



Chapter XXII

Improving PC Services at Oshkosh Truck Corporation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case presents the problems encountered at Oshkosh Truck's IT Call Center and PC Services, relating to improving productivity and user satisfaction of the IT Department. The case presents the process of handling user problems, all the way from when it is received at the helpdesk until a technician resolves the issue at the user's desk, how well the process works, and some problems associated with the process. Oshkosh Truck collaborated with University of Wisconsin Oshkosh researchers on developing metrics instruments and better processes to assist in improving performance. The effort focused on showing the value of a standardized PC platform to the rest of the organization. At the end of the case, although the goal was much closer, it was not attained, and its solution is left for students to solve. The Oshkosh Truck case can expose the students to the following key concepts of IT management:

- *Appreciate the complexities associated with supporting a large number of computers in a business.*
- *Discuss the issues associated with platform standardization.*
- *Discuss the problems associated with IT investment justification.*
- *Discuss how to account for costs of IT, including total cost of ownership and activity-based costing.*

- *Understand the implementation and value of a metrics program, including issues related to design and use of specific data-collection methods like online questionnaires, automated data collection, and interviews.*

BACKGROUND

Oshkosh Truck Corporation (OTC) was founded in 1917 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The company began by specializing in the design and manufacture of all-wheel-drive trucks. The company currently focuses on the design and manufacture of trucks and truck bodies for concrete placement, snow-removal, refuse hauling, fire and emergency, and defense markets. OTC includes brands such as Oshkosh, Pierce, McNeilus, Medtec, Geesink, and Norba. While the corporation's headquarters remain in Oshkosh, it has manufacturing operations in six states and four other countries.

Oshkosh Truck takes pride in the high quality, performance, and reliability of its vehicles. This focus, along with a strategic focus on product development, lean cost structure, and global distribution for specialty markets, has produced a financially successful organization. Since 1996, the company also has engaged in an aggressive acquisition strategy to enhance its product offerings, diversify, and fuel global growth. Between 1996 and 2002, the organization acquired eight different companies including Pierce—a manufacturer of fire trucks, Medtec Ambulance Corporation, and the Geesink Norba Group—a European manufacturer of waste hauling truck bodies.

OTC is a Fortune 1,000 company with sales of over \$1.7 billion in fiscal 2002. Sales are expected to increase in fiscal 2003. The organization has a number of competitors in different markets, including: Volvo Truck Corporation, Wheeled Coach Industries, Wittke Waste Equipment Ltd., and Advanced Mixer, Inc.

SETTING THE STAGE

The IT division of OTC consists of a centralized IT group and four separate IT groups at Oshkosh Truck, Pierce, McNeilus, and Geesink-Norba (Figure 1 shows a partial organizational structure). The corporate IT group, headed by Bill Gotham, Director of Corporate Infrastructure, is responsible for the Call Center (help desk), and for establishing standards and guidelines for networking and computing systems. Historically, this group also has supported the servers for the Oshkosh Truck company, primarily because the servers are located in the same building as the group, in Oshkosh.

Within the last few years, OTC has moved towards a centralized call center to handle requests for help (“calls”) from employees of Oshkosh Truck, Pierce, McNeilus, and Geesink-Norba. Typical calls include problems with network access including lost passwords, and problems with PCs, printers, and Microsoft Office. Most requests are made through telephone calls or e-mails. A significant portion of the calls are routed to the PC Services group or the Networks group within the company where the caller works. The Call Center also helps to solve certain IT-related user problems remotely, although Mary LaPine, Support Specialist at the Call Center, feels that the Call Center employees should be able to solve a larger proportion of such problems remotely with appropriate software and training.

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