**Case Study – Antoine’s Landscaping**

*Antoine’s Landscaping* is a lawn care and landscaping company operating in the Greater Toronto Area. The company founder, Antoine Laurent, started the company when he was in his early teens. He bought a used lawn mower and a used weed eater and started offering lawn mowing and trimming services to his neighbours. Intent on increasing his income, Antoine used some of the profits from his summer jobs to purchase a used snow blower and offered snow removal services to the same customers during the winter months. Thus, *Antoine’s Landscaping* became a reality. As an act of goodwill towards the community that supported Antoine’s business startup, *Antoine’s Landscaping* donates 5% of their profits to school breakfast programs in the GTA.

*Antoine’s Landscaping* recently celebrated their 10th anniversary as an incorporated company. Antoine currently serves as company President and works at marketing the company. *Antoine’s Landscaping’s* engaging website and social feeds currently serve as the company’s major attention draw. Antoine manages Twitter and Facebook accounts to promote the company. He attends trade shows, home and garden shows, and garden store openings to help promotethe company. Antoine works with a web development company to ensure that the company website is up to date and effectively advertises the company. Antoine also evaluates the greatly growing requests for donations from local schools. He visits with schools to ensure that donations flow directly to students. Antoine also visits with grade 10 Civics classes to promote summer jobs. *Antoine’s Landscaping* tries to hire local high school students whenever possible.

Gerald joined the company in its early years as a Project Manager. Gerald’s background in Landscaping Design is instrumental in *Antoine’s Landscaping* success. **Gerald has an in-demand ability to bring customer’s large scale project ideas to award-winning reality**. Gerald works with customers to produce blueprints of their properties incorporating new design ideas and he hires carpenters, brick layers, large equipment operators, and general labourers as required. He organizes the purchase and delivery of materials as required. Gerald oversees and ensures that all large scale projects are scheduled and completed as per the customer requirements.

Susan is the operations manager: She runs the core part of the business which consists of lawn care in the summer and snow removal in the winter. In January, Susan builds a Sales Forecast using previous years’ sales and long range forecasts to predict how much seed, fertilizer and weed control products will be needed for the summer season. By purchasing these products in bulk before the summer starts, Susan saves the company money and helps to ensure Antoine’s Landscaping’s profitability. Starting in March and working through April, Susan contacts all *Antoine’s Landscaping’s* existing customer base to organize their summer needs and then contacts and rehires *Antoine’s Landscaping’s* team of seasonal workers, hiring additional staff as required. Starting in April, Susan schedules Lawn Service for her customers, and follows up with customers to ensure that service has met customer needs. She monitors inventory levels and orders lawn care supplies as needed from suppliers.

In October, Susan repeats the above processes, but this time with snow removal in mind. Ice melting products must be ordered prior to the start of the season to reduce costs. Customers must be contacted to organize work and staff must be organized to meet customers’ needs. Then Susan keeps her fingers crossed for lots of snow!

Naheed works with Susan to support Customers, specializing in working with new customers. Naheed follows up with any new customers leads. She records customer information and requirements, passing large scale, one time only customers to Gerald and Antoine. She spends a large portion of her day responding to customer request for service, resolving existing customer concerns and responds to customer feedback. In April and October, Naheed organizes mass flyer deliveries to market *Antoine’s Landscaping* services. Naheed creates monthly invoices for customers and follows up with customers to receive payment. Customers may only pay by cheque or by credit card. Naheed processes credit card payments and organizes weekly bank deposits.

Jie was recently hired to manage the money. Jie receives and ensures that all bills are paid – this includes utilities, marketing expenses, supplies and employee payroll. The majority of *Antoine’s Landscaping* employees are seasonal help, contractors and part-time staff. Every week, seasonal help and part-time staff submit time sheets to Jie and contractors submit invoices when their respective projects are complete. Jie reviews contractor invoices and time sheet information with Gerald and Susan to ensure the information is correct. Finally, when necessary, Antoine and Gerald submit expenses that they’ve paid for reimbursement. *Antoine’s Landscaping* uses an external payroll company to ensure that employees are consistently paid bi-weekly, contractors are paid, and Gerald and Antoine are reimbursed. At the end of each month, Jie calculates the company profits. To do this, Jie must have up to date access to funds received from sales and money paid out in expenses. Jie then sends 5% of profit cheques to the local schools that have applied for donation. Jie spends a large portion of her time tracking part-time and seasonal employees time sheets. Once a quarter, Jie also calculates HST payments and remits the HST balance to the government. Jie is always worried that a miscalculation in company profits will result in not being able to pay the bills! Jie currently uses Quickbooks to keep track of expenses.

Kumar operates the workshop. He maintains *Antoine’s Landscaping’s* inventory of equipment Kumar maintains lists of service issues and keeps track of warranties. He schedules preventative maintenance to ensure that all equipment is running in peak efficiency. Kumar is jokingly referred to as Mr. Post-it, he keeps track of most of his service requests using post-it notes! Kumar often works with local small engine repair shops to repair equipment that he does not have time to fix. He purchases new equipment as required by Susan’s forecasts.

Victor and Natalia Wentz, owner of *Best Pools* have decided to sell their business.

For the last five years, Best Pools and Antoine’s Landscaping have worked together to provide pool and landscaping services to their combined customer base. *Antoine’s Landscaping* and *Best Pools* have reached an agreement and Antoine’s Landscaping now operates under their new name, *Antoine’s Landscaping and Pools*.

Under the new organizational structure, Victor will continue to work with Gerald as a Pool Consultant to design customer solutions and will manage project implementations that involve pools. Natalia, however, wishes to retire, so Susan, Naheed and Jie will assume all of her customer service and office management activities. Seasonal employees, traditionally hired by Best Pools will be hired by Antoine’s Landscaping and Pools.

Natalia conducted her operating activities in the same manner as Antoine’s Landscaping, so merging the customer base, has not been an onerous activity, but the volume of work has increased significantly.

Antoine and Gerald are notoriously awful at submitting expense reports to Jie. Jie is always concerned that her profit cheques to the charities will be too high, reducing *Antoine’s Landscaping* ability to pay their bills. The increase in staff has also added to Jie’s workload.

Additionally, Kumar will hire two technicians working with him to help with the maintenance of equipment, reducing the amount of work sent out to local repair shops.

Antoine has decided that *Antoine’s Landscaping and Pools* should invest in a centralized computer system to aid in Finance, Customer Service and Project Management. The new system must be able to support Gerald in his design efforts, Antoine in his marketing activities and help Kumar keep track of requests for equipment maintenance support.

They would like to invest properly now in a system that will work for many years and provide flexibility and reliability for the foreseeable future.