

Workshop: Learning SAP to Teach SAP

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Abstract

This workshop will introduce IS instructors to SAP, the SAP University Alliance and the use of SAP itself. Using a popular teaching case and a largely pre-populated data set, attendees will experience SAP in a hands-on way as a business cycle is tracked from procurement to sales accounting.

SAP is the dominant source of ERP software, with over 150,000 installations worldwide, of which 80,000 are in North America. The keyword for SAP is integration: all transactions are available through an entire company's system immediately upon execution. All data exists in the database once and only once, dramatically reducing redundancy and integrity issues. Up to now, SAP been more dominant in larger companies and in manufacturing. New product releases have targeted at smaller companies and new modules will address service industries. IS graduates who have SAP familiarity enjoy an employment market eager to hire them and command a substantial premium in salary.

To facilitate the development of SAP-conversant graduates, SAP began the University Alliance which permits universities and college, even of modest means, access to SAP instruction. SAP offers free training at several points in North America throughout the summer, giving faculty members a chance to develop the required new skills.

It comes as no surprise that SAP is a topic of high interest in the IS education community.

This workshop will:

1. Briefly introduce SAP and its role in industry
2. Briefly introduce the SAP University Alliance
3. Introduce the audience to core SAP concepts
4. The audience will be lead through an entire business cycle using SAP, with a significant amount of hands-on experience, using a popular teaching case

5. The hands-on experience will follow a product from the finding a vendor and purchasing raw materials to making a sale of the finished goods and collecting payment.

The presenters will have several laptops with the SAP interface installed. Prior to the session they will offer to install the interface on participant's laptops. Up to fourteen live users can be accommodated, and a larger number can be handled if audience members wish to work in pairs. The participants will have a coach available to assist users during the presentation. The workshop will be facilitated by the creation of a good deal of data records produced in advance, facilitating a rather rapid sweep a broad view of business.

To conclude, the authors will communicate two key points:

1. Teaching SAP requires a different skill set than other aspects of IS education; and
2. IS instructors who teach SAP quickly realize that they are being transformed from instructors of technology to instructors of business.