

Section Three

Activity Analysis using Soft Systems Methodology

3.1 Simply Wales Overview

Simply Wales offers a range of products and services to SME's who are unable to provide IT solutions for themselves. One of the products/services they offer is business support in which they provide;

- IT support for a sever and up to 10 pc's or Apple Macs
- Unlimited telephone support
- Unlimited email support
- Unlimited remote repairs
- Online call logging & monthly fault reports
- Up to 4 free callouts per month & reduced extended callout fees
- Scheduled antivirus, malware & spyware checks
- Scheduled backup checks
- Real time pro-active sever monitoring
- Software updating and patching
- Competitive pricing on IT equipment, printer & toner cartridges & display kit
- 8 hour response time

Simply Wales also operates an online shop whereby second-hand and refurbished equipment are sold to any customer (they have no specific customer). There is an opportunity for Simply Wales to use this refurbished equipment in their business support, and offer low-cost solutions by using high quality but second-hand equipment to provide such products as servers, PCs, Apple Macs etc.

3.2 Single Root Definition and CATWOE Analysis

A system to enhance the Simply Wales' business support package using low-cost IT solutions, by sourcing defective IT equipment and parts, and refurbishing this equipment to standard specifications, logging all finished products and spare parts in a stock database, ensuring there are always at least 50 of each most-needed items in stock, so that orders can be generated quickly but within an agreed timescale, and can be tailored to meet the needs of the SME requiring the equipment, with an agreed price that beats competitors but ensures Simply Wales profit.

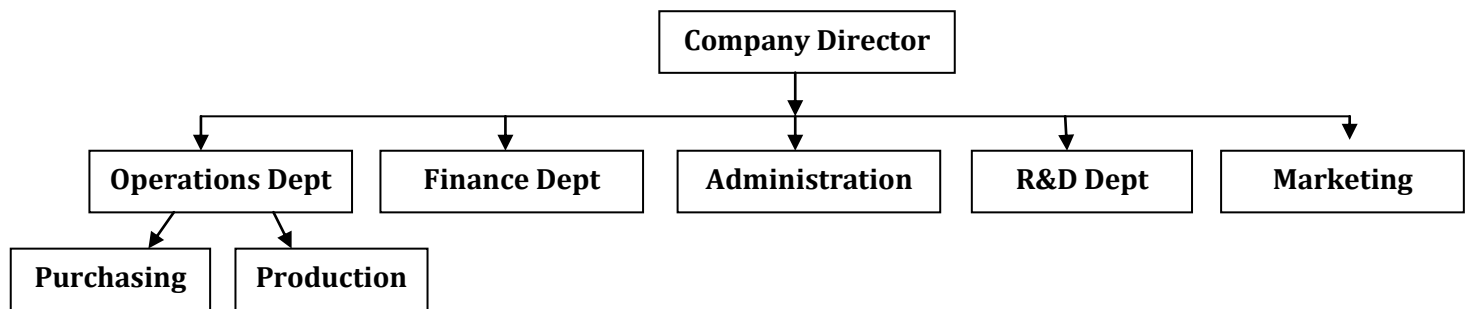
| | |
|----------|---|
| C | SME's |
| A | |
| T | To enhance the business support package using low-cost IT solutions |
| W | sourcing defective IT equipment and parts, and refurbishing this equipment to standard specifications, logging all finished products and spare parts in a stock database, ensuring there are always at least 50 of each most-needed items in stock, |
| O | Simply Wales SME's |
| E | agreed timescale To standard specifications Tailored to the needs of the SME agreed price beats competitors Ensures Simply Wales profit. |

3.5 Recommendations and Conclusions

The purpose of this system is to source defective IT equipment, refurbish this equipment and use it to support the business support package Simply Wales offers to its customers, while conforming to restraints.

3.5a Organisational Structure

For the implementation of this system to be effective, I propose Simply Wales' organisational structure mirror the diagram below.



Departmental Functions according to this model:

- Operations Department: Purchasing
 - Lease with suppliers to source low-cost items
 - Build partnerships with suppliers
- Operations Department: Production
 - Refurbish IT equipment
 - Maintain IT Equipment: Internal and External
 - Ensure it conforms to specification
- Finance Department
 - Not applicable to this model
- Administration
 - Update database
 - Inform operations when stock levels are low
- Research and Development
 - Research competitors
 - Research technological developments / Industry
 - Research customers
- Marketing
 - Not applicable to this model

3.5b The Business Support Package

This system is less about *how* the products and services are delivered and more about *what* products and services are being delivered. As this system supports the business support package and aims to meet customer needs, I see it important to improve the business support package that is currently offered to ensure the research into customers needs is reflected as a whole.

The customer should be given the option to either;

- Option One: Choose a business support package BUT use their own equipment
- Option Two: Choose a business support package AND buy equipment from Simply Wales
- Option Three: Only buy equipment from Simply Wales WITHOUT a business support package.

The business support package will allow customers to essentially 'build' their own package from options according to the purpose of the support and their needs. For example, the customer may only require security support.

The package will be made up of different areas for instance; security, maintenance, back-ups, replacements, updates, repairs etc. Under each area will be more specific functions of which the customer can select.

Should the customer choose option one;

- For a bronze package customers can choose 3 functions from each area for a monthly fee
- For a silver package Choose 6 functions from each area for a higher monthly charge
- For a gold package Receive all functions for an increased fee

For option two, the above applied but an up-front installation charge for cost of the equipment itself and the installation is required. And of course option three, the customer will be charged for the equipment they require.

Before any implementation, a contract will be signed by both Simply Wales and the customer agreeing the terms of the 'package', the monthly cost, the up-front equipment cost (if applicable) and a time-frame for when the equipment should be installed and any other terms.

The customer should be given the option to amend the terms of their package at any given time.

3.5c Stock Database

Simply Wales will have a stock database that logs all hardware, software, parts and finished products. Prior to creating this database, Simply Wales will research which IT equipment (hardware and software) their customers will most use for example, printers, computer monitors, PCs or Macs, RAM, Microsoft Office.

The research into what equipment SMEs currently use and for what purpose, carried out by the research and development department (R&D), will help Simply Wales stock the most demanded product and lessen the risk of not meeting customer demands for example if a customer requires a large amount of equipment in a short time-frame.

The hardware that is in the most demand will have at least 50 stocked in the database; 50 is a safe figure as if Simply Wales has a new customer who demands a quick implementation, the equipment is available and ready for installation as many SME's will require a large number of IT solutions.

For an item to be recognised in the database it will have to be listed as an 'in-demand' item. All other items will be listed as 'low-demand' or 'medium-demand' depending on the outcome of the research carried out by the R&D department. 'Low-demand' items will stock at least 20 and 'medium-demand' items will stock at least 30.

3.5d Item Specifications

The research and development department (R&D) will shape the standard specifications that all newly refurbished equipment must conform to. If there are new innovations in technology that are relevant to Simply Wales, then, to be able to offer the most up to date solutions, all current stock must be updated to now meet the new specifications. See Fig 1.

Fig 1. Standard Specification Prototype

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Item | Laptop |
| Operating System | |
| RAM | |
| Office Software | |
| Processor | |
| Memory | |
| Size | |
| Weight | |
| Battery | |

The specification will differ between items

3.6 Justifications and Assumptions

One of the system constraints is to ensure Simply Wales profits, therefore it is necessary to recommend pricing strategies to ensure Simply Wales maximise their profits.

The owner appears as both Simply Wales and the SME in the root definition as the SME will own the IT equipment once purchased from Simply Wales, but Simply Wales own this system and the equipment until it has been sold.

SME's are the obvious customer as they are receiving and using the refurbished equipment as part of a package.

There will be several actors involved in implementing this system; I have not included them in this model as this model is looking at products and services themselves NOT the delivery so it is unnecessary to model them at this stage. The actors, according to this model, would include:

- Lawyers; who assist Simply Wales in agreeing the terms of a contract with the SME/ Customer
- SME's who negotiate a contract with Simply Wales
- Simply Wales Director who oversees the departmental functions and ensure all control measures and specifications are conformed too.
- Administration Department who updates the database
- Research and Development Department who researches competitors, collects information on SME's and new technologies that can be used on the equipment
- Operations Department who refurbish the equipment

A constraint affecting Simply Wales is the Data Protection Act. If Simply Wales are going to deal with contracts then it is critical they withhold a database of all their customer details. This is of

course a linking system to the area we are in fact modelling; it has not been included in this model as it is not important when focusing on the products and services itself, rather than the delivery of these products and services.