

Work System Theory and the Work System Method for Analyzing Systems in Organizations from a Business Viewpoint

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Abstract:

The work system method (WSM) was developed over almost two decades as a systems analysis and design method business professionals could use for their own purposes or in collaboration with IT professionals. To date, many hundreds of MBA and Executive MBA students have used various versions of WSM in classroom settings to produce management briefings about possible improvements in real world systems in organizations they worked in. The underlying ideas were recently formalized as work system theory (WST). This presentation summarizes WST and a number of extensions that are relevant to WSM. WST consists of three components: the definition of work system, the work system framework for visualizing a work system, and the work system life cycle model for visualizing how a work system evolves through a combination of planned and emergent change. Extensions of WST include work system principles, work system design spaces, a meta-model for describing a work system in the type of detail that IT professionals prefer, interpretations of service systems as work systems, and a theory of workarounds.