this is better than allowing a competitor to lead in technology innovation and
jeopardize an organization's market share in the long term.

In general, managers and DSS analysts are more effective in introducing DSS when they have an
understanding of why people resist change. Understanding the dynamics of change allows us to
plan strategies to reduce irrational resistance. We should always encourage reasoned, rational
questions about a proposed system.

This column is edited and updated from Power (2002) pp. 34-35.

References

Power, D. J., Decision Support Systems: Concepts and Resources for Managers, Westport, CT: Greenwood/Quorum Books, 2002. pp. 34-35.

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