Huffman trucking: desktop management and erp considerations flashcard

Running head: Huffman Trucking: Desktop Management / ERP Huffman Trucking: Desktop Management & ERP Considerations William Dumire Sheryl Carter Tracy Hunter Jeremy Whitson James Welty University of Phoenix BSA / 405 – End-User Business Applications September 15, 2008 Huffman Trucking: Desktop Management & ERP Considerations Introduction In today's highly competitive global marketplace, organizations must learn to improve efficiency and take advantage of all available resources. Huffman Trucking understands this concept and has requested that their information technology infrastructure be evaluated to identify any deficiencies and maximize operational efficiencies accordingly. Specifically, Huffman has requested that we make specific recommendations for desktop productivity and ERP applications so efficiently support the organization. Administration understands that their organization currently lacks an appropriate I.

T. infrastructure and that this must change in order to meet the customer needs of the 21st century. Our goal is to provide Huffman Trucking with specific recommendations on best practices and strategies for implementing new desktop and ERP applications. Specifically, we will define business objectives for the project, all project constraints including financial, time, resources, organizational policies/culture, a description of the end-user computing environment, and a cost/benefit analysis. Organizational Background Before making any specific recommendations, it is important to first understand Huffman's basic operations.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, K. Huffman founded Huffman Trucking in 1936 with a single tractor-trailer. As a direct result of World War II, the growth of the company presented an increased demand for carrier services between

the East Coast and the Midwest. Over the next 9 years (1945), Huffman Trucking's fleet increased to 36 trailers and 16 tractors which helped strengthen the relationship with U. S.

Government. Prior to the 1900 trains were used to carry freights that were transported over land, as they were efficient when moving a large quantity of freight within the urban centers. With the rapid growth of Huffman Trucking internal sales and the acquisition of several new regional carriers, the company was able to maintain a privately held position. Commercial Motor Vehicles are used in the trucking industry to transport and distribute commercial and industrial goods. Essential services such as the transport of large amount of raw material and finished goods are provided by the trucking industry, typically between retail distribution centers and manufacturing plants. However, insufficient infrastructure has been a major constraint to growth within the Huffman organization.

The key challenge is to implement an effective desktop productivity application and an ERP solution that rapidly and consistently integrates with an improved infrastructure framework which will enable Huffman to overcome this constraint. Financial Constraints Every organization must carefully and methodically consider their financial limitations prior to undertaking a major project like the complete revamping of the Information Technology area of their organization. In Huffman's case, they must ask themselves questions like…Can we afford not to implement these new systems? What will happen to our business if we decide not to incorporate a fleet management software application? Can our business continue to be competitive without these changes? Will it be necessary and is it feasible to

implement these changes in phases or will all changes need to be made at once? Given Huffman's current capital situation, we believe they do have the necessary financial resources to undertake our purposed initiative and that it must all be implemented during a concise and limited time frame. Time ConstraintsAs noted above, we feel that the desktop strategies and proposed software application be implemented as methodically and as quickly as possible. This will require a parallel operating set of procedures during which beta testing and bug fixes can occur. While the new desktop management strategies can be implemented rather quickly, it will be necessary to install our proposed fleet trucking tracking and maintenance program in thoughtful and purposeful steps.

We recommend a six month implementation time-frame with frequent testing and revisions as needed. Resource Allocation ConstraintsThe key to a successful project is planning the use of resources and time throughout the project. People are the most valuable and costly resource of most organizations. In order to maximize productivity, utilization and realization, it's critical to assign the right people to the right project teams (LMR Solutions, 2008). Software solutions and Infrastructures are architected, developed, engineered and supported by employees who have the time, energy, skills and interest to make the specific initiative successful. However, Huffman Trucking has limited access to a number of these resources.

Furthermore, these types of resources are often in short supply compared to the demand for new software solutions and infrastructures. The nature and extent of these constraints which project managers experience, varies from one situation to another. Although no matter what the constraints may be,

they will always, at some point affect the way the project is carried out. Managing people across an organization can be complicated (LMR Solutions, 2008), but with the implementation of an ERP, Huffman can centralize their resources making it easy to project short-term and long-term resources needed for the project in a more accurate anner. With a comprehensive understanding of the skills and availability of their staff, Huffman can strategically hire, deploy, and develop resources that match the needs of their project request in implementing a desktop and ERP application. Project Organizational Culture Constraints Huffman Trucking's organizational culture is a very important element influencing the selection, sponsorship, prioritization and ultimate success of their ERP solution project (CNET Networks Inc.

2008). The level of communication and interaction between project team members will also be reflected by the organizational culture. If the organizational culture of Huffman is to promote cooperation between team members and to provide opportunities for them to participate in decision making via tools such as brainstorming, there will be a high level of interaction between team members resulting in better coordination, productivity, morale, efficiency and generation of good ideas in the project related tasks. A Culture Analysis can determine the relative effectiveness of Huffman Trucking's innovations to optimize their organizational performance. The results will enable the organization to identify and implement effective culture-based innovations that improve the company's performance and enhance their project management efforts. The correct identification of project constraints, the anticipation of their nature would

enable Huffman to avoid the danger of over or under-rating their impact on the process of an ERP project implementation.

General Desktop Management Considerations & Strategies In order for Huffman to be successful in their new project undertaking, the organization must consider, address, and implement various desktop management strategies. One of the biggest challenges facing all organization's today is finding ways to keep end-users safe and satisfied with the information technology resources they utilize. As technologies become more and more integrate with the daily operations, the smallest breaches in security, deployment, and/or maintenance in these technologies can compromise the entire operation. One way to address this issue is by addressing and formulating proper and adequate desktop management strategies. It goes without saying that Huffman must take into consideration the organizations desktop computers and, in addition, it also must include laptops, personal data devices, and other mobile devices. In order to properly undertake this task, the organization must carry out steps to ensure its inventory is up to date and accurate.

Next, it must ask questions like " what kind of software are installed on the devices", " what version of the software is installed? ", " what type of network does the organization utilize? ", " has a disaster recovery plan been developed and if so, does everyone know and understand how to deploy it? . These are just some of the questions that must be addressed in the desktop management strategies. " At basic level, desktop management (DM) involves three components-asset management (managing the inventory of

the software and hardware), patch management, and software distribution (including license compliance monitoring). ” (Chaturvedi, N.

, 2007). It can also include several other tasks related to virus and spam filtering, wireless security, network firewall configuration, and VPN management (if individuals require network access from home). There are some very standardized approaches that have been developed for desktop management. They include: 1. Automation; 2. Centralization; and 3.

Outsourcing. Standards-based approach. Huffman should consider each approach in its desktop management plan. Automation infers that an organization have IT asset discovery and inventory processes automated rather than relying on individuals to collect the data.

“ Multiple endpoints are being considered: appliances, virtualization, policy-based management, patch management, and so on. ” (Chaturvedi, N. , 2007). One of the major goals of automation is to protect the organization’s internal working environment while giving insiders the access to specific corporate applications that they need to remain effective and efficient in their jobs.

Centralization refers to a plan/process by which the organization is able to monitor patch installations, track application usage, and track/manage other resources in a very methodical and centralized way. “ The amount of time, effort, and cost saved, when all the controls are in one place, is immense. ” (Chaturvedi, N. , 2007). For example, Huffman must have an infrastructure in place that allows them to perform a software upgrade on all existing systems

at once rather than a technician going to each of their locations and computers and completing the upgrade manually.

" If this entire process is centralized, the installations would be done overnight, sitting in the head office, and any glitches can be handled remotely over the coming week. " (Chaturvedi, N. , 2007). That is the kind of convenience and cost-saving benefits results in why most consultants say centralization is inevitable and imperative with desktop management.

Outsourcing is an approach that allows a company to focus on its core business without the need for keeping up on the world of ever-changing technologies…ones that can dramatically impact the everyday operations of the organization. Huffman could consider outsourcing it's I. T. needs which would allow an external source to bring their expertise and knowledge based skill set to the project implementation table. While outsourcing may not be the answer for every need, it should be considered as a part of the desktop management package. Specific benefits for Huffman to incorporate desktop management systems include increased efficiency, increased productivity, and time-saving benefits to the I.

T. and Administration. I. T. managers can spare a lot more time from routine tasks to do more meaningful activities such as planning specific Information Technology strategies. " IT departments move through the PC lifecycle of purchasing, deploying, maintaining, upgrading, and retiring systems.

" (Chaturvedi, N. , 2007). There is also a two-fold reduction in costs with DM- in support and administration. Also, the cost of rolling out new software,

upgrading existing software, capacity planning and asset tracking, which are mostly administrative tasks, can be brought down.

" (Chaturvedi, N. , 2007). It also leads to a more secure and protected computing environment. Pertinent Information on Desktop productivity and ERP Applications Huffman Trucking current systems includes a variety of different phone systems. The California location has a Private Branch Exchange (PBX) phone system in the office and a digital phone service in the plant.

The Missouri and Ohio offices have digital phone systems and the plants use standard phone service. The New Jersey location has a PBX system in both the office and plant. Digital phone systems use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology which allows phone calls to travel over the Internet as data packets—like email does—with the same level of quality and reliability you expect from traditional landline providers (Proximity, 2005). The use of this technology would transform some of Huffman Trucking's telephones to a desktop productivity device with associated applications to deliver the power and flexibility of the current telephone system to the employees' desks (NEC, 2007). Currently there's no (Enterprise Resource Planning) ERP system in place to integrate the software modules of all logistical locations.

Such a system, which is now used in most large sized businesses, would combine the data of separate applications, automate the company and speed up transactions, and simplify the method of keeping data synchronized across the company. It would also simplify the IT infrastructure as well as standardize the variety of software currently being used.

Considering outsourcing of the ERP application management to an Application Service Provider (ASP) is another good solution for Huffman Trucking. This would allow the company to direct its attention away from the day-to-day management of information systems technology and instead towards the activities that help them to realize their full potential and make solid decisions. New ERP Software Requirements for Huffman In today's technology charged world, software can provide truck-specific information for routing, mapping, delivery address look-up, fuel management, vehicle maintenance, and a myriad of other necessary and useful resources.

" Logistics software assists with load finding, dispatch, driver log auditing and accounting. You can get mobile communications, global positioning systems (GPS) and mobile data terminals right in the cab. " (Transport Technology Today, 2002). Per Huffman Trucking's specific requirements, the new ERP software system must be browser based, modular, scalable, and includes plug-ins for foreign currency.

Specific modular requirements are broken down in the table below: Finance & Accounting Module that includes:•General ledger •Accounts Payable •Accounts Receivable •Cash Management •Billing/Invoicing •Credit/Collections •Costing •Property Management •Assets •Taxes •Report WriterAn Enterprise Transportation Module that is directly integrated into the Finance Module, this module will include: •Fuel Tax reporting •Revenue analysis •Driver management (cost & settlements) •Driver Scheduling •Driver History •Driver Information •Claims •Collections •Licensing costs •Payroll (driver only) •Freight Billing (LTL & Truckload) •Imagining •Interline Payables •Insurance •Report Writer A Fleet Maintenance Module that is

directly integrated into the Enterprise Transportation Module, this module will include: •Vehicle Scheduling •Trailer Scheduling •Maintenance costing •Fuel management and costing Warranty management •Materials inventory management •Fixed assets •Report Writer A Transportation Scheduling Module that is directly integrated into the Enterprise Transportation Module, this module will include: •On-line Customer Scheduling component •Shipping cost calculator •Shipping requirements •Shipping services •Shipping locations •Delivery times by zone •International Shipping destinations •Centralized Shipping Call Center information •Specialized Shipping Call Center information •Report Writer A Customer Relations Module that is directly integrated into the Finance Module, this module will include: Active and Passive Customer Information •Customer Sales History •Customer Trends •Detailed Customer Profile •Customer Shipping Schedules •Customer Leads •Sales History (day, month, year, ect.) •Marketing Budget •Marketing Plans •Market Research Information •Market History •Market Competition •Growth Trends •Public Relations •Trade Shows/Events •Integrated Email Capturing •Report Writer A Human Resources Module that is directly integrated into the Enterprise Transportation Module, this module will include: •Secure Employee On-line access through browser •Personal information, such as name, address, marital status, birth date, tc. •Pay rate •Personal exemptions for tax purposes •Hire date •Seniority date (can be different than the hire date) •Organizational information (department, manager's name, etc.) •Vacation hours accrued and used (for non-exempt employees) •Drug testing results •Hours/miles driven •Safety records – all violations and corrective actions •Attendance at mandatory training workshops •Injuries, workers compensation history •Licenses and training

certifications •Grievances filed •Resolution of grievances •Any investigations of employees •General Applicant Tracking •EEOC Information •Report WriterA Purchasing Module that is directly integrated into the Finance Module, this module will include: •Purchase Order •Purchase Quantity •Purchase amount •Shipping Cost •Purchase Approval •Purchase date •Delivery Date •Purchase History •Purchase Trends •Vendor Information •Report Writer An Inventory Management Module that is directly integrated into the Purchasing Module, this module will include: •Inventory management with bar-coding, handheld, radio-frequency capability •Inventory on Order •Inventory In-stock •Item Cost •Last Purchase date •Inventory History •Inventory Trends •Inventory Location Report WriterOur ERP Risk Mitigation Plan is based upon a scale of 1-5 (possibility that the risk might happen). RisksScaleRisk Mitigation Plan or Contingency Plan Technical: Delay in implementation of the system Difficulties in transferring data from the old systems Loss of data 5 3 2Provide ample time/ extended deadlines for the projects/tasks which may be affected due to such delays in implementation. The best way to mitigate this risk is to carry out an extensive analysis of the various ERP package at the time of the selection and choosing a program which is best suitable for the organization.

Backup should be created in advance for all data. People: Resistance among the employees to such change Training related risks4 5The best way to overcome the resistance is to explain the advantages of the system in advance and clarifying all the grievances and concerns at all levels via training sessions and personal meetings. Due to the complexity of the whole process, training related risks and problems are bound to happen, there it is

important to carefully design a training program in advance by hiring experienced implementation and training consultants in advance and developing a training schedule which does not conflict with the employee's current work. Business: Costs related risks Loss of business due to delay in implementation 3 3The estimated costs may go higher due to increase in scope of implementation, which may be encountered by keeping contingency reserves and provisions in advance for such implementation and keeping strong control mechanisms over budgets for such processes.

The best way to retain the business is to effectively design a back up plan to meet all customer requirements in time during the implementation process in order to maintain the goodwill. Cultural: Adjustment problems to the new corporate culture4Due to the implementation of such modern changes, it is often seen that employees face problems in adjusting to the new corporate culture which is technically much more advanced and efficient. Proper training sessions and education along with open communication with the employees can help in removing this risk. Specific considerations and recommendations for Huffman From the various ERP solutions available that will support the trucking industry needs, the solution provided by Choice Technologies would best fit the needs for Huffman Tucking. Aside from looking at what Choice Technologies offers, the evaluation process must look back at the specific criteria needed to assess different business software, all of which is based on Huffman's organization and current operating environment.

Two specific criteria used for consideration is the time and resource allocation constraints. Implementation of the selected software is crucial to

the needs of the business and although adequate time and resources are needed to implement, the implementation must occur quickly and effectively. The Choice Technologies software is compatible with the current systems used by Huffman, which translates into less time required to revamp the infrastructure. Furthermore, Choice Technologies can help with the implementation depending by providing hardware and network management (Choice Technologies, Inc, 2007). Major software implementations such as ad ERP system will require significant time and support from various personnel within each business unit to help transition the business processes; however, Choice Technologies also provides data import options so that data is carried over to the new system mitigating a difficult transition.

A different criteria used for evaluation is how well the software will integrate within the business culture. Not only should the chosen software provide increase productivity, but it should also be easy to learn and use. A successful implementation requires that all employees are able to quickly and effectively use the software. The Choice Technologies software provides easy to use interfaces including an easy to use reporting tool that is customizable to any user needs. One more criteria used for evaluation is the considerations for desktop management. As stated before, Choice Technologies software is compatible with the existing hardware and operating systems used at Huffman, so no additional resources are neither required nor add additional strain on the IT staff.

Because Choice Technologies is designed for trucking and similar transportation companies, the ERP solution incorporates a global positioning system (GPS) called ChoiceTRAK™, which is actually a core component of the

Choice Technologies software, that will accurately track vehicle movements. Furthermore, the GPS software enables the organization to better evaluate their operations such as tracking trucking speeds to help save on fuel costs. The software will also enables the organization to determine maintenance intervals and associated costs by providing enhanced reporting with tracking data. With these strong features, the software will easily be a good fit for the Huffman Trucking without the need to look for another application to integrate within the ERP system. Fleet Maintenance Programs and Cost/Benefit Analysis TATEMS (Truck and Trailer Equipment Maintenance Software) is designed to simplify Vehicle Maintenance record keeping so that mechanics and technicians can focus on equipment uptime, rather than paperwork (TATEMS, 2008). Some of TATEMS' features include: driver and equipment tracking, registration and permit expiration and reminders, DOT (Department of Transportation) and BIT (Biennial Inspection of Terminals) 90 Day inspections and reminders, and much more.

This software is known for their low prices, starting from $347 which covers 1 TATEMS License to run the software on one computer and enter unlimited pieces of equipment. Included is one year of free support and upgrades. In addition to the low cost, there is also a six-month money back guarantee after removal of the software with no questions asked. RTA Fleet Management Software handles a wide range of small and large business software solutions for industrial, automotive, school bus and trucking company maintenance, facility and equipment scheduling maintenance, and preventative maintenance (RTA, 2005). The highly customizable, user friendly and intuitive system offers the following features which provide a full

range of reports to provide immediate feedback: vehicle inventory, work order system, tire inventory and tracking, parts inventory and purchase orders, fuel inventory and usage tracking, and more. This software does have the DOT and BIT inspection offered by TATEMS which determines whether motor carriers are complying with safety regulations—a legal requirement to conduct preventive maintenance on commercial vehicles.

The cost of this software starts at $11, 000 for the minimum number of units and users. This includes support and training for one year plus upgrades. Unlike TATEMS, there is no money back guarantee. A sales representative stated that the company has never had a customer ask for a refund.

CriteriaTATEMSRTA TrainingYes Yes SupportYesYes Usability1010 functionality109 Cost Low Startup High Startup The startup costs for TATEMS may appear much lower than the startup costs for RTA. However, after multiplying the number of licenses required per computer in each of Huffman Trucking's locations, the dollar amount will be close to the startup cost of RTA. The RTA software does come with a variety of training environments, while TATEMS only offer online training. A good suggestion is to contact a few trucking companies using RTA software and request feedback on their perception of the software's value.

Conclusion As previously discussed, if Huffman Trucking wishes to remain competitive in the globalized world economy, they need to consider the information presented and begin working to carefully and methodically implement the suggested desktop management strategies and fleet management software. While this process will require a significant

investment in organizational resources including a substantial financial and time commitment, the organization is not in a position to delay this undertaking. References Chaturvedi, N. , (2007). Desktop Management Strategies. Referenced on September 6, 2008 from http://search.

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