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The significance of Business Information System (BIS) with special Reference to ‘Gap Filler’

Executive Summary

The objective of the study is to find out the significance of Business Information System (BIS) in organizations. The research takes the help from the case study of Gap Filler to explain the BIS

requirement. The organization is currently using software like Microsoft Access, Filler IT, and Quick Book to meet the BIS requirement. The output is not up to the mark and is not matching the standard of the current business scenario. The Director of the company has realized that there is a need to improve BIS and make it more sophisticated. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software is the solution for Gap Filler. The study recommends introducing SAP, to maintain Business Information System (BIS) for Gap Filler.

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Introduction

Information and data are the key component in the current business world. An efficient BIS keeps a particular organization a step ahead compared to its competitors. Both internal and external requirements are there. The internal requirement includes the overall management of the organization including payment structure and other details of the organization, etc. The external requirement includes the data related the existing customer base, prospective clients, suppliers, etc. According to Fraenkel (2003) a fully equipped information system delivers significant improvements in key quality indicators of business houses, and generates some positive resource. It is admitted fact that information system gives the competitive advantage to any organization.

The study takes the help from the case study GAP Filler. It is a staffing solution providing company having the head quarters at Shepperton near Melbourne. The business of Gap Filler is holding back because of its outdated information system. The study would recommend a better business information system to run the business in a superior way.

Description of the business

The Main business activities

Gap Filler is basically a labor hire and recruitment company. It provides staffing solutions to food processing and agricultural industries. The company mainly caters temporary and short term labors to orchardists, horticulturalists, vineyards, farmers, and a variety of food and beverage processing and packaging businesses. For instance, during the Apple harvesting period, it caters fruit pickers and other processing and packaging hands. Apart from this it also provide staffing solutions for the permanent positions such as firm workers and managers. Though it is operating from Victoria but it has different office location in Warrnambool, Swan Hill, Sale, and Hamilton.

Decision making in the business

The crucial business decisions are made in the Shepperton office, which serves as the head office of Gap Filler. The senior management team and accounts department are located there. The challenge of the business is to supply reliable workers according to the demand. Demand forecast is another difficult task because the demand is fluctuating and seasonal demand. It has

an effective sales team which successfully maintains business relationship with small and large business houses for revenue generation.

Key Requirement of information

According to Stair (2011) information is power and the power depends on how the information is used. Any decision making process has to be based on proper information. In the case of Gap filler, different kinds of information such as keeping up to date records about the availability of 400 workers, contact details of the workers and currency of certifications for operating equipment are needed. It is also important to know the performance of the worker when they are sent to work. The requirement of equipments such as, forklifts, loaders and heavy vehicles has to be tracked.

The information maintenance system is also important. Currently it is using Microsoft Access to track the information. About eight years ago the company invested in Filler IT, a labor hire system but now it is not working efficiently.

Department wise Requirements

Gap filler needs such a transaction process that enable to online transaction. The administrative staffs manually handle the process. That is why an automatic system is required. Currently, information related to customer and sales relationship management, is confined to the sales personnel only. It needs to improve the system because the sales related information is not captured into any company related system. In the case of inventory, the information related to equipments required and the pool of labors is needed to address the fluctuating demand from the agrarian sector. Planning and scheduling is another important part. Information related to the availability of different skill based labors and when they can be sent to work is needed. The company is using business books (Enterprise Version) to maintain the accounts related activities. But some sophisticated version of software is needed to match the pace of current business standard. All kind of information from all the department and activities is needed to make decision. If the management is unable to access any information, the decision will not be holistic and may be termed as wrong decision.

Business Information System

Business Information System (BIS) deals with the management of information related to the activity of the organization. It helps to manage the organization effectively and efficiently. It is basically computer driven device. The primary component of BIS is People, Hardware, Software, procedure and data. Data is required for decision making. Here people can be individual group or organization. Here the procedure is documentation, design and development. Yap, Soh & Raman (1992) argued that Business is the key to success for the business. The business world is depending more and more on BIS software. That is why Barjis (2008) cautioned that the process or modeling of the BIS software is extremely important. A wrong modeling will make the business fail.

In the case of a staffing solution organization information is required further more. Cause it needs to know where is the demand or who does need labor and supply or who is available to be hired.

Recommended Information System

After analyzing the situation of Gap Filler, it is clear that the system and Software it is using are not up to date. To make the system modern and matching to the standard of current business world new system is required. Currently it is using Microsoft Access, Filler IT and Quick Book. These have to be replaced by the new age technology.

A. Different types of information system

There are different types of information system being practiced in the market. These are Office Information System (OIS) which does the day to day office job automatically instead of manually, Transaction Processing System (TPS) which basically focuses on transaction part of the office activity, Management Information System (MIS), which is ideal for routine transaction processing, data storage and data processing , Decision Support System (DSS), which helps in decision-making process based on the data and information and Expert System which stores the expertise and knowledge of experts and then replicate the human reasoning ability and decision-making procedure for those who have less capability. Among all these options Management Information System or MIS is a better alternation because it provides holistic solution to the problems occurred in different departments. By adopting MIS, different kind of problems can be addressed at one go. According to Phillip (2007), Management Information

systems knowledge is necessary for developing successful and competitive firms, creating global identity and adding value to business. Laodon &Laudon (2004) identified five stages of MIS development. First is mainframe and minicomputer computing, second is personal computers, third is client server networks, fourth is enterprise computing, and fifth one is cloud computing.

B.ERP

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is a sub category of MIS. ERP is a better solution process because it helps to flow information between all categories of business functions including inside the territory of the organization and the outside stakeholders. The positive part of ERP is that once the information is stored in the system, everyone who is authorized to access it can access it. Mabert et al.,(2003) mentioned that The experience of the achievement of ERP systems is mixed. Some organizations have experienced very successful implementations and leap in business whereas others companies have struggled. Many software developers provide ERP solutions such as Oracle, PeopleSoft, SCT Banner, and SAP. The study recommends SAP as the proper system. This software is recommended because this is widely accepted and used across the world.

C.Advantages

A number of organizations are there across the world which has seen remarkable improvement in their business operation after adopting ERP. Leon (2013) argued that ERP can be used for commercial purpose or to attain any social objective. The core advantage of ERP is free access of information. Free flow of information helps to speed up the work process.

Previously, vital the information was confined to the departmental people only. But is this system everyone can see it and access it. So the entire decision making process will be improved and take lesser time to make it. Akkermans et al., (2003) argued that the system, ERP is very much successful in the case of supply chain management. ERP helps to deliver more customized product and services, more standardized process and provides greater transparency at workplace. Gap Filler also has a supply chain management as it caters labor and equipments to the agricultural industries. If any organization can provide more customized goods and services then it can get an edge over its competitors. Revision of cost structure is one such way. According to

Shajahan (2004) the information system directly impacts cost structure and as it is automatic system it saves on labor cost.

Swartz & Orgill (2001), argued that once ERP is implemented, the back office activities such as financial management, order management, human resources, management and asset management gets improved.

As these are analytical tools, demand forecast and sales analysis can be done to improve the decision making process. After the introduction of ERP Gap Filler can maintain the labor and equipment pool in a more efficient manner and supply it to its customer according to their seasonal and fluctuating demand.

D.Disadvantages

The process has some shortcomings too. It is alleged that, the process of ERP is complex, costly and time consuming. If the new technology is introduced, then the organization has to arrange training session for the employees to man the machine. Barton (2001) made a point that ERP is a complex process. So it needs expertise and time to introduce it. Umble et al. (2003) also argued in the same way. The researches mention that, it is a not an easy thing and high cost is involved in it. A number of ERP practices have been termed as failures because they did not attain the pre-determined organizational goals. Apart from this, it is also seen that, whenever management wants to introduce any change in organization, resistance comes from the end of employees. But this problem can be addressed through counseling.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that, the stuffing solution provider, Gap filler is using older version of Business Information System. The Director has correctly identified that there is a requirement for up gradation of the information system. The organization is not getting any competitive advantage compared to peer-organization because the quality of output of is not up to the mark. Cases are there where departmental information is confined only within the department. For instance sales related information was not accessible to the employees outside the sales and marketing department. The study found out that management information system, rather enterprise resource planning is the solution for the organization. It will smoothen the

information flowing process, increase the transparency and make the decision making process easy. It has some shortcomings too. The process is complex, costly and time consuming. But after implementing it, an organization gets the benefit and that is really remarkable. After comparing both advantages and disadvantages of ERP, it can be advices that Gap Filler should introduce ERP practice. Though many ERP software solution providers are there, but as SAP is a worldwide trusted brand, the organization should go for it.

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