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by 12345 12345

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Scenario -- Diamond Business Offices

COMP1611 Project Management

Coordinator: Mr Richard Johnson

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Introduction

Diamond Business Offices provide complete office solutions for businesses, offer added value items such as staff such as secretaries, interpreters, receptionists and technical support; or facilities such as audio-visual equipment, video-conferencing, catering and high-quality printing for their customers to find a fully functioning office. They have 120 centres in 15 countries, employing 850 staff, each of the 120 Business Centres has a manager and at least 2 booking staff who handle all room and service bookings through their customised Access database. Each country has its own Head Office with a country manager to whom all the Business Centre managers' report. Each Head Office has a finance manager who is in charge of the accounting for that country – depending on the size of the Diamond operation in that country they could have between 2 and 20 accounts staff responsible for re-entering booking and purchase data.

Key features of the project

With a view to improving its overall customer service provision and the diverse competition in the market, Diamond Business Offices are struggling in some areas which they are trying to improve which would help to survive in the market and secure more customers;

Choosing the location for new centres as the business is expanding which could be affected by factors such as infrastructure and local transport. Areas with good mobile network coverage for efficient and reliable communication with the customers. Securing modern IT which is really important for easy and fast internet connections as customers expect to work from anywhere. Rules, regulations and requirements needed in a certain location such as; the tax position of companies, commercial and ¹⁴employment law, data protection law, and health and safety law. Effects of economic recessions and growth at local and international levels. Recruiting and training staff for their customers.

Diamond is experiencing challenges that need to be addressed so as to achieve their goal which include; skill shortages in particular locations, need for flexible work to suit women with families returning to work, language barriers as it is an international business and their staff does not know any foreign language as they only speak English. Inconsistency of information as room bookings are handled by individual centres each using an Access database application leading to data variations. Delays in dealing with customers due to lack of a centrally managed

accounting software for each country leading to data errors as it requires re-entry by different account staff from different countries.

These challenges need to be acted upon so as to secure a large customer clientele and the following are the proposed solutions; increasing the amount of time and resources needed for training and recruiting more staff so as to offer customers competitive staff and ensure they find everything in place which increases their trust and satisfaction, creating more favourable working schedules accommodating women with families so as to enable the employees balance between work and their families, investing more in foreign language training sessions so as to enable the employees communicate and handle customers without any language barriers which would increase efficiency, secure a modern Information Technology to ensure easy and timely communication with customers through fast and reliable internet connections, acquire a centrally managed database so as to reduce data variations and misunderstandings with customers, securing an interface with a centrally managed accounting software for each country to ensure a smooth running accounting process, creating survey teams to do research on spotting the best suitable locations for new centres. Acquiring an efficient website that allows customers to give their feedback, views and provide a platform to keep in touch with their needs.

Also the issue of timeliness is a key feature of the project as the managing director has set time for some of the objectives to be accomplished; she wants to have 40% of staff speaking a foreign language within the next 2 years, and the objective of customers can enquire, book, and pay for rooms, staff and services in 10 minutes anywhere in Europe, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week she has let it be known that within the next 18 months this should be true for 90% of all bookings.

Major stakeholders impacted by the md's vision

¹⁰ Project manager is a professional who organizes, plans, and executes projects while working within restraints like budgets and schedules. (Gaddis, 1959), he is a key decision maker in ¹³ the project and have a strong interest in the project and has significant power to influence its success.

He belongs to the 'HIGH INTEREST, HIGH POWER' side of the stakeholders quadrant.

Country manager, he is in charge all operations of the country to whom all the Business Centre managers' report and therefore he is in the 'HIGH POWER, HIGH INTEREST' side of the quadrant as they are involved in decision making and governance of a project.

Finance manager as he is in charge of the accounting for a given country as the managing director needs the accounting processes in all countries run smoothly without any errors. Finance managers are on the 'HIGH POWER, HIGH' INTEREST' side of the quadrant as they are key players in the project's success or failure as they are involved in governance and decision making.

Accounting staff, they are found in the 'HIGH INTEREST, LOW POWER' side of the stakeholders' quadrant as they engage closely in the projects activities and contribute significantly to the project but they need to consult and follow orders from their seniors.

Booking staff as the MD's vision will reduce the amount of time any property remains unoccupied, and in the long-term increase the number of bookings. They are among stakeholders who do not lose or gain but contribute significantly to the project and hence, found in the 'HIGH INTEREST, LOW POWER' side of the stakeholders quadrant.

Customer is a person or an organisation that buys or orders products or services offered by the business, (Ireland, 1992). They are among stake holders who have little interest in the project but possess significant power to influence its success. They are grouped as 'LOW INTEREST, HIGH POWER' stakeholders.

⁹ Project sponsor, is a senior management role that provides resources, support, and leadership to the project team and generally owns the project, (Kloppenborg & and Tesch, 2015.) They are ¹⁵ stakeholders who have a strong interest in the project and have significant power to influence its success and can be greatly affected by its failure. They are grouped in the 'HIGH POWER, HIGH INTEREST' part of the stakeholders quadrant.

Increasing shareholders participation.

Country manager, he is the head of all operations in Diamond Business Offices in a given country. Affirming goals and communicating progress throughout the execution of the project would really increase their participation. Project manager should set goals and continuously remind the country managers so as to ensure they are actively participating and pushing their subordinates so as to achieve the set goals.

Booking staff, Make sure they understand their contribution to the project by ⁵ determining how project goals benefit them and communicate this, allowing stakeholders to share their concerns and ideas.

Accounting staff, continuously access their performance in achieving the set goals so as to remind and keep them in track with the projects activities and providing them with positive feedback when they perform well.

Who to involve in Project testing and why

Test team members including specialists like performance and security testers, they are needed in unit testing to test individual units of code to make sure they are working as intended and functioning correctly.

Test automation specialists and technical testers, System, database, security and network administrators, they are needed for testing the environment design, tests how different individual units of code work together and setup of the systems and correct any errors if any.

Development staff, they include managers, developers, architects, they are needed in system testing which is the third phase of project testing where the entire project is tested to ensure it functions as intended.

User experience analysts, they are needed in the final phase of project testing called acceptance testing, it is done to make sure that the system meets all the requirements of the customer or client before launching of the project.

Critical risks associated with the project and recommendations on what actions to take to minimise their impact

Lack of clearly defined objectives, this could occur when the stakeholders; accounting staff, booking staff, finance managers do not clearly understand the aim and targets of the project

due to lack of clear communication. This could be minimized by creating clearly defined project guidelines and agreeing upon them with the stakeholders and communicating the vision of the project from the beginning (Barker Stephen., et al., 2009).

Underperformance, this could occur ⁶ when the project doesn't perform as well as initially expected, for example the aim to improve capabilities of staff so as to improve and update the services offered to their customers and ensure that a customer can enquire, book, and pay for rooms, staff and services in 10 minutes anywhere in Europe, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week fails. This could be minimized ² by anticipating potential performance risks early on in the planning process which can help you prepare.

⁶ Project schedule risk, is the risk that tasks in your project will take longer than expected which might impact other things like your budget, delivery date, or overall performance. For example, the MD's aim to have 40% of staff speaking a foreign language within the next 2 years fails to get accomplished within the set time which may require some extra time and resources and this could be unfavourable to the overall performance of the project. This risk could be mitigated ² by overestimating the time needed to complete tasks in the planning phase and build in time contingency. This way, you'll have wiggle room for scheduling later on. You can also create a project schedule using a timeline. Having clarity into work, dependencies between work, and any delays can help project managers dynamically adapt to time risk as it crops up. Understanding your project lifecycle can also help you determine how long each task will take.

Operational changes, this risk occurs when change happen in team processes, for example unexpected change in roles, changes in processes that may require adjustments which requires additional resources, hence increasing the estimated costs of the project and lead to distractions which in result affect project timelines. This can be mitigated ² by making sure your team is prepared for the change and has time to adjust through team meetings, scheduling tools, or additional trainings.

Risk of limited resources, this occurs when the resources needed to complete the project are not enough which include things like skills, money or tools. Allocation of these resources should be done early in project planning before implementation of the project. For example the number of booking staff allocated to achieve the managing directors goal maybe less which may delay the project. This risk may be mitigated by creating a resource allocation plan which helps in ensuring efficiency in utilisation of the project's resources and proper estimations.

Steps to take to ensure that all stakeholders received the right level of communication.

5 **Establish regular review points**

Regular and planned review points help you communicate project wide changes across your team and stakeholders, it can be inform of meetings and project boards. There should be set agenda in those meetings which should include milestone reviews, budgetary performance, and a review of ongoing risks. To ensure regular reviews one person should be allocated the accountability for organizing and keeping a regular note of meetings. This ensures that they are productive, the business that you need to cover is completed, and that previous actions are followed up. Finally, remember to invite a mixture of people to your reviews. Encourage more senior members of your project team to let more junior members of staff present at these meetings. It will help them with their professional development, while encouraging a more open and transparent working environment.

Stakeholders' involvement

You need to regularly communicate to your stakeholders to run a successful project during your regular project meetings and milestone reviews. It's worth putting in some extra effort and opening up the communication channels as wide as possible. Regular meetings with other project managers, a monthly catch-up with your boss, and even weekly or monthly update reports about your project. Once all the stakeholders are proactively involved, messages are conveyed and all stake holders get immediate information hence avoiding miscommunication.

1 **Making use of online collaboration tools**

They allow your team to manage their projects remotely and share files quickly. They include, Google Docs, Microsoft 365 Suite, Monday, Asana. They really help bring a new level of oversight and transparency to your project if implemented correctly. Collaboration tools can be efficiently used in a project by establishing clear ways of working, assigning individual responsibility to one team member to make sure online records stay up to date, and give clear instructions that work needs to be completed on specific platforms (Chu, et al., 2009.)

Project documentation

Communication also involves ¹ all of your project documentation it includes your project strategy, your project roadmap, and how to assign informed tasks, role descriptions and project briefs are delivered to your team. There shouldn't be any unsureness in your project documentation as it will hinder ¹ the effectiveness of the project team to be able to complete their tasks in time. Ensure that your project Documentation is up to scratch by having regular reviews and if anything is not clear seek clarification from the responsible member and in case any information is missing the responsible team member should be held accountable to take the necessary measures Project documentation could be made easy and reliable by making use of ¹ online collaboration tools to ensure that your Project Documents are in a centrally located and managed space which could be on a shared hard-drive, online, hosted on your internal servers or as a printout that is easily locatable in the office. This could also be important for future reference. ¹ Well maintained Project Documentation is also a great way to prevent mistakes and project scope creep happening (Hajjar & AbouRizk, 2000).

Flexible working patterns

This is one ¹ way to retain employees, and help your team achieve a better work / life balance. When employees are working remotely, they should be contactable. ¹ This doesn't mean that you need to be in the office all the time. However, when you are out, your project team needs to know when they can contact you, what the preferred method of communication is, or who they should be speaking to instead. This can be done through ¹ Skype, or you can even use Whatsapp to check that your figures are correct.

¹ Creating an open and transparent working environment

Be honest with your project team in all aspects of the project. ¹ Perhaps your company is going through a difficult patch, is undergoing a takeover, or maybe your project just hasn't hit the milestone that you were aiming for. ¹ Make sure you communicate problems to your team this will help create a more comfortable working environment. It also shows them that it's perfectly natural to announce bad news, and will prevent resentment from building unnecessarily. It also helps ¹ to build a better rapport with your project team, and build their confidence in you as a manager.

Celebrate achievements together

When you achieve the set goals in different phases of the project, celebrate together as a team¹ everyone's input is important. Everyone has something to offer, and celebrating it together helps motivate the entire team. Always make sure you take time to celebrate achievements, as it shows that you understand what has gone well during the project.

Forms of communication to take

Effective communication is more than just passing information from one person to the other but it's about understanding the emotions and intentions behind that information (Fielding, 2006).

Written form of communication⁷, implements the use of hand-written or typed words. This means that there is less human interaction involved and interactions are mainly comprised of text. For example through emails, written messages, internal memos, written notice and posters. The project manager may communicate any news to the team members, in terms of referencing it is the best form of communication. This form of communication really helps in laying down¹² apparent principles, policies and rules for running a project, it is useful where record maintenance is required and therefore very useful in project as record keeping is key. It is also vital when it comes to matters of legal compliance conformity which relies on written communication as it provides defensible records (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018)

Verbal communication, this is an oral-based form of communication, it involves conveying messages through speaking. For example the project manager may inform the other stakeholders on any changes or the progress of the project through speaking in a meeting. Also the project teams may raise their concerns to the team leader one on one. It is the most effective form of communication as it gives immediate feedback and therefore it eases the process of communication. It is the most effective and effective for all as it provides clear and complete understanding of the information conveyed and also more clarity through more explanations of words and ideas (Day, et al., 1975).

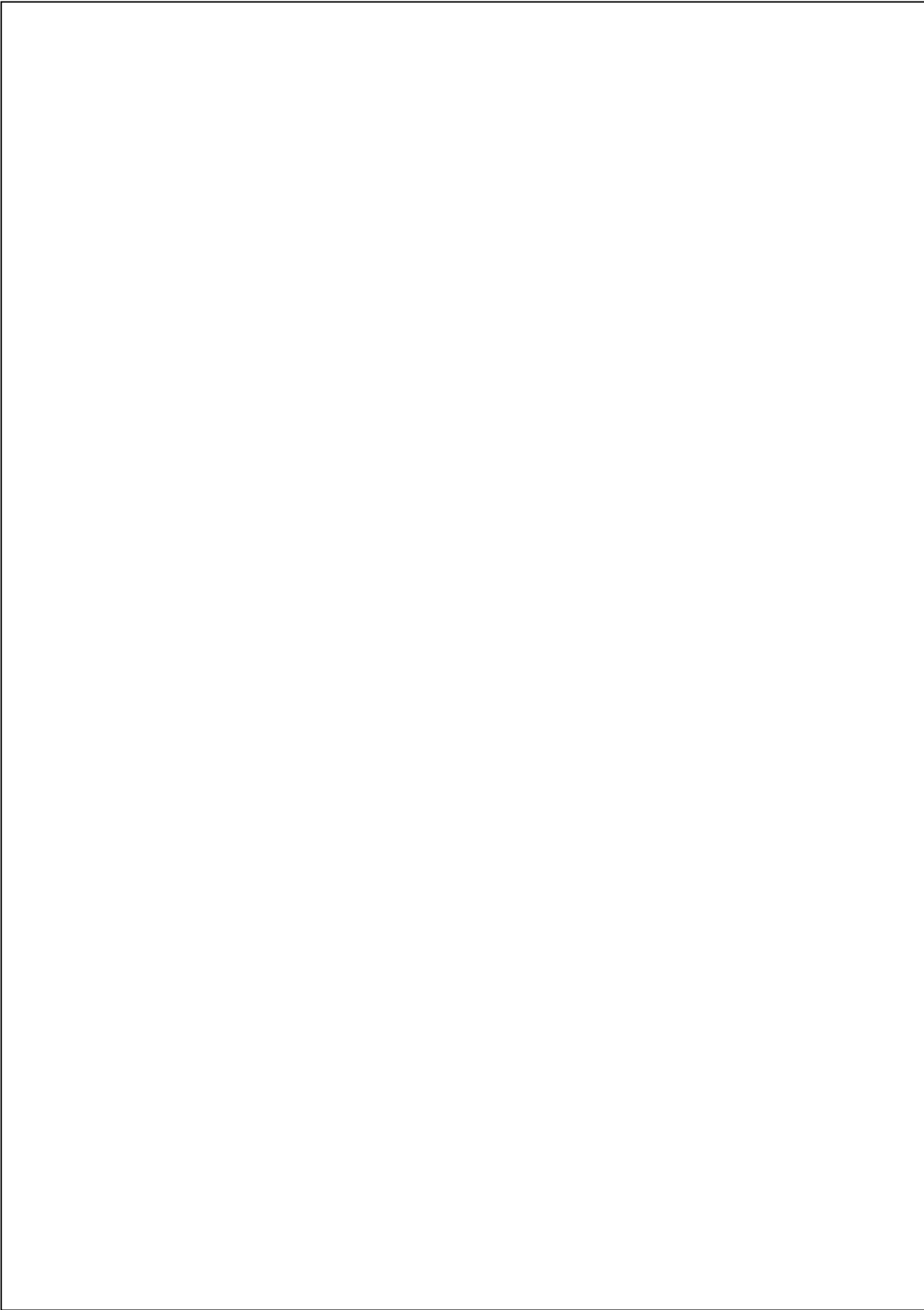
Visual communication, it involves use of visual elements to communicate information or ideas¹¹, it includes use animated GIFs, screenshots, videos, pie charts, infographics and slide check presentations. For example Diamond Business Offices use slide presentation to advertise and promote their business in terms of reforms and new services by sending them to their prospective customers. The project manager might also use pie charts and graphs in presenting

statistical data of the project to the team members for example, cost estimates per the required resources could be presented in graphical form. This form of communication helps in delivering ⁴ information more directly as information such as statistics is better explained in a picture than in words.

Visual communication is also more flexible as ⁴ an image makes sense to everybody despite cultural, geographical, ethnic or language differences among people. For example if Diamond Business Offices are promoting a new product among customers ⁴ across different geographical areas, speaking different languages, an image or a slide presentation could convey the message more easily without any barriers (Dudhal, 2022).

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