

Strategic Assessment: The Mane Event

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Executive Summary

The Mane Event is a small beauty salon in Murray, Kentucky that has served clients for the past thirty years. They offer a variety of services to tend to their clients' hair and cosmetic needs. The owner, Melisa Parker, has worked there as a stylist for about as long as the shop has been open. She and other experienced stylists have built up a clientele and provided them with quality services and a great experience. The stylists that have been with the company for a long time are experienced, professional, and always busy. On the other hand, the new stylists or apprentices Parker hired on are still in training and lack experience and a client base. Parker's main goal is to make these new hires motivated and help them gain clientele. She would one day want these stylists and apprentices to handle most of the services allowing Parker to cut back on her time working as a stylist. However, this goal is far off given the position the company is in now.

The company must attract new customers for the apprentices and retain these customers as long-term clients to reach Parker's goals. To accomplish this, they must take advantage of information technology to correct their inefficiencies and risks and increase their exposure online. To compete with the other hair salons, they must begin to offer both similar and differentiating conveniences. Provided that The Mane Event uses little to no technology now, they will need many solutions that can be easily implemented and offer advantages right away. These solutions include to hire someone to develop a website, use a salon scheduling system, transfer their customer data to spreadsheets, use Excel for payroll, and use secondary devices and cloud storage for back-ups. The solutions described will help close the gap of where the company is now and where Parker would like the company to be.

Hardware Software Inventory

In The Mane Event salon, you would be hard pressed to find much of any hardware or software used by the business. The business has little relevant technology or information systems that affect their business processes. They do most of their work manually using a pencil and have little technical knowledge on the opportunities and advantages of using current information systems. During the thirty years The Mane Event has been open, technology has gone through major changes while The Mane Event's systems and processes have generally been the same. They have gotten by during this time without investing into any new technologies, but if they want to reach their goals, they will need to change. However, they do have some hardware they use every day and the owner uses social media software on her personal phone to stay connected with customers and followers.

Hardware

- Land line phone
- Elavon Credit card reader
- Accounting calculator (for payroll)
- Samsung Galaxy 7 (Owner's personal phone used for social media posts)

Software

- Android Nougat 7.1.2
- Instagram App
- Facebook App

Company Background

The Mane Event was founded in 1988 in the small town of Murray, Kentucky by Brenda Lawson. The current owner, Melisa Parker, began working there shortly after and continued there as a hair stylist for ten years until she bought the company from Brenda. Throughout this time, the company grew its consumer base and a reputation as one of the best locations in the Western Kentucky area for hair styling and cuts. Parker is now the sole owner of The Mane Event while also having a full schedule as a hair stylist. She has four stylists that work directly under her as her apprentices and rents out booths in the shop for two other stylists. The two stylists that rent do not work for Parker but share the space and resources inside the building in return for paying monthly rent to her. The Mane Event is located in the heart of Murray off the highway that cuts through the city. They have customers from all around the area both men and women ranging from young to old. Parker also sees customers from Tennessee and other parts of Kentucky. Customers wanting to get their hair cut can either walk-in or call and schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are usually taken care of by the young apprentices that do not yet have a large client base built up while Parker and the other hair dressers are usually booked for weeks out. They offer many different services from haircuts to manicures while also selling hair products.

Current IT Solution

There is little use of IT at The Mane Event with the only hardware being a telephone, credit card reader, and an accounting calculator. There is no computer or network connection in the building and the company itself does not have a website. However, Parker does run a Facebook and Instagram for the company from her personal phone where she posts recent haircuts she has given or inventory she has received from Redken. Moreover, the stylists themselves run their

own social media relating to their work. On the stylist's personal accounts, you can find numerous pictures and example of the work they can do with color and cutting hair. Other than that, one would struggle to find any use of technology in the business as everything is done and stored on paper.

For example, The Mane Event keeps a scheduling book to manage all their appointments. The receptionist would answer a call from the customer then proceed to get relevant information from them including what they would like to have done and the date and time they preferred. The receptionist would then call the hair stylist over to check and confirm the times of the appointment. The hair stylist needs to confirm it because they must know if it can fit in their schedule for that day after considering the customer that is trying to schedule and what they would like to have done. The hair stylists usually know how long each type of request takes for the customer while the receptionists are not always sure. Thus, they must check with the stylist first which could take up to ten minutes. Once the time is confirmed they then write it in the book in pencil.

Furthermore, they use a log book to keep track of their customer data. All information regarding each customer is kept in the book on paper. For example, it will have information about what the customer recently had done, any colors they used, their phone number, and comments. There are a hundred or less pages in this log book of customer data. Moreover, to handle the revenue of the business and determine the pay of the employees, Parker uses a calculator and pencil and does it all by hand. To file and handle their taxes, Parker sends them to a CPA in the family that files them on their own time. The CPA is not paid to handle the tax information and does this outside of the business but does use Microsoft Excel to process the data.

Gap Analysis

Currently, the Maine Event is as busy as ever with many of the stylists having their schedules booked out weeks in advance. However, the apprentices that had recently started working at the salon are having trouble building up clientele. Most of their haircuts come from walk-ins that were not on the schedule as they are the only stylists available to take care of these customers. After asking Parker in a perfect world where she wanted the company to be in five years, she replied with an answer right away. She said in five years she would like many of young and new hair stylists' clientele to be built up and her employees to stay motivated. Parker would like most of the business and clientele to shift to the other stylists allowing her to cut back her time being hair stylist to only a few times a week.

Parker works five days a week and sees up to seven clients a day while being booked out for six weeks in advance. The other new stylists, on the other hand, usually only get to work on the occasional walk-in as many of the customers are already comfortable with the hair stylist they have chosen. Many of the clients have bounded rationality and tacit knowledge which is knowledge that is hard to verbalize and embedded in the routines of people (Afuah & Tucci). Some consumers have always gotten their hair done by one person who knows exactly what they want. It could be hard for them to explain to others how they like their hair done. Other customers might be comfortable with the newer hair stylists giving haircuts but may doubt their experience. However, it is hard for these stylists to get experience if they are only working on a few people every so often. This leads to the hair stylists becoming unmotivated and dissatisfied as they are waiting around, instead of gaining experience with clients. This does not satisfy the necessary conditions defined in The Goal of having happy, satisfied employees in the workplace (Goldratt). These stylists want to become professionals, but it is hard for them to do that when they have no client base.

Parker has this goal in mind, but she has struggled to find a way to close this gap of where the company is now to where she wants it to be. She could perhaps give it time and hope that soon the clients begin to become familiar with these new stylists and begin to trust them to do their hair. However, if many of Parker's clients were to start seeing the apprentices, the number of clients would not be enough for all of them to stay busy. Parker and the stylists will have to adjust their business practices to be able to reach new clientele to compensate for the number of new hires.

To attract new clients for the stylists, The Mane Event will have to expand its reach and exposure, alter their business processes, and mitigate risks. The Mane Event has customers from all over the Western Kentucky area and other areas even outside of Kentucky. Most people become aware of the salon from word of mouth. People talk to others about a great experience they had there and the reputation of the salon spreads. However, this is not an advantageous way to gain customers given the technology that is at their disposal. Before people check out new places whether it is to go out to eat, for entertainment, or to get a hair-cut, they do research online. If someone were to try to find information on The Mane Event online, they would not find much. Their online exposure is minimal and if they want to expand their reach, they must address this issue. When looking up haircuts or beauty salons in Murray, Ky, there are several barber shops and beauty salons that appear before theirs and most of them have websites with information about the company. If a person were to move to Murray or attend college at the University and want a haircut, there are multiple, more convenient options available based on the exposure they have on the internet.

Furthermore, business process would need to change to close this gap. Currently, the process of scheduling an appointment is inefficient and takes the stylist away from what they are doing to

come and verify the appointment. They have many options available to make this process more convenient for both the clients and the stylists and perhaps allow for more clients to be seen. Moreover, changes need to be made to mitigate the risks of storing data only on paper. If something were to happen to either the scheduling book or customer data book, there would be no way to recover the information. They could lose this data all from a simple accident like spilling a drink on the books. They must address this risk as it could save them potential issues with clients and giving them a better, more convenient experience. With all these changes, more clients will likely come and stay as long-term customers allowing for the apprentices to expand their client base thus stay motivated.

Industry Competitive Analysis

The mission of The Mane Event is to provide quality haircuts and styling along with a positive experience to customers through the means of differentiation. The general strategy of The Mane Event is differentiation as their haircuts are given by highly qualified stylists to fit exactly what the customer is looking for. They always try to ensure the customer has a positive experience and feels welcome at the company. They provide several different services whether it is cuts, styling, coloring, pedicures, manicures etc. This allows customers to come and receive many different services in one place along with the ability to purchase hair products. The structure of the organization is functional with functions that include stylists and receptionists. The employees in both functions are headed by the owner, Parker. Porter's five forces will offer a more extensive look at their environment:

Bargaining Power of Suppliers: The supplier's power is low as The Mane Event could easily switch suppliers if Redken were to raise their prices. There are numerous hair product suppliers which The Mane Event could switch to that will provide the same quality as Redken. Moreover,

they cannot raise prices without affecting demand and their 'product' is not critical to the end product making their power low. (Porter) If Redken raised their prices, The Mane Event would have to raise the price they charge their customers as well. However, many customers will not buy the products if they are too expensive because there many other options in hair products. Therefore, The Mane Event would not sell a lot of stock and not need to buy more from Redken. Also, while using Redken products contributes to their services, The Mane Event does not need Redken's products to continue to offer their high-quality services. There are other options they could use that would contribute to their end product.

Bargaining Power of Buyers: The power of the current buyers is low because they are price indifferent and there are high switching costs associated with going to a new hair stylist after always going to the same one. A new hair stylist must learn the customers preferences and become accustomed to working with their hair. There are a lot of connections made with the current clientele and the experienced hair stylists there now. There is also high differentiation between the services they offer and what other barber shops and salons offer. The Mane Event has some of most distinguished hair stylists in the area receiving talent from best beauty schools in Western Kentucky. Moreover, many of stylists make friendships and connections with the clients and show care for their wellbeing. Buyers would most likely keep paying if prices rose to keep the connections and history they have at The Mane Event.

Threats of New Entrants: The threat of new entrants is high for The Mane Event because it is easy to open a hair salon as long as you have a location and the right personnel. If a new hair salon were to open in Murray and take advantage of the technology, they might be able to acquire customers quick due to the convience they offer. The brand loyalty to the service The Mane Event provides is high, however, a new entrant could lure any new customers away since

they do not have the same psychological and effort-based switching costs that repeat clients have. This would be especially true if a large name brand salon like Aveda were to open a location in Murray. Therefore, there is a high threat to taking away new customers and hindering their ability to close the gap.

Threats of Substitutes: The threat of substitutes would be low because there are not many substitute services for getting your hair cut. One substitute would be people cutting their own hair, however, the quality of the cut would not compare to the job performed in a hair salon. If a substitute performance is inferior to industry product quality and there is a lack of available substitutes, the threat of substitutes is low (Porter).

Rivalry Among Competition: There is high rivalry between the competition in the hair salon industry in Murray. There several different hair salons and barber shops throughout Murray that compete for new customers around the area. Moreover, there is low market growth as many of the small beauty salons in Murray have only one location and are not looking to expand. Furthermore, there is not a market leader right now in Murray as each company has around the same share of the market.

Stakeholders

Melisa Parker: She is the owner of The Mane Event and works as a hair stylist at the company. She must make the strategic decisions and goals the company should implement and aim for. She is responsible for teaching her employees, motivating them, and making sure they are seeing enough customers for the business to make a profit. She would decide if and what kind of technology The Mane Event should implement.

The Mane Event Employees: They will be affected by any decision Parker makes and they are responsible for providing excellent service to their clients and making sure they represent the company well. The decision Parker makes could affect their efficiency, job roles, and their clientele.

Booth Renters: They do not work for Parker or The Mane Event, however, they do use space and resources inside her shop and are responsible for paying rent each month for this usage. They will be affected depending on what Parker chooses to do as they may be able to share any kind of resource or new technology that is implemented in the shop.

The Mane Event Customers: The customers will be affected by the decision Parker makes as it could change the efficiency and convenience of the service they receive. Moreover, if The Mane Event chooses to increase their visibility, potential customers could be affected as they could find and choose to go to the salon for their haircuts and other services. No matter any change that takes place, repeat customers will still expect to be satisfied with their haircuts and happy with the experience they have at The Mane Event.

Alternatives

Do nothing: In the situation The Mane Event is in, Parker can make the decision to do nothing and continue to operate as usual. By choosing this decision she will hope that in time her apprentices and other stylists build up clientele naturally from continuing to work at the salon and gain experience. With this decision, she will be choosing not to implement any information technology solutions and continue handling processes manually. Customer data will still be stored in a loose-leaf book, payroll will continue to be done manually, appointments will be

stored on paper, and the scheduling process will still take up a decent amount of both the stylists and the customers time.

Install computer and network: Parker could choose to install a computer and a network at The Mane Event. This decision would mean The Mane Event now can use the capabilities of a computer and the Internet to improve upon their inefficiencies and security risks that come with storing and processing data manually. They could now install applications that could make data processing easier and store their data securely on the machine. Having a network and internet connection would allow the Maine Event to back up their data and allow them to use any applications on their computer that require the Internet to work. This decision would cost them more money initially as they would have to pay around \$300-\$500 for a computer and have monthly fixed costs for an Internet connection around \$40. However, finding a PC with the capabilities they need would not be difficult and is not an expensive investment considering that it could allow them to take advantage of technologies that could help them move ahead in the market. An internet connection would be a monthly cost; however, it could help minimize costs associated with risks of not having back-ups.

Transfer customer data to Excel spreadsheets: Parker could transfer customer data to spreadsheets on Excel. While Excel is not ideal for storing customer data for a large organization, it would be enough and more for what The Mane Event would use it for. Most companies would use a database like MS SQL Server that would store employee and customer data, however, these large companies need the ability to store hundreds of thousands or millions of records while The Maine Event does not. At most, the book of customer data The Mane Event uses stores information for about 100 customers. Having to use a database would be unnecessary and excessive for only storing the amount of records Parker would use. Using Excel would be

user friendly for Parker and the other employees and allow them to organize the data in spreadsheets and access the data quickly. This decision would also cost the company money as it would require a Microsoft Office subscription, but is well worth the costs given the capabilities it would provide. A subscription for Microsoft Office 365 is \$70 per year and comes with Excel, Microsoft Office, PowerPoint etc.

Use secondary storage devices and the cloud for back-ups: To help compliment the other decision of storing customer data, Parker could back-up the data to the cloud and other secondary storage devices like a flash drive. Storing back-ups of this customer data could help minimize the risks associated with only storing the data locally. If Parker were to decide to get a PC and stored the data locally, there is a risk that the data could be lost if the something were to happen to the PC. There are many options for cloud storage and while they come with their own risks, many are free and offer the security options to protect the data they choose to store. Parker could choose to use Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox, etc. Many of these options come with the ability to enable two-factor authentication allowing the account to only be accessible when the user knows the password and has something only the user would have. While there are risks with storing any data in the cloud, the customer data Parker would be backing up would not contain anything other than customer names, hair services they have gotten done, any products or color they used, and maybe they're phone number.

Use Excel for payroll calculations: As of now, Parker completes payroll for her employees by hand using a calculator. She could make the decision to use Excel making the process more efficient. Using Excel could allow Parker to use formulas for calculating payroll cutting down the time to do it to only a couple minutes. This could also allow her to make less mistakes when calculating the pay for her employees.

Hire a contractor to develop website for The Mane Event: Parker could make the decision to hire a contractor or a company to create a website for The Maine Event. Currently, many of the salons in Murray have websites meaning they have greater online visibility and offer more convenience for the customer than The Mane Event. This decision could allow The Mane Event to have information about the company and the stylists that work there for anyone to see including potential new customers. The information could include the services they offer, biographies, and contact information for the company while also linking to their Facebook and Twitter. This decision could involve high variable costs depending on the person or company that they hire. A developer could cost \$25-\$50 per hour or \$200-\$500 for a flat rate.

Use a salon scheduling system: Parker could decide to use an online scheduling system to help make and confirm appointments on their computer. As of now, they just use a book for the scheduling, but through using a system they receive more flexibility for change and offer convenience for customer. This system could include the ability for receptionists and stylists to use an application to make and keep track of appointments and even let customers request appointments through their site. There are many tools that are already developed with salons in mind to choose from that cost between \$25-\$50 per month.

Impact on Stakeholders

Do nothing: By doing nothing, Parker could initially save money and time by not implementing any IT. The Mane Event would continue to operate as it is now into the future. While Parker could save money in the short run, this decision could cost her money in the long run. Parker would be taking no steps to increase the efficiency and visibility of her company decreasing the likelihood of new customers. She would be continuing to take the risk of storing data on paper and would not be creating new conveniences for her customers. Parker would have a hard time

reaching her goal to take a step back from being a stylist and letting the others take her clientele. The Mane Event employees would be affected as they will not have to learn new processes, but this decision would also decrease the likelihood of getting new customers. This could lead to them feeling unmotivated and dissatisfied as they do not have the task significance of having a busy schedule and would not be earning as much money off commission. The receptionists would be generally unaffected as their job roles would stay the same. The booth renters would still be required to pay rent and would still have to do their processes manually as well. The customers would still be getting the same service they are receiving now, however, they would be missing out on possible increased levels of service IT could offer.

Install computer and network: By installing a computer and a network, Parker would be taking the first step in addressing the inefficiencies and risks in her company. Having a computer could help her save time once she has the proper applications installed, however, she will have to spend time and money to find and purchase one. Moreover, she will have to start paying monthly internet bills. On the other hand, the possibilities she will have with a computer and network down the line will outweigh the original costs. A computer will affect the employees as they will be able to use it to increase their efficiency as well, especially the receptionists. Booth renters could also take advantage of the possibilities with a computer and internet connection, however, could see their rent increase due to the monthly cost of the Internet. Customers could see increased convenience by having Wi-Fi in the waiting area and could see other conveniences if Parker chooses to use more possibilities that come with a computer and the Internet.

Transfer customer data to Excel spreadsheet: By transferring the customer data from the loose-leaf binder to an Excel spreadsheet, Parker will be able to store and find customer data more efficiently. She will have to take time initially to enter all the data and will have to pay \$70

for Microsoft Office subscription. Employees will be affected as they could find data on the customers much faster. If a customer comes in and says they want the same color they had done last time, the employee can easily search the table to find the information quickly. Booth renters will also be affected as they could be able to use their own spreadsheets for customer data if they choose to. Customers will be positively affected because their information will be quickly accessible, so the stylists can begin their service as soon as possible.

Use secondary storage devices and the cloud for back-ups: By implementing this decision, Parker will ensure that the data she stores is not lost or deleted if something were to happen to the PC. She would be making a major improvement over only having one copy of the data on paper. She could use cloud services for free and purchase a flash drive for cheap ensuring she always has a back-up. Employees will be affected as this decreases the likelihood that their client's data will be lost. Booth renters would be unaffected as they would have to find their own means to back up data. Customers would be positively affected as they will not have to deal with the inconvenience of The Mane Event losing their data. However, this comes with a security risk if Parker's cloud service account were to be compromised.

Use Excel for payroll calculations: By using Excel to calculate payroll, Parker would be decreasing the time it takes for her to complete payroll and minimize the mistakes she would make if doing it by hand. Using Excel, all Parker has to do is input numbers and use simple formulas. While she would have to learn how to use Excel, the learning curve for the actions she would be performing is not large. This decision would also positively affect her employees as it would decrease the likelihood she made a mistake when calculating their pay, therefore, will receive the proper amount of pay. Booth renters would not be affected as Parker does not pay them. Customers would also be unaffected as it does not affect the service they would receive.

Hire a contractor to develop website for The Mane Event: By choosing to follow through with this decision, Parker will have to invest time to find a person or company to create the website and purchase a domain. However, domains are rather cheap for about \$12 and a person or company could create the website for a small amount given it would not take long to make. By having a website, Parker could increase the visibility and scope of her business leading to more clients for her employees allowing her to cut down on her time as a stylist. Her employees would be affected as they could see an influx of clients helping them gain more valuable experience and make more money. Booth renters could also benefit from The Mane Event having a website if they could also put their information on the page. Customers would benefit as they could get more information about the services the company provides and the stylists that work there. Customers that may not have known The Mane Event existed could now see the salon as an option for their hair services.

Use salon scheduling system: By using a scheduling system, Parker would be increasing the efficiency of the scheduling process while allowing her to better manage and organize her appointments. She must, however, pay for the services that could allow her to do this. Employees would also be positively affected as they could better manage their appointments on a computer than on paper. It would be easier for employees to find appointments they have and pinpoint times they are available. Booth renters could be positively impacted as they could also use the service, however, would require a different schedule than the one The Mane Event uses. Booth renters could also have to pay for the service if they choose to use it. Customers could be positively affected because it could decrease the time it takes to schedule an appointment and the time the stylists are away making the appointment. By having a scheduling system, customers could have the convenience of requesting appointments online.

Recommendation

My recommendation for Parker would be to implement a synthesis of the alternatives listed including installing a computer and Internet connection, hiring a contractor or company to develop a website, transferring customer data to Excel spreadsheets, using Excel for payroll, and using an application for scheduling. These decisions will help Parker close the gap between where the company is now and where Parker would like it to be. Collectively, these decisions will increase the efficiency of their business processes, increase the company's online exposure, and decrease risks associated with storing and processing data manually. As a result of these improvements, the likelihood of attracting and retaining new clientele will increase. Therefore, the apprentices and other stylists will have a greater opportunity to gain experience and build a formidable size of clientele allowing Parker to step back from working as a stylist.

Five years down the line, these decisions to take advantage of the current information systems available will put The Mane Event in a position where Parker could feel comfortable allowing her employees to take on a majority of the work. While these alternatives can offer great benefits, they are not cost or risk free and will take time. In the first year, Parker can expect to spend \$1400-\$1500 for the initial setup of new information systems. After that, Parker could expect around to spend \$800 per year, however, she could lessen this cost by increasing rent to the booth renters given they will be able to use the same technology and resources. If these solutions are implemented correctly, the benefits far outweigh any risks or costs. As her stylists gain experience and see more clients, the stylists will earn more money meaning so will Parker and The Mane Event. Because these decisions increase the chances of gaining clients, they increase her chances of moving towards the goal of every company: to make money now and into the future (Goldratt). Therefore, while these decisions will require Parker to increase her

budget for spending, they will help in closing the gap more than the decision to do nothing ever could.

Doing nothing would not be the best option for Parker and The Mane Event. Choosing this decision would mean The Mane Event would sit idle while having inefficiencies and inconveniences in scheduling, storing, and processing data. Moreover, the other salons in the area would hold a competitive advantage in gaining new customers over Parker's salon. New customers unfamiliar with salons in the area, whether they have just moved or started college down the road, will look online when searching for a salon to go to. The Internet will have the most in depth information about salons in the area, and The Mane Event will not be one of the first options to show up. There are several salons that appear on a search of the area and most have websites offering information on the stylists and the services they provide. The Mane Event does have a Facebook page that gives them some visibility online, but it is mainly for pictures and has little to no information about the services they offer or the stylists that work there. Firms that fail to take advantage of technology advances will frequently fall to the competitive pressures of those that have adopted new and unique tools (Fried). By doing nothing, The Mane Event is not expanding their scope to reach new customers online and will lose these customers to other salons that have taken advantage of technology advances.

Consequently, her apprentices and other stylists will not receive the clientele they need to gain the proper experience and stay motivated throughout the day. As of now, many of the stylists do not have a full schedule and most of time work with walk-ins, if there are any. They are not building a client base and are not constantly working with clients. During this down time, they can either help the receptionists clean the shop and organize or watch and learn how Parker provides her services. This leads to low task significance and low task identity as their effort is

not tied to the proper outcomes and they are not seeing the same value in their work as they would if they were providing cuts, styling, coloring, etc. These factors will lower the meaningfulness in their job. Moreover, they are not receiving much feedback as they are not seeing that many clients meaning they are not getting the proper experience and knowledge to move forward in their careers as professional hair stylists. When the psychological states of being meaningful and having the right knowledge is low, motivation will decrease, and turnover will increase. The best time to transform an organization is when it is good shape: its financials are solid, customers are happy, and employees are productive (Cash). Currently, The Mane Event's employees are struggling to be productive, they should try to correct this problem not wait until more problems appear before they make a change.

Moreover, doing nothing will not address inefficiencies in the company. The scheduling system would stay the same and require stylists to stop what they are doing and flip through a schedule book to find an available appointment taking away time from the client they are working with and making the client on the other end of the phone wait. This process results in wasting time for the stylist and inconvenience for the customer. Another process that will not improve from doing nothing is retrieving client information. Currently, it is stored in a book written in pencil with smudges, eraser marks, and spilt hair products and color on the pages. This not ideal for the stylist to find customer information about their last visit as it could be hard to read and find. Furthermore, Parker would still be processing pay roll by hand, increasing the likelihood of making a mistake and taking up more of her time. Parker would like to take a step back working as much as she does, but with the processes she has in place now, she will continue to deal with inconvenience and time lost. Not to mention the risk that comes with storing scheduling appointments and customer data on paper. If she were to lose either, she would have to spend an

extraordinary amount of time to recover anything she could and could lose customers if appointments are missed. If Parker wants the company to be in shape to where she can let her stylists take most of the clients, she must make decisions that alter the direction of the company.

One decision that Parker can make that will move The Maine Event closer to closing the gap would be to install a computer and a network in the shop. Having a computer and a network will provide Parker with numerous opportunities to increase the efficiency and capabilities of the company. A computer and Internet connection will provide the ability to download and install applications, back-up her data, research hair styles, order products, etc. This decision will open the door for the other alternatives listed after, therefore, is one of the first decisions she needs to make. While a tower, monitor, keyboard, and mouse could cost her around \$300-\$500, it is a one-time cost that will last her many years into the future and allow her to accomplish certain tasks much quicker than before. One example is a reliable Dell OptiPlex which comes with Windows 10 and enough memory and processor power for her to do all that she would need. Almost every business could make use of a computer and The Mane Event is no different.

Having an internet connection will also prove to be beneficial as the stylists can then use the computer to research, email their clients, and order certain products. It could also help when having a scheduling system on the computer as it could notify them in real time when a request comes in. An Internet connection is also necessary for the alternative to back-up their data to the cloud. This would cost around \$40 per month with Murray Electric, however, with the increase in bills Parker will have to pay for the shop, she could also charge more rent for the booth renters. While booth renters may not like the idea of more rent, the capabilities of the computer can also increase their efficiency as well.

The decision to use Excel for client data will also move The Mane Event closer to Parker's goal by increasing the efficiency of storing and retrieving customer data. By using a spreadsheet, stylists will no longer have to flip their book written in pencil and filled with smudges and stains on each page. Using Excel spreadsheets, Parker could make tables with customer data that will be easy to search and filter through. Given that The Mane Event does not track an extensive amount of customer data, a database such as Microsoft Access or MS SQL would be excessive and provide more difficulty in setting up. Having a database will not increase The Mane Event's efficiency when compared to using a spreadsheet as the data they collect is little and straightforward.

The main data that stylists log in the customer book is only the color or product used on a client and the date of the visit. Parker could make a table in the spreadsheet with columns that include client name, product used, comments, and date of visit allowing her to keep track of the same data but use it in a more efficient manner. She could also have another spreadsheet just containing contact information for the clients. Excel spreadsheets have great performance up to 1 million rows, but Parker would never get close to that with most likely around a thousand rows of data for the table containing products and comments about visits. If Parker had many thousands of customers, then Excel would not be the best option. However, the likelihood of The Mane Event reaching that many customers is extremely low given the slow growth of the market and the location in Murray, KY. Furthermore, they would not have to update the spreadsheet every time a customer visits, just the times they do something different and most of time people will get the same thing done because it is what they like.

Having this data in spreadsheets, will make data easier to input and find, saving the stylists time having to flip through and find the data in a large book kept in the back of the shop. Data will be

easier to read and understand as well as it will not have stains, eraser markers, or smudges preventing full understanding. This time they will save adds up and could allow them to spend more time with their clients and know their needs quicker leading to a more positive experience for customers especially ones that have just started going there. To use Excel they will need a Microsoft Office subscription which will cost around \$70 a year for The Mane Event.

Parker could use spreadsheet to also calculate the payroll for her employees allowing her to complete this process much quicker than before. As of now, Parker is totaling up money made by the company and the stylists by hand then calculating the earnings and pay for each individual stylist. Doing calculations by hand can be time consuming and error prone. By using Excel, she could cut down her time of completing payroll drastically. Excel will provide the ability to create and copy formulas across cells then calculate the data that is submitted. The only thing Parker would have to change each time is the numbers. If Parker wanted this data to be protected on the computer, she could easily protect the workbook and encrypt it with a password. By doing this, she will make sure no employee or other user can open or modify the spreadsheet. Through using an Excel spreadsheet, Parker would save a lot of time at the end of day allowing her to put her focus on other needs of the business and it would mean employees are more likely to receive the correct amount of pay for what they have done. Automating their data processing will allow them to have access to the appropriate information meaning it could help identify small problems before they grow larger and could help the company jump on a profitable opportunity (Cash). Through using Excel, Parker can minimize problems with payroll and the stylists can spend less time looking for data, and more time with their customers.

Another alternative that will support the new direction of The Mane Event would be to store the customer data on secondary devices and in the cloud. This would mitigate the risk of losing the

data from just having it in one place. If anything were to happen to the PC, they could be able to replace the hardware and applications, but not the customer data on the hard drive. Customer data is extremely valuable for The Mane Event and losing years of this data could hurt their business. Customers like to receive similar types of hair styles, cuts, and colors, but sometimes they will try something different. If they try something different and like it, they may want to get it again someday. However, if the customer data is lost, they may never have the chance as the customer or the stylist is unlikely to remember exactly what the customer had done. New customers are not going to want to go to a place that losses track of their data. Storing this data off the PC will lessen the impact if something happens to it. Customers will not have to deal with the inconvenience of not being able to get the same color they got a couple years ago or even last time. Flash drives are inexpensive and could allow for offline storage allowing for recovery in case of data loss. However, with flash drives being easy to misplace, cloud storage is another recommended option and is typically free to use. I would recommend they use OneDrive for consistency since they would already have a Microsoft subscription and up to 15GB of free storage. This does come with the added risk of someone gaining access to their account and stealing data. Although this is true, when using two-factor authentication with a strong password, this risk is severely lessened. Moreover, the data they would be storing would not be sensitive as it mostly be customer's hair styling preferences.

While the options previously mentioned will increase the efficiency of the company, implementing a scheduling system and a website will increase the likelihood of gaining new clientele. By having a website, potential customers could find information about the salon online that they could not have before including information about the services The Mane Event provides, products they carry, and detailed bios about the stylists. By hiring someone to develop

the website, Parker can describe and request certain requirements she wants the website to have. The website will cost her money but given that it will be much like a brochure with little difficult requirements, it should not cost much. The domain could cost around \$12 while a developer could charge \$20-\$50 an hour or \$200-\$500 for a flat rate. To find a person or company for the job there are several online resources like UpWork and Fiverr that can be used to identify developers. By picking a company or person with a good reputation, Parker will end up with a professional website that is easy for users to navigate and find information on. Now, when people are looking for salons in Murray, they will see The Mane Event as a result with a website. In terms of the Internet Enabled Business Model, this decision will increase their scope or ability to reach people by taking advantage of the Universality of the Internet meaning the ability of the Internet to enlarge or shrink the world (Afuah & Tucci). This would mean that someone in a town outside of Murray or outside of the state could find valuable information about the salon. New clients, whether in or out of town, will check a company's website to get a feel for the organization before they choose to go. The website could also link to social media accounts they have allowing the customers to continue to stay connected. Moreover, The Mane Event could use their website to link to the service they use to manage their schedules.

By having a scheduling service, potential and long-term customers could use The Mane Event's website to request an appointment. The stylists would be notified of the appointment and could approve one of the times the client chose. The client would then be notified through email or app of the date and time of their appointment. This decision relates to step two of how senior managers should design systems by selecting technologies that support the information requirements providing a responsive, flexible system (Cash). Having a calendar service at their disposal, will allow stylists to flexibly manage and understand their schedules better. There are

several services that provide this ability for around \$25-\$50 per month for the number of employees Parker has. The website could link to the service they choose and provide information on how to request appointments. Services like Vagaro and Square will offer customers the ability to go through their website or an app they download for the scheduling process at The Mane Event. Vagaro is specifically designed with salons in mind and offers a calendar service, online booking, and marketing to reach out to potential customers. Square while offering similar services can be used for any company that needs appointment managing. While Square may be cheaper, Vagaro will fit the needs of the stylists specifically offering a standard configuration allowing The Mane Event to reach the final stage of integration in the IT adoption model. This means the technology is more likely to become integrated with the business processes.

Furthermore, having the ability to request appointments online will give Parker a competitive advantage over her other salons in the area. This means The Mane Event has a competence that is competitor differentiating which means the firm's level of competence is higher than that of its competitors (Afuah & Tucci). While many of the salons in Murray have a website, they do not offer the ability to request appointments online. This decision will allow The Mane Event to stand out in a positive way.

Having an online calendar service on their computer could also improve the scheduling process if customers were to call. Stylists will get a better view of their calendar on a computer than flipping through pages in a book when trying to talk to a customer on the phone. This will increase the efficiency of the process and the convenience for the customer. While having stylists make appointments does take up their time, they should still be the only one's scheduling appointments for themselves. Parker could decide to train the receptionists to manage the appointments for the stylists, however, I would recommend against it. If Parker were to allow

receptionists to make appointments, it would take away the stylist's autonomy and responsibility of handling their schedule leading to them becoming unmotivated and dissatisfied. Moreover, Parker did not implement the correct people controls to ensure the receptionists have the growth need strength to want to understand the complexity of managing the schedule of several stylists. The receptionists could navigate to the stylists' schedules on the service and find a date the customer wants, but they should not make the appointment without input from stylist. Stylists will need to be in control of their own schedule and having a scheduling service will allow them to do that more efficiently as they could use their cell phone or a computer to manage and organize them.

Currently, the imitability is high, and the complimentary assets are freely available in the salon industry in Murray meaning The Mane Event must continue to innovate or follow a run strategy to make money. When looking at the Internet Enabled Business model, the decision to use scheduling services to manage stylists' calendars and allow for customers to request an appointment could increase their sustainability. This decision would align with the run strategy which involves changing some subset of components or linkages of business to offer customers better value (Afuah & Tucci). Customers will get better value because they will have the convenience of requesting appointments online on their phone or computer rather than having to call. Moreover, the employees will have a positive behavioral intention to use the system because there will be high performance expectancy and low effort expectancy. Employees will be able to use a simple user interface on their computer or app to quickly manage all of their appointments.

While there are costs and risks for The Mane Event, these solutions could provide efficiency, will be easy to use, and could attract customers. With the amount of competition in the area, creating a website will put emphasis on the differentiation of services The Mane Event offers and

having a scheduling system will give them a competitive advantage. These solutions do not only attract the necessary customers to reach the goals but provide enough efficiency and security in the company to keep them. The results of these solutions could help Parker reach her goals of enriching her employee's jobs and giving them a clientele base that will allow The Mane Event to run smoothly as Parker cuts down her time as a stylist.

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