

# **SFS (Shared Financial System) Upgrade**

## **Post Project Review (PPR)**

Thursday, February 9, 2006  
Pyle Center

### ***Background:***

The SFS Upgrade project was a seven-month effort by UW System Administration, DoIT and the campuses to migrate the PeopleSoft Financial Applications from version 7.5 to version 8.8. The project began in earnest in April 2005 and culminated with the unveiling of the upgraded SFS at the end of November 2005.

Invitations were extended to over 70 individuals, to participate in both the survey (sent before the PPR), and the PPR. Approximately 60 attended the SFS-PPR.

### ***1. What went well (during the upgrade)?***

#### **Team Composition**

- The appropriate people were involved in implementing the upgrade
- The project sponsors were engaged, which was a real positive.
- Assigning a site leader at each campus to coordinate the tasks, and signing off on the task completion paid off.
- The leadership throughout all areas was outstanding
- End users being involved directly benefited them. They recognized that if they didn't learn the new system, it would negatively affect their work.
- There was a synergistic affect as a result of the structure of the different committees. There were members on the steering committee selected to represent different areas of expertise (CIO's DoIT, staff, etc.) and if there was a problem, representatives could go back to their campus and be the driving force to meet schedules.
- Everyone was focused and dedicated to a successful upgrade.
- The cumulative knowledge of the team resulting from the initial SFS project and the 7.5 upgrade was beneficial during this upgrade.
- There was an overall positive attitude, with problems being expected, and seen as challenges for a free exchange of ideas or for appropriate staff to seek resolution or to escalate to PeopleSoft.
- Everyone worked (well) together.

#### **Team 'Can Do!' Attitude**

- Everyone working on the upgrade had a vision of 'success' - and they worked hard to make the upgrade successful.

- This project had a high level of respect at all levels (technical, functional, project management), which isn't always the case, and why this upgrade worked well.
- The business community working with technical staff previously, created a history of trust and open communication, which carried through for this project.
  - o The history of cooperation especially among the Controller community goes back for years. We have been meeting together and we were comfortable talking with each other about problems, which contributed to both the readiness for the challenge and the success of the upgrade.
  - o There was a commitment for the long journey together, and the history together resulted in not questioning deadlines, or the project.

## **Communication**

- Communication about what was going on was prompt, accurate, direct and thorough at all times. All knew the true situation and were able to do their jobs.
- The Project team was very accessible. They were prompt to return calls and emails.
- Project team leaders also responded quickly and were available providing feedback in-person and by email quickly. They were open and honest – even if they didn't have the answer, they told us they are working on it, and followed up. They were not afraid to say when there was a problem. Nothing was hidden behind the scenes.
- Having the website with status updates and documentation was extremely helpful
- Since Oracle took over PeopleSoft, their response rate is 10X better than before. They may not have the answer right away, but they were responding quicker.

## **Documentation**

- Project formation documentation was excellent. Role definition for various teams and stakeholder groups followed standard project management protocol.
- The 'website' had documentation readily available for the team when it was needed. The timelines, manuals, etc. on the website were very helpful.
- Communication from UW System and the project team was well documented.

## **Project Management**

- From the beginning there was a team, budget, plan and a deadline; and these were all was kept current throughout the project.

- There was a methodology to identify risks when the project was chartered. An ‘anticipating problems workshop’ was held early on, which identified potential problems and rated or prioritized these problems in terms of the attention needed, in order for the project to succeed.
- Roles were clearly defined, as were tasks (e.g., ‘readiness checklist’) identifying what needed to be done, when, testing, etc.

## **2. What could have been improved?**

### **Communication**

- At the end, functional staff were relied on too heavily, which didn’t allow for timely responses

### **Documentation**

- Manuals needed edits and updates. There is work going on with the campuses to clean them up.
- PeopleSoft/Oracle – we felt we were misled regarding what the upgrade was. Their communication and documentation could be improved. Things that were changed were not in the release notes.
  - o Patches that came in the middle were a surprise to some, but we didn’t know the consequences of the patches.

### **Project Management**

- During the planning stage, we could have used more resources (functional side), e.g., instead of working 80 hrs a week, another person would have been helpful.
- As a group we needed to emphasize continuous process improvement by looking at business processes that needed attention and/or improvement.

### **Testing, Training and Quality**

- At the beginning of the upgrade, new or added features required time/staff/resources to investigate to determine whether or not to install the added features.
  - o Increased functionality was not always utilized because we did not have enough time to investigate and decide whether or not to include.
- The upgrade from 7.5 to 8.8 was the biggest technology we’ll ever do. We didn’t have the technical expertise.
  - o Contracting with more consultants earlier was needed. We didn’t know what we didn’t know what expertise was needed (especially with Accounts Receivable/Billing Information (ARBI)).

- Consultants vs. learning by doing vs. training:
  - Technical consultants would also have been helpful (rather than learning by doing).
  - This upgrade (relative to 7.5) was easier, and we had consultants for that, so we learned more during this upgrade as a result.
  - We may need to get training &/or bring in expertise.
- Even though we knew mechanically what to do, we lacked policy and functional area expertise. When training end users who had detailed questions came forward, we were not prepared to provide them with this information.
  - The focus groups going forward could address this.
  - User groups with membership from the campuses would better serve to develop policy, procedures and best practices.
- We needed more networking. We got better as we evolved. We could have used networking at the beginning (now we use higher ed listserv). We tried to figure things out on our own.
  - Going to Higher Education Users Group (HEUG) to be exposed to what we didn't know, to network, and to find resources would have helped.
  - The customization of bolt-on (got from Australia) was brought up in advance

### ***3. Overall themes that emerged***

#### **Team spirit**

- We are in this together and we will succeed! We're going to make this work!
- Knowledge of a new system can be overwhelming, but we must understand it.

#### **Project Management**

- Skilled project management made the difference,
- Leadership throughout and in all areas was outstanding. For example, assignments of responsibility to the site managers was effective. It identified what any one person had to do.
- There was an accountability structure, so we knew who was accountable.
- Continue the upgrade process (at some level).

#### **Communication**

- Communication overall was excellent!
  - Communication regarding the functional side (day-to day) was valuable.

## **Testing, Training and Quality**

- Resources (time, consultants, budget) for networking and doing University visits, research was necessary.
- Strengthen the infrastructure services for SFS so they better meet the needs of the business units (scheduling, storage, etc.)

## ***Recommendations for future upgrades***

### **Overall**

- The success of this project needs to be brought to the attention of VP Don Mash, so it can be incorporated into other projects. Ultimately this project success should be shared with the Department of Administration (DOA).
- The energy and synergy to do this project needs to go forward.
  - o A users group or a listserv or is needed so we can continue to work together.
    - A facilitator is needed so all can continue to work together (develop a history/trust/ability to talk together). Purchasing people are a good example – they have regular meetings, know each other, and are comfortable with each other.
    - Focus groups are needed to explore process improvements.
    - We need a UW-System representative involved.

### **Communication**

- Keep this conversation going (via user group, focus group, listserv, etc.) with this group. Keep the momentum, communication, trust, etc. going.

### **Documentation**

- A central repository of business rules is needed. We need to have a central repository for all campuses.
- An archive is needed because the data base is too large. Move history data out of production system.
- Clarify our expectations of manuals, especially the level of detail required by end users.
  - o Place the manual somewhere for all to share.
  - o Improve and change the manuals as needed.
- Implement an SFS /Wikipedia

- Develop 'UWSA Best Practices and Policies' so there is consistency across the campuses. These should be flexible, based on the size of the campus.

## **Project Management**

- Roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined (including committee structure). This work needs to continue.
- The structure that we have created needs to be continued.
- The Site leader group/structure needs to be kept together. Form a different user group that doesn't already exist to do this.

## **Testing, Training and Quality**

- The next upgrade already has been identified (Fusion). Someone needs to keep an eye on it to see what/how other institutions are doing it. Network with other universities now, before we upgrade.
  - o Capture the business rules and process so we can do the same thing
  - o There's an opportunity for communication with other teams, e.g, PeopleSoft/Oracle
- Use current fiscal year data base (for converted data) requiring processes being fixed in advance of an upgrade.
- Focus on quality (that this group of people has). Maintain a sense of commitment to a quality product
- Should we develop a standard set of test scripts?
  - o Empirix could be a test model – for automated testing
  - o Consider coordinating with UW-Madison to see how they do the implementation of PeopleSoft by using test scripts.
- New or additional functionality
  - o Have a group look at and test, and decide if an upgrade is feasible and practical to implement within the project timeline.
  - o Have a focus group to look at an area and to determine whether or not to make process improvements in certain functional areas, and who can do it.

## ***Unanswered Questions:***

- How to sustain a group of this size?
- Communication means/methods for a large group – should it be threaded conversations or listserv or other means?
- Should a PeopleSoft users group be created?
- Did the test scripts fully serve their function?

## ***5. Feedback on the Post Project Review and Survey Tool***

- The survey was long--maybe the length was needed based on a project of this magnitude.

- Would like to know average time to complete the survey(estimate).
- At beginning when asked to identify which group I belong to, is it possible for each group to branch off to specific questions for that group?

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**Post-Project Reviews (PPR)**

**Project Management**

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