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Assignment 3: Individual Response to the case study

Student Support Recommendations for Management Concepts

Boeve, Chiles, Cho, Deitsch, Finck, and Sere (2016) completed a case study that reveals outdated, unreliable technology comprises a major challenge facing Management Concepts. Employees and trainees complained of dissatisfaction with developing and partaking in Management Concepts’ online solutions (Boeve et al., 2016). This paper outlines recommendations to address existing challenges to ensure future development and delivery experiences are improved.

**Goals/Objectives of Proposed Student Support Model**

The goals of this proposal achieve the larger objectives that assist employees and trainees to address gaps in the current student support system (Boeve et al., 2016). The objectives of this proposal consist of: 1) enhancing the online trainee experience and 2) developing employee skills. Goals of the proposed student support model include: 1) upgrading the existing online infrastructure to support multiple web browsers, 2) deploying state-of-the-art online development tools, 3) training employees on the new development tools, and 4) implementing a new support model to assist both employees and students during course development and delivery. The goals of improving Management Concepts’ online infrastructure and support models are intended to achieve the first objective. The second objective addresses the remaining goals.

**Support Services Elements**

Multiple student support elements are required to fulfill the proposed goals. One element of support service includes information technology services for upgrading or reconfiguring the exisiting online learning system and deploying online development tools. A committee to determine which online development tools to license, such as Adobe Captivate or Articulate Storyline, comprises another element. An organization that specializes in training on the desired tool to instruct staff comprises another support piece. Assessing staff performance using the new tools are another component. Help desk services are required to provide the needed support to both students and staff. Finally, self-help tutorials to supplement help desk services are needed.

**Organizational Structures and Skill Sets**

Information technology and help desk services are not part of Management Concept’s core competenceies (Management Concepts, 2016b). Therefore, both services require the engagement of external vendors. Since help desk services are needed in all time zones in the United States, the selected vendor must have available staff in each time zone. However, only information technology vendors located near Management Concept’s headquarters in Virginia are under consideration. This allows the vendor to work closely with headquaters personnel to complete the recommended technology initiatives (Management Concepts, 2016a).

**Financial Considerations**

Engaging the recommended vendors may require additional financial resources. There are a number of alternatives available to Management Concepts to raise these funds. The company can sell assets such as one of the training centers in the Washington, DC area (Management Concepts, 2016c). Another alternative includes raising tuition. The GSA Schedule does allow increases in price; however, depending on the specific contract some time may pass before realizing an increase in revenue (MAS Blogger, 2012). However, no delays are encountered in realizing proceeds from tuition increases for private sector clients.

Other required elements can rely on existing or low-cost services. Existing staff managers can include performance on using new tools as a new objective in the existing performance process. Management Concepts can leverage self-help tutorials from the development tool vendor. These tutorials are generally free.

**Support Services Evaluation Methodology**

The recommended support services evaluation methodology includes an overall approach, survey timing, and how goal achievements are measured. Fage recommends using a combination of qualitative, evaluative and statistical measures as part of an evaluation strategy (2004). Qualitative, evaluative and quantitative questions are recommended for inclusion in each survey sent to learners and staff in an attempt to gather well-rounded, objective data (Fage, 2004). Surveys crafted for each support intervention are sent once the transaction completes. For example, the resolution of a help desk incident triggers a customer satisfaction survey. Comparisons of survey results between the last two quarters and, eventually, comparisons of the same quarter between two years are completed. Initially, comparisons that show improving survey results indicate success and, over time, consistent baselines for success are established.

**Rationale**

The motivation and research related to the first goals are discussed here. The motivation for the first goal arose from the dissatisfaction with technical support for online courses reported in the Management Concept’s case study (Boeve et al., 2016). Research has shown student satisfaction and retention are improved when student support issues are addressed in a timely fashion (LaPadula, 2003; Siming, Niamatullah, Gao, Xu, & Shaf, 2015). Upgrading the existing online infrastructure to support multiple web browsers eliminates an existing problem and will assist with future student satisfaction and retention.

Next, the impacts of the second goal on Management Concept’s staff are discussed. In the Management Concept’s case study, employees felt development tools were outdated and did not support creativity (Boeve et al., 2016). Staff retention increases with access to the latest tools (Hayes, 2005). Professional development increases productivity and energizes employees to think creatively (Nalewaja Van Voorhis & Falkner, 2004). Employee productivity increases and career prospects are brighter in this type of work environment.

Discussions of the rationale related to the third goal are presented next. Staff training constitutes a major success factor in the adoption of new technology (Bates & Sangra, 2011). The second goal recommending the deployment of new development tools necessitates that staff training comprises a necessary requirement for success.

Finally, the rationales for including help desk services as a recommendation are provided. Help desk services make a positive contribution to student’s overall satisfaction with support services (Erdil, 2007). Currently, online students express high levels of dissatisfaction with this delivery modality (Boeve et al., 2016). The additional help desk support provided can increase student satisfaction.

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