

Sew What? Inc.

The Role of Information Technology in Small Business
Success

Case Study Analysis
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Case Study Overview

- Sew What? A small company founded in 1992 by Megan Duckett from Australia.
- Specializes in making custom theatrical draperies and fabrics for stages.
- Has grown from a tiny home operation to a multimillion dollar enterprise with 35 employees.
- Initially grew business by “word of mouth” but her business lacked credibility
- In 2001/2002 decided to use technology to help gain publicity and credibility.

Case Study Overview (continued)

- Started with MS Publisher and in 2005 hired a Website developer to build an extensive and impressive Website that was customer focused.
- Business experienced “explosive growth” as a result of her marketing efforts and the Website in the mid to late 2000’s.
- Entered the Dell/NFIB Small Business Excellence Award and won!
- Subsequently, has won several other significant awards.

Case Study Questions

- 1. How do information technologies contribute to the business success of Sew What? Inc.? Give several examples from the case regarding the business value of information technology that demonstrate this conclusion.
- *Examples:*
- Expanded market - Duckett was able to grow her business from local to international clients using her website.
- Customer education - the website helps her education her customers about curtain design.
- Customer service - The website allows them to more easily match materials, select colors, and learn about her product's "care and feeding."
- Cost accounting - Duckett is able to track production workflows and more accurately calculate costs.
- Business process reengineering - workflow information helps identify useful process changes, and provides feedback to help Duckett evaluate the results.

Case Study Questions

- **2. If you were a management consultant to Sew What? Inc., what would you advise Megan Duckett to do at this point to be even more successful in her business? What role would information technology play in your proposals? Provide several specific recommendations.**
- The article provides no information about Duckett's current challenges, though recommendations should focus on them.
- In general, Duckett should give scalability and flexibility significant consideration when making future IT decisions. Her reputation may lead to continued growth and/or expansion into new areas. She will not want to find herself limited by her own information systems.
- Lastly, Duckett should not get too carried away with prizes. While it's great to get a pat on the back now and then, the real prize is profitability. Profitability turns into big annual bonuses and pats on the back from people she cares about the most, her employees.

Case Study Questions

- 3. How could the use of information technology help a small business you know be more successful? Provide several examples to support your answer.
- NOTE: Organizations don't necessarily *want* information systems, they are expensive and distracting. However, organizations usually *need* information systems in order to accomplish specific goals.
- For example, a car mechanic would want to ensure he or she meets her quota of billable hours. By keeping a customer database with vehicle maintenance schedules, the mechanic can contact customers and schedule them for routine service during anticipated slack times.



Questions?

Thanks for Your Participation!