Q1

Though not a novel concept, perhaps the most noteworthy change to consumer expectations brought on by the Internet is the speed at which information gathering, service execution, and business-to-customer interactions take place. Drawing on the example of Sears and their use of catalogs, it becomes apparent that the introduction and widespread use of the Internet changed each of these concepts: the customer that once relied on the release of a periodically published catalog could now look up the same information using an e-commerce website; the same customer could order goods and have the order fulfillment process occur within minutes of placing instead of relying on mail orders among other, slower processes; finally, what were once interactions that took place in the Sears store between customer and business now take place through a website, a process that is faster, has a high potential satisfaction rate, and frees up both parties for other tasks.

Q2

As long as there is a human element in any process that requires choice and has room for free thought, cyber security of a firm is always at risk. It is the assessment, mitigation, and acknowledgement of this risk that plays into the action of insuring enterprise resources so that in the event of a human-facilitated intrusion (happening with knowledge or not), all is not completely lost. While education and process engineering to reduce company exposure to cyber threats certainly provides direct impacts on information security, the valuation and assessment of threat is one of the largest parts of protecting a firm from the “human element” of the cyber security initiative. Finding the appropriate regular investment is, in the climate right now, perhaps the single most important action an enterprise can do to work against the human side of computer security threats. The idea that all threats can be stopped is unrealistic; instead the actions that are taken to better ensure the continuity of the organization should be prioritized.

Q3

At the most elementary level, this scenario calls for all the elements that a project management professional would use during any large scale, enterprise-spanning, IT deployment with the added necessity for assessing the current “in-process” state of affairs and working with actions that have already taken place. Crucially, any recommendations to this firm by the consulting body must take into consideration the current state of change, atmosphere of the enterprise, and must call on the full support of ALL senior leadership entities involved in the undertaking. I will attempt to outline a process below, largely in order of occurrence but with flexibility on planning time and, of course, being subject to change.

It is important to recognize that, even though changes have likely been made towards implementing the global sales and marketing platform already, it may be useful to start the planning process by ignoring these temporarily while creating a framework for planning as though it were starting from the beginning. In any enterprise-level and down change it is imperative to define baselines; by setting aside any changes/processes that may have occurred since the project outset, a surrogate baseline can be ascertained and used in later steps of this “ad hoc” deployment. Not only does this baseline assist in the “standard” project definitions that occur in the planning state (directive timelines, entity definitions, rollout plans, success definition, and metrics), but it serves to create a bridge of translation between what needs to occur, what has occurred and any spaces in between. It is likely safe to assume that this stage in this scenario would occur before any further changes are made and likely before the consulting/management assignment is accepted.

The logical next step in this scenario would be to take a “change inventory” and develop a working change database. The baseline project definition would likely be used here because it allows for comparisons between the current project state and the estimation of the pre-change version. Once this inventory has been established, it would likely be necessary to bin each change into groups, denoting their ultimate destination under the new project directive. Examples of these bins and specific sales/marketing platform tasks that may fall into them could be the following: legacy data source connections to an existing data warehouse for the marketing division may fall into a “keep” category, IT processes like site-specific spreadsheets and smaller IT solutions developed and used by individual sales groups might fall under a “flag for obsolescence” category. This “change inventory” development would need considerable input and reliance on enterprise personnel involved in the efforts preceding the current iteration as it probable that these actions either were not documented, or the groups overseeing these changes are no longer a usable communication avenue.

Establishing metrics that would be used to determine the outcome of the implementationwould occur in any project manifest. Besides the more standard metrics that may be used in evaluating sales/marketing platform deployments like forecasting accuracy, inventory valuations, on-time-delivery, delivery accuracy, and customer satisfaction, it may be appropriate under the circumstances to include metrics that assess the project status in relation to previous efforts taken. These metrics could include an estimation on the rework required, that is the additional resources required to undo/correct previous actions, an estimation of the usable elements from previous efforts, and a comparison between the deployment cost of a “native” effort and the “ad hoc” approach of this scenario. While these metrics may be estimations, they would likely highlight the importance of many implementation characteristics, perhaps the most recognizable being full management support and action, as much buy-in from enterprise individuals, and the financial capital to see a project through, even if scope, resource, and business case definitions change.

With this baseline estimation and new project definitions established, the long process of integration begins, specifically a focus on bringing the whole effort (with new overseeing body) forward, keeping those previous actions that make sense to keep and eliminating those that do not. Leading up to this point, the consulting/managing group has developed a surrogate project baseline definition, tabulated all changes that may have occurred since the original implementation start into a “change inventory”, established a change management system and its governing body, and brought all considerations together into a consolidated project directive with success metrics that have been defined.

I have not mentioned any consulting strategy for addressing changes to culture, but feel it is appropriate to include here simply because it is likely that the enterprise, according to the scenario that is defined in the question, is in dire need of some communication thereof. Despite the past failure, it is apparent that the organization is determined to complete the sales and marketing platform development project. As the consulting/managing group, I would focus on communicating to appropriate entities the tasks, outcomes, and expectations from the directive coupled with any concrete metrics, examples, and deliverables that would serve to bring the project as a whole to a more accessible level through the organization.