

Systems analysis project



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Systems Analysis Project Fundamentals of Business Systems Development

The company I work for recently met with our primary client in hopes of identifying any potential shortfalls and to gain insight on our customer service ability. During this meeting one concern seemed to dominate the study; the client felt they were not getting adequate personal attention when they called. They also indicated " it felt like voice mail hell" when routed through our phone system. It was apparent the issue of phone etiquette needed to be addressed within our organization. One theory states during the systems analysis stage " the design of any new system must be predicated upon an understanding of the old system." (Modell, 2004). In our case we needed to decide if our current system was capable of addressing the issue. We convened a panel of key personnel to develop a model to accomplish two goals. First, to correct the deficiency identified by the client from a procedural standpoint. Second, correct the deficiency from a system standpoint. In response to our client's concern, we adopted a policy that all phone calls would be answered by a live person prior to receiving a voice mail box. We discovered three possible methods to support this change. One method was to put a " buddy system" in place. This would pair the staff into two-person teams that would cover each other's phone and supervisor's phones in the event someone was away from their desk. Another option was the implementation of a call center. The call center would field any calls that were missed by the supervisor or the secretary, and the caller would be given the opportunity to leave a personal message or transfer into a voice mail box. Finally, the third option was to roll all the missed calls straight to the receptionist. This position would then be responsible for incoming calls and any missed calls that are placed to the direct line of the staff or

supervisor. After weighing the choices, our recommendation was to implement a call center. This was the option with the least amount of variables and proved compatible with our current system. " In progressive companies, management is always interested in suggestions for improving productivity". (McGraw-Hill) This was not the case in this situation as the idea was flat-out rejected by the firm's Managing Partner despite suggestions from a team he assembled. The " buddy system" was his decision, partly because he wanted more accountability from the staff, but mostly because he had seen it work effectively in another workplace. This would prove to be a costly mistake. With this newly adopted concept, we were now in the market for a new phone system. The current phone system would not support the additional lines or the architecture of linking phones to enable partner monitoring. We looked at a number of different models from a number of different manufacturers including digital, IP and a hybrid of the two. We also visited a number of companies referenced by the vendor to actually see the system in operation. What we really focused on was a solid system that was easily expandable, carrying all the features we were accustomed to and the capability of linking multiple lines on a single phone. We found one particular model that broke the mold. This system offered everything we were looking for and a number of fantastic features we had never even considered. In fact, one feature was so valuable it compensated us for the cost of the system. This solution was hybrid-style allowing us the flexibility to use digital and IP technology dependent upon our needs. We were able to facilitate the current features we were accustomed to and answer up to five employee lines on one phone. Unlike our current arrangement, the new system offered a conference-call bridge. This would

allow the capability to host conference calls in-house in lieu of a private third-party service costing upwards of five thousand dollars per month. The element produced such significant savings we were able to fully absorb the monthly lease cost from the new purchase with money to spare. At this point we decided to invest the savings further and install a point-to-point line between our Los Angeles and Sacramento offices. This enabled us to take advantage of the hybrid technology and connect our phone systems together using the IP protocol. Due to the complexity of this upgrade, we decided to implement this in stages. There were many variables to consider involving multiple communications companies, a huge training curve and a change of internal procedures. Since the basis of this upgrade was to implement the "buddy system" among our users, that was the first priority after the initial installation. I could not have been more pleased with the outcome of the installation. The lead technician for the communications company previously worked for the vendor selling and installing the phone system. Since they were friends the cutover was smooth and seamless. During the installation the vendor was able to change our line configuration with the communications company lowering our monthly phone costs. I had full and complete trust in their knowledge and abilities. After the installation we moved to the training and documentation portion of the project. We already had most of the documentation in place prior to the installation, but we needed to adjust as certain coding had changed. We initiated the new phone system first thing on a Monday morning, and by noon the users seemed to be adjusting quite well. Voice mailboxes were re-initialized, the system was user friendly and even with the additional lines added to the phone, the users had no problem adapting. We adjusted the minor changes within the

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documentation and called it good. We were ready to implement the "buddy system". This concept is multi-faceted in nature. As a law firm the primary target for this method is the secretarial staff. The idea is to have the attorney's phone linked to their respective secretary's. In the attorney's absence the secretary now has the capability of answering the attorney's line from their own desk. The "buddy system" involves teaming these secretaries in pairs and configuring the phone in the same manner. In the absence of the team member, the secretary would have the capability of answering the "buddy's" phone. The secretaries are instructed to remain at their desk in the absence of their partner unless it is an emergency. In the event that both "buddies" had to be away from the desk, the phones should be forwarded to another secretary that's available. A number of problems surfaced during implementation beginning with the initial training. The secretaries were too close and the rings were unidentifiable, causing every phone ringing to be answered. They could not get in the habit of looking at the lines before answering, plus the office sounded like a telethon. The fifth stage of the systems analysis process states to "monitor system and solve problems as they arise, keeping documentation up to date." (GCSE, 2004) In keeping with that we corrected the issue by disabling the ring on all foreign lines. This seemed to address most of the confusion, and after a brief learning period, the concept appeared to be flowing, however the enjoyment was short-lived. The next set back we faced was not as easily rectified. In the absence of both team members, the phones were to be forwarded to another secretary. This issue became more prominent as people began straying from their desk and when an employee was absent for the day. The calls would then forward to another secretary, and if she was unavailable she would

continue the forwarding. The domino effect would cause one secretary to monitor their lines plus the forwarded lines. Now their phone turned into a switchboard. Another problem occurred when the forwarding option was engage. The call would release leaving no indication of the calls original destination. Finally, you had to manually forward and "unforward" the phone which many seemed to forget. At this point we were getting more complaints from the client than before. They would call a direct line and receive an unknown party who would ask them who they were trying to reach. After going through all that to service our client, we degraded our abilities and did a disservice in the long run. After revisiting the issues with the Managing Partner, we are now going to revert back to the original recommendation and implement a call center. I am currently trying to address any potential problems beforehand in order to make this a smooth transition. Too many changes will give me and the firm a poor appearance. References Modell, M (2004), The Systems Life Cycle Analysis, retrieved May 15, 2004 from World Wide Web: at (<http://www.dsi-sho.com/pgsa2/pgsa04.html>) McGraw-Hill (2000), The Six Phases of Systems Analysis & Design, retrieved May 16, 2004 from World Wide Web: at (http://www.mhhe.com/cit/interactive/uit/text/ch10/100401_why.htm) GCSE (2004), Systems Analysis Module, retrieved May 16, 2004 from Word Wide Web: (<http://www.thevickerae.worldonline.co.uk/theteacher/newgcse/module6/task12.htm>)