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CIS 410-50

27 September 2022

Symantec Case Analysis

Executive Summary

Symantec designed, delivered, and supported a line of software for the information management, productivity, and software development needs of business users. They began growing quickly with new products being added and existing ones being updated. Product lines were scattered across the U.S and only had centralized HR, finance, and sales at corporate. As the company began to grow, however, communication was lacking, and the flow of information became less efficient.

Overview

Symantec was founded in 1982 by Gary Hendrix who was an expert in artificial intelligence and language processing. Eubanks, who was the founder of another company (C&E) merged with Symantec and became the president/CEO. Eubanks believed in acquiring the best products available and did not believe in relocating workers or imposing a culture on new product groups. He understood that people do not want to be relocated, and instead, wanted keep building and not lose spirit.

Symantec was organized into product groups and centralized functions. These consisted of product development, marketing, quality assurance, support, and management. Symantec's product line included 15 main software packages, and the product's life cycle was started by its product development team. Within each team, product group managers were involved in all stages of the product's life cycle.

There was also a training department that have customer workshops and seminars and prepared product information packets. Technical support departments were also in place within each product group and a

centralized customer service department. To keep all departments in order, top executives met weekly and a quarterly newsletter, INSITE, was printed which included general company information. Although these were in place, there were still some problems that arose.

Problem

As mentioned earlier, the main problem that Symantec faced is communication and information flows. On one hand, employees expressed frustration that some information was not shared, and certain groups did not communicate with one another as they didn't have the time. Eubanks had to intervene and say that the groups were not communicating because each believed that it knew the best way to do something and did not need to share or receive information from others. Eubanks worked to have a meeting for the entire company to help better communication. In hopes that this would work, there were some other underlying issues that came from this.

Symantec's orders came in one at a time, and because of this, a more efficient system was needed. Because producing the software in-house was more costly and was a lot of work for programmers, they became more reliant on the MIS department. Whenever there was a system failure or technological problem, the MIS department was notified. They worked to keep track of and prioritize requests, however this was time-consuming, and the department took too long to respond. The MIS department also allowed employees to choose their own hardware, but it set standards for how email should operate and what types of phones and phone switches employees should use. This breakdown frustrated employees, and about once a month, e-mail corrupted files for no apparent reason. Overall, due to this new partnership, employees believed that there were now "too many ways to communicate".

All in all, MIS's problems were only temporary and due to poor systems decisions made early on. The main reason for system failures was because they just evolved and weren't planned. They realized that the more they fixed, the less they created innovative solutions to replace what was there. To combat these

issues, Eubanks, Paige, and some other leaders suggested some ways to help the company grow with minimal issues

Analysis

As the company has a do-it-now and fix-it-later mentality, Paige stated that “Most of my time is spent reacting to things as they happen”. Working in the present is how the company operated and is what they are used to. Paige suggested adding more people to the MIS would help provide to the level of service that the company demands. This would be more effective as it would keep the company up to speed with the market and allow them to grow. It also would keep the employees more at ease with the validation that there are more people to use as resources. Overall, this suggestion would only help the company in the long run.

Additionally, Eubanks suggested that MIS needed the right person as the head as things at the time were not working. In short, MIS is the ‘study of people, technology, organizations, and relationships’ (What is MIS). Results were not being met so finding someone fit for this position would create a new form of leadership and organization. This is also a great suggestion as having a good leader could help with their lack of communication and aid with information flows. Leaders also help mitigate risks in the workplace, increases motivation, and even reduces stress and confusion (19 Reasons). Although changes in leadership are sometimes hard to adapt to, if you find the right person for the company, the flow will work out.

Stewart and Loretta Wagner both believed in building communication and increasing face-to-face contact. Symantec was facing some limits to communication such as people being too swamped. This makes sense as in a lot of companies today, face-to-face interactions have decreased which have created some bumps in people’s workflow. By increasing communication, relationships can be created and developed, trust is built, it prevents problems, provides clarity and direction, and improves productivity (Training). Kathy Johnson also believed that having managers with good personal communication skills can only benefit

new hires. By telling new hires what the company objectives are, and that Symantec has an open-door policy of talking to each other and then doing it, it can help their lack of communication.

Overall, Eubanks believed that to support Symantec's rapid growth, they needed innovative product development teams and strong managers who were "competent in communicating and decision-making".

He believed that there would be more issues with creating products, however, the main challenge was managing the company. There are a multitude of solutions that Eubanks could consider in this situation that would help better manage the company as well as continue to help the company grow and flourish.

Alternative Solutions (3)

Alternative 1: Not do anything. Symantec could continue to operate as they are, and only make some minor changes such as finding a new leader of the company and creating product teams who are innovative. They could continue to have meetings when necessary and employees can turn to leaders whenever they need help. This solution could work for the company as making simple changes would make employees less overwhelmed and able to be more productive in their work.

Alternative 2: Implement a hierarchical structure. A hierarchical structure "refers to a company's chain of command, typically from senior management and executives to general employees. In other words, this structure applies to organizations with a sole leader and a flow of subordinates underneath them"

(Hierarchical). This flow would add some form of structure for Symantec as there are now defined leaders and teams created. The creation of teams can help increase productivity as employees can focus on one task at a time and can communicate with individuals who are familiar with the work they are doing.

Having more personal connections can help there be more control and create more teamwork, rather than seclusion.

Alternative 3: Implement a more structured MIS system. While the MIS system was a good addition to the company, there are still some challenges that they face in terms of leadership and consumption of time. By creating more structure, the organization would run more smoothly and can help fix

communication issues and issues with the flow of information. Employees would also feel more knowledgeable about the company and may even spark innovation. By sparking innovation and increasing motivation, innovative ideas can develop and even the analyzation of areas that need to be improved upon. Some ways MIS can create more structure is, like mentioned above, finding a new leader, and increasing face-to-face interactions. Additionally, analyzing the past and present, as well as planning the future by scheduling, can help Symantec stay on top of tasks and give everyone something to do. This will allow the leaders to be the best role models and carry out the duties they need to.

Solution

The solution that I would choose is a combination of Alternative 2 and Alternative 3. With Alternative 2, the hierarchical system can help define the leadership, and create more control within the company. Control would be created as employees would know what their tasks are and not get in the way of others. It would also allow for more trust and communication within teams, as well as throughout the entire company. This structure would give people a visual as to how the company runs instead of solely verbal communication. In addition, Alternative 3 should also be implemented as the MIS system adds an extra layer of support. By having MIS as a resource, employees can do their jobs, and like with Alternative 2, it can increase communication if they hire the right leader. Overall, mixing the two together will ensure maximum efficiency for the company and a better understanding of the company's long-term goals.

Conclusion

Most can agree that the goal for companies is to make money. "If the goal is to make money, then an action that moves us toward making money is productive. And an action that takes away from making money is non-productive" (Goldratt 47). Eubanks always wanted to help Symantec make money, however, they faced some challenges with creating a system that includes communication and a strong flow of information. Before Eubanks was hired as President/CEO, employees had a demanding time knowing what tasks to do and felt as if they didn't know little to nothing about the company. He decided

that incorporating MIS into their system would help, and while it did, it was not to his satisfaction. He, along with many other leaders, made some suggestions on how they could better Symantec's system. These included finding new MIS leaders, having meetings to increase communication, and even implementing technology. Leavitt's diamond proposes that every organizational system is made up of four main components: People, Task, Structure and Technology (Leavitt's). One can conclude that achieving these four components was his main goal. He shows this when he listens to the employees who complain that they are not sure what they need to do, so in place, they do not do anything. He implements MIS to create more structure and used HP's basic modules to manage high-value order entries in a short amount of time. Eubanks wanted Symantec to grow and become one of the best – that is clear. His ideas were on the right path but could be improved by trying new structures and being open to the idea of hiring new people.

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