Noah Anderson  
Dr. Robert Barker  
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# Symantec Case Study

# Mission Statement and Background

Symantec is in the business software industry and creates software for other business’s information management, productivity, and software development. They create their own software and buy other software companies with established products to continue maintaining their software and distribute it. These companies can be anywhere within the U.S., while Symantec is based in Cupertino, California. Once a software company is acquired, they remain with the same staff and overall structure, with slight managerial changes, and become a Symantec product group.

# Generic Strategy

Their generic strategy is differentiation focus. They create, or procure, “the best products possible, no matter where the companies were located.” They off their unique products for a premium and tailor their marketing towards their target market with each product.

# The Problem

Symantec was a rapidly growing company, with that growth came increasing communication and IT infrastructure problems. The IT infrastructure was not able to handle the growth in company size, revenues, products, etc. As a product was purchased more employees were added to the infrastructure causing more problems. No infrastructure was decided before the growth making it harder every day to implement an infrastructure.

“IT architecture defines the policies and guidelines that govern the arrangement of IT tools and data” (Cash). The IT tools and data were not accessible in the slightest, any system that was attempted to be implemented was riddled with errors, shutdowns, etc. that affected the entire company. These shutdowns limited communication even more within the company.

There were too many systems being implemented that brought in too many communication channels, ultimately making it harder to communicate between departments. The MIS department did not have the time to fix these systems as they were too busy putting out small fires just to keep the company operating.

# Five Forces

## Competitive Rivalry

Symantec offers their customers unique products that specialize in increasing productivity, communication flows, and more. There are not any competitors mentioned in the case, but it seemed like Symantec purchased other products that would be probable competitors.

## Threat of New Entrants

The threat of new entrants was low. Within the business software industry, you need industry knowledge, and software development knowledge especially. The size of software that Symantec was offering to businesses require lots of skilled labor, creative ideas, expensive technology, and experienced sales and marketing personnel.

## Threat of Substitutes

The threat of substitution was medium. There are many software companies that offer products to businesses, but Symantec was able to offer a unique suite of products to their customers. This was harder to substitute as other software companies may focus on one software at a time.

## Bargaining Powers of Suppliers

Symantec had two suppliers, the products they purchased and the software developers that created their products in-house. Before a company was acquired by Symantec, they were able to negotiate a higher price and better deal as they were “the best products possible.”

The software developers in-house were able to negotiate higher compensation as they are the ones that have to knowledge and expertise to create Symantec’s own products. It is safe to assume that Symantec recruited “the best possible” software developers, as they did with their products. They also maintained the current products as well.

## Bargaining Power of Customers

The customers did not have a lot of bargaining power. Symantec offered the best and most unique products to their customers, not leaving room for them to negotiate better services or prices.

# Organizational Structure

Symantec has a matrix structure. When a product was purchased, they kept the same employees, did not move them either, and replaced the top managers. This product, and previous company, would be come one of Symantec’s product groups. Each group controlled their own product development, marketing, quality assurance, support, and management. Finance, human resources, and sales were handled at the corporate headquarters in a more centralized fashion.

# Stakeholders

The first stakeholder group are the shareholders, which in this case are Gary Hendrix, VP of Advanced Technology, and Gordon Eubanks, the CEO. They are the top players in the organization and all problems stem from them. The lack of information flow causes them to not know what is happening within their own company.

The second group are the employees of the organization. They are most susceptible to change, especially IT infrastructural change. The unreliability of systems makes their work almost impossible to do, causing stress of missing deadlines and losing trust with customers.

The third group is the customers. This group is affected the most external of the organization. If employees are not able to contact customers, they begin to lose trust and eventually the customer will no longer do work with them.

# Alternatives

## Alternative Change the IT Infrastructure

The first alternative solution would to be change the IT infrastructure and implement an appropriate infrastructure that will grow with the company, not struggle to keep up. “Newer IT tools are constrained primarily by our ability to identify useful applications; develop them, and put them to effective use” (Cash, 4). This defines what Symantec was having issues with exactly. The new IT tools were implemented before being ready and were not able to be used effectively.

This system would need to decrease the number of ways to communicate, in order to keep it simpler and to motivate communication, handle orders and upgrades, and any and all accounting functions. When being implemented the system needs to have dedicated MIS employees to fully develop, implement, and maintain it. This may require more MIS employees, having some work on the new system implementation and having some work on patching the current system until the new one is ready. According to Cash, we will need to first perform a bottom-up and top-down assessment to understand where the company is now, and to develop guiding principles for the new architecture.

This will improve the communications flow to the executives and every other employee and department. Employees will need proper training to effectively use the new system. Will improve the standard that Symantec can operate at, drawing in more customers and improving relations with current customers.

## Alternative Only Replace the Communication Systems

Only replacing the communication systems would ensure that communication channels are always available, that communication amongst departments is promoted, and improve the spreading of information to improve every department. Currently e-mail, phone-mail, CC Mail, interoffice mail, and regular phones are all means of communication. As every employee prefers a different method for different reasons, and not all employees have CC Mail, this causes lots of issues as no one knew how they were going to hear from someone.

The e-mail once a month would corrupt files, e-mail was not able to be used in heavily networked areas such as New York City, phone calls were limited to the number that could come in before not being able to call outside. Not all employees had phones or e-mails, the international employees especially.

Replacing all communications systems to a more consolidated form will make it easier and more reliable for all employees to use. It allows the executives to not be blocked from making important phone calls for meetings or sending e-mails in reply to emergencies. Customers can hear back from the sales and marketing teams with more reliable communications in case they are ever needed.

## Alternative Do Nothing

The last alternative would be to do nothing, and continue with the multiple communication channels, unreliable PC clones, and other unreliable systems. The MIS department would continue to patch any issues that come in, never being able to fix the actual architecture.

As Symantec continues to grow the IT system delays will become longer and longer. This can cause employees to resign from the company and move to a similar company with a stable IT architecture. The executives will not receive better communication, employees will continue complaining to them, and the only way to solve your IT issue will continue to be go around the MIS department and fix it yourself. Customers will not be involved with the company as they will not be able to place orders or upgrades and the quality of products will degrade.

# Recommendation

The best alternative is to do a bottom-up assessment to see where the current IT infrastructure is, what doesn’t work, why it doesn’t, and possible replacements. Then a top-down assessment will be performed by management to develop a strategic vision statement that will be translated into an IT vision (Cash). As this assessment is being done, requirements and plans developed, and eventually the architecture being implemented the MIS department will continue supporting the old system.

The assessments will be done because of Fried’s Rule 15 “You can not get there unless you have a map.” You need to know where you are now and then where you want to go. You cannot patch the issues in the old system forever as people are not immoral (Fried), Eventually they will grow tired and quit leaving the system in an even worse position. There are trade-offs when developing a system. Not every issue will be able to be solved with this one system, there will need to be some features prioritized over others (Fried).

# Works Cited

Cash, J. I. (1994). 4. In *Building the information-age organization: Structure, control, and Information Technologies*. essay, Harvard Business School.

Fried, L. (1995). 6. In *Managing information technology in Turbulent Times*. essay, John Wiley & Sons.