Chapter XII

The Evolution of Technology Innovation at Dakin Farms

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of technology innovation by businesses using the Internet is transforming and reshaping the nature of inter-organizational commerce and relationships. This case proposes the evolution of technology innovation by a popular family-owned business situated in Vermont. It investigates the technology innovation at Dakin Farms applying the systems development life cycle methodology. The case analyzes phases of IT implementation and its influence on inter-organizational systems and relationships that in turn affects employees’ morale and culture. The case contributes to research, practice, and education.

INTRODUCTION

Developing computer-based information systems is usually concerned as a rational process, intended to achieve identifiable and agreed upon goals that enhance its effectiveness. Virtually everyone is familiar with the concept of
systems development life cycle. Kendall and Kendall (2001) define systems development life cycle (SDLC) as a phased approach to analysis and design of systems development through the use of a specific cycle of analyst and user activities. Hoffer, George and Valcich (2002) refer to systems development life cycle as a common methodology for systems development in organizations that features several phases marking the progress of the systems analysis and design effort. Similarly, Dennis and Wixon (2000) identify phases that are composed of a series of steps which rely on techniques that produce deliverables (specific documents and files that provide understanding of the project).

The common stages in the systems development life cycle include: initiation and investigation, systems planning, analysis, design, implementation and maintenance (Kendall & Kendall, 2001; Laudon & Laudon, 2000; O’Brien, 1999). The systems development life cycle was intended to ensure the translation of system objectives into operational systems within constraints of schedule and budget. It disciplines practitioners to respect the technical prerequisites. Robey and Markus (1984) suggest that implementing information systems is commonly acknowledged to bring about both technical and social changes to organizations. In this case we describe information systems implementation at Dakin Farms using a case study research method.

Case study research method was found to be useful as it allowed for in-depth information in a real setting that paved the way for further “how” and “why” types of questions, resulting in thicker descriptions and explanations. The author first conducted a series of interviews with the president of Dakin Farms. Each interview lasted between 1-2 hours. Then the author made arrangements for two groups of students—each group consisting of 4 students—to visit Dakin Farms and gather data about their systems implementation process as part of their group projects. Students had to present their findings in front of the entire class as an oral presentation assessment. This case presents the findings from both the author and the students. The next section presents the background information of Dakin Farms.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF DAKIN FARMS**

Dakin Farms is a Vermont company which produces maple syrup, cheddar cheese, smoked meats and other speciality foods. The central office is located in Ferrisburg, Vermont. In 1960, Sam and Joan Cutting purchased
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