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CIS 410

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Symantec Case

Case Overview

Symantec was an IT company founded by Gary Hendrix in 1982. Symantec then merged with a company named C&E Software which was founded by Gordon Eubanks in 1984. Hendrix became the vice president and managed advanced technology while Eubanks became the president and CEO of the company. After Symantec Corporation was formed, they faced rapid growth and went on to purchase three other Software and Technology companies. The main issue in this case is that Symantec's Infrastructure wasn't suited for the needs of a large scale, rapidly growing company. This in turn, hurt the company's internal ability to communicate.

Five Forces Analysis

Industry & Competition

Symantec competed in the IT industry where they developed software and hardware for businesses in the late 1980's. They sought out competition which were newer startup companies and tried buying them. Other than that, there were a multitude of companies that were becoming "tech giants" in the late 80's such as Lotus and Ashton Tate were both software companies.

Threat of New Entrants

As computers started to become more powerful, businesses' demand for newer and better working software also became abundant. New companies were being started up pretty frequently and a lot of new entrants would soon grab their share in the market. This was a big threat for Symantec at the time.

Power of Suppliers

Symantec were the suppliers at the time. They built their own IT infrastructure (The Hewlett-Packard System as well as their own Network System) which allowed them to be self-reliant.

Power of Customers

The customers held a high degree of power at the time. With business demands and technology growing rapidly, customers could easily move to another software company if they see that they provide an upgraded value over what Symantec had to offer. With this, a lot of competition as well as newer startups, customers had a large pick of what they wanted to go with at the time.

Threat of Substitutes

The threat of substitutes was high. There were many other software companies at the time and Symantec specialized in a highly demanded field. New Information Systems processes were being developed frequently.

Organizational Mission

Symantec “designed, delivered, and supported a diversified line of software for the information management, productivity, and software development needs of business users.”. Symantec also developed different versions of their old products, prided themselves on never having a missed product release date, and established their products as being some of the best on the market.

Company’s Strategy

The company used cross functional communications to control the information flow, incentives for employees, and control systems for functional and product groups in order to maintain and analyze the performance of the company.

Organizational Structure

Symantec used the Matrix Organizational structure. The company was organized into five product groups that controlled their own products development, marketing, quality assurance, support and management. Finance, HR, and sales were handled by centralized departments that were located at the corporate headquarters. Some centralized functions were not at headquarters such as purchasing and manufacturing.

Key Stakeholders

Management

Management at Symantec were key in decision making in the company and their decisions would ultimately affect the remaining stakeholders.

Shareholders

Symantec was a publicly owned company and shareholders were directly affected by decisions that Symantec makes.

Employees

Employees, although frustrated are the backbone of the company and are affected by their performance as well as management's decision making.

Customers

The customers are the businesses that Symantec sells to. The customers are most impacted by the decision making and processes of Symantec. If the product isn't efficient, a new alternative will be chosen, and Symantec will suffer.

Alternatives

Alternative #1: Upgrade The Internal MIS Systems Using Communication

Upgrading the company's Hewlett-Packard System and Network systems would be pivotal in maintaining the success and growth of Symantec. I believe that the MIS management team needs to reevaluate their processes and ask some of the questions stated in Building the

Information Age, Chapter 4, “Which applications will we develop, and which will we buy off the shelf?” and “Who will assess whether our IT architecture is meeting the firms needs?”. I think answering these will lead the management team to be more coherent and use in person communication with employees to assess the needs of specific areas. This could solve issues such as the company’s 80 Macintosh systems not being able to be connected to the email system. If smaller needs are met, communication can be reestablished, and the company can gather information from within itself to know what exactly the steps are to upgrading the internal architecture based on the employee’s needs.

Alternative #2: Keep their IT Infrastructure

Symantec can implement rule one of project management, “You cannot estimate large projects”. The company can implement new features into the system as they go as Dykes wanted when he stated, “I don’t like having a department that studies things and says, “this would be exactly the perfect way to do this, lets proceed.” In a company that is growing and changing rapidly.”. Gathering feedback and refining the system as they could help the management team gather information and do their best to solve problems as they go rather than create something finite, implement it, and then deal with major problems with the system.

Alternative #3: Create a new IT Infrastructure

Opposite to alternative two, the company can start from scratch, hire a new MIS manager, and build a new IT infrastructure from top down. Going over the strategic vision, IT vision and principles, as well as blueprints for the long term and short term for the company. Doing this would help managers and MIS employees gain a better understanding of the infrastructure and fix any minute problems from within the company.

Recommendation

I recommend alternative number one. It is the most realistic while also being the most feasible. Being able to fix the IT infrastructure as well as the communication problem within the company can solve both problems while not having to develop a new system or deal with the same unsustainable system.

Citations

Cash, Building The Information Age Organization

Fried, Managing Information Technology in Turbulent Times