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Advances in computer information technology in recent years have led to a wide range of systems that managers now use to make and implement decisions. In general, these systems have been designed from the ground up for specific purposes and are very different from standard electronic data processing systems. Too often, unfortunately, managers have little room in developing these systems support solutions: At the same time, the non-managers who develop them have limited understanding of how they can be used. Despite these shortcomings, the author found that a number of the 56 systems he studied were successful. The difference between success and failure is the extent to which managers can use the system to improve their performance in their organizations. Thus, the author suggests that it is this criterion that designers and managers should jointly attribute the use of the possibilities of modern technologies. What can managers really expect from computers other than a pile of reports of a foot deeply dumped on their desks every two weeks? Everyone knows, for example, that computers are well aware of receivables. But what about all the promises and all the speculation over the past few decades about the role of the computer in management? While progress has been made in basic information search, processing and displaying technologies, my recent study of 56 computerized decision support systems confirms the general wisdom that very few management functions have actually been automated to date, and all the signs that most of them may not be. Instead, my findings show that other researchers have reported: applications are developed and used to support the manager responsible for making and implementing decisions, rather than replacing it. In other words, people in a growing number of organizations are using what is often called decision support systems to improve their managerial effectiveness. Unfortunately, my research has also confirmed the fact that, while more and more practical applications are being developed for use by decision-makers, three significant obstacles still stand in the way of others who could benefit from them. First, managers and computer users in many organizations are only familiar with some of the types of systems that are currently in use. As a result, different types of innovative systems were often conceived and nurtured by internal or external entrepreneurs rather than system users or their superiors. Secondly, and closely related to my first find, these entrepreneurs tend to focus on technical characteristics. Too often, this myopia means they are unable to how such systems can be used to improve the effectiveness of individuals in organizations. Finally, highly innovative systems - the very ones that management should find most useful - is implemented, especially when the incentive for change comes from a different source than the potential user. Simply put, my goal in this article is to discuss, without being ingested in technology engagement, the high potential of the various support systems, the challenges and risks they pose to managers and performers, and a wide range of strategies to address these challenges and risks. There are many ways to classify computer systems, it is practical to compare them in terms of what the user does with them: Extracts isolated data items. It is used as a special analysis mechanism for data files. Receives preliminary data aggregation as standard reports. Assesses the implications of the proposed solutions. As Exhibit I shows, EDP reporting systems typically perform only the third function in this list of operations that I have organized by measuring from data orientation to model orientation. Thus, unlike an EDP user who receives standard reports on a periodic basis, the user of the decision support system usually initiates each instance of the use of the system, either directly or through a staff intermediary. Exhibit I Comparison of EDP Systems' Applications, Goals, and Characteristics vs. Decision Support Systems While decision-oriented reporting systems often grow out of standard EDP systems, I will focus on seven different types, summarizing one example of each type. It is interesting to note that external consultants have developed systems in my second, fifth and seventh examples, while in the first, third and sixth cases it is about creating people acting as internal entrepreneurs on the basis of staff roles; only the fourth system was developed for the direct purpose of the user. The same model of initiating innovative systems by others, besides users, was present in many of the 56 systems. 1. Search only - the information system of the shop. In order to help the production promenades increase the percentage yield on the newly developed 50-stage microloan production process, the management of one company created an online information system of the shop. Operators submit daily work reports that include yield, release date, identification of the person who does the work, and so on. The leakers then juggle this information to obtain performance data on the operator, the machine, and the batch. So they can use the system in a number of ways. They can control the workflow, identify exit problems and address day-to-day issues such as who worked for which batch, when, and which operators are ahead or behind schedule, or below schedule. Protomen have 13 standard commands with which they can obtain data stored in the system and display them on the terminal of the cathode beam tube. Teams allow them to adapt to their needs. Search and analysis is a portfolio analysis system. Before advising clients or making sanctioned trading decisions, portfolio managers at the bank I studied use an online system to analyze individual portfolios. Managers can bypass laborious manual methods and obtain portfolio information in graphic or tabular form. Depending on the situation, the manager can check both individual portfolios and portfolio groups from different points of view, for example, rank them differently, get a breakdown by industry or level of risk, and so on. Thanks to this flexibility, the bank's portfolio managers are more efficient at using a huge amount of information, most of which existed before the system, but was only available through tedious manual analysis. 3. Multiple databases plus analysis - sales information systems. Great flexibility was also the reason that two consumer goods companies and one manufacturing company I looked at developed information sales systems that are very similar. EDP's standard features were too inflexible to produce timely and cost-effective special sales analysis reports for marketing and company planners. In each case, information obtained from EDP systems is now supported separately so that it is convenient, and in two cases to be able to analyze it in conjunction with external acquired proprietary databases and models. In principle, each system is the means by which an employee or team tries to help decision-makers. Their working methods are gradual: identifying the problem; bring to it the current system and existing experience; Develop a solution in the form of an analysis or an additional system module, and incorporate the results into an extended version of the system. Evaluation of decisions using the accounting model - budget sources and applications of funds. To speed up operational decision-making and financial planning for two years, the insurance company uses the budget system in an online mode, source and application of funds. The inputs are projections of future business levels in various areas of insurance and investment, as well as assumptions relating to important indicators such as future money market rates. The output is projected to be total cash flow per month. The Investment Committee uses this model to allocate funds by investment and to minimize the amount of cash idle in banks. The Committee compares projected cash flows on the basis of different distribution decisions; the decisions it actually makes are decisions that produce adequate projected cash flows and that are acceptable to groups in the company. In fact, the system is the accounting definition of the company. There is no doubt about the accuracy of the relationship in the model, so the way the results are projected may be wrong if the estimates of the level of business activity or the money market rate are incorrect. Evaluating solutions using a modeling model - a marketing solution system. In order to provide a more rational basis for repetitive marketing solutions, the consumer goods company uses a model that links levels of advertising, promotions and pricing with sales levels for a particular brand. The model was developed in a team setting by aligning the analysis of historical brand information with human subjective feelings about the impact on sales of different levels and types of advertising and other marketing actions. The model has been tested by tracking its accuracy in forecasting sales based on competitive actions that have been taken. Unlike the accounting model I just mentioned, this is a modeling model in which some of the most important relationship scores are at best. For example, there is simply no rule by which you can confidently predict sales based on advertising levels. In fact, it was the heart of the problem in designing the model. Although it has proved useful for forecasting, much of the value of the model lies in the company's clearer understanding of the market environment. Decision-making - optimizing the use of raw materials. Another consumer goods company, faced with short-term supply problems for many of its commodities, has developed an optimization model to solve the mathematical puzzle of choice and balancing between different product recipes. The contribution to the model includes a number of different recipes for many products, short-term levels of raw materials supply, and production requirements for finished products. The solution is to choose recipes that maximize production using existing supplies. When the short-term supply situation changes, the model can be revised and a new set of recipes selected. This system has a significant impact on how managers view distribution policies. Initially, they considered the allocation of scarce raw materials to products by prioritizing products. The model showed that it is more profitable to start with production needs, and then allocate scarce resources by optimizing the combination of product recipes. 7. Decision-making is a system of insurance renewal rates. As a result of an overhaul of its group insurance information system, the insurance company developed a system to address part of the clerical burden of underwriting and to ensure consistency and accuracy in rate calculations. Instead of calculating renewal rates manually, underwriters fill out coded entry sheets for that calculate the rate of renewal based on a number of standard statistical and actuarial assumptions. Because these assumptions may or may not apply to specific policies, policies, review the documentation accompanying the policy and decide whether standard calculations are applicable. If this is not the case, the coding sheet changes accordingly and is re-subordinated. In fact, the system makes a decision in absolutely standard situations, while the underwriter decides whether the situation is standard and if not, what adjustments are needed. As a result, underwriters can focus on the substance of their work rather than on related clerical matters. The range of capabilities these seven systems represent a wide range of approaches in supporting solutions. The first helps the production leaks by simply providing quick access to historical information, such as who has worked on what is a lot and when the work has been done. But protomen have to decide what to do once they have the information. On the other hand, the underwriter support system in some cases makes a decision. Between these two extremes, model-oriented analysis systems help people organize information, and facilitate and formalize the evaluation of proposed solutions. While ceos in most large companies have used budget or planning systems similar to the source and application models I've talked about, the range of opportunities for other types of decision support systems is surprisingly wide. Obviously, some of these systems don't have much use in many settings. However, their diversity suggests that most companies need to have a number of genuine capabilities to apply the concept of computer support to decision-making. Motives managers What do the solution support systems that actually help their users? What is their real impact? In my review, the answers to these questions proved elusive in many cases, as users valued the system for reasons that were completely different from the original ideas about what the systems were supposed to accomplish. In fact, there is a wide range of targets for these systems. While many decision support systems share the goals of standard EDP systems, they go further and address other management issues, such as improving interpersonal communication, promoting problem solving, promoting individual learning, and strengthening organizational control. Such systems can influence interpersonal communication in two ways: by providing individuals with tools for persuasion and by providing organizations with a vocabulary and discipline that facilitates negotiations across the boundaries of units. The Tools of Persuasion Standard Texts on System Analysis completely ignore the personal use of decision support systems as persuasion tools. But consider the following offensive (convince someone to do something) uses to which companies supplied these systems: the manager of the chemical plant tried to meet the production targets (quantity by product) that were set a marketing group. Unfortunately, the group will prepare the targets without much regard for the lack of raw materials in which the plant worked. The plant used the model to calculate the production mixtures. At one point the plant manager came in to know that he could use this model to investigate whether marketing sets targets that led to poor plant use and made it seem ineffective. As he ran the model under a series of different production mix goals, it became clear that this was the case, and he used the results to convince marketing to change the mix of his plant's production. The data search and manipulation system first gained widespread exposure in the transport company when a number of the company's top managers used it to develop a good quantitative justification for the proposed merger. This system could be used to study and manipulate a large database of information about the industry. Although the merger was not approved, management believed that the system helped it to a good fight. The management of the shipping company found that the system it used to consolidate and finalize strategic investment plans also helped it negotiate with banks. Banks and other sources of financing appear to be equally impressed by the rigorous computer analysis on which management based its requests for funding. As a result, the advantage in trust was small, but, in the opinion of management, noticeable. Now that we've seen illustrations of offensive persuasion tools, let's look at examples of defensive (convince someone that a user did a good job) uses these systems: When asked whether he ever made direct use of the case tracking system, the head of the forensic team at a government regulatory agency said he remembered only one case. That was when he spent the lunch hour generating the report to make his group's latest performance appear as favorable as possible, despite some unfortunate delays and problems that made the standard report look bad. The new president of a major conglomerate used a one-year budget model to learn about the current election budget, and to help him discount what people in various fields claimed by touching on their own budget needs. The schedule of classes at the training school for the company's service staff found its work disappointing, as it was always difficult to justify the budget on explicit grounds. Using a model that generated optimal workout schedules, the planner could protect himself very easily by saying: Using these assumptions about exhaustion, acceptable peak time deficits and other considerations, this is the best budget. If you (budget I would like to change these assumptions, I would be happy to create a new budget. What level of deficit do you propose? Thus, the system does not help the planner make decisions, but also helped him protect them. Many people suspected that a new enterprise product in a consumer company might not be appropriate, but no one knew exactly why. When the risk analysis was carried out using the model, the reason became clear: the company had a very significant risk of decline. In addition to sealing this decision, the analysis gave a clear answer to the people who offered this enterprise. A cynic might argue that people use or abuse systems in such situations. A more practical finding is that these systems simply serve to improve the effectiveness of managers in their organizations by helping them communicate with others. I want to point out that most of the benefit of many decision support systems in my sample has been this kind. Helping communication solutions support systems also helps managers negotiate between organizational units by standardizing process mechanics and creating a common conceptual framework for decision-making. In my survey, managers have often noted that consistent definitions and formats are an important means of communication, especially between people in different organizational units, such as units or departments. In some cases, the development of these definitions and formats has been a long-term and sometimes difficult task, which has been gradually carried out over several years, but which has also been considered a major contribution of systems. For example, one of the goals of some model-oriented systems in my sample was to evaluate in advance the overall outcome of solutions that different people consider separately, filtering those solutions using a single model. In these cases, the system has become an implicit arbiter between the different objectives of the different departments. Instead of arguing from their different perspectives, marketing, production and financial people could use the model to demonstrate the impact of one group's proposals on the actions of another group and on the overall outcome. As a result, the issues were clarified and the negotiation process accelerated. The production fluids I mentioned earlier noted the same simplification. This helped them to discuss work schedules and research problems by providing immediate access to objective information about who did what, when and how well at any production facility in the workshop. Value for the user While implementing a number of successful systems I have studied has found it necessary to go through the motions of presenting value/benefit justification that is due to the dollar value of personal effectiveness, they do not believe that these numbers are greater than anyone else did. Management has usually decided to assume that the proposed system seems to make sense and probably how people interacted and/or made decisions. Monetary savings are obviously a very important and appropriate rationale for the development of computer systems, but at this stage it should be clear that the assumption in the style of EDP that systems should always be justified in these terms is not sufficient in decision support systems. It is equally obvious that there is some danger in the development of the system simply because someone thinks it makes sense, especially if someone is not a direct user of the system. In fact, the systems that I cited as my first, second and fifth examples started this way and faced resistance until they were moved as something that users would like to become more efficient. Again, the common problem here is a common trend for technical people to focus on the technical beauty of the system or idea and assume that non-technical people will somehow see the light and be able to figure out how to use the system in solving business problems. This kind of proptitism was present in the history of almost every failed system in the sample. The message is clear: try to take advantage of the creativity of technical specialists, but rest assured that it is aimed at real problems. The challenge, of course, is how to achieve both of these goals. There are a few ways I'm going to discuss. Development Patterns Despite the popular belief that user needs should be taken into account in the development of systems and that users should be actively involved in their implementation, users did not initiate 31 of the 56 systems studied and were not actively involved in the development of 38 out of 56. The results illustrated in Exhibit II are not surprising. Prospective users did not initiate or play an active role in implementing 11 of the 15 systems that faced significant implementation problems. Conversely, in 27 of the 31 systems in which users played a role in initiating and/or played an active role in implementation, there were relatively few such problems. Exhibit II Systems Resist Users But it would be wrong to draw conclusions from these conclusions that systems should be avoided entirely if prospective users do not initiate them, nor play an active role in their implementation. First, 14 of the 25 systems that I studied in which this model was ultimately successful. More importantly, many of the truly innovative systems in my sample, including 5 of the 7 that I described earlier, exhibited this model. On the other hand, many systems initiated by users do nothing more than mechanized existing practices. While such mechanization can be very useful, and while I am certainly not assuming that major innovations should come from external sources, the real is to be able to use ideas, regardless of their source. One way to do this is to develop a design strategies to encourage users to participate and participate in system development, regardless of who initiated the concept. Examples of successful strategies follow. Impose gracefully: Marketing and production managers in a decentralized company did not enjoy the additional work (changes in format and data reporting requirements) required for the annual budget system set by top management. Initially they were particularly unenthusiastic because they thought the system would not help them. This quid pro quo worked well; instead of seeing the system as a complete imposition, the manager saw it as an opportunity to participate in something that would benefit them. Running dog and pony show: Central planning staff at two companies have developed systems for budgeting and financial analysis. In one company, the system was never caught, despite lengthy training demonstrations for unit employees and other potential users. These people seemed enthusiastic about the capabilities of the system, but never used it if corporate planning people did all the work for them. In contrast, the training program for the system in another company facilitated immediate and active participation. In order to participate in the seminars, people had to bring their own financial analysis problems. They learned how to use the system by working on these problems. When the workshops ended, many users were thrilled: not only did they know how to use the system, but they also proved to themselves that it could help them. Either can happen, not only when the system is designed without consultation with the user and the affected parties, but also when there is no one having enough experience with a specific kind of system seen to clearly visualize their strengths and weaknesses before it is built. Implementing a number of systems in my sample avoided these pitfalls by creating small prototypes that gave users something specific to respond to. As a result, a large-scale version could be developed with a realistic view of both what was needed and what would be flying in the organization. A similar approach, also successful, is simply to create systems into small pieces that can be used, modified or easily discarded. The user's hook with Each new module or application developed as the result of one of the three information sales systems I mentioned earlier goes through three stages. The first phase consists of common, common, discuss any current problem areas that groups of users are concerned about. After research conducted by management scientists, the second phase presents the name of a brief official statement about the problem, written jointly with a group of users. In addition to describing the problem, this statement goes over the methodology and resources that will be required to respond to it. The third step is a formal request for permission from your own pocket. Selling system: In one of the companies I studied, a marketing analysis team used a direct sale procedure to convince people of the merits of a sales forecasting system. The field was very simple: they compared manual monthly forecasts for one year with system forecasts. System predictions were more accurate for ten months out of twelve, with fewer errors overall than manual ones. The system was adopted. In another company, management had a real-time system installed to monitor the largely automatic production of low-cost consumer goods in order to minimize material losses due to creeping incorrect adjustments in the machine's settings. During the initial installation, the implementation team found suspicions, but previously unfounded, of deception by staff in this part; more parts left a lot of machines than entering them. Cautious hints were removed that the monitor should be checked because it records impossible results. The employees were sold under the new system: they knew very well that it worked. Fundamental Changes Despite the extensive experience with EDP, many organizations have used no more than one or two of the seven types of decision support systems that I have illustrated here. One reason for this is that the rationale for such systems can be difficult: quantification of the impact of replacing ten clerks with one computer is one thing, while quanting the impact of improving the individual efficiency of line personnel is another matter entirely. Another reason is that implementation can be complex: many ideas come from people other than users. However, the development of a decision support system makes sense when it becomes clear that fundamental changes may be required in the way decisions are made and implemented. Often, the process of determining a system is as valuable as the system you've created. My last point is that the concept of solution support systems can in itself help managers understand the role of computers in their organizations. As the name implies, data processing systems organize and accelerate the mechanics of doing business by automatically processing the mass of data. On the other hand, Expanding these systems helps people make and report decisions about administrative and/or competitive tactics and strategies. The support systems I've talked about go even further. On. Since the expansion of existing data processing systems, many decision support systems are built from scratch for the sole purpose of improving or speeding up the decision-making process. The basic philosophy is that using computers to help people make and communicate decisions is as legitimate and appropriate as using computers to process the masses of data. There is evidence that this view is somewhat caught and is becoming more widespread. This does not mean that all organizations should delve into the winning task, but that managers should be aware of the opportunities and challenges in this area and should try to assess whether their organizations should move in that direction. 1. Stephen Alter, Computer Decision Assistance Research in Organizations, Ph.D. Thesis, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1978. A version of this article appeared in the November 1976 issue of Harvard Business Review. Reviews. management information system pdf for b.com

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