

**UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND**

**FACULTY OF COMMERCE**

**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

**MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER 2013/2014**

**TITLE OF PAPER: MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS I**

**COURSE CODE: BA215/BA317**

**YEAR OF STUDY: B.COM 2 (FULL TIME), DIP COM 4 (IDE)**

**TIME ALLOWED: THREE (3) HOURS**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- 1. This paper consists of sections A and B.**
- 2. The case study question – Section A, is compulsory.**
- 3. Answer any three questions from section B.**

**NOTE: Marks will be awarded for good communication in English and for orderly presentation of work.**

**This examination paper should not be opened until permission has been granted by the invigilator.**

## SECTION A

### CASE STUDY

This section is compulsory

#### HUGE BENEFITS FROM TIDYING UP

Complexity is a dirty word in computing. The more convoluted something is, the more expensive and difficult it is to manage, and the more likely to go wrong. Unfortunately because computing infrastructures develop erratically, many businesses end up with hundreds of poorly documented software applications installed by forgotten development teams and long-departed managers. Many of these applications do the same thing, and they rarely talk to each other. Some companies try to consolidate applications; boiling them down to a simpler set of systems.

One such is UK transportation giant, First Group. Darin Brumby, its CIO, explained: "A lack of business ownership and sponsorship of projects in the past had led to a sea of data, but no information for the decision makers." First Group's consolidation process is part of a larger initiative to stabilize its IT operation. And bring it in line with the need of business managers. The company is also one year into what Mr Brumby sees as a three year program to cut the complexity of its application base; it has already cut its 300 software applications by 50. It is reaping the benefits. Four years ago the company had different inventory management and maintenance systems for its businesses, meaning that it could not centrally control stock and had limited insights into its warranties. Replacing the applications with SAP's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system enabled the company to use a single application for inventory and maintenance across all 20 of its operating companies. "The benefits were enormous", says Mr Brumby, "not only in process controls and improved operational efficiency but, more importantly, we were able to embed the standard operating procedures of the organization into that platform, which of course you can't do with 20 separate platforms".

#### Questions:

- a) What good lessons can we derive from the case above in the usage of ERP systems. (15)
- b) Discuss the limitations emanating from the use of ERP systems. (Use examples from the case where appropriate.) (15)
- c) Discuss the issues that are crucial for the success of an ERP system such as the one indicated above. (10)

**SECTION B****ANSWER ANY THREE QUESTIONS FROM THIS SECTION****QUESTION 1**

Discuss the important features of executive information systems that make them appealing to their users. (20)

**Question 2**

Discuss electronic marketing systems explaining clearly the importance of each. (20)

**QUESTION 3**

- a) Why is distributed processing important in organizations? (12)
- b) What precautions should an organization take into account as it uses distributed processing? (8)

**Question 4**

Discuss the importance of Edgar Schein's theory of technology assimilation in enabling organisations successfully integrate information technology into their operations. (20)

**Question 5**

What is your understanding of the term 'IT-enabled competitive advantage' and how can an organization engaged in the retail business benefit from this? (20)