IT Strategic Assessment Report

Austin Shircliff

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# Executive Summary

A+ Tutoring is a small, local tutoring service that is owned and operated out of a residence in Louisville, Kentucky. Although all types of tutoring can be done, the primary function of this business is to provide study aid and developmental help for students with a diagnosis of Dyslexia. A+ Tutoring is owned and operated by Sandy Shircliff. Mrs. Shircliff holds a master’s degree in teaching from Bellarmine University in Louisville and is also a certified Barton tutor and dyslexia screener. The Barton System is the gold standard or Dyslexia tutoring programs and is regarded as being the most effective at helping students overcome the learning disorder.

Mrs. Shircliff is considering using information technology to expand her business by offering a system that is currently absent from her business plan. In this system, she would like basic information to be available to her current students and to potential students. She is also planning on opening a small store that would sell various study tools as well as specialized items to benefit her students, as well as children who are not her students, that have been diagnosed with Dyslexia, Autism, or any other learning disorder.

The best way to provide a system like this would be by using a website. This website would allow the business the opportunity to provide an e-commerce store that would be centered in differentiation by what she is offering her customers. This site could also include information about the A+ Tutoring as well as how to sign up for tutoring and information about Dyslexia for those that are unaware.

# History and Purpose

## History of A+ Tutoring

A+ Tutoring was started only about 6 months ago in June of 2016, but the idea of the tutoring service was formed years before the business ever came into existence. Mrs. Sandy Shircliff was a 1st grade teacher at St. Bernard in Louisville, Kentucky when she noticed that her daughter, who was in 8th grade at the time, was having a difficult time with some of her work. Most the problems she was having stemmed from assignments that involved heavy reading or analysis. Around the same time, her nephew began to exhibit the same kind of symptoms. However, he was much younger than her daughter.

After testing, it was revealed that they both had Dyslexia and were not on the reading levels that they should be on. Once she herself learned more about Dyslexia, she started noticing many students in her class exhibit the same behaviors as her daughter and nephew. Mrs. Shircliff then embarked on learning the Barton system and becoming a certified Dyslexia screener to help those students. From that need in her life, she created a business. It started off with only about 3 or 4 students and only operated after school when she was still teaching at St. Bernard. Students would come to her room after hours and she would tutor them for a flat fee. When she started the Barton programs, she began to charge more and eventually realized she wanted to make the commitment to do tutoring full time. She quit her job at St. Bernard and dedicated her time to tutoring.

While she was still teaching at St. Bernard, she began the process of becoming a certified Barton Dyslexia tutor. Susan Barton, the creator of the program, was regarded as the leader in Dyslexia screening and tutoring and her system was highly praised. After investing about 3000$ to get certified, taking many classes and passes screening tests, she became a certified tutor and opened A+ Tutoring.

## Purpose of the A+ Tutoring

The purpose of A+ Tutoring was to help students. As a long-time teacher of young students, Mrs. Shircliff has always had a desire to see students succeed. When she noticed that some of the students, including her own daughter, were having problems due to undiagnosed learning disorders, she decided that she wanted to be the one to provide this service them. While there were other options for these students in the Louisville area, they were overpriced and a lot of parents were not willing to pay these outlandish prices.

However, A+ Tutoring is looking to expand and make an online presence for itself. There are certain things that Mrs. Shircliff would like to put on a website and one of them is an e-commerce store. In this store, Mrs. Shircliff is wanting to sell items to help kids with learning disorders such as: fidget cubes, special pencil grips, weighted blankets and stuffed animals for autistic students, and many more items that could help students learn and focus more.

# Management and Business Processes

## One on One Tutoring Sessions

A+ Tutoring’s main business process at the center of its business plan is the one on one tutoring sessions in which students spend one hour with Mrs. Shircliff. During this session, she goes over many different subjects, but the focus is on reading since that is the subject that students with Dyslexia have the most trouble with. During these sessions, Mrs. Shircliff uses a variety of different tools and learning aids to teach students including iPads and letter tiles.

Using the Barton system, Mrs. Shircliff can track the students’ progress in the course and determine by how they are doing if they are ready to move on to the next level in the program. The system also helps Mrs. Shircliff to communicate to the parents of the students about the progress that they are making. Since the student must pass certain curriculum in order to move up, the learning objectives are clear from the beginning and the parents seem to like the ability to see the progress.

## Build a Relationship with Each Student

While the tutoring is a most important part of the business, it is also crucial that Mrs. Shircliff has connection to the student that she is working with. This connection will allow the student to open and work with Mrs. Shircliff to ensure the best result possible from the tutoring sessions. Some students are shy and have a tendency to not want to speak because they are afraid that they would get an answer wrong and that they would be judged. It is important that the students know that Mrs. Shircliff is there to help them to overcome their Dyslexia (or any other learning disorder that the student might have) so that they can succeed in their education moving forward. When the bond is made, it is easier for students to open up and be comfortable with Mrs. Shircliff when she is working with them.

Not only does this help the student, it helps Mrs. Shircliff. Each student is different and, most of the time, the students that she is working with are quite young. When she gets to know them better, she can adjust the course in a custom way to make it easier for them to grasp the concepts. When she is able to use real world examples that the students can relate to, it keeps them interested in the activity because it can feel like a game when really it is a learning exercise.

Having small connections with the students helps Mrs. Shircliff better teach them and it helps them have a more positive attitude towards the whole process. Some students can be embarrassed when they have a “tutor”, but with the way Mrs. Shircliff presents the material and communicates with them, it just feels like any other activity.

## Creating/Maintain a Schedule

As with any business, a main process is making, altering, and communicating the schedule. Mrs. Shircliff primarily tutors after school hours form 3-7pm. During that time, she can see 4 students. Most of the students are required to meet with her at least twice a week in order to stay on track in the Barton program. This makes having a schedule very important for A+ Tutoring.

The student’s schedules are always subject to change outside of tutoring and there are a lot of factors that can influence a student not being able to make a tutoring session. Many of the students play sports or have clubs and they have to work around those in order to have make sure that tutoring is not pushed to the back burner.

As of right now, scheduling is done verbally only and is written in a calendar that Mrs. Shircliff has on her at all times.

## Recruiting

A+ Tutoring is doing very well right now in terms of students and that is because of the recruiting that Mrs. Shircliff has done. The main form of recruiting that has been done is word or mouth recruiting. From her time at St. Bernard and St. Edward, where she taught before St. Bernard, Mrs. Shircliff has created a great reputation for herself as a standout teacher who always puts her students first. Therefore, she has been praised by a lot of her students’ parents to the parents of other students that are having troubles in school.

This word of mouth recruiting that her customers are doing for her has accounted for a vast majority of her business. As of right now, Mrs. Shircliff has 10 students and currently A+ Tutoring has spent 0$ in marketing and is running at near full capacity.

## Book Keeping/Payments

A+ Tutoring currently charges 50$ per hour for tutoring sessions and most parents pay monthly with some paying by session. These payments are done in checks or cash with no option to use a credit or debit card. There is also no option for the customers to pay online. They must pay in person at their tutoring session and there is currently no penalization or fee tacked on if the payment is late or missed.

A+ Tutoring uses QuickBooks Pro to handle and manage all of its business finances and payments. By using QuickBooks, Mrs. Shircliff is able to easily keep track of who has and hasn’t paid their current balance by sorting them by student. However, there currently is no reminder system for the customer in place other than Mrs. Shircliff calling, texting, or telling the customer in person what their balance is and even though the price is fixed based on the sessions, there is no physical billing system in place either. It is simple the verbal communication of the price

# Current IT Environment

## Hardware

Since A+ Tutoring is a new and small business, they do not currently have or need a lot of hardware. Currently, Mrs. Shircliff is utilizing a Dell Optiplex 380 computer running windows 7 to do all of the electronic work on. This computer is connected to a Acer G206HQL monitor. A+ Tutoring also uses an Epson ET 2550 printer. A lot of the tests and exercises that are given to the students need to be printed off and this small printer is more than capable of doing the job at an efficient rate.

Lastly, A+ Tutoring does have two iPads. One is a second-generation iPad that is running iOS 9 and the other is a third-generation iPad that is running iOS 10. These are primarily utilized when using the Barton reading app. Mrs. Shircliff has the students use the second-generation iPad while the third-generation is the one that she uses.

## Software

Similar to hardware, A+ Tutoring does not have a need for a ton of software. In most cases the basics will do. They currently are utilizing Windows 7 on their dell computer and on that computer the only application that is in primary use is QuickBooks. However, Mrs. Shircliff does use Microsoft Word for basic letter and message writing as well as printing materials for the students.

The main software that Mrs. Shircliff uses is the Barton reading app. This app is used in everyone on one tutoring session by the students. This app was free to download but the each of the levels cost 30$. In order to download this app, you must be a certified Barton tutor. In the application there are games, exercises and assessments for the students to complete. The benefit to them being on the iPad is that it feels like a game and not like work.

## Staff IT Skills/Training

A+ Tutoring is a very small business. It is so small that there is only one employee. Therefore, there is no set training or skills that are required. When talking to Mrs. Shircliff about how she came to use technology in her business, she said that she mainly just watches YouTube tutorials. She learned how to use QuickBooks entirely from YouTube.

The only other IT that had a learning agenda was the Barton reading app. This app is really big for an iPad app and has a lot of tools packed into it. In order to make sure that all the certified tutors have knowledge of the tools that are available to them, Susan Barton, the creator of the system, requires that the tutors know the app inside and out in their certification courses before they use it in their practice.

With A+ Tutoring looking to expand into the realm of technology with a fully functioning website, there may be a need to have someone on the staff that can bring knowledge of online business practices to the business. However, to keep costs down, Mrs. Shircliff could end up learning about it and doing the job herself.

## IT Budgeting and Spending

A+ Tutoring has been up and running now for about 6 months. So far, their IT budget and spending has been very low. Most of the equipment that is used in the business has been purchased used or was something that Mrs. Shircliff already had as a personal item. With that being said, Mrs. Shircliff has expressed an interest in having a website and has prepared to budget the money to pay for hosting and all the other necessary expenses that come with running an online site and an e-commerce store.

# Envisioned IT Capabilities

## Leadership’s Vision

## Top 10 Technology Issues

# Closing the Gap

## Recommendation 1

## Recommendation 2

## Recommendation 3

## Recommendation 4

## Recommendation 5

# Conclusions

# Appendices

## Basis of Analysis

[In this section, explain findings in light of the theories and models used in the course, as outlined in Dr. Barker’s class meetings.]

## Technology Inventory

[Include details from Section 4.]

## Top 10 Technology Issues

[Include organizational documentation, if available.]

## Strategic Planning/Visioning Documents

[If Available.]

## IT Budget/Spending Documents

[If Available.]