

5-2009

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Repository Citation

Jeyaraj, A. (2009). Oracle E-Business Suite in the Enterprise Systems Course at the Raj Soin College of Business. *Technology First*, 7 (5), 14-14.

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Oracle E-Business Suite in the Enterprise Systems Course at the Raj Soin College of Business

By: Anand Jeyaraj, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Information Systems, Raj Soin College of Business, Wright State University

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, or simply enterprise systems, are enterprise-wide information systems that enable core activities underlying business processes in organizations. Enterprise systems incorporate several stand-alone information systems ranging from marketing, purchasing, sales, distribution, scheduling, human resources, customer relationship, finances and decision support through a single integrated central database that captures data relating to the various activities and business processes in organizations.

Enterprise systems are available as out-of-the-box solutions from several software vendors such as SAP, Oracle Corporation and Microsoft Corporation. These ERP solutions, according to its vendors, typically incorporate industry best practices for enabling business processes, i.e., enterprise systems may not always be compatible with organizational practices. Consequently, organizations generally have to customize enterprise systems for their own business processes or reengineer their business processes to fit the enterprise systems. Thus, enterprise systems implementation is a non-trivial activity that requires information systems professionals skilled in business process mapping, reengineering and enterprise systems.

Recognizing this need, the Raj Soin College of Business has been offering an undergraduate course on enterprise systems development and implementation since January 2008. Through the duration of the course lasting ten weeks, student "consulting" teams interview senior executives and key personnel at a client organization and learn about its operations, tour its production and warehouse facilities, map its business processes, identify enhancements for more streamlined operations and construct an ERP business model that serves as a blueprint for implementation. Student teams also develop a "business case" that will help the organization determine whether ERP systems can be justified for their operations.

Beginning January 2009, the same course also introduces students to Oracle E-Business Suite as an example of a specific tool for actual ERP implementation. The Oracle E-Business Suite supports a variety of application areas such as supply chain management, customer relationships management, product lifecycle management, procurement and manufacturing. In association with the Oracle Academy that facilitates learning of enterprise systems by providing the software and curriculum, students are provided hands-on training on using the Oracle E-Business Suite for a variety of business processes such as order to payment, procure to pay and bank statement to reconciliation. Students thus gain an in-depth understanding of how ERP systems enable business processes in organizations.

The course also introduces students to cutting edge industry practices through the academe/industry connections with leading proponents of practices regarding ERP systems development and implementation. Between January and March 2009, subject matter experts from three organizations – Booz Allen Hamilton, Corbus LLC, and Sogeti USA, all with a presence in Dayton – visited the Raj Soin College of Business and shared their experiences in developing and implement-

ing ERP systems for the benefit of students. Collectively, the subject matter experts introduced students to various issues and practices such as requirements elicitation and verification, business process mapping and reengineering, software configuration management, contract and engagement management, quality assurance, project tailoring, selection of methodologies, skill sets and domain knowledge, project documentation and change management.

Industry reports suggest that ERP systems will become even more pervasive over the coming years as organizations strive to expand and streamline their business processes and operations. *If you are interested in finding out more about the ERP program at the Raj Soin College of Business, please contact Anand Jeyaraj at anand.jeyaraj@wright.edu.*

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