Case 3 Analysis: Symantec

Jessica Hoffman

CIS 410

**Symantec Overview**

Symantec Software Company offered a variety of IT systems to businesses. This software helped them manage information about customers and their business as a whole. Symantec had great early success, and demand for their products skyrocketed.

**Symantec Mission, Generic Strategy, and Organizational Structure**

Symantec was devoted to helping organizations manage their information safely and securely. Symantec’s generic strategy was differentiation because they provided a line of unique software products for businesses. The main five products groups at Symantec were database and project management, language-related products, utilities, and presentation. These groups affected Symantec’s organizational structure for operations and production, while the rest of the company functions were performed at a central corporate location.

**Porter’s 5 Forces**

The threat of new entrants into this information systems industry is very high during this time because lots of companies want to capitalize on the demand for IS. The threat of substitutes is also high, although Symantec strives to use differentiation as their model. The buyer power is low in this case, since the IS companies are competing with each other for market share, and prices are determined by the outcomes of these competitions. Supplier power is also low, since Symantec and similar companies produce software with mainly just labor of programmers. The competition aspect is also high here because Symantec will have to compete with many companies providing similar services to businesses.

**Symantec’s Dilemma**

Symantec had issues with misinformation due to poor communication channels within the company. There was no standard for communicating, and as Symantec obtained new smaller companies, resources were used inefficiently. The “Internet, corporate ‘intranets’, and other webs of electronic communications” are making organizations “synonymous with the decisions, policies, and data flows that shape day-to-day practice” (Morgan, Images of Organization, pg. 76). Good communication is largely important to all firms with multiple departments or locations. Communication “go[es] beyond coordination, commerce, community, and content. … Interactivity properties mean that people can exchange electronic messages in real-time” (Afuah and Tucci, Chapter 3, pg. 44). Symantec should consider taking advantage of this emerging technology and develop a plan for improving communications long-term.

**Stakeholders**

Symantec stakeholders mainly include the employees, investors, and customers. Symantec employees are affected by the quality of communications within the company because it determines whether their job is more stressful and difficult than it has to be. Investors are interested in the well-being of the company overall, and would hope that the communications issues could be resolved. Customers of Symantec want reliable products from a company they trust, and it’s much easier to trust a company that has solid internal and external communication.

**Alternative Actions**

**Option 1: Do Nothing**

Symantec may choose to continue current practices avoid outsourcing or investing in new communication standards. Every company faces internal issues, and you have to pick your battles. If the company is profiting and competing well without changing the status quo, then possibly they would save money by not trying to change it.

**Stakeholder Impact:** Employees likely wouldn’t appreciate this option because their productivity is suffering as a results of communication issues. They may have additional unneeded pressure since they also have to spend time tracking down information and validating it. Investors who stay informed about internal operations would be concerned if they heard Symantec has no plan to improve communications between employees. Customers may not notice a difference with this option, since seemingly they are still receiving their services reliably.

**Option 2: Outsource communications management**

Perhaps implementing a company-wide communications standard is a large, expensive feat, and Symantec should just utilize inexpensive resources to manage this issue. Technologies “such as wireless communications can offer alternative or complementary infrastructures for data communications” (Afuah and Tucci, pg. 214). They could hire consultants, contractors, or long-term employees overseas that can supervise and assist company communications between departments. They could attend telecommunication meetings and bridge the gap between company groups that have problems with misinformation.

**Stakeholder Impact:** If successfully implemented, employees may like this option because it would ultimately save them time and effort that was used for resolving communication issues. According to the Zwass article, “outsourcing will go only as far as long-term collaboration” (Zwass, Electronic Commerce: Structures and Issues, pg. 15). This means that potentially outsourcing may just bandage the issues instead of leading to huge bursts of profit. Investors might see this as a good, low-risk opportunity to see if internal problems can be resolved without much change in organizational structure. Customers may be indifferent to this option, unless their customer support is also outsourced in efforts to improve external communications.

**Option 3: Implement standards for internal communication**

Symantec may decide it’s time to standardize communication efforts so that different departments and centralized groups don’t operate that differently. The company could purchase new communications software used by everyone in the company, or simply define standard communication protocols that employees are required to follow. A new communications system could be costly though, since “secure messaging … has to feature … confidentiality, message integrity, authentication of both parties, and nonrepudiation” (Zwass, pg. 5-6). But in the long run, this would save Symantec time and money and prepare them to stay sustainable long-term.

**Stakeholder Impact:** Employees would most likely prefer this option, since it would clear up ambiguities concerning communication and allow them to perform their duties more seamlessly. Investors would inquire about the cost and timeline of an effort like this, because if new systems need to be implemented, it may take a while to see the return on investment. This is less of a concern during this time, since “the cost of the Internet is a lot lower than that of earlier means of electronic communications” (Afuah and Tucci, Chapter 3, pg. 36). Customers would likely get more reliable service if Symantec had clearer communication.

**Recommendation: Implement standards for internal communication**

As a rapidly-growing IS company, there is no reason that Symantec shouldn’t have a main standard for internal communications as their business continues to expand. Employees would be most positively affected by this option, which results in increased productivity and ease of completing their tasks or working with other departments. Standards are important for any large company that wants to compete and survive long-term. Standards are much more scalable than trying to reconcile the various processes of many different departments.