

The clarion school for boys, inc. milwaukee division: making information systems ...

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Company profile

In 1989, Clarion School was founded by investors from Chicago local area, mainly to help children. They were interested in giving help to young men who are wayward in seeking motivation, direction, and become productive society members. In 1993, Milwaukee Division was opened and therefore were the second oldest in the Clarion system School. It was classified as a private school, profit facility for residential treatment for delinquent boys of age between 10 and 18. Clarion Milwaukee in 1999 set themselves apart from the competitors by emphasizing information technology use in conjunction with its staff that considered communication with one another and can faster access student data. Mr. Young advocated the use of computer information systems with the aim of increasing the productivity, effectiveness, and communication of the staff. In 1999, Miller obtained approval and acquired funds to get all the systems in place. It procured an IBM AS/400 with sixty personal systems and associated applications so as to accelerate routine functions such as providing faster access to student data. Budget constraints prevented Clarion from upgrading any systems from 2002 to 04. Sixty computers were replaced over time, but AS/400, and its applications remained outdated. In the year 2006, the school had 128 full-time and part-time employees that provided treatment and care to 120 students.

As capital requirements and operational expenses continued to rise, Milwaukee became very dependent on higher enrollment and increased per diem to balance the budget. During 2005 to 2006 fiscal year, Clarion charged families or placement agencies \$150. 50 per day for every enrolled student

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in regular treatment program. For the students enrolled in ISIS program, the charge was \$197 per day. The total revenue for the fiscal year 2005- 2006 was budgeted at \$4, 891, 000.

Business situation

With the labor cost taking most of the operating budget for the school, Jacob Miller considered computerization as a way of increasing staff productivity and effectiveness in improving communications and accessing information among the staff. The staff wasted much time by using electronic communications to accelerate routine tasks because the system was not used 15 percent of the day. In 1998, Miller recommended to the Clarion Inc. board of directors to purchase IBM AS/400 computers and the associated application software. Board of Director's members showed interest in the new information systems and also the staff from all support areas and treatment programs expressed enthusiasm for the benefits proposed.

Technical situation

Clarion Inc. Uses IBM AS/400 computer, sixty personal computers with the associated applications that helps in accelerating routine tasks and providing faster, easier access to the computerized student data. Every IBM computer has Microsoft Windows latest version as well as Microsoft Office software suite. Additional forty to fifty personal computers, as well as additional AS/400 computers, were possible if needed. Internet access was not allowed because of materials that are potentially harmful to students. Between 2002 and 2004, budget constraints prevented any upgrades. Sixty personal computers were replaced eventually, but the main system, and the

associated software remained the 1998 version. The system is distributed inefficiently and underutilized, according to the evaluation answers from the faculty and the staff based on the location of main system, computers, PBX and others. There was no contact between the personnel and also the telephone system was not efficient. There is a lack of personal computers available and unavailable system backups as a result of miscommunication. The users were not aware of what the system was offering or untrained.

Solution

The organization should establish a team approach to planning, in the organization, a small team with strong leadership and feedback from user groups in every department should conduct planning. Feedback should be used to motivate and promote a staff towards support and cooperation in Information System projects. The school should evaluate and involve the entire system when considering Information System projects. Evaluation should incorporate input from experts in each department. Formal impact assessment methodology should be established in the school to ensure consistent and comprehensive evaluation. Information Systems requirements should be incorporated in the proposed planning activities. Information System objectives should be established within Clarion Milwaukee Division five-year plan; therefore, Clarion Milwaukee should incorporate the ongoing computer based methodologies evaluation. Permanent manager level position should be created with the major responsibility of managing Clarion Milwaukee information system which include personal computers, computer networks, and telephone systems

Benefits

The school benefited from the reduced operational costs due to minimized paper cost. Sending of emails would cost less and take less time. Technology has played a big role in the school by making it competitive; Clarion school has a competition with other nine schools, therefore, it must keep its competitive advantage over the other competing schools. It has also helped by acting as selling point for increasing the number of students in the future that translates to more revenue. Since any system is as good as people using it, the users must be trained properly to use the new systems full capabilities. The main objective of the software and hardware investment was to use electronic communications to save staff time, provide faster, easier access to the computerized student data and also accelerate routine tasks. Therefore, specific planning framework should include a master IS plan that will help in identifying strategic issues of the school and development of planning infrastructure for the future.

Products and services used

The server used is the IBM eServer iSeries line, which was replaced by IBM system i family of hardware. The new operating system used is called i5/OS and supports AS/400 DB/2 database applications. IBM AS/400 personal computers were also used in Clarion Inc.

Services provided by other groups

Clarion-Milwaukee need maintenance third- party organizations that can service its hardware, this will make continuous software upgrades and maintenance easier by involving software specialists that can provide

support to the current operating system and the application software. One of the companies that offers services is the Hooper Technology Services, Inc.. This company is an authorized Microsoft value added reseller which is specialized in providing state of the art solutions for organizations based on Microsoft suite of products, this company provided Clarion School for Boys, Inc,-Milwaukee with what is needed to be purchased, its specifications and the prices. Another company is LTM, it provided consultation services to the Clarion school for Boys, Inc.-Milwaukee Division. LTM did some consultations with Clarion-Milwaukee staff with the aim of getting the strengths and weaknesses of the information system. They include hardware and software, policy and procedures and getting the perception of the staff, then present a report to the Board of directors.

How to prioritize these projects

Portfolio approach is the best approach to project management. It helps in defining new projects and gives the organization better reporting and control over projects existing. Portfolio management methodologies have four basic steps that can be used to prioritize. They include gathering information about all projects in the project list. Evaluating each project by use of appropriate metrics and prioritize the projects. Given project demands and organizations capabilities, determine how to staff the projects. Moreover, monitor overall portfolio performance and individual project performance. Project portfolio will help Clarion-Milwaukee better manage both customer and project expectations. A methodology that can be used to prioritize projects is the default methodology of “ how much money is in the budget.”

It means that IT department has all authority, responsibility, and control for the project to all departments with their agendas in the organization.

Therefore, these projects should be prioritized based on the value that it will bring to Clarion-Milwaukee. In conclusion, a report explaining concerns, needs, weaknesses, strengths, and project costs should be presented to the board of directors.

Reference

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