

OPENING CASE

A large medical instruments company just hired Scott Daniels, a senior consultant from a large consulting firm, to lead a project to resolve the quality problems with the company's new Executive Information System (EIS). A team of internal programmers and analysts worked with several company executives to develop this new system. Many executives were hooked on the new, user-friendly EIS. They loved the way the system allowed them to track sales of various medical instruments quickly and easily by product, country, hospital, and sales representative. After successfully testing the new EIS with several executives, the company decided to make the system available to all levels of management.

Unfortunately, several quality problems developed with the new EIS after a few months of operation. People complained that they could not get into the Web-based system. The system started going down a couple of times a month, and the response time was reportedly getting slower. Users complained when they could not access information within a few seconds. Several people kept forgetting how to log in to the system, thus increasing the number of calls to the company's help desk. There were complaints that some of the reports in the system gave inconsistent information. How could a summary report show totals that were not consistent with a detailed report on the same information? The executive sponsor of the EIS wanted the problems fixed quickly and accurately, so he decided to hire an expert in quality from outside the company whom he knew from past projects. Scott Daniels' job was to lead a team of people from both the medical instruments company and his own firm to identify and resolve quality-related issues with the EIS and to develop a plan to help prevent quality problems on future projects.