Target 1: Data Storage

The current data center (DC) was established 20 years ago in Dayton, OH where it currently resides. It’s a traditional facility that is 3,400 Sq. Ft. with a raised floor and HVAC installed. The data center consists of two 750 kw 1979 Caterpillar diesel generators, twin UPS systems for backup power, and a FM-200 system that replaced the initial Halon fire suppression system. In addition, it uses 3 WAN providers with micro nodes, a single Tier 1 vendor while the rest are Tier 3 vendors, uses core switching, comprising Cisco Nexus 7000 series units, and a cascade of downline routers and switches.

This equipment will not allow the business to perform at its optimal level because it can’t keep up with the constantly increasing workloads that technology must cover. Implement a protocol to ensure the security of the data since the current data center can continue operating, but the outdated technology will make it more difficult to protect. It’s also important to mitigate general security risks to prevent the DC from being compromised. Based on the Activities provided in the IT Plan, I agree with the stated objectives and the plan to update the main DC. It clearly addresses the need for all technology in the DC to be up to date, for a new main DC to be established, and to man that DC around the clock for quick response times.

Target 2: Unified Communications System

First, the Local Area Network or LAN is too slow in general and only gets slower while attempting to use cloud-based applications. Secondly, the email system must be revamped, and lastly, this revamp must include Instant Messaging and Video Conferencing capabilities. Everything that must be corrected for this target will lead to miscommunication, and this can lead to a series of problems. Project deadlines may be missed or narrowly submitted in time, important information may not make it to key personnel in a crunch when necessary, and the communications may be intercepted.

While I agree with 2.1 of the Activities sections of the Global IT Plan, I disagree with sections 2.2 and 2.3. Google Hangouts is not the best nor most secure platform to utilize for business communications. Not only does Hangouts have a reputation of being repeatedly hacked, but it’s also often used to conduct illegal activities or scams. Let’s keep it consistent by selecting Microsoft Teams to conduct meetings and standard communications. This covers all bases for IM, an extra medium for phone calls, and video conferencing. Embed Microsoft Teams into company devices as intended with Google Hangouts.

Target 5: Enterprise Resource Programming (ERP) System

The company currently uses an old version of BPCS ERP. The remote sales offices and London office upload their financial reports to Dayton via Hyperion. No CRM system is in place, instead an old version of Intrak is being used to manage customer service calls and to take orders from the in-house sales desk. There’s no central data repository installed to track customers, and marketing personnel need a digital asset management system installed as well as control to manage collateral material using a marketing development and approval process.

There are quite a few issues here. First, having no central data repository installed means that there’s important data stored in multiple data silos that are borderline impossible to integrate. Secondly, No CRM database leads to missed sales opportunities as well as a restricted view of sales forecasts. It’ll also make it difficult to share customer information with other personnel in the company. Lastly, without a digital asset management system, your data can be lost or misplaced. Productivity will not reach its optimal level, and there’s no security to any of the files.

The current state of the ERP system is ineffective and must be updated. Without this, the company will not be able to handle its growing business and won’t effectively expand internationally. In addition, the ERP system must be able to integrate with both POS terminals, a Human Resource Management System, and a Materials Resource System must all be implemented ASAP.

Target 6: Point-of-Sale (POS) System

Currently, there’s no automation to the sales process within the company. Everything is conducted manually and with errors at pretty much every step. The sales operations and customer data management components of the POS system are done manually by each salesperson. The sales directors send the data to the sales VP, but it’s very likely that this data is filled with errors. The data forecasting hence the quotas that are created are also done manually. Sales automation and customer management are both required for the continued growth of the company. Without an up-to-date POS system in place, the company will not be able to grow as quickly as it could, if at all. It’s likely that the company will hit a wall and won’t be able to properly operate on an international level without an effective system.

The only recommendation I have is to change 6.2’s suggestion from implementing multiple POS systems with different teams to implementing an Integrated POS system to be used by the entire company. This will solve the issue of the lack of consistency with the products used to conduct transactions and sales forecasts that stunt the company’s growth while also producing potentially inaccurate data shared with the Sales VP. An integrated POS system will automate the financial reports with the necessary and accurate details desired by the Sales VP.

Target 11: Customer Resource Management (CRM) System

As previously stated, there’s currently no centralized CRM database implemented in the company’s infrastructure. This leads to missed opportunities with customer follow ups as well as potential sales. In addition, the sales forecast and customer insight will both be limited. Sharing customer information across the company is difficult, and there’s not central location for customer purchase history, patterns and preferences.

The implementation of a central CRM system is mandatory for the company to succeed and grow. It’s important for customer retention as well as keeping up with the company’s growth. Without this technology, it may lead customers to begin migrating to other competitors in the market.

H: International Markets

The implementation of the updated IT plan will assist Lee and Mary’s Gourmet Ice Cream with its international expansion. Focusing on Unified Communication Systems, it’s stressed that communication must be fluid and must be secure. Miscommunication, or lack thereof, can lead to slow or late project deliverables, upset customers or partners, both of which can lead to the decline of the company’s brand. When looking at the POS target, consistency is also mentioned because a change in procedure simply based on location while interacting with an international company will cause customers and partners to not trust the company. This plays into international expansion as well as buy-in from the members of the company. Consistency, trust, reliability, and security are what these targets all boil down to and focusing on these details will help Lee and Mary’s achieve and retain a leadership position in the international market.

I: Implementation and Maintenance of Plan

The implementation of the Global IT Plan will lead to increased efficiency, stability, scalability etc., but these are some big changes that will be made. The update in technology, the learning curves, implementing systems on a corporate scale may all lead to not only to a shift in operations, but a shift in company culture. It’ll take time to let these changes settle and truly resonate with the members of the company. On the flip side, Lee and Mary’s will be brand new compared to how it was operating prior to this update. Processes will be automated, communication will be smooth and instant, personnel will learn new things in and out of technology which may prove fruitful not only to the production of the company, but just the skills that the company will be able to teach its people. This is important because when looking for potential candidates, it’s not just a matter of “can this person fill this role and perform the duties accurately and efficiently”. It’s also about, from a potential employee’s perspective, “what can I take from this company whether I stay or go?”, so it makes it even more important to stay on top of the ever-changing technological landscape because that can be a game changer to somebody who wants to make Lee and Mary’s their home either for a few years or even permanently.