

Symantec

Case 3

Alex Weber

Introduction

Founded in 1984 after the merger of Symantec a Language Processing Company and C&E Software, Symantec Corporation was created. Symantec would consistently acquire smaller companies with innovative products and would add them as product groups, leaving them in their original location. In 8 years the number of employees would grow from 30 to 316 and profits of \$50 million.

Industry / Competitive Analysis

Mission Statement:

Symantec is a software company dedicated to developing, delivering, and supporting a diversified line of information management products to its business users, in a reliable and efficient manner.

Generic Strategy:

Symantec holds many different product lines each specializing in information management for business users. Each of these products is consistently upgraded and expanded throughout its life cycle to provide an advantage over its competitors.

Symantec looks to capture repeat purchase behaviors through the purchase of

upgrades for all of its products. This information leads me to believe Symantec holds a Differentiation Generic Strategy.

Porter's 5 forces

Rival Competitors:

Symantec has multiple competitors such as Lotus and Ashton-Tate, both are well established companies. Symantec stays ahead of the competition by owning a large array of product lines and consistently upgrading and staying ahead in development. Symantec also tries to edge out rivals by providing newsletters outlining new innovations to their products.

Threat of Substitutes:

Threat of Substitutes is high in the software space as new products are always being rolled out with new innovations and the newest technology. Symantec combats this by attempting to understand the core needs of the customers and what they want to see in products. This overtime can increase the switching costs of customers making it hard for them to leave.

Threat of Buyers:

The Threat of Buyers could increase if Symantec were to lose its wide customer base and stop making and developing new products and services. Symantec combats this by holding 41 distributors in 23 foreign countries. They also will attend 300 shows a year with the goal of expanding their customer base.

Threat of Suppliers:

Suppliers could become an issue if they start to raise prices for goods required to perform business activities, such as HP systems. They can keep prices low by notifying HP about system outages and by establishing themselves as one of the larger customers of suppliers products.

Threat of New Entrants:

New Entrants bring innovation, and new ideas of how things are done. With a relatively low barrier to entry Symantec needs to constantly worry about the “Next Hottest Thing”. By keeping prices low and always innovating / acquiring new products Symantec can always stay ahead of new entrants.

Orgs Structure

Symantec is organized into product groups and centralized functions. These product groups are spread out in different cities and are up to themselves to choose product life cycles, marketing strategies, and do their own conceiving of products independently. The central departments handle the newsletters, press releases, shipping, customer support, and management activities. Symantec is a Divisional Organization.

Business Issue and Key stakeholders

Business Issue

The current business issue that Symantec is facing is its information flow throughout the entire company. From when they were a small 30 person company and could just communicate in the hallways, Symantec never established a true communication

control system as they grew causing many issues between departments that needed to communicate with each other to succeed. As they got bigger they attempted to establish a communication system which caused information to sometimes have to be gathered from 5 different sources. Between downages with the systems this caused information to sometimes be lost or never communicated and when issues occurred the MIS department was notified in multiple different ways making the prioritization of requests almost impossible.

Key Stakeholders

- Symantec
 - The company as a whole
- Symantec Departments
 - Different Product groups that the company is divided into
- HP and ROLM Phone mail system
 - Current Information System outsourcing companies for Symantec
- Investors
 - Anyone who has bought into the company and relies on its success
- Employees
 - Employees of Symantec who need to communicate
- Management
 - People who run Symantec and make the policies and controls

Proposed Solutions and Alternate Courses of Action

Alternate courses of action

1. Keep with the current System

The current system, using HP, ROLM, and MIS department although is seen as being very inefficient, it is working as Symantec is constantly growing and has continued to grow. As Fried said “Your Organization is not Perfect Ever” (Fried). One of the biggest issues right now is the technology having issues with reliability and uptime. Right now the communication technology isn't up to speed and overtime HP and others will innovate solutions that can keep up with the current load requirements. By sticking with the current technology solutions and vendors this could help with loyalty discounts as over the next few years they develop more solutions as the current most technically advanced software is not always the standard (Cash). This would take an Architectural solution of Revolution, and wait for systems to be developed thus allowing systems to only get better and not worrying about a fatal crash that could be caused by a new solution.

Stakeholders affected

Management would need to navigate the complaints of employees about lack of information flows. The Departments would continue with the current systems and would need to slowly adapt as changes occur.

Symantec as whole would see the current vendor systems take hold which

could possibly drive up or down the price. Investors would only be affected if this were to cause a slow in development and sales.

2. Build In-house software

As done before with POPS Symantec could build its own internal communication system. Symantec did well during its first in house project of following Rule 18 if Fried that the end objective is to implement the system (Fried). They didn't get caught up in making it nothing more than functional then added on later. As an information system and provider one of their company goals is to always be developing and acquiring new products. This would be a great opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. A lot of innovations come from someone wanting to scratch their own back and a product being developed to solve that need, Symantec cannot be the only company having issues with information systems uptime. This Architecture change would be considered evolutionary to the way systems are, creating an advantage over competitors. This solution would cause money to be invested in the development of the system and if it were to fail could be detrimental to the business processes. Data which is a non depletable resource could be lost (Cash).

Stakeholders affected

Employees would be pulled away from current jobs to work on this new solution. Management would need to make decisions about which systems could stay and which would need to be replaced. Symantec as a

whole would need to be educated on the new systems that would be unveiled and the current information system vendors would be slowly phased out. Lastly, this would be a gamble as a bad outcome from this project could cause investors in the company to lose money.

3. Rebuild the Controls for communication and information flow (Chosen Solution)

My chosen solution is to focus on rebuilding the controls of the system as a whole and defining how communication is to be conducted. Currently, employees and managers are filling out requests to MIS in many different ways. This makes it hard for MIS to be efficient in their jobs. Also, some people who rely on information have to check 5 different sources to see if information is being relayed to them. Technology is only as efficient as its user, and if the user is sending information through a lot of different mediums this is not only an issue in availability in the CIA triad but also shows that Symantec has no standards for control. Symantec needs to set precise controls on how information is to flow throughout the company and set fixed times for the different departments to communicate regularly. Currently, no matter how advanced the technology is If Symantec has no controls, when better technology is developed later it wont make an impact as expected. Moving from where we are today to where we want to be needs a solid infrastructure (Cash).

Stakeholders affected

Managers would immediately need to make changes and enforce the criteria set. As Fried said in the "Rules of Project Management", "Nothing is quite as useless as a standard that is not enforced".(Fried) Employees would need to change processes thus would require a learning curve for employees to adjust. The different departments would begin communicating on a regular basis to distribute information throughout the organization. Shareholders would at first see no impact but later when these take hold I think profits will rise as it gets more efficient.

References

- Cash, James I. *Building the Information-Age Organization: Structure, Control, and Information Technologies*. Irwin, 1994.
- Fried, Louis. *Managing Information Technology in Turbulent Times*. John Wiley & Sons, 1995.