**ISQS 5350: Unit 1 Homework**

This homework deals the CONFIG Case.

To make it easier to see the questions and answers, leave the questions in *italics* font, and put your answers in **bold** font after each question sub-part. Single space your answers. As a guide, your finished document including both the questions and your answers should not exceed 7 pages.

Credit points (100 total) are listed for each of the 10 questions. Grading criteria include accuracy, completeness, conciseness, clarity of writing, proper grammar and punctuation, depth of analysis, and logical reasoning to support and justify your answers.

Save your complete file and upload to the Unit 1 Homework link.

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1. *(5 points) What was Compusys’s overall corporate strategy? How did the CONFIG project relate to that strategy?*

**CompuSys’ business model revolves around providing custom-built machines for its customers that are made up of several components which need to be compatible. The CONFIG project was intended to ensure that the compatibility was actually achieved so the overall system would function correctly. As the product complexity grew, this became even more necessary for Sales to know they were adding the correct components to orders.**

1. *(15 points) Identify the relevant stakeholders (individuals or groups) relevant to the CONFIG case. Overall, what were the stakeholder’s overall goals, concerns, and priorities? In other words, what did they care about?*

**To begin, the CompuSys customers are, perhaps unwittingly, stakeholders in the development of CONFIG. Their primary concerns are receiving accurate quotes, fully functioning systems, and delivery when expected.**

**One would expect that these would align with Sales, another stakeholder in the creation of CONFIG. However, as the text explains, “Quite simply, sales reps were not motivated to produce error-free configurations; they were rewarded on the basis of sales volume, not configuration accuracy.”** [1] **Their concerns did not completely overlap with the customers, as representatives prioritized the sale itself and not the customer experience.**

**Manufacturing as a whole were also stakeholders in CONFIG as this project consumed a large amount of their resources and its success was perceived to reflect on the organization. This is especially true for the manager of the Configuration Systems Development Group, George Smith. While his department was responsible for a broad range of business functions, there are multiple references to his personal stake in the success of the CONFIG tool regardless of the resources spent on it.**

**The last stakeholder to mention is Tom Jones, the manager of the company’s AI center from a different department who is thought to have started the CONFIG project. Like Smith, he was also invested in CONFIG’s success and adoption even though it was outside the scope of his department.**

1. *(10 points). Who were the intended end-users of CONFIG? What were their overall primary job duties, goals, and performance evaluation metrics? How did the functionality of CONFIG align with their needs and requirements?*

**While the Manufacturing team were responsible for the development, the Sales organization were the actual end users of the tool. Their responsibilities were simply to make sales, and we are given no indication that they are involved with the customers after the sales are made.**

**Interviews with employees in Sales explain that their main priorities are the metrics they were measured on and that resulting compensation. These were mostly concerned with the volume of sales and not the accuracy of the configuration. Even though configuration errors upset customers, it appears those issues didn’t present themselves until after the sale by which point the sales representatives were no longer incentivized to care.**

**The CONFIG tool would ideally allow Sales to generate more accurate quotes. Early on, CONFIG was not even integrated with their quote tool and required a series of exporting steps to feed quotes. This small amount of value for quote accuracy was a poor tradeoff for the extra steps as explained by one representative, “It’s not worth the time it takes to run it through CONFIG. Ninety percent of the time, the customer will authorize a modification anyway.” Even if the quotes were off, it did not affect enough resulting sales to matter as the customers were still likely to purchase if their final price was different than originally quoted.**

1. *(5 points) What were the estimated/anticipated costs and benefits of CONFIG?*

**CONFIG was expected to benefit the company’s allowances costs which we surmise are the differences between the actual price of the configurations and their original quotes. There was also an expected benefit to customer satisfaction by avoiding shipping delays and incorrectly configured systems. The anticipated costs are not given, but we do know that the project was minimally staffed at first. This implies that the estimated level of effort to complete the project was low.**

1. *(15 points) Explain various definitions of project success, and the degree to which CONFIG was a success or failure according to each definition. From what perspectives could CONFIG be considered a success? From what perspectives could CONFIG be considered a failure?*

**It is difficult to say that CONFIG achieved any amount of success in the traditional triple constraint model. Insofar as the scope was ever entirely defined, it appears that CONFIG did eventually succeed in providing accurate configurations to sales representatives. If we consider user experience as part of the scope, then it would still fail because sales reps struggled to use the completed tool. Cost and time were clearly exceeded as the project far outpaced the initial allocated resources. For further reference, I offer this triple constraint diagram kept on my office whiteboard:**

**A close up of text on a white background

Description automatically generated**

**We can say that CONFIG provided some partial value for the sales representatives who did use it, although use declined over time. As far this study describes, there were no unexpected benefits from the CONFIG implementation. Besides being a case study for escalation theory, it’s difficult to say there were any innovations or learning lessons that CONFIG drove.**

1. *(15 points) Refer to the list of project success factors in Table 1-2 of Chapter 1. For each of the 9 factors, briefly describe how that factor unfolded in the CONFIG case, and how it may have contributed to the level of success or failure of the project.*

**This response will use the Chaos Study success factors from 2001 as it is closer to the timeframe of this study.**

* **The project did appear to have strong executive support, this may have actually been a contributing factor to the failure.**
* **User involvement was weak even though there was a specific end user team from Sales called the User Design Team (UDT) created to offer input. Their most important request was ignored, and the team eventually became a poor representation of the overall Sales organization.**
* **The business objectives were not clear as evident by the debate over the integration of quotes into configurations. This is a defining objective of this project that wasn’t established prior to development.**
* **The scope may have been actually been too low, as it didn’t include the important feature of incorporating quotes.**
* **There is no evidence that software infrastructure was an issue, the failures point to a misunderstanding of the end user’s needs.**
* **Basic requirements were ignored which resulted in the low utilization of CONFIG.**
* **The role of formal methodology is unclear, but the scope creep does imply that a consistent or successful methodology was not applied.**
* **The estimates were not reliable, the team was not adequately staffed from the outset and it’s unlikely the extreme development resources were planned.**

1. *(5 points). What was the main reason the CONFIG project failed?*

**CONFIG missed some key steps in most IT methodologies, but I would argue that the simple base issue was a lack of accurate requirements. Had they created a product the Sales department requested; the usage probably wouldn’t have been so low. What separates this case from an average IT project failure, though, is the continued use of resources beyond when it should have ended. The author makes a strong case attributing this to escalation theory and I agree. If the failure was identified and ended earlier, CONFIG would have been one of many scrapped projects.**

1. *(15 points) Analyze the CONFIG case using the “Four Frames of Organizations” (figure 2-2) from Chapter 2. What insights can be gleaned from your analysis regarding potential contributors to CONFIG’s failure?*

**The structural frame is concerned with the actual organizational makeup of the company. CONFIG was not owned by the team who would use it and it’s clear this structural separation was key to the lack of adoption by the end users.**

**To make the structural issue worse, the two teams were politically opposed inside the company. This inflamed the adoption issues by disincentivizing either department to help the other. It’s possible that better cooperation might have improved the acceptance and usage of CONFIG even with its problems.**

**There is also a failure of human resources to balance the needs of the organization with that of its employees, specific Tom Jones and George Smith. This is obvious by the almost immediate termination of the program following Jones’ death. If the desires of two employees are able to drive decisions harmful to the company, there is a problem with how the needs of people and business are balanced.**

**Finally, there is a lot of symbolic value placed on the “failure” and “success” of a project to a team or project leader. In reality, projects can fail due to unforeseen issues and ending those projects in a timely manner is important to avoid the sunk cost fallacy.**

1. *(5 points) Analyze the CONFIG project life cycle from the perspective of section 2.4 “Project Phases and the Project Life Cycle”. What type of methodology were they following?*

**Your answer goes here.**

1. *(10 POINTS) What should Compusys management have done differently to achieve greater success for the project? What did they do wrong?*

**CompuSys should ensure that end users have a more active role in the development of projects intended for them. The failures**