



Caleb Hayden

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### Case 3: Symantec

Symantec is a company that provided information systems and other software to consumers at a fast-paced rate focusing on the MS-DOS platform, but also providing specialized products for the growing MacIntosh userbase. The company grew at an exponential rate and it quickly became apparent that their specialized departments and product groups lacked cohesion. This facilitated a lack of inter-group communication, an issue that was not present in the company's fledgling form. This is a problem for several reasons, but first and foremost because "Communication problems lead to distrust and low morale"(Duggan). Much of Symantec's growth is attributed to acquisitions and mergers with other smaller companies. As a result, the company is comprised of offices with a multitude of different locations, many of which focus solely on their products and functions rather than contributing to the company as a whole. This decentralization was a careful choice by the Symantec executives, who believed that relocating employees was bad for morale and harmful to the work environment of existing companies as they are merged.

With this decentralization and rapid growth, Symantec began to struggle with company identity and communication. This idea is expressed throughout the case through several different viewpoints. For example, many people believed it wasn't worth their time to communicate to other departments. If the departments shared a purpose or goal, they would have not viewed things as important as communication as "not worth their time". The complex nature, the

unreliability, and the sheer number of communication channels within the company proved to be major barriers that kept people from using them, or at the very least, made their usage more difficult and time consuming.

In the book, *The Goal*, productivity is described as anything that helps the company achieve their goal (Goldratt). Clearly there was no shared goal for the company. There was an interesting point brought out in the case that stated at one point there was a person in charge of data entry, that when they ran out of things to enter, or if the somewhat unreliable MIS went down, they had “literally nothing to do”. Had there been an overall goal of the company, that said person would have found something to do to contribute and be productive, but since every individual department of the company did only their own specific duty and had little knowledge of other functions, they did nothing.

Clearly, change needed to be made. The case leans on the problem that there was a communication issue between departments and locations, while this is true, instead of thinking “what is the problem”, we must think of “why it is a problem”. One of the most important steps to problem solving is defining the problem, not simply stating it, by asking why it’s a problem, we can truly define the problem itself and see where it stems from (Beecroft). This communication issue was a problem because departments didn’t feel like information coming from other departments was important to them because they focused on themselves (local optima) instead of an underlying goal for the company as a whole or even how other departments could assist in achieving their goals(global optima). They also viewed the communication system as difficult and unreliable, which deterred many from using it. What is happening is the company is using local optima as their measurement for productivity instead of global. This can be explained using math, “A local minimum of a function is a point where the

function value is smaller than or equal to the value at nearby points, but possibly greater than at a distant point. A global minimum is a point where the function value is smaller than or equal to the value at all other feasible points.”(Mathworks). By viewing things locally, the departments don’t know or really care about the objectives of the entire organization.

Symantec must define a clear organizational purpose and goal clearly defined throughout the entire organization so there is no confusion about job responsibilities when it comes to interaction between departments. This way, there will be a greater reason for communicating, and departments won’t view this communication with other departments as a waste of time. Before explaining which decision Symantec should adopt, one must first understand the business and the environment that it resides in. To do this we will look at Porter’s five forces (Porter).

First, we’ll begin with the suppliers for Symantec. There really aren’t very important suppliers in this case when it comes to a pure software development company. The extent of suppliers boils down to the wholesale or retail dealers in which office supplies and electronics needed for work are purchased. They do not hold a ton of power over Symantec because the office supply markets are vast.

Next, we’ll look at the intra-industry competition that Symantec faces. There really aren’t many immediate threats to Symantec, at least, there aren’t any mentioned in the case. In fact, when they want a certain product, they simply buy the company, reorganize some of the management, and leave it as is. Also, with the speed that they’re pushing out products and the fact that they’ve never missed a product release date, it would take real effort to compete with them fully. If Symantec can continue to aggressively pursue the market, they will maintain a great deal of power over their competitors.

Third, we'll look at the threat of new entrants. With the manpower that Symantec is needs to complete the tasks that they complete, they keep some power over this force. However, with any software company, the cost of capital needed to join the market is almost nonexistent. This creates a gap in security as far as their market share goes. To counter this, Symantec has been coming out with products on time, and rapidly. This environmental threat will continue to exist as long as they're a software only company, but with their aggressive strategies, they will likely continue to dominate the space.

Fourth, we'll look at the customers. In software, many times, companies are intending for their software to handle the most tasks and be the easiest to use from the user's perspective. Since they are operating in a space that thrives on product differentiation, not only is Symantec producing a different and innovative line of products, they are also doing it at low costs and doing it at scale with the vast number of products they supply, meaning they can create vastly different products than their competition and update those products more quickly than them as well. This all points to the fact that the buyers don't have much power over Symantec if they want reliable and quickly updated products. That being said, the inherent problem of communication also means that the engineering and development teams aren't getting the feedback that the customer service staff are getting, and as a result, are missing a lot of information that could be used to improve and support their products.

The last force we have to look at is the threat of substitutes. There really are no highly competitive substitutes for what Symantec provides. Software and technology systems are often hard to create a substitute for due to the vastly more efficient ways of software over doing things manually. Due to this, there is no real threat of substitute to their product in the immediate future.

Even if a substitute arises for one of their products, their numerous number of products will keep them relatively safe for now.

Now that we understand Symantec as a company and the environment that they reside in, we need to discuss the alternatives that are plausible for Symantec as a company to make going forward. I will stick to three most plausible decisions, define the main stakeholders involved in the decision, and lastly, how the decision will affect them and why it's the correct or wrong choice.

Stakeholders are people that are impacted by changes in an organization. The main stakeholders I will reference are the customers who Peter Drucker describes as the most important stakeholders ([www.destination-innovation.com](http://www.destination-innovation.com)), regular employees, and corporate employees. These stakeholders are the ones that are most heavily affected by any major change in purpose or goal. These are the people that should be taken into account when making decisions with company-wide implications.

The first alternative would be to simply do nothing and move forward as-is. Symantec will continue to lack appropriate communication and the parts of the whole will continue to work mostly or entirely independently. This idea isn't even plausible due to the already vast amount of complaints from employees from all departments. Corporate employees would not be happy due to the lack of communication that continues, and the fact that their employees will at times be unproductive since they have no goal to work towards. Regular employees wouldn't be affected since their jobs wouldn't change, but will continue to endure the daily stresses that lacking communication can create. Customers would stay the same and be relatively happy since there weren't any known complaints to the company from customers to begin with. This decision is

unacceptable because it will not create a better rapport between the company and its corporate employees or make the company more cohesive.

The next alternative would be to focus on the communication and information flow by itself. This will no doubt fix some of the communication between departments but will not change the fact that people view information from other departments and the need for it “not worth their time”. This attitude again stems from the fact that there is no underlying purpose or goal for the company and everyone treats their own department’s requirements as the goal to measure their productivity. Corporate employees would be somewhat happy because communication would improve at least slightly. Regular employees would remain pretty neutral since their jobs won’t change much, they could even become slightly unhappy due to the feeling of being forced to communicate when they deem it unproductive. Customers would remain neutral because their view of the company or interaction with it would not change. This decision wouldn’t make negative changes to the company but would not fix the overall problem.

The final alternative would be to implement very clear purpose and goals to measure productivity among all departments. Currently, every department views their local optima as the measurement to live or die by. They need to implement clear global optima to get everyone on the same page and subsequently, fix their communication problem. This will keep their communication at a much higher level than before mainly because employees will consider it productive to do so. This will save time due to not having to reinvent the wheel every time a problem comes up since another department may already have a solution. The company will be able to apply updates to software faster and push out new products quicker. Customers will be happier due to the quicker bug fixes. Corporate will be happier because of the better communication and more than likely better revenues. Regular employees will have a clear

purpose to follow and will become happier due to the less work that goes along with fixing problems that other departments already have a solution to. They will also be happier because “Connecting people to a purpose is an important way of helping them feel good about your company” (Rick).



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