Derrick Fox

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Week 7

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1. Should the new system be designed as a Web-based system? Why or why not? What are some specific issues and options that Susan should consider in making a decision?

Yes, I believe the new system should absolutely be web-based. Web-based systems are very scalable and will allow the customer to use some of its facilities from home. There are some issues that you will have to consider when making this decision such as how the architecture of a web-based system will affect hiring technical staff and either purchasing hardware geared towards web service like racks of servers or whether or not you will outsource that functionality. Being that they system is more scalable than traditional in-house systems, Susan will have to outline a plan ahead of time as to how to upscale in case of a flux of activity.

2. Assume that Cassia Umi, Personal Trainer's president, has asked Susan to prepare a system requirements document and deliver a presentation to the management team. What should be the main elements of the system requirements document? Also, based on the suggestions in Part A of the Systems Analyst's Toolkit, what visual aids should Susan use during her presentation?

In addition to the systems’ requirements themselves, the system requirements document should also include the description of the alternatives that were considered and should makes specific recommendations to the management. Some visual aids that Susan might consider are graphical summaries of performance trends, a series of cost-benefit examples, or a bulleted list of important points. Our book also says that whiteboards, flip charts, overhead transparencies, slides, and videos could all greatly contribute to convey your message. For this specific presentation I personally believe the best combination of visual aids (if available) would be to start with a quick opening video showing a similar system in use in a similar environment. Then, use slides to go into detail about the specific elements illustrated in the video. I would then move on to a bulleted list of pro’s and con’s associated with the new system. I would follow up with a cost-benefit chart of how the pro’s listed in the previous side translate into increased revenues. If there is a prototype of the system, now would be the time to demonstrate it.

3. Should Susan use a prototype during systems design? What options does she have, and how would you advise her?

If there is any hope of drawing up a workable prototype to demonstrate in the presentation then it is of my personal opinion that there can be no better visual aid then that. Giving the sceptic a chance to interact with the product before investing in a purchase is one of the all-time leading selling strategies. There is however an excellent chance that being that she is trying to convice them to go web-based that they do not yet have the staff with the technical prowess to develop a workable prototype yet. So, perhaps a video outlining a similar system in detail in another gym could help. However, if Susan does have a development team at her disposal back at her company then it is possible using an Agile iterative methodology to develop a functional prototype in time for the presentation.

4. Susan wants to prepare a presentation that will calculate the total cost of ownership for the system. What financial analysis tools are available to her, and what are the advantages (and possible disadvantages) of each tool?

There are some tools to help Susan prepare a presentation to show her audience the cost-benefit analysis in its three phases: payback analysis, return on investment analysis, and present value analysis. The CCH Web site provides a variety of information to businesses including present value analysis. As for the return on investment analysis, Hall Consulting and Research offers free ROI templates. HP Services offers an online TCO analysis tool. But the most tried and true financial analysis tool is still probably Microsoft Excel with wide array of statistic functions and graphical functionality. The advantage of MS Excel is that it works with all types of numbers regardless of what field (area of occupation not a column of cells, haha Excel humor) you work in. This however can also be a disadvantage because some systems may necessitate more specific data or perhaps more specific functions to work upon said data. Also, an inherent disadvantage with any quantitative representation like a graph is that there can be many qualitative an intangible advantages to a new system that cannot always be represented graphically.