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[Field Research]

Primary Analysis of Information Distribution at Walkbase Company: Developing an Information Strategy

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Abstract

Purpose – Currently, organizations must have a plan to achieve their future objectives. In this case, an information strategy facilitates greater success when planning for the future in any organization.

Research design, data, and methodology – The core objective of the project was to explore the information infrastructure of Walkbase in a discursive manner. We started the project by providing a description of the firm, which facilitates retail outlets using in-store analytical devices.

Results – We conclude that the management of Walkbase revised its current information structure to implement a more structured one that might be included in a long-term investment. On such an occasion, management can prioritize the component to develop first.

Conclusions – Along with our results, we also described the business, its products, its facilities, and how it can serve different industries. Finally, we left the prioritization decision within the framework's components to top management.

Keywords: Information Strategy, Walkbase, In-store retail, Marketing Strategy, Personalized in-store, Distribution Information.

JEL Classification: D81, L81, M31, M39.

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1. Introduction

The main activities of the company is providing a real-time system Small, often battery operated device that uses Bluetooth technology to connect with shoppers' smartphones while they are in-store. A beacon sends out unique signals that a mobile app recognizes within a small physical range. This triggers a specific action in the app, such as a push-notification. This of course requires the shopper to first download app and then opt-in for location based services. joins Wi-Fi and beacon technology(Crunch Network, 2014). In this case, beacon technology is recognized as an ambient context identification system and it provide the possibility for background positioning and detection. Furthermore, this technology will bring a new power for phone that can make it truly "smart" (Loiwal , 2014).

The company faced with a significant successful investment since 2011; therefore, since 2013 they invest approximately 3 million euro in A-series venture capital funding. The main investors were SBT Venture Capital and Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo, former CEO of Nokia. The headquartered of the company is located in Finland with two offices in Helsinki and Turku. Moreover, as expanding in the company marketing, they penned some offices in the other countries like United Kingdom, and United States in 2014 (Crunch Base, 2014).

The company as an expert company in providing in-store analysis service for airports and retailers on February 2015 published a report that they achieved record-breaking growth during 2014. On one hand, they mentioned that they soared their investment in this technology to 5 million euro and they expanded their new offices across the European countries by the end of the aforementioned year. On the other hand, the company recently report that they have a significant increase in absorbing more customers to their portfolio of retail chains and airports with about 30 new clients. Furthermore, in order to gain more customer and expand their market, the company investigate more than 50 million customers in approximately 300 store through installing more than 2000 sensors.

The company platform by using a real-time in-store data collecting will improve customer experience which is based on web

analyzing platforms studies on the revolutionary online shopping experience by customers. The new technologies like indoor location tracker facilitate retailors either in stores or airports to measure people follow patterns via their smartphone with some sort of personalized location based services. The effects of marketing in different specification of a retail store such as physical spaces, online and offline facilities will be analyzed, measured, and optimized via the aforementioned platform in order to improve the customers' experience.

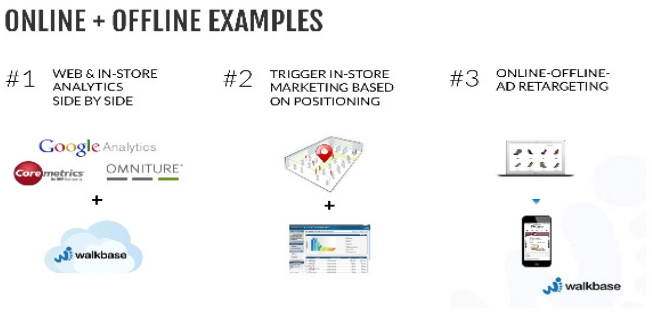
The result of above activities will bring significant progress in ROI creating for the beneficiaries in terms of the investors, company, and other sort of related organizations. In this case, ROI from marketing point of view will be calculated as what constitutes the company "return", and what true investment is (Duboff, 2007). From retailers perspective this means connecting the loyal buyers with some sort of personalized in-store marketing system, and finally turning physical stores into virtual advertising spaces (Walkbase, 2014). In the following parts of this paper the following terms will be argued: the products, customers, marketing, the long term strategy of the company in terms of information strategy, related background studies to the issue, as well as developing an appropriate information strategy for the company.

2. Product

In terms of products of the company, we can describe them from different point of views as follows.

2.1. From beginner perspective

Retail store is defined as a place that a retailer usually owned and operated in it for business activities; also, it could be a manufacturer or by someone other than a retailer mightily owned and operated in it for selling goods to the ultimate consumers (Harper, 2008). In this case, for example in a fashion clothing store, the Walkbase Bluetooth device will bring the best possible shopping experience for the customers not depending on whether they visit in their physical stores or their shopping center online. This facility will be available through guiding the customers to their prospective goods in terms of their tastes, and their needs while this tool will facilitate their access to the product and services by cutting down inconvenience store layouts, or facing lots irrelevant promotion messages. Therefore, Walkbase supports brands to optimize their advertising with providing all those things that the relevant customers need them. This process will be started at installing just a small Wi-Fi and a Bluetooth beacon boxes inside bricks-and-mortar stores. This electronic devices will provide an analytical information for retailers on how their customers react when they're in their store. These tools also have a direct connection with a smartphones to show relevant, location-specific content to the user which in this case they are customers of that specific store.



Source: Walkbase(2014).

<Figure 1> Examples of Online vs Offline - In-store

Totally, this state of art technology will help the rWireless network technology used for transmitting data over short distances. Compared to Classic Bluetooth, BLE has lower energy requirements and is therefore ideal for simple data transfer applications. etailersto generate the best possible shopping facilities for their customers in order to increase their satisfaction and encourage them to come back again to their shopping store regularly. Not to be left behind that this special tools is called "iBeacons". They are a sort of Bluetooth low energy devices that distribute their location to nearby portable electronic devices which enables smartphones, tablets and other devices to perform actions when in close proximity to this special electronic device (Pointrlabs,2015).

2.2. From Marketer perspective

This electronic device is designed for retail and airports to facilitate them with the modern technology as an in-store analytics and marketing platform for providing the right products to the right customers at the right time. This system is like a mixture of Google Analytics and marketing automation platform by which collect marketing information the stores as well as public arias which is always faced with lots of people as perspective customers for the different products. Therefore, this technology is provide a professional analysis of customers'in-store purchasing patterns, and it will provide some measures to optimize the effects of marketing on the physical stores. Moreover, this system will provide an in-store personalized location based marketing which facilitate both online and offline buying processes for the customers.

2.3. From industry perspective:

Retail technology is considered as the relevant category that the Walkbase products are belong to that. The products of the company are used in a large number of famous retail stores, groceries, automotive, restaurants and cafes, shopping centers, department stores, and airports in different parts of the worlds (Walkbase, 2014).The Accenture Retail Technology Vision 2014 argued that technologies that will have the significant effects on

the retail industry in the following years; moreover, they categorized these trends into three groups as follows:

• From Customer experience perspective: exploring the technologies that impact a customer's experience in the store, online and across different channels.

• From Data and analytics perspective: identifying new forms of data and new opportunities to improve operations and better understand customer behaviors.

• From Infrastructure and core IT perspective: demonstrating how cloud and related technologies could streamline operations, lower costs and strengthen the business overall (Singh, 2014).

In this case, the company developed a software to provide the required platform called software as a service (SaaS). In this case, the company will provide both the software and hard wares like Wi-Fi, Bluetooth beacon, door counter and camera hardware as the complementary parts of their services to the retail stores. Finally, this comprehensive services package will combines proprietary software and either their own or customer's existing hardware, with rich integrations to customer's existing enterprise systems.

3. Marketing

The company will provide their professional solution available all around the world. In this case, the company has four offices in which two of them are located in Finland, and the two other one are in UK, and Switzerland. The process of collecting and analyzing data within a retail space using similar metrics encountered in web analytics to understand consumer in-store behavior. Moreover, they have several collaboration with famous retail stores in deferent industries like fashion, jewelry, electronics, and other high-end retailers. Apart from the aforementioned industries, they have close connection with automotive retail, airports, restaurants & cafes, shopping malls and department stores. The main focus of the company in term of marketing is on selling the products directly to the large number of customers however, they have also some strategic partnership such as Cisco, Aruba, and Xirrus as WiFi infrastructure providers, retail analytics , digital agencies, as well as mobile application developers.

4. Practical applications

Considering a car retailer as an example, the Walkbase technology will be provide several information related to the in-store solution as follows:

• The practice of visiting a traditional bricks-and-mortar store to examine a product but purchasing it afterwards from an online store. Providing data related to the number of people who pass the showroom window or a display car at a shopping mall

• Calculating the number of people who stop to look at the store and they stand for how long;

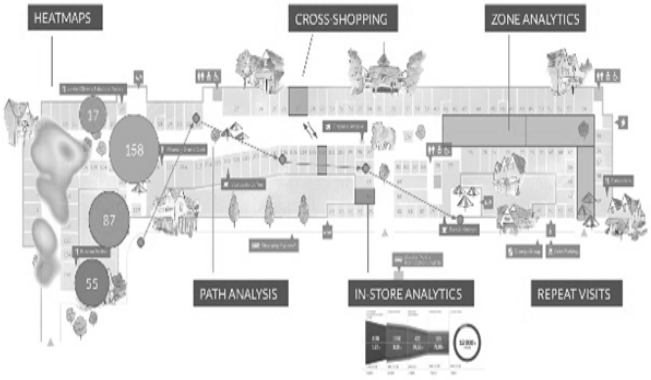
• Counting the number of people who come into the store and which part of the showroom they visit; and whether they're first time visitors or repeat visitors;

• Finally, how much of them spend time looking at the different cars before making a purchase.

This process of analyzing has a lot of merits for retail store such as understanding the effect of different strategies like window marketing, store layouts and marketing campaigns on the shopping experience by customers.

Apart from the above mentioned passive and anonymous analytics, people may contribute to location based services delivered to their smartphones such as current location in store, directions to a specific department/product, product recommendations, special offers, and stuff like that.

These may be related to the customers as online shopping terms. For instance, on the Amazon website you can see a list off recommendation products based on the previous purchased online, or most visited or searched products personalized by in-store engine.



Source: Walkbase(2014).

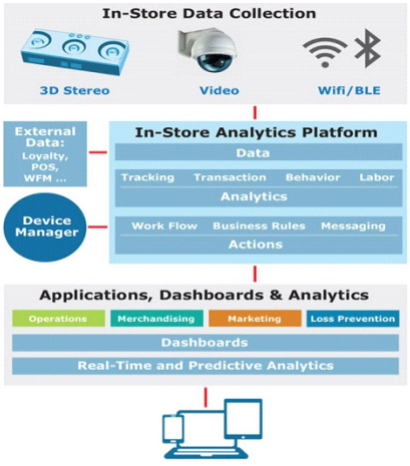
<Figure 2> what can be measured in physical stores?

5. How the system is working:

First of all the solution provided by the company will measure the indoor position of any available mobile tools in the covered signal boarders. In this case, the Walkbase Wi-Fi networks will automatically scans for any Wi-Fi-enabled smartphones with in-store sensors and the software will try to detect approximately the position of the available devices through an appropriate algorithms of signal strength calculation. This system will collect all the information anonymously, and also, this data analysis process is statistical base in which the number of device observations will be calculated.

In-store analytics platform solutions has to be flexible in order to facilitate the process of data and resource entering into the platform from any sources in the enterprise for the developers

to create applications for special needs while having the architecture and rules in place to corral all efforts into a common system — or "source of truth" for in-store customer behaviors (Brick Strem, 2014).



Source: Walkbase(2014).

<Figure 3> In-Store Data collection

6. The merits of in-store analytics and marketing for the customers

6.1. Analyzing people flow and buying patterns inside stores at retailers and airports

The system will generate anonymous an analysis of the prospective customers patterns which provide several vital benefits for retailers about the performance of their physical stores. In this case, this facilities will engage visitors with goods available in the store as a new experience that the shoppers would like that. This new process has significant effect on marketing strategy and it will also provide some measurement for evaluation. For instance, the airports are able to predict future queue lengths according to the number of people entering the airport and send additional personnel at security, in case of needing. The passenger will realize the results of this optimization as an eye-catching progress and more fluent shopping and travel experiences (Walkbase, 2014).

6.2. Customers and retailer's Walkbase-enabled app

The main idea of the software and hardware provided by Walkbase is providing more personal retail shopping experience for the customers. This idea means offering more relevant and personalized goods to customers. Price Waterhouse Coopers in a study entitled "The Customer Centric Store 2010" argued that "the number one opportunity in the current market is to refine the customer's in-store experience" (Halsey, 2011). Walkbase technology will collecting, connecting, and recording the shopping profile of the customers in both terms of online and physically inside stores so they will receive only the relevant adverts based on their aria of the interest. Furthermore, this system will provide the exact location of the customers needed product with in a store, and they might receive some special offers related to their preference just on time in their cellphone as a short massage or any other forms of promotional adverts(Walkbase, 2014).

7. The merits of in-store analytics and marketing for the retailers

Gartner (2014) argued that the retail businesses that employ targeted messaging connected with indoor positioning systems will find five percent boost in their sales until the end of 2020. It is generally accepted that in-store analytics will bring the opportunity for understanding the customer paths, window & in-store marketing, marketing campaign ROI, customer service & staffing, performance benchmarking, and improved customer insights. On one hand, This analyzing process will bring the opportunity for the retailers to improve gross shopping hours & average dwell times, boost store attractiveness & engagement, activate impulse buying, improve impact of marketing, optimize marketing investments, improve customer service & satisfaction, identify & harmonize best practices across stores, and stuff like that. On the other hand, indoor location based marketing and services enables a wide array of business opportunities for retailers and airports to engage with their customers and trigger buying behavior(Walkbase, 2014).

Due to the fact that approximately 70-80% of customers mightily keep their Wi-Fi turned on when they are in a shopping center, therefore, many of them will face with a Walkbase-enabled store which can track their shopping habits. Finally, the electronic tools can anonymously provide the retailers a significant valuable statistical data to better understanding the habits of their prospective customers, also, they will be able to personalize and improve their customers shopping experiences(Walkbase, 2014).

7.1. Strategy for In-store personalization

In-store personalization deals with making an informed recommendation to a customer in a spontaneous manner by dwelling on information gathered from previous activities, although this might appear straightforward it requires a lot of activities and considerations. A Walkbase report identified 6 strategic factors that need to be addressed when planning for In-store personalization.

<Figure 4> Strategy for In-store personalization

7.1.1. Identification

Identification is the first factor of the strategy and it involves identifying the individual customers for whom the personalized products or services will be channeled towards. The unique experience that the customers will have has a lot of impacts in the overall purchasing of the customer. Identification requires the collection of customer's information and with privacy issues headlining current discussion, customers consent is sort after through app installation agreements and store Wi-Fi logging agreement. After a customer has consented to this agreement, their information can be used to provide a personalized experience.

7.1.2. Analysis

Analysis involves turning the data and information that has been gathered into valuable knowledge that can be used to make informed recommendation to the individual customer. Transforming data into information and information into knowledge in this perspective requires a comprehensive analytical system which will process and add meaning to the raw data.

7.1.3. Automation

The automation is done after identifying the unique customers and analyzing their In-store behavior. The knowledge obtained can be applied manually by the retailer in the store but this slow and time consuming. However, an In-store intelligent platform can assist the retailer with this task of applying the knowledge personalizing customers uniquely. A well- functioning platform ensures scalability and financial benefits in the long run.

7.1.4. Mobile Apps and Strategy

Mobile applications is a key feature when it comes to In-store personalization, it serves as the connection between the customers and the personalized information. The application communicates to the customers the personalized experience that the retailer has in stock for them. Designing a well-functioning mobile application and getting customers to use if is very critical to the success of In-store personalization.

7.1.5. Customer journey and offline-online integration

The understanding of customer's journey assists in tailoring messages and context in In-store personalization. This is a factor that demands retailers to determine if a customer is new to the store or is a returning customer who is seeking more information to assist in purchasing. Information gathering to this effect can be done both offline by determining the lastly related store visited or by checking the last visited pages on the stores website. To achieve this a marketing technology the adds both online offline activities can be employed to do the analysis.

7.1.6. Store Personnel Involvement

Building the first 5 strategic blocks is important in In-store personalization but the last block of involving the store personnel is the critical part. Most often than not retailers focus all their attention on the first 5 blocks and completely or partially ignore the last block. Involving the skilled worker at the store in the process is something that must be done if the In-store personalization will succeed. The personnel at the shop have direct contact with the customer and it is paramount that they are well vest with the systems and processes. Store-personnel training are the best way to ensure familiarization with the applications and systems in the store.

7.2. Shoppers Topology

As a company that designs analytic solutions for retails store, knowing the category of shoppers is one aspect that cannot be overlooked when designing a personalization In-store strategy. Maynard (2014) identified 8 types of shoppers in her research at the Medallion Retails in US. These shoppers include Advocates, Conventionals, Sophisticates, Gradualist, Students, Mechanists, Indulgent shoppers and Caretakers.

7.2.1. Advocates

These are the type of shoppers who are very demanding and are very critical of features such as quality, price guarantee, buton the positive side these shoppers will be willing to evangelize about your brand to many other people.

7.2.2. Conventionals

Conventionals are shoppers that follow the laid down rules in shopping and they aspire to products and services appropriately.

They are not demanding as advocates.

7.2.3. Sophisticates

Sophisticates are the type of shoppers who have a taste in certain brands. These shoppers have the desire to pay a premium for the best quality. They are expects in the brands and stay loyal to those brands. The important feature they look for in products is the quality.

7.2.4. Gradualists

The gradualists are the type of shoppers who are interested in purchasing products with the mindset of getting immediate deals. Gradualists are not loyal customers because they are not interested in relationships but rather transactions.

7.2.5. Students

These are the type shoppers who pay particular attention to information about products before making any purchase. In-depth knowledge about product is very important to these shoppers.

7.2.6. Mechanists

Mechanists are the shoppers that work the system in a way that they always want to take advantage of every little opportunity that they will get from the shop. They prey on activities like promotions and discounts.

7.2.7. Indulgent shoppers

The Indulgent shoppers are the types that are willing to spend a huge sum of money on some particular products in order to satisfy the cravings or pleasure. Indulgent shoppers will forgo many other things in their lives just to get pleasure for few things.

7.2.8. Caretakers

Caretakers are the final group of shoppers who are more interested in repairing and maintaining their product than going in for a new one. In the store these shoppers will look for an upgrade of a product the buy a new one completely.

The purpose of identifying these categories of shoppers is to assist in designing and tailor an In-store personalization strategy that will first and foremost recommend, educate, connect, inform and inspire both retailers and customers who patronize a brick and mortar store.

7.3. An overview of the Organizational and Information structure of the company

Walkbase as stated in the introduction has four main offices for its operations. The Headquarters and the Research and Development offices are located in Espoo and Turku respectively in Finland. The Europe Sales & Support is located in London and currently there is a new office for Lead Back-end development in Bern, Switzerland. The company has four (4) founding members and employs about 20 full time employees around all the locations they operate. Special services like professional legal advices and advertisement are out sourced by the company in their respective locations.

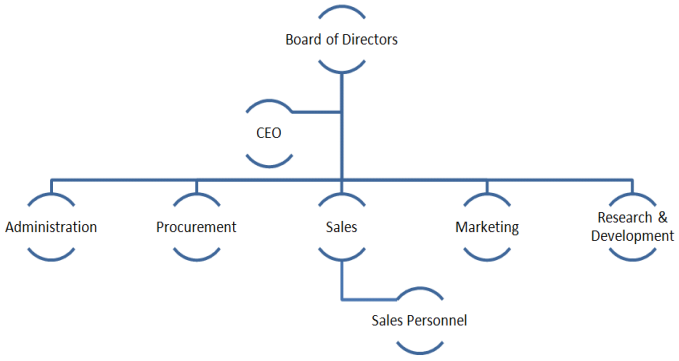
Walkbase is an In-store solution for analytics and Omni channel customer engagement. Here, in-store solution for analytics means the tracking of customer footfall patterns, their in-store behavior, offline sales funnel and calculating the in store impact of the marketing activities. Walkbase uses Wi-Fi and BLE Beacon Technology to build online-offline customer profile and engage customers in new ways- from proximity marketing to point of sales. Therefore we can conclude, this organization works to acquire information through the tools it sells and help its customers in planning its marketing activities and make more effective business decisions. The use of this dynamic solution introduced by Walkbase is not limited in groceries and departmental stores only. It has a reasonably big portfolio of clients. It is now serving Airports, Railways and Bus Station, Restaurants, Cafes and Gas Stations, Stadiums, Casinos, Banks and Cinemas. They are also programming applications compatible to smartphones such as, Travel Apps, Shopping Apps and Loyalty Apps etc.

For an organization with such a diversified customer base, it is imperative to have a well-designed information strategy. Being a Business to Business venture, we can define that this organization has two different sets of information flow. These are internal information flow and external information flow. While internal information flow disseminates information within the organization and different departments of the company, external information flow might be more dynamic. External information flow disseminates information to a variety of stake holders such as, customers, suppliers, outsourcing organizations, media, financial intermediaries and so forth.

8. Internal Information Management

The organization Walkbase is a product of a research conducted in Abo Akademi. As an organization, it is not exactly large in size. However it has several departments such as Procurement, Design & Production, Marketing and Sales, HR and so forth. Being a considerably small organization, most of the final decisions are taken by the top management i.e. the CEO/MD. In this organizational structure, the departmental heads pass necessary information to the top management and discusses before taking any particular decision. The company uses its own domain and internal email system for internal and external written communications. Having a limited number of employees the company enjoys an easier information dissemination process. In order to preserve information for future use, the company stores its necessary documents in its own server and cloud server. This information is mostly regarding Suppliers, Customer Profile, Product Design and Descriptions, Marketing

Plans, Sales Figures etc. This information is mostly accessible by key personnel of the company and is preserved for future references. In the following part we will discuss about the Information aka Knowledge Intensive Departments of Walkbase. In the discussion we would elaborate why they need information, how they acquire it, how it is preserved for the future and why and finally how is it shared.



<Figure 5> Internal Information Management OF the company

9. Procurement Department

The procurement department is an important department for Walkbase. The devices this company sells to its customers are only assembled in Walkbase workshop. But their major components are mostly imported or purchased from the local suppliers. Therefore, the procurement department is always in need of the current information regarding manufacturers of these components. For example, one of the "Customer Counting" Devices is imported from Germany by Walkbase. In this occasion, the source of these devices, quality of them, prices and duties are important information for the aforementioned department. Walkbase personnel usually use the Internet Technology in order to search for such information. Apart from that, they also gather information by visiting different business fairs, using their personal or previous business connections and also from various Business Magazines and Newspapers.

This information acquiring and preserving is considered as a continuous process. The procurement department maintains a database for its regular suppliers along with the details of the key personnel of those companies, their products, prices etc. This database is regularly updated and is often reviewed by the top management and is often shared to other departments. For instance, the Finance Department might like to review that report to identify scopes of reducing production costs, while on the other hand, the Marketing and Sales Department might use the same report to find out who supplies a particular component which is creating a glitch in the final product and creating customer dissatisfactions.

10. Research and Development Department

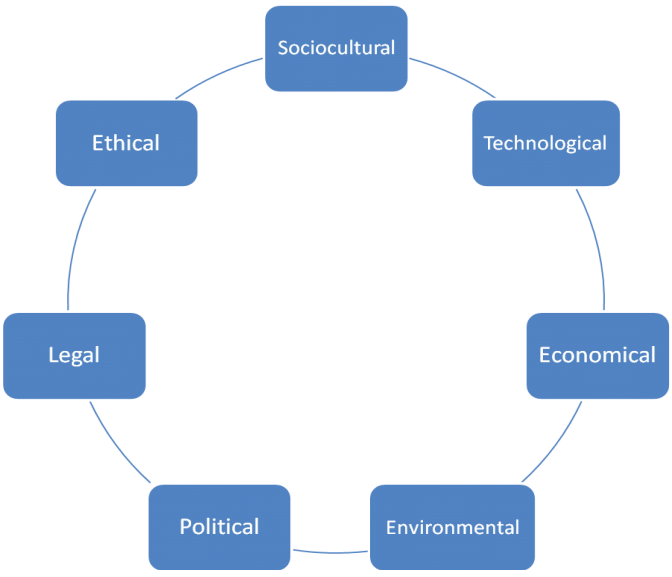
The Research and Development Department are responsible to design the final products. A continuous flow of information regarding new technologies and more efficient processes are in continuous need. When asked about the sources of such information, the Head R&D, Niclas Jern explained that the use of the internet is the easiest tool to capture the current news about new technologies. However, the key personnel of the R&D department along with the top management often visit different business fairs. He also mentioned that keeping a healthy relationship with business entities manufacturing or supplying similar products also helps the company to acquire important information. The company usually depends on its own expertise when taking a proactive step and depends on external information and intelligence when going for a reactive approach.

11. Marketing & Sales Department

Although Marketing and Sales in Walkbase has their separate managers, we are discussing the Information Structure of these two departments together since they use almost the same set of data and are interrelated. I the current practice, the marketing department collect information from both the Sales Department and from the market itself. Database is maintained to preserve the information of the agencies that are responsible for the communicational activities such as TV Media; print media advertises social media marketing and point-of-sales Material suppliers.

Apart from the regular day to day information, a yearly plan is documented and preserved to share with the rest of the employees which acts as a detailed plan about Marketing Initiative for the whole year. The sales department collects data primarily from the front end sales personnel. Along with gathering information from market end, the company maintains a "Customer Feedback"facility which helps them to learn about their product's short comings, glitches and any scope of development or improvement.

Apart from the market sources, the sales department also keeps a database of existing and prospective clients. This gives them a picture of the existing market and their position in the industry. In order to have an effective information structure it is imperative for any business entity to indicate the main sectors where a healthy information inflow and outflow is necessary. In order to locate those sectors we have used the STEEPLE Methodology. This gives a simple yet effective direction to the top management. It helps them to chalk out implementation plan of effective Information Technology Infrastructure. The best part is that this methodology covers both the micro and macro factors.



<Figure 6> Methodology

In the following phase we will discuss the methodology and the factors it cover.

• Sociocultural: By focusing on this factor, the management can gather information about proper HR management policy, the environment the business is operating in and its customers' perceptions. It will instruct the team to collect information about the culture which will help the company to be more customers centric and it can further contribute in product and service development.

• Technological: This factor deals with the technological aspects of a business. This helps the management to locate the current technological practices. This would help the business in the further development of its IT facilities and its use would make the organization more efficient and sustainable.

• Economical: The economical factor encompasses the macro level economic condition. This would help the company to give attention to the national and global economic changes, current and future government policies etc. It is very important that the business keeps the latest and up to date information about economic policies, financial regulations and so forth. The management and the employees should address the importance of this information and are well aware about them.

• Political: For any business, current political situation is a very important factor. How the business would grow, if it would at all grow, would there be any downfall are few of the concerns. In a calm political situation, business tends to grow while on the other hand an unrest situation can directly affect the business negatively. This often results to loss in sale, loss in proper transportation and collapsed supply chain.

• Legal: A business should always be very informed about the business law and the legal obligations of the region it is operating in. This usually ranges from Company Registration to the sale of the final product. As a good corporate citizen it is their duty to comply with the legal obligations and maintain the papers accordingly. This aspect might also encompass information about regulations in Banking, Company Memorandum, and Sales Regulations etc.

• Ethical: A business serves different stakeholders. The public is one of the key stakeholders. In the current time, they have turned more concern about the business entities in the society and are the yat all performing ethically. Several agencies and NGOs are also being vocal and active in order to make businesses more accountable towards ethical decision making. A business therefore needs to keep up to date information about these issues.

11.1. Horizontal and vertical information processes in the company

The horizontal and vertical information processes in the company is synonymous to how most organizations operate in their daily activities. For a company like Walkbase, the daily operations rely on the vertical process of developing analytical solutions for prospective clients through the R&D departments and the everyday processes of sales and marketing. Nonetheless, horizontal perspectives which permeate across the whole organization are considered significant and demands highlighting. Such horizontal processes include developments of employees, occupational health and safety, gender equality and diversity of operation. From this angle we can argue that an information strategy falls within the domain of horizontal process in the sense that an information strategy will focus and accentuate the significance and need of information across the entire organization. In general, horizontal processes assist the vertical processes by proposing an alternate perspective in managing the operations of an organization. It must be noted that horizontal processes such as an information strategy should not be considered as a transitory solution to a situation but rather, it should be entrenched into the day- to day vertical operations of the whole organization.

11.2. Information strategy issue in the company

Analysis of the current situation in the company brought to bear some information strategy issues that this article will try to explain and also make some suggesting to this effect.

First of all it was discovered that the organization as a whole do not have an official information strategy that serves as a guide when dealing with managing of information. No overall strategy exists, though a series of operational guidelines are in place for general announcements, use of e-mail and the database. As explained by the R&D department the process of information management in the company is seen as organic due to the fact that there are no plans, policies or structures that guides how information should be collected, processed, stored and disseminated. (Hanson, 2011a).

The internal information management is predominantly based on systems and informal communications between employees

and this is possible because of the small number of employees that work in the company. The organization uses two main systems (Aha.io, and Flowdock) when it comes to internal information storing and dissemination.

11.3. Information Strategy Concept

The concept and scope of an information strategy in an organization is broads which depend on several elements that interrelate with each other. Assigning a single definition for Information strategy is difficult because information professionals from different areas view the concept from their own perspective and organizations assign and adept to definitions that best suits their unique needs. In the ICT field, the concept is equated to information systems strategy where the focus is predominantly on managing information with software and hardware. Whereas in other discipline an information strategy can incorporates both human interactions and synchronize it with technology and systems. Hanson (2011b) mentioned that "the purpose of an information strategy is to highlight the extent to which a modern, complex organization depends on information, in all of its guises, and to consider how this strategic asset should be managed. The assertion from this point of view can be somehow equated to the perspective that, an information strategy is an important resource that if implement efficiently and effectively can contribute enormous to the entire organization in terms of the daily operation and future dealings as well (Hanson, 2011b).

The need for information as resources has always been a key issue with organizations that depends mostly on information before making critical and strategic decision and Walkbase is no exception from this category considering their business operation. The advance in technology and the propelling force of the World Wide Web has intensify the greater need for information in organization and the challenge that comes along with this opportunity is information overload which places a lot of burden on organizations. The emergence of the concept of information management as discipline has helped curtail this challenge and indeed it will not be a fallacy if one assumes that information management provides the basic foundation of an organizational information strategy.

The epitome of an information strategy can be said to be emphasizing and throwing more light on the significance of a worthy information management either by developing an information management system that supports decision making or facilitate better information flow in an organization. This is also invariably linked to the overall performance, annual turnovers and general adeptness of the entire organization.

11.4. Information Management as foundation for information strategy

Detlor (2010), defined information management as "the control over how information is created, acquired, organized, stored, distributed, and used as a means of promoting efficient and effective information access, processing, and use by people and organizations". This definition that Deltor (2010), provided sterns the need for a strategy, that will be the jelling force for the entire elements into a cohesive unit for a comprehensive outcome. As a key foundational element in formulation of and information strategy, this article will address and touch on the process view of information management and relate it to the information strategy in a broader perspective.

11.5. Process view of information management

Information management as a process is deduced from the definition of Choo (2002), who states that information management involves the "processes that acquire, create, organize, distribute, and use of information in an organization". In addition to this definition Deltor (2010), stressed that conceptualizing information management from a process point of view is not a new thing as this has existed since early 1990's and proponents of this view have argued for a process information management model that will incorporate all or some the key element of the whole information value chain or lifecycle. As a process of information management, Choo (2002) identified six information processes that need to manage and these process are listed below:

- Identification of information needs
- Acquisition of information to address those needs
- Organization and storage of information
- Design and development of information products
- Distribution of information
- Information use

These processes are not mutually exclusive of each other as they are inter-related and needs to be addressed as whole when dealing with the compressive information management process. On the hand, Wilson (2005, pp.263–278), proposed a more simple process of information management and according to him this processes must be followed systematically but pointed out that it is not a static or rigid process and changes and adjustment can be made to suit the demands of the organization in question.

- Acquisition
- Organization
- Storage
- Retrieval
- Access/lending
- Dissemination

However, Deltor(2010) argued that although, these processes are all inclusive and incorporates that most important element of information management, information needs identification and information use must not always be included in the process. His reason for this argument is that eliciting information requirement and matching this requirement to information need is more critical to provide a design that will promote effective and efficient information use in an organization. He stressed that "effectively managing these information processes will helps get the right information to the right people in the right forms at the right times and at reasonable costs"

11.6. Strategic and Information Planning

The strategic information planning of an organization should however by in synchronizing with the whole business planning of the organization. Having mutually exclusive strategies might lead to a malfunctioning of the information strategy. This concern basically applies to the individuals and policies that exist in the organization and more specifically the understanding of the horizontal as well as the vertical requirement of information and business process in relation to the reliability, durability, quality and ownership of data and information. The challenge that is mostly evident in this kind of situation is the integration of the information strategy into the business strategy of the organization and the consensus building of a common ground that focuses on the single objective of the organization. The remedy to this situation as stated by Deltor (2010) is to have a more general information strategy that will address the horizontal or departmental issues such as information management principles and governance arrangements. Also information sub-strategies included into the main vertical strategies such as polices and decision making. These two approaches however, are critical in the integration and merging of the information strategy and the business strategy of an organization but this requires good leadership and efficient all inclusive management to excel.

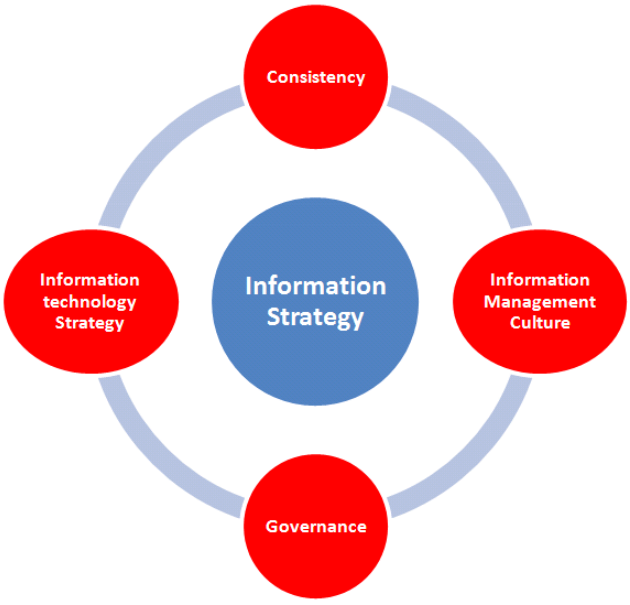
12. The horizontal and vertical information processes in the company

The horizontal and vertical information processes in the company is synonymous to how most organizations operate in their daily activities. For a company like Walkbase, the daily operations rely on the vertical process of developing analytical solutions for prospective clients through the R&D departments and the everyday processes of sales and marketing. Nonetheless, horizontal perspectives which permeate across the whole organization are considered significant and demands highlighting. Such horizontal processes include developments of employees, occupational health and safety, gender equality and diversity of operation. From this angle we can argue that an information strategy falls within the domain of horizontal process in the sense that an information strategy will focus and accentuate the significance and need of information across the entire organization. In general, horizontal processes assist the vertical processes by proposing an alternate perspective in managing the operations of an organization. It must be noted that horizontal processes such as an information strategy should not be considered as a transitory solution to a situation but rather, it should be entrenched into the day- to day vertical operations of the whole organization.

12.1. Information strategy for Walkbase

The company size of Walkbase is small and this poses a challenge in developing a comprehensive information strategy to that effect but irrespective of this fact this article make some suggestion based on researched theories that the company can used in their information strategy.

According to Hanson 2011, an information strategy framework involves 4 key elements which are labeled as:



Source: Hanson(2011)

<Figure 7> Information strategy framework

• Consistency

The key principle of an information strategy is to consider the organization Walkbase as a single integrated unit that functions together collectively. In designing the information strategy it is paramount that the 4 offices located in the 3 countries namely Finland, United Kingdom and Switzerland be thought of as a single unit that works collectively it is through this principle that consistency can be obtained. Most often than not the fragmentation of locations creates a barrier to an effective and efficient information strategy, but considering it as single when planning improves communications and results in benefits such as more consistence and standardize methods of sharing information, a holistic information system infrastructures and good information management practices that will be felt in all parts of the organization.

• Information Management Culture

An information management culture in an organization is the practice of recognizing the significance and strategic value of information as a resource. In addition to recognizing the strategic value, it is also import to encourage the application of good management practices in the organization. This involves well defining information that is available for dissemination in the organization and also ensuring easy access to the information. Secondly, the information that would be shared but be fit for purpose in the sense that it must be accurate, complete, current

and consistent. Finally employees must be encouraged and their responsibility towards information must be explicitly explained to them. An information management culture does "provide a framework for how information is to be shared, captured, stored, modelled and kept reliable across the environment"(Mike 2.0, 2014). It is one thing to set the precedence for an information strategy in an organization and it is the other to make sure how this precedence will be achieve and that is when the next framework (Governance) comes to play (Hanson, 2011).

• Governance

Governance plays a very critical role in any organization in terms of policies, structures, operations and human relations. Indeed it is observed that if you are not able to get the element of governance right in an organization it will be hard to get "anything"right. This assertion can be related to our everyday life endeavors as well, and the application of it to an information strategy in an organization is no exception. In relating governance to the information strategy of Walkbase, it will entail the process of envisioning their future prospect and adopting an information strategy that will propel them to achievethat vision. The second point that has to do with governance involves setting an information management structures with clearly outlaid level of authority of developments and practice of how key strategic and operational decisions concerning the overall management of information will be made and sustained over time as the organization grows and expand.

• Information technology Strategy

The importance of an information technology in setting up an information strategy cannot be overlook in this context dueto the fact that technology has become part and parcel of our everyday live. Developing a good information technology strategy will help support the information strategy of Walkbase. An Enterprise Architecture (EA) that will take a holistic or bird view of the whole processes, roles and technologies involved in the strategic development of the organization´s technical infrastructure can be considered when designing the information technology strategy. Currently the company is outsourcing the platforms thatthey are using to share information but an alternative of using the technology to develop their own systems can also be considered when developing the strategy (Hanson, 2011).

13. Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the management of Walkbase can revise its current information structure and implement a more structured and organized Information Structure. Needless to mention that it might be included long term investment. In that occasion the management can prioritize which component to develop first. The core objective of the project was to explore the information infrastructure of Walkbase in a discursive manner. We started the project by giving a description of the firm which happens to be facilitating retail outlets with in-store analytical devices. The following phases discussed the current practices, how it can be further developed and finally it described a framework which can be used as a checklist and indicate scopes of development. Along with that we also described the business, its product and its facilities and how it can serve in different industries. Finally, we left the decision on the top management to prioritize within the frame works components.

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