

# So You Have to Teach Information Systems in Business: What Software Would You Choose?

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## 1 Introduction

For the past ten years the Bachelor of Computing Systems (BCS) at Unitec New Zealand has included a compulsory first year course in Information Systems for Business, in some form. There are many and varied reasons for the inclusion of a business course in a computing degree that are adequately explained in the literature (Goodwill 2001). At Unitec we have a new marketing slogan "Experience real world Learning". This philosophy and the advice of our School of Computing and Information Technology industry advisory committee led us to believe that in the Information Systems for Business course we should be using and teaching a commercial Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software package. The issue then became one of which software to provide to our students so they could experience real world learning and gain a better understanding of the business environment.

## 2 The Software Selection Process

ERP software is expensive and mostly out of reach for educational institutions. At Unitec we have now experienced the use of three different ERP software packages and decided to evaluate them against each other. There were two primary reasons for this, we needed to ensure that we were using the best possible product for our students and that it was cost effective for the school.

The three software packages we have used are:

- SAP
- BPCS-MAX
- Finance One

To adequately compare these products we sought a reputable evaluation product and after much deliberation decided on the "Software Evaluation Spreadsheet" found at <http://www.software-evaluation.co.uk>. This is a freely available software evaluation spreadsheet that can be used online, it can also be purchased from the website for ongoing software evaluation. As this was the only evaluation we intended to complete permission was sought and gained to use the results in this paper (email Bryan Weir 11-05-2007).

## 3 The Evaluation Process

The three software packages were evaluated in seven separate worksheets:

1. Overall requirements
2. Admin and Security
3. Reports (Statistics)
4. Web Based Software (ASP Solutions)
5. Vendor and Vendor Support
6. Cost
7. Final Score.

There was an eighth worksheet that we could have used, User Defined Data, however we felt that all the categories we needed were covered by the other worksheets. Within each worksheet there were between six and 27 different questions which were rated on a five point scale and also weighted by a five point weighting factor.

## 4 Results

In five of the six worksheets Finance-One outperformed the other two products for our requirements in a teaching environment. It was significantly higher in the Administration and Security, Reports, Vendor and Vendor Support and Associated Costs worksheets. The Web Based Software worksheet proved not to be critical for our purposes and all three products scored the same (0). In the overall result Finance-One scored approx 50% higher (365) than the other two products, SAP and BPCS-MAX which ended up with very similar scores overall (231 & 234 respectively). As Finance-One is the software package we are currently using, we are now confident in we are continuing to give our students their "Real world learning experience".

## 5 References

Goodwill, G. J. (2001) *The Catchcry: We're Computing Students – Why Do We Have to Learn about Business Skills?* The New Zealand Journal of Applied Computing and Information Technology 5(1) pp 31-38

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