



Chapter XIV

Management of Telecommunications Services: A Vital New Content Area and a Course Model for the College of Business

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Abstract

Telecommunications companies are facing a challenge in satisfying changing customer demands related to telecommunications services. Historically, the industry challenge was managing the changing technology; today, the industry must also focus on the management of telecommunications services. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to provide an argument for the importance of the management of telecommunications services as a vital new course area at the university level, and (2) to describe one possible model for a new undergraduate course, Management of

Telecommunications Services. The chapter is targeted towards university faculty and administration and corporate representatives responsible for technology education. The ultimate goal of the course is to align university curriculum with the needs of the telecommunications industry and provide the industry with entry-level information technology (IT) employees who have an understanding of the fundamentals of the management of telecommunications services.

Introduction

The deregulatory impact of the 1996 Telecommunications Act resulted in fierce competition for customers by telecommunications firms. This competition has intensified, and in order to increase the size of their customer base, many telecommunications companies are striving to create a competitive advantage through an increased variety of service offerings. These telecommunications companies hope that by adding new types of services to their existing ones they can achieve economies of scope (Grover & Saeed, 2003).

As telecommunications companies face challenges in satisfying customer demands related to telecommunications services, telecommunications providers have been forced to rethink the fundamental way they do business. Historically, the industry was driven by the management of changing technology; today, the industry also has to focus on the management of telecommunications services. Hall (1996, p. 10) summed up the new challenge facing the telecommunications industry regarding the management of telecommunications services: "... services are now being defined in terms of what they provide to users. For suppliers, this requires a radical change of perspective, from being technology providers to becoming service providers, which must also be reflected in the approach to management."

The turmoil in today's telecommunications industry's services sector is a reflection of the state of the service sector in the United States (U.S.). In the U.S. economy, where services account for 73% of the gross domestic product, the entire service sector is in a constant state of change that is causing upheavals in the traditional ways of doing business (Lovelock & Wright, 2002).

Top managers in the telecommunications industry recognize the crucial importance of the effective management of customer services. One industry person noted that, "Several years of good-quality communication service can be shattered in a few minutes if the customer care processes are poor" (Adams & Willets, 1996, p. 1).

In response to the changing critical success factors for telecommunications companies, the field of management of telecommunications services began in the mid 1990s with the initiation of research and applications geared toward providing better management of telecommunications services. Managing the services that telecom-

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