**Case Study Analysis of**

**Symantec**

CIS 410-50

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**Executive Summary**

Symantec is struggling with incorporating geographically and technologically dispersed product lines into a rapidly expanding company. Communication issues are plaguing Symantec from various source causes and requires large, but incremental changes. The task of giving Symantec a stable, reliable, robust, and perhaps most importantly expandable communication backbone is a huge undertaking and needs to be chunked out by tasks. Using Leavitt’s model to implement the needed changes we are faced with changing the companies People, Technology, and Structure.

**People**

Symantec has experienced growth from 30 to 300 workers in less than a decade. This growth is largely attributed to the 3 product acquisitions made. With each acquisition Symantec incorporated the company by allowing them to continue operations as normal – no location changes, but with various upper management replacements. This allowed core developers to remain in the development teams that originally produced the innovative products. The choice to leave product teams unchanged at the expense of company integration may prove a difficult hurdle when overcoming norms and value differences.

Symantec needs to look at management training for the personnel they choose to keep from the product teams they acquire. Often the products they acquire are startups where management has no true leadership experience. Training these personnel up to be effective leaders and managers may prove more cohesive than replacing product teams’ founders.

**Technology**

As often the case with small companies that expand rapidly, no infrastructure/IT roadmap seems to have been created. As the company grew rapidly, the MIS department was left the role of firefighting instead of planning and innovating. Symantec tried and failed multiple times to incorporate newer network technologies but had them fail for a variety of reasons (having Dykes, the VP of Finance and Ops, choose the new network system is one of them).

Moving forward, Symantec will need to have a multitude of smaller, more manageable projects to accommodate the growing pains of the company. The IT Vision Statement needs to be clearly stated and then carried out. A bottom up and top down approach are required to pull themselves out the rut they currently are sitting in.

**Structure**

Interestingly enough most of the problems stem from what CEO Eubanks thinks is a guiding principle of the company. Eubanks says that Symantec will keep product teams together to foster product innovation and consistency at the expense of distance, communication, and maintaining a single company culture. Having such dispersed teams that have not been integrated into the company as a whole means that Symantec will struggle with maintaining company standards.

Moving forward, Symantec needs to choose between integrating products or restructuring their operations to facilitate disparate geographical locations. Sales teams by product may also be an option to increase communication of innovative product development.

**Strategic Vision Statement**

Symantec needs a clearly defined Vision Statement to begin to move in the right direction. Symantec is having those that aren’t technologically qualified make technical decisions based on their own visions, not the companies. These visions need to be defined to act as the beacon for all future products and projects.

*“**To build a skyscraper, owners start with a vision of a building that will meet their needs. They work with an architect who translates the vision into a construction plan... Similarly, senior executives do no need highly technical expertise in computer science, but they do need to clearly articulate for the information architect their business strategy, organization structure, management control systems, and related IT requirements.”* **– Cash, IT Architecture: Basic Building Blocks – pp. 172**

Their statement during this era would likely be something similar to this.

*We work deliberately to produce top software either by research and development or acquisition of other product teams. We must provide supported, reliable, industry leading products by allowing our product groups the freedom to continue to operate in the way that brought their success. We do not believe in imposing our culture on them because what is best for a product group – is best for a product group – which is best for the user.*

From this Vision Statement we can Then create an IT Vision Statement that facilitates these goals and allows Symantec to fulfill this strategy.

*Our IT team’s role is to provide for the now while anticipating the future. We need to plan for various levels of growth through implementing systems that are expandable, modularized, and loosely coupled. We need to facilitate company workers by providing a robust and reliable system that promotes continued productivity and user experience. We strive to be the joy of Symantec employees and users, not the bane.*

With these vision statements clearly defined we can begin to work through the issues that face Symantec. Only after we know where we want to go can we begin to work towards that destination.

*“The strategic vision statement is meaningful, inspiring, and captures the essence of what the firm must do well to prosper in the coming decades. In turn, the strategic vision is translated into an IT vision”* **– Cash, IT Architecture: Basic Building Blocks – pp. 184**

This quote from Cash shows us that our IT Vision is really defined by our strategic vision and without it we are wondering aimlessly.

**Stakeholders and the Impact**

The stakeholders of Symantec’s Success are:

1. Shareholders – increased productivity usually results in increased profits.
2. Symantec’s Directors and Executives – These members have a distinct interest in the success of Symantec because they have high visibility and poor performance can mean their removal.
3. Product teams – Symantec’s acquired product teams have an interest in the continued success of the company to continue having a job. They care about consistent paychecks and having a stable work environment.
4. Users of Symantec’s Products – Users want Symantec to have great customer service, support, and great products for as low as possible costs.
5. Symantec’s Competitors – they have a stake in Symantec’s success or failure because they are trying to take as much market share held by others as possible.
6. Governments where Symantec operations are being done – these governments have distinct interests in providing jobs to their constituents and generating tax revenue from keeping businesses in their jurisdictions. These governments range from local, city, state, federal, and international.

**SWOT**

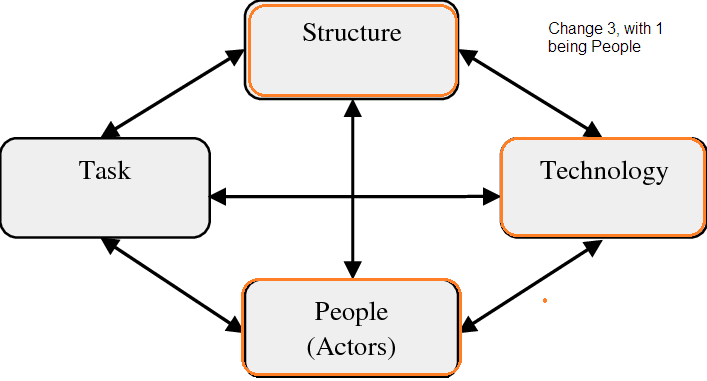
Strengths – Internally Symantec has cohesive product groups. Each group was maintained after acquisition and the core development team remains intact. As a result, Symantec has never missed a product release date and continues to offer superior products to its consumers. Communicating disagreements with upper management can be performed through a variety of outlets including direct lines of communication with C-Suite.

Weakness – By keeping acquired products groups together and not truly integrating them into Symantec multiple company cultures are being formed. Lack of standard methods of doing things leaves employees confused about how to proceed when dealing with different groups. Product groups do not intermingle between themselves and are for the most part siloed off. The network infrastructure is crippling the company and making everyday functions unreliable (such as email & phone calls). Furthermore, many product team managers have little or no experience because of their entrepreneurial backgrounds.

Opportunities – Symantec can move toward more modularized, expandable, and loosely coupled technologies that allow for continued growth while addressing the current growing panes that plague the company.

Threats – Symantec’s greatest threat is truly itself, but for external threats it faces competition mainly from well established companies like Lotus and Ashton-Tate. These companies represent an external threat that is less of an issue than the internal weaknesses.

**Root Causes of Issues**

******The root causes of Symantec’s issues are caused on various levels. These levels are:

* Company policies and culture
* The IT and keeping up with company growth
* Poor management from untrained employees
* Lack of communication due to lack of integration

These issues are reflections of Leavitt’s Diamond and will be the basis of improving the state of Symantec. Company policies and culture fit as well as lack of communication due to lack of integration both fall under ***structure.*** Poor management from untrained employees falls under ***people***. Lastly, IT’s inability to keep up with company growth clearly falls under ***technology.***

**Structure**

Before we can work on the technology or the people, we need to know the big picture. We need to know what Symantec’s structure is now and what should it become to facilitate the strategic vision. Right now, the structure is very largely divisional. As Symantec acquires companies, they are incorporated mostly only by name. There is no adoption of culture and most operations are contained within each product team. This is in line with the CEO’s vision because he specifically states that he wants to keep the environments that brought each product’s success intact. But clearly there are issues to be sorted out here.

One or the most evident issues with the current structure is the separation of sales and each product group. Sales operations are run centrally from headquarters and leaves a disconnect between the products they sell and the teams that develop them. Many product engineers expressed frustration due to not knowing product issues that are known by the sales teams until the customer brings up the issue. To remedy this sales teams should operate out of each product group. The products are already a divisional structure, separating sales out into HQ serves no purpose.

Another issue is that product teams do not share information with one another. Recently all the teams were required to meet and share ideas but doing so in a normal/organic way is more sustainable. Having product team members volunteer to float between product teams would increase the flow of fresh ideas amongst product teams.

**People**

Any employee can tell you that a poor manager is equipped to destroy team cohesion and productivity without even knowing it. Symantec currently changes out some of the personnel from acquired product teams, but little is done as far as continued training for those that are retained. To remain consistent with the company strategic vision it is important that these managers are not indoctrinated into the Symantec way but rather groomed in their current environment. If it is desirable to keep product teams operating in a similar manner to before they were acquired managers need to be trained based on their unique challenges. Training specialists should perform side by side training and workshops regularly at the location of each product team.

**Technology**

Lastly, technology needs to be incrementally changed to serve current issues and prepare for future ones. A huge and likely overlooked issue is that the wrong people are making technical decisions. The VP of Finance and Operations should not be deciding on the technology used for network infrastructure. VPs need to learn that their role is to communicate the strategic vision to technical experts and the experts give top recommendations and options for them to make a final decision. Having a title doesn’t breed technical competence, only ability cause change.

Nothing can cripple a company faster than breaking its IT Infrastructure and Networking. Employees can’t work and tasks take exponentially longer to perform because of troubleshooting.

Careful thought needs to be given to the needed technology so using a OSI 7-Layer model we will parse out some of the current issues facing Symantec’s IT Architecture.

*“OSI 7-Layer Model:*

*7. Application (the user’s application program)*

*6. Presentation (user interface/screen display)*

*5. Session (exchange between two nodes on the network)*

*4. Transport (protocol for encoding messages)*

*3. Network (mechanisms for separating multiple messages)*

*2. Link (data encoding schemes)*

*1. Physical (wires, connectors, voltage)”*

**- Cash, IT Architecture: Basic Building Blocks – pp. 180**

To delve into the issues facing Symantec, we’ll assign each of their observed issues to one of the seven layers:

**7. Application (the user’s application program)** – OMAR (Order Management and Accounts Receivable) and POPS (prepaid order processing system). POPS built in house and required in house continued support that requires more division of MIS departments attention.

**6. Presentation (user interface/screen display)** – 80 Macs cannot access email applications because of compatibility issues.

**5. Session (exchange between two nodes on the network)** – virtual machines vs physical machines, and macs vs IBM, macs not able to link to network.

**4. Transport (protocol for encoding messages) -**

**3. Network (mechanisms for separating multiple messages)** – HP 3000 and HP 935. Dykes, VP of Finance and Operations put in charge of choosing a new IT System to act as the back bone. The actual network system of Novell LAN which connected all 320 IBM-PC and IBM-PC-clones. 80 Macs on this LAN system couldn’t be linked to the e-mail software.

**2. Link (data encoding schemes)** – fax, email, file shares on VMs, telecom. Any one of which fail sporadically.

**1. Physical (wires, connectors, voltage)** – Having to go out and buy your own cable and charge it instead of relying on MSI because the ticketing system isn’t effective or standardized.

These issues all stem from the same issue- unplanned growth and lack of planning. The current IT architecture is straining to support the operations of the company and is inhibiting any hopes of future growth.

The issues faced by Symantec are extensive and highly involved. To fix all these issues in one project would be futile because by the time the requirements and user stories were collected the planned solution will have already changed and change requests would have begun to pile up. No, Symantec needs to incorporate many small, incremental changes to IT architecture as projects.

*“Rule 6 – In large projects, the resulting system never satisfies the buyer... The product delivered was exactly what the buyer wanted—three years ago... With large projects we need to look for ways to compress the schedules or to implement the project incrementally.”*  **- Fried, IS Management Issues – pp. 364**

The incremental changes that Friend’s quote is talking about are changes made in bite size projects. Projects that do not attempt to replace an entire system, but incrementally implements fixes as needed based on priority. The first priority of the Symantec should be to get the hardware issues sorted out. You can have beautiful software, but without sufficient hardware it will not run. As previously stated, project teams of three should be created to tackle the issues working closely with executives to ensure alignment with the strategic vision.

Groups of three were chosen to reduce likelihood of human error while still optimizing communication channels needed to work effectively. Each individual will be more inclined to pull their weight and will have greater responsibility of project success placed on them. These smaller groups have less overhead associated with communication in larger groups.

*“Project plans must take into account the contingencies and risks of people-related activities and the overhead time associated with communications in large projects.”* **- Fried IS Management Issues – pp. 362**

Once the physical, links, and network issues are sorted out you can begin to start worrying about the issues concerning which email platform to use. Each of the issues outlined under the specific OSI number needs to have dedicated, three person groups assigned to ensure completion.

*“Rule 10 - They are not simply project management risks. For example, if you break down a large project into modules to be incrementally implemented, the sequence of implementation may result in a delay of some business benefits at a cost to the user.”* **- Fried IS Management Issues – pp. 365**

What Fried means in the above quote is that these small projects are broken down to decrease the time required to implement the change and to move quickly; it is not meant to reduce all types of risk. If a small project is delayed that another project depends on in order to begin, the chain reaction could result in failure to provide service to a customer, failure to provide communication channels to employees, or any number of other projects. In short, these small projects are not much less risk averse because of the rippled reliance one to another.

**Decision**

It is imperative for Symantec to make changes organizationally to remain competitive. Plagued with communication issues, Symantec needs to make drastic changes in the following three categories of Leavitt’s Diamond: People, Structure, and Technology.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Concerning Situation** | **Suggestion** |
| Change People | Managers of acquired product teams are ill-equipped to effectively manage. | Prune unsalvageable employees from product teams. For those that are kept, implement in house management training to fit their unique product’s environment and divisional subculture. |
| Change Structure | Sales department’s central location creates disconnect between known user issues and the engineering team. | Sales teams are no longer part of the centralized functions of the company but are to be imparted as dedicated resources to each product line. This will foster clear communication of needed product improvements and bug fixes. |
| Change Technology | The company has grown too quickly for the strained company Information Architecture. | Align a IT Vision Statement and impart teams of three to tackle issues faced by the company. These teams are responsible for creating modular, loosely coupled, and expandable solutions for focused issues the company faces today and will face tomorrow. |

**Rejected Alternatives**

1. **To do nothing**
   1. This is not an option because as it is now, Symantec can barely perform day to day operations. The IT Architecture is strained and not likely to withstand any growing utilization if the company were to continue expanding. Also, communication channels need structural reformation. Personnel need to be trained or let go if unable to fulfill their management roles.
2. **Implement a comprehensive project to fix IT Architecture**
   1. This option wasn’t chosen because large projects are unmanageable and will always deliver yesterdays product tomorrow. They are too slow and will not be able to fit Symantec’s immediate, paralyzing needs.