

ACADEMIQUE

DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS

BSB50215 or BSB50207

**Study Support Materials for
Plan and implement (or review) administrative
systems**

BSBADM504



STUDENT HANDOUT

Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
<i>Elements describe the essential outcomes.</i>	<i>Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element.</i>
1 Prepare for meetings	1.1 Develop agenda in line with stated meeting purpose 1.2 Ensure style and structure of meeting are appropriate to its purpose 1.3 Identify meeting participants and notify them in accordance with organisational procedures 1.4 Confirm meeting arrangements in accordance with requirements of meeting 1.5 Despatch meeting papers to participants within designated timelines
2 Conduct meetings	2.1 Chair meetings in accordance with organisational requirements, agreed conventions for type of meeting and legal and ethical requirements 2.2 Conduct meetings to ensure they are focused, time efficient and achieve the required outcomes 2.3 Ensure meeting facilitation enables participation, discussion, problem-solving and resolution of issues 2.4 Brief minute-taker on method for recording meeting notes in accordance with organisational requirements and conventions for type of meeting
3 Follow up meetings	3.1 Check transcribed meeting notes to ensure they reflect a true and accurate record of the meeting and are formatted in accordance with organisational procedures and meeting conventions 3.2 Distribute and store minutes and other follow-up documentation within designated timelines, and according to organisational requirements 3.3 Report outcomes of meetings as required, within designated timelines

Introduction

Administration is a general term used by business to describe the tasks involved in the management, recording and monitoring of business activities, performance and information. The systems and processes used to assist with these tasks are known as **administrative systems**. These systems cover a wide array of management processes including the maintenance of employee files, recording day to day business transactions (sales and purchases), tracking feedback or complaints and even maintenance of customer databases. Much of the information gathered is used by managers to plan, assist with communication and ultimately allow them to make informed decisions and recommendations. Facilitation of these tasks is enhanced by an effective system and the following information explores the planning, implementation and monitoring of administrative systems.

Choosing an administrative system

As with any business decision, choosing an appropriate administrative system (or process) should not be made until it is researched and investigated thoroughly. Imagine spending considerable time and effort on a system to find out in the end that it doesn't do what you had first intended. There

are a series of steps that we will explore that will help provide structure when choosing a suitable administrative system. They are as follows:

1. Define the objectives – what exactly do we want the system to achieve
2. Collect relevant information – costs, specifications, usability, supplier
3. Generate feasible options – not all systems are equal or do they fulfil all requirements
4. Make a decision – based on all the research
5. Implement and monitor (evaluate as required) – we will come back to this step later.

1. Define the objectives

Before we go any further, now would be a good time to outline some examples of the types of administrative information and processes seen in businesses today.

Human Resources – Employee records including start and end dates, wage rates, bank account details, pay runs, policy documents, rosters and attendance, training documents, appraisals

Accounting - The systematic recording, reporting, and analysis of financial transactions of a business. Also includes statistical analysis and measurement (management accounting) .

Purchasing – Supplier records, inventory levels and reports, stocktaking tools, purchase orders, invoices, catalogues

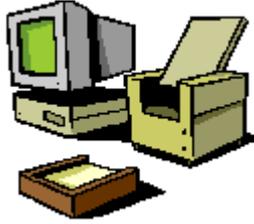
Sales & Marketing – Client databases, CRM, sales leads, market segmentation and geographic analysis, yield and revenue management, commissions

Operations – Daily sales and credit card transactions, customer records, appointments, bookings/reservations, frequency of visits, special requests

Given the many tasks listed above (and there are many more) I am sure you can understand why administrative systems are used to better manage the recording of information. Put yourself in the role of a small business owner who employs 5 staff and is responsible for the day to day operations of their business. How would you manage the purchasing of raw materials/stock or pay your staff and what about maintaining your financial records. What systems would you implement to help manage your client database? What role will the employees play in accessing, maintaining and updating these systems? And most importantly, what sort of information do you want these systems to provide you with. These questions must be considered when defining the objectives of a suitable administrative system.

Another consideration is **document management** which is the process of handling documents in such a way that information can be created, shared, organized and stored efficiently and appropriately. For many businesses, the focus of document management is on the organization and storage of documents. They want to be able to store documents in an organized and secure way that still allows documents to be found easily.

There is a move within large organizations to use document management software to help them do this. With the increased storage capacity of servers, these systems may involve using document imaging. While document management software is designed to make handling electronic files more efficient, it doesn't let you convert paper files into electronic files like document imaging systems do.



The trend towards a paperless office is more realistic for some businesses than for others. Most businesses still operate in a “mixed” environment of paper and electronic data, so their document management system has to expedite the handling of paper documents as well.

Initially in businesses and other organizations, internal reporting was produced manually and only periodically, as a by-product of the accounting system and with some additional statistic(s), and gave limited and delayed information on management performance. Data was organized manually according to the requirements and necessity of the organization. As computational technology developed, information began to be distinguished from data and systems were developed to produce and organize abstractions, summaries, relationships and generalizations based on the data.

The task of determining document needs for an organisation is complex. It will require you to find out the requirements and capabilities of the organisation and to communicate with a wide range of people to:

- identify the types of documents required
- determine entry, storage and quality needs
- determine information technology capability
- establish standards

To do this you will be required to already have skills in computer operation, word-processing and keyboarding, research and analysis, literacy and the ability to communicate with a diverse range of people in the workplace.

There is no single list of components that belong in every administration system. The interrelationships, layouts and access types are highly reliant on organisational needs and options.

2. Collect relevant information

Choosing a suitable system requires an understanding of organisational structure and stakeholders, existing procedures for information management and control, and the budgetary constraints afforded to the ongoing maintenance of the system.

Range of variables

The system you design may be either electronic or paper-based. Depending on the size of the enterprise, it might be one or more of the following:

- invoicing
- car fleet usage
- stock control
- office supplies
- reprographics
- mail distribution
- tendering out
- personnel system (or some aspect of that system)

- accounting system (or some aspect of that system)
- computer file management system

Types of documents

There is a broad range of documents produced in any business organisation. These include:

- spreadsheets and databases
- letters
- memorandums
- faxes
- brochures, flyers and display materials
- reports, annual reports and prospectuses
- policies and procedures
- financial statements
- invoices and orders
- tables
- newsletters
- agendas and minutes



This is just a sample of the types of documents that might be produced by a business organisation. The documents produced will depend on the types of activities undertaken by the organisation and the communication requirements, both internal and external.

The word 'document' has traditionally referred to paper or 'hard copy', however, documents may be produced, distributed or filed in hard copy or electronically. This is one of the issues to consider in planning the design of documents and standards for their production.



Costs

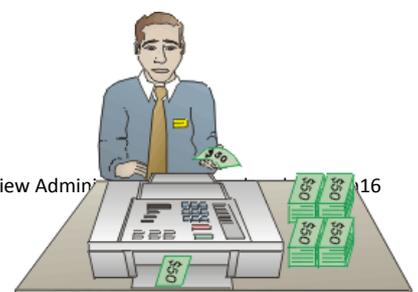
It is important to use the most efficient ways to produce documents and to customise hardware and software to reduce production time and achieve maximum efficiency.

Costs to consider include:

- the cost of the operator's time spent keying in information, checking, correcting and printing the document
- the cost of stationery
- the effectiveness of hardware, including operating speed and configuration for optimum performance
- the effectiveness of software, which must allow for simple and fast input, manipulation and output of data

Appropriate technology now and in the future

In many organisations you will not have the opportunity or responsibility to identify appropriate hardware, as this will be installed by experienced IT staff.



Even if you do not have responsibility for purchasing and installing software, you would expect to have access to suitable programs to produce the range of documents required. These may include word processing software such as Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect: layout software such as Adobe PageMaker or Quark Express: spreadsheets, such as VisiCalc or Microsoft Excel: and databases such as Filemaker Pro or Microsoft Access.

Computers for Data Storage

Early business computers were used for simple operations such as tracking sales or payroll data, with little detail or structure. Over time, these computer applications became more complex, hardware storage capacities grew, and technologies improved for connecting previously isolated applications. As more and more data was stored and linked, managers sought greater detail as well as greater abstraction with the aim of creating entire management reports from the raw, stored data. The term "MIS" arose to describe such applications providing managers with information about sales, inventories, and other data that would help in managing the enterprise. Today, the term is used broadly in a number of contexts and includes (but is not limited to): decision support systems, resource and people management applications, enterprise resource planning (ERP), enterprise performance management (EPM), supply chain management (SCM), customer relationship management (CRM), project management and database retrieval applications.

Managing electronic records

The general principles of records management apply to records in any format. Digital records (almost always referred to as electronic records), however, raise specific issues. It is more difficult to ensure that the content, context and structure of records is preserved and protected when the records do not have a physical existence. This has important implications for the authenticity, reliability, and trustworthiness of records.

3. Generate feasible options

With the extensive knowledge and research gathered, the most appropriate administrative system should be determined. It is important to avoid getting lost in the detail and effort should be made to return to your key requirements and objectives. Review all options whether they are technology or manual based systems and as to whether an external supplier should be approached to provide the system.

Obtaining quotes

Generally speaking, if the administrative system is software, then a supplier will need to be approached. The purchase of a new administration system or software is a large expense for a business and must be carefully considered before making the outlay of funds. Consideration needs to be given to the exact needs of the organisation and then quotations received for the most suitable system. Cost factors you need to consider include the cost of peripherals, supplies, insurance, linking systems, software development and cabinets; future costs of maintenance; security equipment; training; and reconfiguration of workplace space.

A cost analysis involves sourcing prices from a range of suppliers. Many of the complex administration systems used today are administered by highly trained internal staff or outsourced to system suppliers, developers or IT professionals.

Important considerations are the type of work required (highly specialised work may limit your commercial options but deliver the highest quality outcome), time limitations (who can deliver the result the fastest) commercial confidentiality (can you trust the organisation with your information

and assets) and objectives (is the implementation to be staged, continuous or concurrent with other activities or work).

When seeking quotes it is important that you ensure you cover all facets of the work, and that each supplier is given the same guidelines.

4. Make a decision

Once you have quotes for your desired administration system, selection of the successful supplier or developer is dependent on not only the fulfilment of specifications and requirements outlined above, but also the organisations internal policies. For example, an organisation may require that the purchase of an administrative system (i.e. new payroll management software) must be subject to a rigorous cost benefit analysis including the possibility of outsourcing. A decision to outsource might be governed by the fact that there is not the technical expertise required in-house or your research has shown that the process will be more cost effective, it will be quicker and the standard of work will be of a higher quality.

Most organisations require three separate quotes and you would then be asked to provide a recommendation on the quote identified as the most suited for the organisation. This may not necessarily be the cheapest quote, but it should be the one deemed most suitable for the organisation and its staff.

Comparison of quotes that have been submitted must be conducted without bias and in line with the project and organisational objectives. If quotes fall outside of these objectives, for reasons such as time, cost or specifications, discuss them with the supplier/developer and perhaps request an amended quote.

5. Implement & Monitor (evaluate as required)

Identifying and developing implementation strategies.

Choosing the right strategy for the implementation of a new or changed administration system requires careful consideration of the situation, environment, key stakeholders and influences. If the analysis of the available evidence has led to the decision to implement a change, then confidence in that decision must remain strong or risk failure at this critical stage.

Encouraging staff to participate in the implementation process.

Encouraging staff to participate in the implementation process results in:

- Reduced instances of resistance and conflict
- Better assimilation of the new changes
- Better morale
- Higher value of feedback
- Efficient use of the system.

Any changes that affect staff members must be clearly explained to them, their support encouraged and training provided if required.

Conflict and resistance to change are the two biggest causes of implementation delays. Some individuals or groups can often halt change altogether if there has not been sufficient collaboration and communication; e.g. unions, government agencies and industry bodies can enact swift actions to disrupt the implementation of a new system if there is a hint of impropriety or non-compliance.

It is important to motivate the staff and ensure they feel involved in the process from the start.

You need to give them clear direction so that they feel involved and confident as to what is taking place. Make sure they understand the reasons for the implementation and know what their responsibilities are and what is expected of them.

Implementing the system

You have now identified the type of admin system you need, received quotes, reported to management who have approved and now you are ready to implement the system. There are a number of ways you can do this:

- Via a trial period in which a section of the organisation participates; any difficulties are identified and corrected at this stage before full implementation.
- By phasing in the new system a section at a time until the whole organisation is connected
- By changing to the new system while still using the old system for a set period; e.g. 3 months. This might be used if major difficulties in the new system would have a negative impact on the organisation and severely disrupt work. However, this option may be costly and prove unwieldy.
- By direct cutover, in which the new system begins operation on a set day

There are no hard and fast steps to an administration system implementation. One suggestion from an IT project manager is the following eight steps to success:

1. Prepare the infrastructure, including hardware, software, communications and facilities.
2. Coordinate with the key stakeholders. The organisation/s responsible for the supply and/or implementation of the system are notified and scheduled for the individual project tasks.
3. Implement training for initial users. Use feedback to modify training for all users.
4. Install the new system on the testing servers/desktops, etc.
5. Ensure all machines 'talk' to one another and storage/retrieval methods work effectively during the data conversion test.
6. Perform final verification against organisational and developer benchmarks.
7. Implement the new processes and procedures. Roll out the training and access for all users.
8. Monitor and report on the system. Make modifications as necessary and ensure organisational impact is minimised.

Defining and communicating procedures for using the system.

Administration of business processes required standardised communications procedures to remain effective and efficient. Electronic systems have provided a time-saving approach to communications, yet protocols must be included to preserve system integrity. When implementing a new or modified system, these protocols should be defined and followed.

- Email messages
- Intranet/web posts
- Facsimile messages
- Internal newsletter
- Meetings/presentations
- Memoranda
- Printed instructions and manuals
- Training Days
- Professional Development.

Your organisation's structure, culture and existing policies and procedures will influence the method of communication you choose.

Whatever method you choose, you must ensure that each stakeholder is clear about the role that they play in the implementation process.

Providing training and support on the use of the system.

Provision for training is usually included within the planning budget of a system implementation. Even small modifications will need to deliver some level of training and support for users. It is important to select the appropriate type of training and support to meet the user needs.

There are a number of training options:

- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Buddy systems
- Online tutorial
- On-the-job trainers

You need to identify the one that best suits the organisation and staff requirements.

Depending on the type of administration system being upgraded, some type of support should be offered from the developer/supplier. This might take the form of policy guidelines and procedure manuals for the new system; professional development for the staff involved; annual assessment of skills of users; training handbooks; DVD's or videos. In some instances there might even be a variety of training methods used to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the system.

Dealing with contingencies to ensure minimal impact on users

With any system implementation, problems will arise. These might include software failures, inappropriate planning or running out of money. The key word here is 'planning' and time should be allocated to exploring some of the problems that may arise in the early stages of choosing the right system. Remember that most administrative systems start out as a manual process and therefore returning to this method whilst problems are resolved might be a suitable back-up plan. Often large enterprise will run both systems (the old and the new) side by side and only adopt the new system when most of the glitches are removed. Other contingencies may include the use of back-up/contract staff to catch up on any delays or maybe negotiating contracts with admin system providers to provide additional help if issues arise.

Monitoring the administrative system

Now that your system is in place, the people who are to use it are trained and the inevitable systems bugs have been discovered and dealt with, it seems like your need to maintain it are over. This is not true. Some problems take a while to show up. While none of us like this, it happens. Some of this can be due to the exact conditions for a particular bug failure may not exist very often. Another reason may just be that people don't recognize a problem when faced by it. Finally, there is always room for improvement. While areas that can use improvement may show up immediately, the ideas for how to make those improvements often need to incubate for a while.

Even though you may move on to other projects, constant monitoring of your new or improved administration system is definitely called for. Many things that are totally outside of your control or were totally outside of your original project scope can end up affecting your system. Be aware of this possibility and look at each new change in the company with the question in your mind, "Does this affect my system?"

No matter what, you are the company's expert on that system. It isn't up to some user to determine if there is a potential problem, you should be the one to do it. You should also be prepared to offer recommendations on how to mitigate any problems that may arise.

Monitor system for usage, security and output in accordance with organizational requirements

Monitoring the system essentially consists of receiving some sort of regular reporting on how the system is operating. While it is clear that you need to know the errors and problems that are happening on the system, you also need to know what is working right on the system. So, your system monitoring needs to consist of things like:

- Numbers of users
- Average usage time for users
- Average turn-around time for users
- Categorized statistics on types of users and types of uses
- Types of inputs provided
- Types of outputs generated
- System problems

This list is by no means conclusive, as different systems will need different sorts of data gathering. It is only provided to give you an idea of what sort of data you should be looking for. How you receive that data can be via a variety of methods as well:

- Administrative support and back-up
- Feedback from internal and external clients
- Observation by trained technicians
- Automated monitoring tools and processes

Regardless of the types of monitoring systems you utilize, it is important to be specific in what information you need to monitor. Without specificity, you may find yourself overwhelmed with undirected information, which hides the true data that you need. Often, a few specific indicators can tell you everything you need to know, indicating success or problems.

That other data may help you further pinpoint the problem, once you realize there is one, but it often won't point out the problem as well as those few key indicators. Key indicators are such, because they are easily influenced by a large number of factors. As such, they don't tell you where the problem is, just that there is one. You must then take that information, and seek other data, which can help you pinpoint the actual problem.

Another important item to constantly monitor is security. This is especially important for computerized systems. Since most company computer systems are connected in some way to the Internet, they have become a hackers' playground.

While many hackers aren't malicious, only wanting to prove that they can defeat your security systems, there is always the risk that a hacker could plant a virus, or steal critical corporate data for use by a competitor. Therefore, all hackers must be considered a risk, and systems must be protected against them. This protection can include:

- Confidentiality agreements with vendors, clients and other users
- Passwords for system access
- Computer firewalls
- Safeguards against computer viruses

Creating and maintaining security systems for computer systems is a specialty in and of itself. You are not expected to be an expert in that area. However, you are expected to keep your eyes open for any security risks that you see or any indication of hacking on the system. These must be immediately reported to the appropriate personnel in IT

Modify system to meet changing needs in accordance with organizational requirements

While your new administration system is probably a masterpiece, it's probably not perfect. Even if it is, the company where you've implemented it isn't perfect. If we were to say that the company was perfect, we must still face the reality that the world isn't perfect. These imperfections require changes from our companies, often causing the need for changes to our systems.

Part of your monitoring process isn't so much monitoring the system itself, as monitoring what is happening in the company. **Companies are ever-changing organisms, with new products, systems, processes and goals constantly taking the place of old ones.** Some percentage of these will surely affect your administration system.

By monitoring proposed changes in the company's products, systems, processes and goals, you have the opportunity to recognize potential problems for your system. Obviously, the earlier you can recognize these potential problems, the easier they will be to deal with.

As your company's expert on your system, it is your responsibility to warn management of the potential impact a change may make on those systems. If a proposed change necessitates a change to the system, you will need to provide a proposal for changing the system, with all costs impacts and especially the cost of not making the change.

This can be a great opportunity to include other non-critical changes that you've been wanting to make to the system. Let's say that there is an ease-of-use issue with one module of your system. If a change to the company's processes, necessitates a change to your system that affects said module, you can easily justify adding your ease-of-use change to the scope of the larger change needed to facilitate the system's compatibility with the company's new processes.

Each time a change like this is necessary, it will have to be treated like a whole new project, similar to the project which got you involved in the company's administration systems in the first place. Even small changes may necessitate dealing with them as a project.

Ideally, you will be able to integrate several changes together, making one project out of them. Even seemingly unrelated changes, if they are on the same system, can be integrated together as one change project. This will reduce the management load and hopefully the cost of creating and implementing that change.

Changes to software are especially well integrated in this manner. Often times, things that are seemingly unrelated, from the user's viewpoint, are interrelated from the programmers' perspective. By making a number of changes at the same time, you help the programmers maintain their productivity.

Clearly identify further modifications and notify users

Just as you did with the original specifications and requirements for your administration system, be sure to clearly delineate what modifications need to be made, in a clear and concise manner. If you are wanting input screens or forms which are laid out in a particular manner, be sure to draw it out, so that your idea is clearly presented to those who have to do the work

Many times, it is the lack of clear communication that causes dissatisfaction with the end result. Let's say that you are having your home built. Without clear blueprints, swatches of carpeting, paint and tile, specifications for brick siding and roof shingles, there's no way that the builder will know

how you want your home to look. Can you imagine telling him to build you a five bedroom house, without telling him what it should look like? He may produce a wonderful house or just as likely produce a disaster.

As part of this modification process, be sure to keep all stakeholders, especially those who are the users of the system apprised of the upcoming changes. Taking the time to send out updates on these changes, talking about what they will be, how they will look, benefits that they will bring to the user or company and how they will operate can greatly reduce the interruption caused by implementing these new modifications.

Although change is a given, I must repeat that it isn't well accepted. Anything you can do to thoroughly inform stakeholders and users of upcoming changes will mitigate the complaints and reduced productivity that is a typical part of the change process.

This is also a great opportunity to solicit comments and suggestions for further changes. Since you are in the process of modifying the system anyway, why not ask users if there is something that they would like to see, in order to make the system easier to work with. Just because someone suggests it, doesn't mean that you have to accept it. But, it's much easier to incorporate such a change at this time, than to have to deal with it as a separate change.

Monitor staff training needs and train new staff on administration system

Often, new systems require new training. Just about as often, not enough training is provided. Even if it is, that doesn't mean that the trainees are going to absorb everything that they're told. Re-training sessions, when you see that staff members are struggling with the new system, are highly useful. Many times, it is only necessary to review the training that they've already had. Other times, it is useful to provide shortcuts and "hints" on how to get more out of the system.

That's why effective training has to include practical use of the system, process or task that one is being trained on. By learning about it, then doing it, what one learns is better planted in the memory.

Another factor here is the fact that familiarity with the system helps people understand what they're being taught. In other words, if you have a training session for using a new system, then set people loose to use it, they'll remember some (about 10%) of what they've been taught. Hopefully, that part that they remember will help them to get into the system and attempt to use it. That's a valuable part of the training process.

After going through the frustration of trying to use the system, possibly without success, bring the people back into the training room, and repeat the training. What you are saying will make much more sense to them, because they will have seen the system, used it to some extent, and have some understanding of it. When you say "Go to such-and-such a screen" they'll know what you're talking about. At the same time, because they already know what that screen is, they'll be able to focus on what to use it for.

In addition to training existing staff on the use of the system, you need to remember that there will be new staff coming on board at some point in time, who will need to be trained on that system. Your training sessions for existing staff will provide you with an excellent opportunity to create the training material for this new staff.

The best way to create this training material is by video recording the training session for your existing staff. When you do this, be sure that you mike the speaker; don't count on the microphone installed in the camera. That won't provide quality sound. I've seen more 'good' video destroyed by poor sound than any other reason. The other advantage of video training tools is that they don't require the availability of a trainer. People can be trained individually, without wasting company

funds, paying a trainer. The individual can be trained on an individual basis, even repeating lessons or parts of lessons as they need.

Helpful websites:

<http://www.capterra.com/convenience-store-software/>

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/business/starting/supplier-stock-management/stock-control-basics>

<http://retailexpress.com.au/blog/news/10-tips-better-stocktake/>

http://www.jsw.org.au/elearning/retail/certIV/control_inventory/unit_ci/concepts/cic0203.htm