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PANEL 11

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES FOR BUSINESS PEOPLE: HOW SHOULD THESE TECHNIQUES DIFFER FROM TECHNIQUES FOR IS PROFESSIONALS

Panel Chair: Steven Alter, University of San Francisco

Panelists: Sue Conger, Southern Methodist University
Carolyn Green, University of Houston

Much of the systems analysis and design literature and much of current practice seems to assume that the work will be organized and carried out by professional IS analysts. In the age of decentralization, flat organizations, and outsourcing, business professionals must take on more systems analysis responsibilities, either directly or through their subordinates and contractors.

This panel discussion asks whether typical business professionals who are not IS professionals might need their own systems analysis techniques. Systems analysis techniques for IS professionals focus on clarifying and shaping system requirements to create a rigorous specification from which a programmer can work. Techniques for business professionals might focus on developing a better understanding of business process alternatives or on other topics they can delve into without being technology experts. Panel members will present a range of views on the topic.

- Steve Alter will summarize a systems analysis method designed for business professionals based on experience as a professor and former VP of a software firm. The method was developed through many iterations of a presentation combining concepts of TQM, reengineering, and sociotechnical systems. It was validated to some extent by asking working MBA and EMBA students to use it for analyzing information systems in businesses.
- Sue Conger will discuss matching techniques to problems that novices can handle independently. Based on twenty-five years of industry and academic experience plus research during work at Mobil Corp., she will propose application development activities users should and should not do. Support for her ideas will be developed from a three year study of novice analysts using four different types of methodologies.
- Carolyn Green will respond from the viewpoint of a former Pennzoil IS executive who is now teaching and doing research related to organizations and systems development. She will cite recent developments approaching the same problem from the perspective of object-oriented analysis, resource life-cycle analysis, and prototyping. She will compare the likely practicality of these approaches with those presented by the other panelists.

Each panel member will present a personal viewpoint for about fifteen minutes. The panel will then spend fifteen minutes comparing both the systems analysis methods discussed and research approaches used for evaluating those methods. This will leave substantial time for comments and questions from the audience about three primary issues: 1) Should systems analysis techniques for business professionals differ from those for IS professionals? 2) What are the characteristics of systems analysis techniques that typical business professionals can use? 3) What are the key research topics in this area and how should the research be performed?