: Why use a common language when developing and using decision support?

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Developing a common language between developers, managers and other decision support users improves communications and understanding and is important. Depending upon our background and expertise, e.g. operations management, engineering, medicine, computer science, or human resources, we have a personal built-in lexicon which we use to communicate as part of our role in an organization. Our personal dictionary works well when we communicate with employees with similar backgrounds and expertise. However, moving outside of this affinity group and bridging the communication gap can be a real challenge. This is particularly challenging when designing decision support and analytics for any specific group of targeted users.

For instance, with the proliferation of health information technology it has never been more important to build a common language to help clinicians become more comfortable with adopting, using and accepting or indeed contributing to the analysis and design of a computerized decision support aid. Decision support for medical or clinical personnel is typically referred to as clinical decision support systems (CDSS). Healthcare professionals, such as physicians, consultants, and nurses, need to speak the same decision support language or at the very least they need to understand what the technologists are saying in order to participate meaningfully in the dialogue. Gibbons (2016) notes "Contradictory interpretations of fundamental notions hinder team efficiency and create unnecessary animosity and frustration."

The jargon used by computerized decision support developers needs to be reduced or eliminated to improve communication between Information Technology and healthcare professionals. This change will help to facilitate more effective requirements gathering and create an improved feedback and development loop. The success of computerized decision support is largely dependent upon knowing the target users for the proposed decision support and their needs.

In order to realize the value of computerized decision support, BI and big data analytics, we need to move away from buzzwords favored by vendors and consultants towards a language that is accessible and meaningful for everyone involved in the process. It is only by finding a shared way to communicate that decision support technologists and managers/users will begin to truly understand one another.

Many organizations and teams do not have a shared vocabulary, but high performing organizations and teams seem to have a common or shared language for decision making and discussion. Decision support systems can provide decision makers with a common shared vocabulary

promoting better communication and information/knowledge sharing. Enhanced collaboration among team members should reduce the time for decision processes and improve decision outcomes. Both the organization as a whole and individual users benefit when a shared vocabulary is used to discuss decision making and decision processes.

We are trying to build the modern day computer-based equivalent of the Tower of Babel. We do not seek a tower "tall enough to reach heaven", but we want to improve human decision making. To reach this lofty goal we must have a shared language. With one shared decision and information technology language, nothing in the domain of computerized decision support will be beyond our reach.

References

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