

Case Studies

Each chapter includes a Chapter Case, a Continuing Case, a Capstone Case, and an Online Case Simulation. You can learn more about the Online Case Simulation in the MIS CourseMate Features section.

Chapter Case: Best of the Best! (BoB)

Best of the Best! uses the name BoB in its advertising. As the firm's slogan points out, the quality is the same, no matter how you look at it. BoB imports and sells gourmet coffees, cheeses, and specialty foods from around the world. BoB operates 12 retail stores in large malls, and also sells to online customers.

Background

About a month ago, BoB implemented a new point-of-sale (POS) system at all locations. Using a client/server design, the workstations in the firm's 12 retail stores are networked to a server at the main office. Sales reps in the stores use the system to record sales transactions, manage customer accounts, and to print various daily, weekly, and monthly reports.

When the new sales system was installed, the IT development team conducted extensive training for the sales staff, and set up a support desk. The IT team also prepared a user manual and distributed copies to all sales and office staff.

Store managers have reported that sales-people do not like the new system and find it very confusing. When an IT support person visited the stores to investigate the problem, she discovered that the new people were having problems with the interface, and could not understand the user manual. They said that it was unclear, very hard to read, and did not use familiar terms. When she asked for examples of confusing instructions, the sales staff showed her the following examples:

- Obtaining the authorization of the store manager on Form RBK-23 is required before the system can activate a customer charge account.

- Care should be exercised to ensure that the BACKSPACE key is not pressed when the key on the numeric keypad with a left-facing arrow is the appropriate choice to accomplish nondestructive backspacing.
- To prevent report generation interruption, the existence of sufficient paper stock should be verified before any option that requires printing is selected. If not, the option must be reselected.
- The F2 key should be pressed in the event that a display of valid merchandise codes is required. That same key terminates the display.

Tasks

1. What should BoB have done to avoid this situation?
2. Should the sales support staff ask the IT department to rewrite the user manual as a maintenance project, or should they request more training for sales staff? Can you offer any other suggestions?
3. Rewrite the user manual instructions so they are clear and understandable, and use the guidelines in Communications Tools found in Part A of the Systems Analyst's Toolkit. What steps would you take to test the new version?
4. In the process of rewriting the user manual instructions, you discover that some of the instructions were not changed to reflect system maintenance and upgrade activities. A request form on the firm's intranet, for example, has replaced Form RBK-23. BoB also has phased out printed reports in favor of online reports, with a menu-driven interface. Rewrite the user manual instructions to reflect the changes.

Continuing Case: Personal Trainer, Inc.

Personal Trainer, Inc. owns and operates fitness centers in a dozen Midwestern cities. The centers have done well, and the company is planning an international expansion by opening a new "supercenter" in the Toronto area. Personal Trainer's president, Cassia Umi, hired an IT consultant, Susan Park, to help develop an

information system for the new facility. During the project, Susan will work closely with Gray Lewis, who will manage the new operation.

Background

System changeover and data conversion were successful for the new Personal Trainer system. The post-implementation evaluation indicated that users were pleased with the system. The evaluation also confirmed that the system was operating properly. Several users commented, however, that system response seemed slow. Susan Park, the project consultant, wants to meet with you to discuss operation, maintenance, and security issues affecting the new system.

Tasks

1. What might be causing the slow response time? Prepare a brief memo explaining system performance and workload measurement, using nontechnical language that Personal Trainer users can understand easily.
2. What could be causing the network slowdowns at Personal Trainer? If a problem does exist, which performance and workload measures would you monitor to pinpoint the problem?
3. At the end of the systems analysis phase, you studied the economic feasibility of the system and estimated the future costs and benefits. Now that the system is operational, should those costs and benefits be monitored? Why or why not?
4. You decide to prepare a security checklist for Personal Trainer. Prepare a list of security issues that the firm should evaluate and monitor. Be sure to organize the items into categories that match the six security levels.

Capstone Case: New Century Wellness Group

New Century Wellness Group offers a holistic approach to healthcare with an emphasis on preventive medicine as well as traditional medical care. In your role as an IT consultant, you will help New Century

develop a new information system.

Background

You implemented the new system at New Century Wellness Group successfully, and the staff has used the system for nearly four months. Overall, New Century is pleased with the improvements in efficiency, office productivity, and patient satisfaction.

Some problems have surfaced, however. The office staff members call you almost daily to request assistance and suggest changes in certain reports and forms. You try to be helpful, but now you are busy with other clients. Actually, your contract with New Century required you to provide support only during the first three months of operation, but you want to encourage them to begin working on Phase Two of the computer upgrade project. Anita Davenport, New Century's office manager, reported that the system seems to slow down at certain times during the day, making it difficult for the staff to keep up with its workload. Also, you are increasingly concerned about system security. A recent article in the local newspaper described an incident where a disgruntled former employee was planning to break into a computer system and destroy or alter data.

Tasks

1. What might be causing the slow response time? Prepare a brief memo explaining system performance and workload measurement, using nontechnical language that New Century users can understand easily.
2. New Century's partners asked you to provide ongoing maintenance for the new system. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, you want to provide a brief description of the various types of maintenance. Prepare a brief memo that does this, and include at least two realistic examples of each type of maintenance.
3. Although the system has been operational for a short time, users already have submitted several requests for enhancements and noncritical changes. Should New Century use a maintenance release methodology to handle the requests? Why or why not?

4. What are the main security issues that New Century should address? Prepare a memo that lists the primary concerns and offers a specific recommendation for dealing with each issue.