



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Electronic Performance Support Systems

Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS) is software designed to improve employee productivity by providing immediate on-the-job access to integrated information, learning opportunities and expert consultation, with the scope and the sequence controlled by the user.

A company-wide EPSS will include access to information databases (increasingly Web-based, whether Intranet or Internet) and on-line discussion forums to share problems and learning with other employees and enhance opportunities for continuous improvement.

Barry Raybould, an expert in EPSSs, defines it as "an electronic system that directly supports a worker's performance when, how, and where the support is needed."

EPSS can significantly reduce training time and cost, because employees have tools to teach them the information they need at the time they need it, which is the most effective time to train employees (rather than at a convenient time for the trainer, a time when people have little need for the information and are likely to forget it).

It also can increase employee self-sufficiency and empowerment, because the information they need to do their jobs is easily accessible from their workstation and can be tailored to their needs. It can help organizations become more flexible with employee assignments. EPSS can also help train difficult-to-reach workers, decrease paper documentation, such as user manuals, evaluations, and tests.

An EPSS is a tool, which enables employees to competently use the software applications associated with new business initiatives. Depending on specific requirements, it can provide its users with:

- Explanations and descriptions of the business processes which the application supports and how it supports them – i.e. the 'big picture'
- Demonstrations of the tasks which an employee has to complete within the application
- Training opportunities to practice these tasks in a safe, off-line environment (and prove competency through an assessment)
- On-line help and instruction for completing these tasks on-the-job.

EPSSs are a radical departure from traditional approaches to training and documentation. Traditionally, trainers assume that a training course solves a work performance problem and technical communicators assume that effective documentation does. EPSSs are predicated on the belief that a combination of the two, as well as other types of information tools, helps. The exact combination depends on the users, so EPSSs let users tailor the system to their needs.

EPSSs are generally used to provide support for:



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- Performing a task (procedures and processes)
- Finding information in databases

Presenting information in alternate forms (video, audio, text, image, data)