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FEASIBILITY OF ERP SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION IN SSIS WITH REFERENCE TO FOUNDRY UNITS

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ABSTRACT

The way the business is being done has undergone a sea change in the last three to four decades globally. Business organizations are facing challenges for growth and survival. The changing trends and preferences of customers, regulations from regulatory agencies, environmental concerns for safer tomorrow etc. have exerted pressure on the business organizations. The businesses organizations should have latest and upto date information for efficient decision making to reduce cost and improve profitability. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is software which monitors information and dataflow across various functions and coordinates between them. It streamlines the flow of information across all functions cutting departmental barriers. ERP enables the managers to take decisions in short period of time under existing constraints. The large scale industries are successfully implementing ERP software. They are able to afford the huge cost involved in implementation of ERP software. Equally important are small and medium industries in Indian economy. In terms of value, this sector along with micro businesses contributes to manufacturing output and total exports of the country. This sector employs about 69 million persons in over 26 million units throughout the country. Micro, medium and small enterprises provide maximum opportunities of jobs. ERP software brings benefits in terms of cost reduction, improved sales and quality. Small Scale Industries (SSIs) find it difficult to spend huge amount on the implementation of ERP software. Here a study of twenty SSI firms in foundry sector in Belgaum is considered for the study. It is also found that the firms are managed as partnership firms. The managers, owners and employees of SSI units find it convenient to use ERP software. There is feasibility of implementation of ERP software.

KEYWORDS

ERP, SSIs, foundry, feasibility, Big bang approach.

INTRODUCTION

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is a system which monitors information, dataflow across various functions and coordinates between them. ERP enables the managers to take decisions in short period of time under existing constraints to achieve objectives of the organisation.

ERP brings together people who work on shared tasks within the same enterprises or in their dealings with suppliers and customers. Enterprises have to ensure smooth flow of information across all levels and between all sections to access the up-to date information. Some of the benefits of ERP system include reduction in cycle time and work-in-process. Other benefits include flexibility, information accuracy, optimum resource utilization, quick decision making capacity. ERP covers the techniques and concepts employed for the integrated management of businesses as a whole, from the viewpoint of the effective use of management resources.

There are many ERP software vendors in the market. Players like SAP and Oracle are major players in the market. There are different modules for different functions like production, finance, sales and distribution, materials management etc. The ERP solutions are user friendly which is a major advantage offered by ERP software. The user friendly approach can be used to manage the business with varying business conditions.

Different firms follow different approaches for ERP implementation. There are two approaches namely Big Bang and Roll out. In Big Bang approach, a firm goes for implementing all ERP modules at a time in all locations. This is a common approach for SSIs for implementing ERP in one or two locations.

In Rollout approach, a firm first goes for ERP implementation in one plant for all the modules. This location is a representative one, having good representation of the company's all business process and this is the place where company builds the global template that covers most of the company process. Later this template is replicated to several locations. Rollout can also be based on different businesses or divisions of a company. The advantage of rollout approach is low risk and it does not put lot of pressure on the company in terms of time. However the only disadvantage is that project may go on for long time. Other approach like Big Bang and Modular is also used by firms to implement ERP software. In Big Bang and Modular approach, a firm wants to go live for all plants but for selected modules.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is aimed to look into the feasibility of implementation of ERP software in small scale industry units with reference to foundry sector.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

After the liberalization of economy in India in 1991 the opportunities for industrial growth have increased significantly. Industries are the engine of growth. In India the Small scale industries (SSI) sector contributes significantly to the total exports of the country.

In terms of value, this SSI sector along with micro businesses contributes to manufacturing output and total exports of the country. This sector employs about 69 million persons in over 26 million units throughout the country. Micro, medium and small enterprises provide maximum opportunities of jobs.

As the SSIs are seeking to increase their productivity and skill sets to compete with large scale industries, they are concentrating on the use of information technology for optimal utilisation of resources. ERP software is one of the technologies small scale units can adopt. Here, for the study of feasibility of implementation of ERP software, twenty SSI firms in foundry sector in Belgaum is considered. It is also found that the firms are managed by proprietors or as partnership firms. Belgaum is a major city and district headquarters in North Karnataka and also revenue headquarters of North range. Belgaum is also a foundry hub of the Karnataka state having approximately 200 foundries producing more than 70,000 ton of automotive and industrial castings of ferrous Base. Many of these industries are located in Udyambag which is a very vibrant and developing industrial area. Belgaum also boasts of a large number of supporting ancillaries like CNC and conventional machine shops which finish the castings that are produced in Belgaum.

A foundry is a factory that produces metal castings. Metals are cast into shapes by melting them into a liquid, pouring the metal in a mold, and removing the mold material or casting after the metal has solidified. The most common metals processed are Aluminum and cast iron. Melting is performed in a furnace which

may be powered by electricity or fuel. Furnaces have refractory linings which provide the energy to melt the metal. The temperature melting point alloys, furnaces may reach around 500° C to 1600° depending upon requirement.

In the casting process a pattern is made in the shape of the desired part, which can be made in a single piece or solid pattern. Pouring of molten metal can be done using gravitational power or by using mechanized handling devices. Usually ladles are used to pour the molten metal into the mould. The casting is allowed to cool for few hours to few days. The solidified metal component is then removed from its mold. The casting is subjected to heat treatment. Heat treatment involves the use of heating or chilling, to different temperatures, to achieve a desired result such as hardening or softening of a material. Heat treating is used to alter the physical, and sometimes chemical properties of a material. The final step in the process usually involves grinding or machining the component to achieve the desired dimensions and surface finish.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Schaper (2002) observes that small and medium-sized enterprises make a major contribution to economic growth and employment in most countries around the world. The collective impact of SMEs is influential as they represent about 95% of all private sector firms in most modern nations and so form a major portion of all economic activity. They account for 35% of exports from Asia and approximately 26% of exports from developed countries including the United States.

Klaus et al. (2000) describe ERP systems as “comprehensive, packaged software solutions that seek to integrate the complete range of a business’s processes and functions in order to present a holistic view of the business from a single information and IT architecture.” Genoulaz (2005) identified six categories concerning literature review which include: implementation of ERP, optimization of ERP, management through ERP, ERP software, ERP for supply chain management and case studies.

Stratman and Roth (2002) conducted a survey of North American manufacturing users of ERP systems through a questionnaire. They have identified some factors which are hypothesised to be associated with successful ERP adoption. Some of major factors identified by them are planning, project management skills, ERP training, learning etc.

Earlier ERP was mostly implemented by large scale industries in view of affordability in terms of cost and requirement. It is not only large scale companies, but also SMEs have the need to go in for ERP software. Koh et al. (2006) concludes that SMEs have the same needs as large enterprises but face different challenges in view of their financial constraints and capabilities. Buonanno et al. (2005) confirm that SMEs either do not have sufficient resources or are not willing to devote a significant portion of their resources to a complex ERP implementation process. Rao (2000) also holds that SMEs are more vulnerable than large companies.

A deeper understanding of the ERP implementation at SMEs is needed to ensure coordination between different departments. Huin (2004) holds that unless differences between SMEs and large enterprises are clearly understood, ERP projects in SMEs will not reach the desired outcomes. Those facts reveal that the ERP for SMEs definitely demands specific research and analysis other than previous investigations primarily targeting large enterprises. Lussier et al. (2008) notes that understanding small business is an important area of research. The contribution of SMEs is extremely important to the economy and rapid growth. This growth is essential for providing immediate employment opportunities. Ramirez (2005) concludes that lack of training and development of skills and limited training in development of human resources main challenges faced by SMEs in Latin America.

Rana Basu (2012) found that only eight of twenty five issues are contributing 80% of total contribution. Hence eight issues are regarded as key issues being extracted from review section in context to ERP implementation in SMEs of developing countries like India. The issues for successful implementation of ERP after extracting from Pareto analysis. They identified the most important issues that would actually lead to successful ERP implementation and to prioritize the issues against the benefit criteria by applying TOPSIS (Technique for order preference by similarity to ideal solution) method. Those issues are education & training, support from top management, properly defined goals & objective, project team competence, project management, change management, proper selection of package and effective communication.

Buonanno et al. (2005) contribute with an empirical research analyzing factors affecting ERP adoption and compared SMEs to large scale companies. Their study presents correlation between company size and ERP adoption. A similar comparison between large companies and SMEs is also embraced by Bernroider et al. (2001) but focused specifically in the ERP selection process. They have identified the differences which are related to staffing the group performing the selection process. Basically, large scale organizations engage more manpower in decision making processes than SMEs. SMEs select ERP with less complex models and less expensive methods.

Maleki (2010) has identified 14 critical success factors which have critical role in successful implementation of ERP software in SMEs in Mysore and Bangalore. The most important factor in successful implementation of ERP software is appropriate training. The second most important factor is top management support, the third being project management.

Sun et al. (2005) analysed the critical success factors of ERP implementation in order to propose a structured approach to help SMEs. Grounded on the literature, they consider five critical success factors: management and organization, process, technology, data and people. They emphasize that some CSFs are more important than others.

ERP software for small and medium industries is having huge potential and its effects can be explored. The benefits of ERP software for improvement in quality, customer satisfaction and information flow can be explored.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Here 20 SSI units in foundry sector are selected. The discussions were held with managers, owners and employees working in the factories. The employees were briefed about concept of ERP software and its potential uses. Almost all managers and owners were having basic knowledge of concept of ERP software. The managers were briefed about different ERP software and modules available. They were more eager on cost of ERP software and training required to use ERP softwares. They also understood the concept of Big bang and Roll out approach. It is found that all the firms do not have more than one unit. The units can implement all modules at one go or module by module. The process in foundries is studied and it is found that the process is almost same in all units.

TABLE NO. 1: MANAGER / PARTNERS' EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ERP SOFTWARE

Details	Category	No of units
Likely investment on ERP system	Rs 1 lakhs	10
	Rs 1-10 lakhs	6
	Rs 10-20 lakhs	4
Preferred ERP Modules	Production	16
	Material	12
	Finance and accounts	10
	Sales and Distribution	6
Preferred ERP Software	HR	1
	SAP	1
	Oracle	2
	Local	17

TABLE NO. 2: PROFILE OF SSI UNITS

Number of Units	20
Number of Employees in each unit	5 to 12
Turnover per year (Rs)	0.4 to 4 crores
Investment in Plant and machines	0.6 to 3 crores
Power Used	Electricity
Customers	Automobile and ancillary industries

TABLE NO. 3: KNOWLEDGE OF MANAGERS AND PARTNERS

Educational level		Knowledge of computer/ERP	
ITI	1	Very good	1
Diploma	5	Good	8
Degree(B.E, B.Sc etc)	14	Moderate	11

TABLE NO. 4: EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYEES

No of employees	No of units	Average work experience	No of units
less than 5	1	Less than 5 year	6
5 to 10	14	5 to 10 years	20
10 to 15	5	Above 10 years	14

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

As all the units are in foundry business they are having same process. Many of these foundry units are supplying castings to Automobile and Auto ancillary industries located in Belgaum, Pune and Goa. The order for foundry units runs into several hundred of components. These foundry units cannot handle big and one of a type order. It is convenient to implement production module of ERP software as the work flow process is well defined. The units are more interested in Production module followed by Material module. The Material module will be helpful to procure raw material from the suppliers and will be helpful to manage the inventory efficiently. These units can go in for Production module in combination with Material, Finance module. None of the firms except one unit is not interested in HR module as it is evident that the workforce size is lesser. Quality module is also not expected by any of the firms. All the units are cost conscious and cannot afford to spend more than Rs 10 lac for ERP software, it is advisable for them to implement low cost ERP software module by module. It is found that the employees are ready to use computer and understand the process. Employees are having good working knowledge of work flow process. They showed keen interest in adopting ERP software, but expressed doubts about they would face more pressure for productivity. They were convinced that there would not be any unnecessary burden on them and more over it will be easy to do decision making at shop floor. Once production module of ERP software is implemented they can think of going in for other modules and the upgraded versions and get connected to ERP software of key customers who have implemented SAP or Oracle etc. It is feasible to implement ERP software in these units.

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