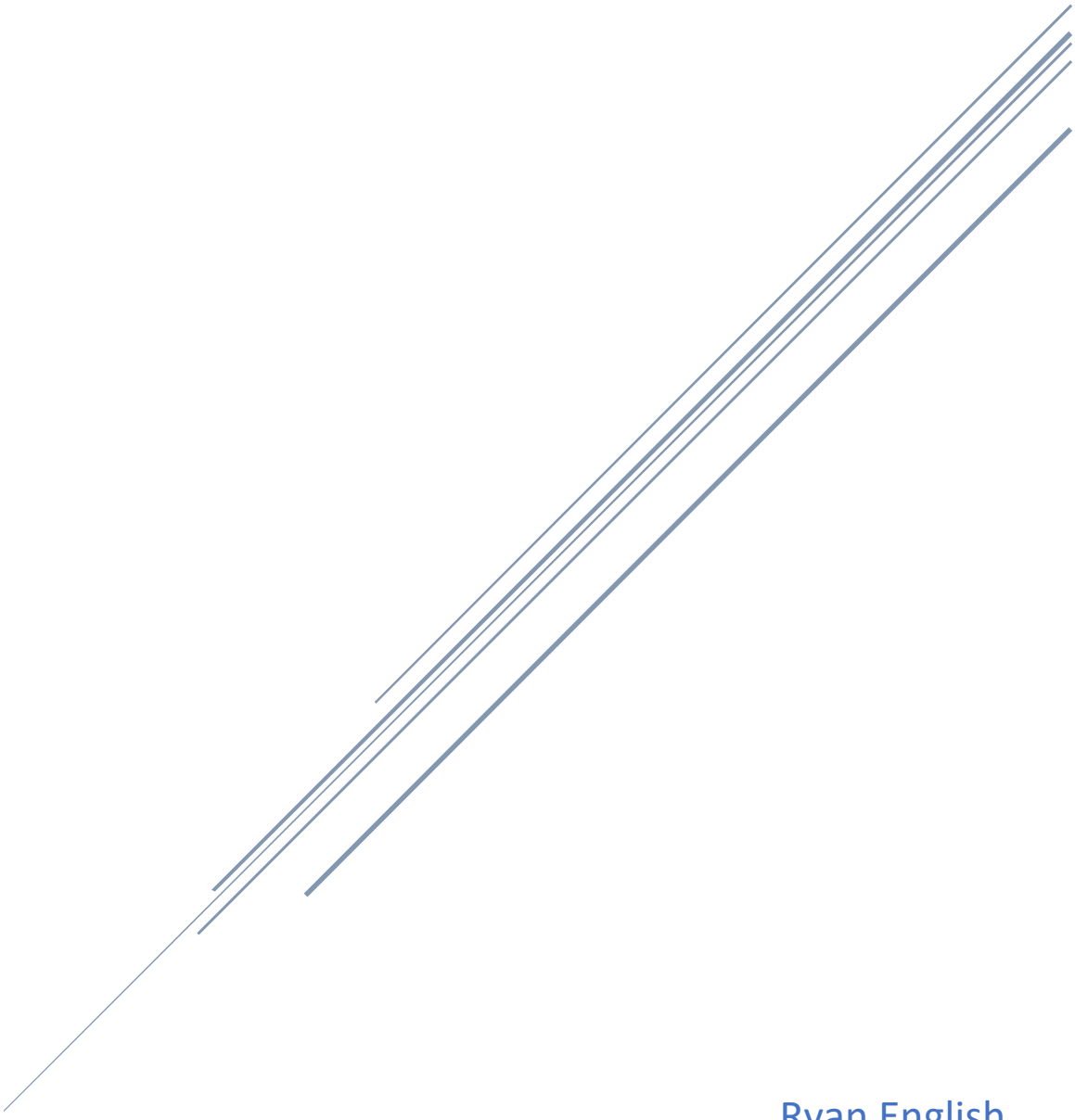
CASE THREE

Symantec



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CIS-410-50 02/23/2019

Executive Summary

Symantec produces software for business users, and in the 80's felt huge growing pains as it acquired a few smaller software companies. Symantec separated each of these products into different divisions, or product groups. Unfortunately, Symantec saw lack of effective communication between its different product groups. Many issues required a heightened communication, because one product group most likely solved the issue another product group is working on; or, the sharing of ideals helped the company produce better products, but the employees weren't talking. They all assumed they were the most capable of solving the issue. Symantec's MIS department was also operating at 100% capacity and found it difficult to keep the systems running without down time.

Most of Symantec's executives argued that the problems could be solved by creating a communication environment in Symantec. Whereas this will, in the short-term, solve the issue; we need a long-term solution as well. It is recommended that Symantec refined the IT architecture by performing a "bottoms-up" and "top-down" perspective of the architecture.

Once Symantec completes the perspectives, they will receive a blueprint of where the company is and where the company would like to be; allowing for Symantec to scale its IT architecture based on the acquisition of new products (therefore growing their product division) and stay in tune with the visions of the executives.

In order for the change to fully commit to the organization, Symantec must abide by Leavitt's Diamond. This would require the People and Structure to change, since the Technology is changing, and Tasks are not necessary to change. The people, like most executives mentioned, would need to change to a more collaborative nature. The structure will change to a more decentralized IT architecture in order for the MIS department to handle the scaling of the organization.

Another possible solution is to continue operations as is, but this is not recommended due to the issues increasing in scale as the organization grows. These are growing pain issues and must be solved accordingly.

Another not recommended solution is fully decentralizing the architecture. This is a step in the recommended solution, if done alone it will only solve short term. The organizational vision will be lost without a blueprint. Similarly, implementing a collaboration philosophy will only short term solve the issues.

Background

Symantec - a software company - in the 80's was at the height of the software industry. They were acquiring many smaller software companies and organizing them as product groups in the organization. Unfortunately, as Symantec grew the IT architecture did not grow along with the company. Issues arose that didn't allow the employees to effectively and efficiently utilize the technology they had in place. Many of Symantec's executives could not agree on an effective solution.

Issues

Lack of communication between functional and product groups.

Even with the amount of open communication channels most groups did not engage in discourse about ideals and previously solved issues.

Lack of clearly defined communication channels.

When communication does occur between groups, with no clearly defined channel, the end users end up losing sight of the communication. For example, many partners utilized CC Mail but only a handful of Symantec employees had access to CC Mail.

Lack of sharing ideals

Each product group believes it is the most qualified to solve the issue at hand.

MIS department unorganized, slow response and high down time.

Due to the addition of product divisions, MIS was unable to process additional request and was at full capacity. MIS also determined the requests priority as they came in, which added even more time to the request. Symantec employees heavily relied on email for communications, but the MIS ‘s Novell LAN went down at least once a week.

Lack of effective planning.

Symantec was dominating the software market at the time. They were acquiring many software companies, some of which not geographically close. Unfortunately, they were not planning scaling as they acquired more software pods.

Mission Statement

Design, deliver, and support diversified line of software for the information management, productivity, and software development needs of business users.

Five Forces

Threat of new entrants

The cost of capital for development of software is low; therefore, the threat of new entrants to the realm of software for business clients is high.

Threat of substitutes

The case does not mention specifics on the threat of substitutes, but on the assumption of the threat of new entrants being high, it is assumed that the threat of substitutes is high. The longer time goes, the higher the threat will be.

Bargaining power of customers

With the information provided in the text, there is not a clear definition of customers; but, one can assume that since the customers are business customers that their bargaining power was relatively high. Coupled with the threat of substitutes the customers could easily swap software providers if not met with excellent satisfaction.

Bargaining power of suppliers

Due to Symantec creating in house software for business users, they did not have many suppliers. They did, however, has suppliers for the hardware end of business – like Hewlett Packard. The suppliers had a high bargaining power due to the lack of substitutes at the time for the same software.

Competitive rivalry

With high threat of substitutes and high threat of new entrants the competitive rivalry was high amongst the few software giants at the time in 1989.

Stakeholders

Symantec Shareholders

Symantec is a publicly traded company, so the shareholders of the company have stake in the effectiveness of the business processes.

Symantec Administration

Symantec administration (managers and the like) have stake in the effectiveness of communication in order to better plan the for future business proceedings.

Symantec Employees

Symantec employees hold a stake in the effectiveness of communications in order to better complete their assigned operations.

The most effected of the employees would be MIS department, if Symantec can effectively and efficiently communicate, they can handle their requests.

Symantec Customers

Symantec customers hold a stake in the effectiveness of communications in order to receive the best possible products

Proposed Solution

Refining the IT architecture with the "bottoms-up" and "top-down" perspectives

"Only startup firms have the luxury of building an IT architecture 'from scratch'" (*Cash pg. 172*). Unfortunately, Symantec has since passed the days of building its IT architecture from scratch; so, in order to effectively utilize its architecture, Symantec needs to refine the system. Symantec, due to its large growth, can no longer answer "*Do we have the right technologies? Are they structured appropriately?*" (*Cash pg. 171)*. The system in place is manageable, currently, but was designed for the smaller software "pods" that Symantec has acquired over the years. As they acquire even more business pods this process of refining will most likely need to be reassessed.

Beginning with the “bottoms-up” perspective Symantec takes the current IT architecture and conducts a SWAT analysis to determine points of strengths and weaknesses. An example of Symantec’s current weakness in the architecture is the POPS system that is unable to process the request for a company the size of Symantec. “Bottoms-up” creates a baseline of where the company is in regard to its current systems, and by conducting a “top down” analysis a blueprint can be created.

“Top-down” perspective is taking the current vision from the administration on how they IT architecture should be utilized; and, according to the case, many administrators share a vision of increased collaboration amongst product divisions, and a scalable MIS department. The “top-down” perspective creates a where the company wants to be; and by linking these perspectives a blueprint for an effective IT architecture is formed.

Once the blueprint, or roadmap, for a redefined IT architecture is created it allows for Symantec to implement scalable processes in order to effectively and efficiently utilize the systems they have in place. As Symantec updates and refines the architecture, they must fully commit to the changes inbound, and in order to do this they must consult Leavitt’s Diamond for change.

In Leavitt’s Diagram this process of redefining the architecture changes the following three components: Technology, Structure, and People. The technology change is the obvious; but, people and structure must change as well. The structure that will most likely change – this can be different dependent on which step of the roadmap they are implementing – will be the controls at each organizational level. For example, the MIS departments POPS system is likely to change, moving the controls to a more decentralized standpoint so each product division can handle its own request, and if necessary, offload some to another POPS.

Lastly, with each change the people must change as well. In this case, as each change is implemented Symantec's people must be more willing to collaborate and communicate – which is just another way of saying Symantec's people must learn to utilize the IT architecture efficiently and effectively.

With the IT architecture roadmap and understanding Leavitt's Diagram, Symantec will have a long-term solution to their current issues of communication and unorganized MIS department. This recommended solution will take years of commitment from Symantec and constant refining; but, Rome wasn't built overnight.

Alternate Solutions

Do nothing

Doing nothing and continuing operations as is, is not a recommended solution. Symantec is feeling growing pains from the acquisition of software pods that may or may not share geographical location. If Symantec ignores these growing pains and continues acquiring pods the growing pains will increase exponentially. According to Fried, "Firms that fail to take advantage of technology advances will frequently fail to the competitive pressures of those that have adopted new techniques and tools." (*Fried pg. 111*) This quote specifically is talking about adopting new technology; but it still applies for refining the current implemented technologies in order to adapt and overcome.

Decentralize IT architecture

Whereas decentralizing the IT architecture is a solution to the problems currently facing Symantec, this is not a long-term solution. Decentralizing the IT architecture or allowing each product division to handle their own architecture, would allow for the MIS department to be broken down and able to process the load of that product division – and maybe some offset load.

Unfortunately, this might not coincide with the business objective; and the only way to get this information is to perform the top-down perspective.

Implement corporate philosophy on enhanced communication

This, like the aforementioned solution, is a solution for the short-term but lacks the linking between where the company is now and where it *might* want to be in the future. The issues that Symantec are facing are more than just lack of effective communication; the employees aren't utilizing the technology correctly – or don't have a clear definition of usage like how to contact other product divisions.

Implementing a corporate philosophy on enhanced communication will most certainly help mitigate the issues of product divisions not collaborating; but it will not resolve the issues facing the MIS department.

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