E-commerce conflicts

Business, E-Commerce

As we can see from the case study I have just described, Ethics can be extremely useful to organisations as far as new systems development is concerned and it proves that the methodology works. The same concept could be applied to the Utility for the development of the Dispatch system. A main advantage of such a large amount of user participation is that Dispatch workers will feel more committed and confident to the use of a new system and as a result, produce a higher work rate if they feel that they have been part of the systems design and held a key role.

Many methodologies, especially those associated with the conventional approach give the users hardly any control what so ever over new technology that is being developed and as a result are almost forced to adapt to the changes that occur as a result of it. Ethics would provide the Dispatch workers with a way of maintaining control over the introduction of new technology. Another large advantage is that it would make a public demonstration of the knowledge and skills possessed by the Dispatch worker therefore IS staff would become more likely to treat them equally rather than just as end-users, which would decrease conflicts.

I now intend to discuss a particular Ethics tool known as Participatory Design (PD) which could also be very useful for the Utility. " Participatory design implies that workers as users of computer products take part in the decisions that affect the system and the way it is designed and used. Because technology is not developed in isolation, participation in decisions about technology also involves decisions about work content and job design." (Schuler, Namioka, 1993: 28)

The above quote shows us that system designers, when developing a system, must make decisions on the technology used, but in order to do this they need knowledge of the work content. Obviously this is something they do not possess, this is possessed by the end-users and their participation will help the designer to make a system that exactly fits the needs of the employees who will use it. The Dispatch workers would be able to help the IS staff to design a system that is useful to them and fulfils their own requirements.

This kind of methodology poses advantages for all three of the main work groups of an organisation. For managers, it enables them to get out of the spot-light if a system goes wrong are not be help fully responsible. For users, it enables them to increase their knowledge of the work place and to feel more integrated with it. For systems designers, it quite simply allows them to create better systems. (Schuler, Namioka, 1993: 34) As a result, we can see that PD is not only beneficial for the Dispatch workers, but for the Utility as a whole. Another advantage for the Utility that PD offers is that even after the new system had been implemented, Dispatch workers would be able to make changes or alterations to the system themselves as and when their needs change since they would have the knowledge to do so, thanks to their participation in the design of it.

A main focus of PD is on the concept of workplace democracy. The idea is that, currently, there is generally a lack of democracy within the workplace as decisions are usually made by empowered individuals such as management. As PD concentrates of all parts of the organisation

participating in the design and the end-users actually making decisions, rather than just being affected by them, the idea of workplace democracy becomes possible. This is a good thing as it means the design of the system will not just take into account certain parts of the Utility, but all parts of it. " The road from participatory design to workplace democracy can be built, in part, on the base of successful participatory design projects." (Schuler, Namioka, 1993: 36)

To take gender issues into account, in the past, the use of conventional methods towards systems design has meant that the views and needs of females have been severely overlooked. This is because the conventional approach focuses mainly on the technology and ignores the users. The fact that it ignores the users means that user requirements do not get taken into account, and female user requirements especially do not get taken into account as they did not hold a strong position in the technological world in the first place. The reason being because the conventional idea of the woman was to stay behind at home and not to go out to work, technology was considered the males domain, the home the female's domain. " The definition of information technology systems by conventional processes has signally failed women in the workplaces." (Webster, 1996: 148)

For example, when a decision is being made about what system is needed, perhaps management are making part of the decision. As management jobs are mainly taken by men, again because of the old conventional view of the woman, the needs of the females will not be represented in the decision that it made because there are not enough women present in management. As I

have mentioned earlier, a focal factor of PD is that everyone participates and everyone is treated equally. Also, that PD follower's are striving towards a democratic workplace.

This means PD would be good for woman in terms of systems design because woman would no longer be treated as inferior to men since the idea is that everyone is equal and the workplace is democratic. PD states that all participants make decisions regarding the design of the new system. This means that finally, women would be included in the decision making and their needs will go represented in the decision making process. This means that in the Utility, the female worker's needs are more likely to be met if PD is used.

To conclude, we have seen that the conventional, hard approach to systems development would be unsuitable for the Utility. A more soft approach such as the one have discussed would be much more appropriate in terms of designing a successful system. Methodologies such as Ethics along with its tools like PD offer a variety of advantages and could solve many of the potential problems the Utility could have with the design of the Dispatch system. Conflicts can be partially resolved, as well as a better system being designed in general. I would highly recommend Ethics to the Utility and think they would be wise to give it strong consideration.

Bibliography

Books: 'Computing for Non-specialists', Bandyo-padhyway, N, 2000, Essex: Pearson Education 'E-Commerce', Bandyo-padhyay, N, 2002, Berkshire:

McGraw-Hill Education 'Information Systems Development', Avison, D, Fitzgerald, G, 1988, Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications 'A Level Information Technology', Heathcote, P, 1998, Ipswich: Payne-Gallway Publishers 'Participatory Design', Schuler, D, Namioka, A, 1993, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates