1331-526: Business Information Sources

Assignment Three: Survey of Information Support Services

This assignment is aimed at analysis of information support services in business organizations. Students will select a local or an interntional business organization and collect information about information support services in that organization. Information support services in this assignment refers to the approaches adopted to facilitate access to external information sources and mechanisms put in place to manage internal information. Information can be collected from the website of the organization or other relevant information sources. Contacting the organization for providing information through a questionnaire or email communication will be helpful. A general outline is given below as a guideline:

Introduction

- Organization Profile: Development and very brief history, nature of business, major activities, etc.
- Peculiarities: core values, unique features, or business culture.
- An overview of the types of information needs and information sources relevant to main activities.

Access to external information:

- Information services, e.g., library, information center, etc.
- Arrangements to access information sources.

Management of internal information:

- Organizational sites handling management of internal information.
- Approaches to managing enterprise contents: websites, intranets, portals, repositories, etc.
- Functions and responsibilities of internal information management.

There is a possibility that none (or some) of the above arrangement may be currently available in the selected organization. If this is the case, then prepare suggestions for arrangements to facilitate access to external information and management of internal information (approaches discussed in relevant lectures and ideas from best practices and guidelines will be helpful).

A written report is required for this assignment. This report should be prepared using professional style of presentation of information and formatting of the write-up. Report is expected to be from 6-8 pages (1500-2000 words). A summary of report will be presented in class. Assignment will be assessed based on the quality of contents and presentation of information.

Following steps will be helpful in doing this assignment:

1. Start with a review of the web site (or other relevant information sources) to compile information about the organization (introduction).
2. Gather information about support services (interview, email communication, or filling up a questionnaire) or detailed analysis of information through links from the website.
3. Review the relevant best practices to borrow ideas for suggesting a system for the selected company.

Questionnaire attached to this description might be helpful in gathering information. This is a basic questionnaire to provide a sort of template. Students can make changes in line with the requirement for their chosen organization.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How important are the following external information sources to your company? Indicate the importance on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=Not required, 2=Not sure, 3=Useful, 4=Needed, 5=Must have).

Information Sources
Books, trade journals, newspapers
Reference sources (directories & guides)
Business sources (Factiva, Bloomberg, Reuters)
Company information (Hoover, SEC Edger Online)
Bibliographic databases (ABI/Inform, Business Source Complete)
Industry reports (Sullivan, Gartner)
Consumer information (Mintel, SRDS, WARCS)
Financial databases (Data Stream, WARDS, CRSP)
Investment research (Value Line, Mergent)
Other sources (please list)

2. How is access to external information sources arranged in your company?
   o In-house library/information center
   o Membership in outside libraries
   o Partnership with other companies
   o Subscriptions through agents
   o Access through aggregators
   o Outsource to information providers.
   o Links provided through the company website.
   o Other options, please list _____

3. If your company currently has a library or an information center, please indicate the importance of services and function provided by this facility. Indicate the categories on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=not available, 2=no plan to have it, 3=not relevant, 4=needed, 5=must have).

Function/Activity
Procuring or arranging access to information materials
Compiling information on competitors
Building portals of information on news, industries, and companies, and others.
Alerting service and briefs as timely documents and dashboards
Streaming media to facilitate use of current awareness resources
Delivering information access on mobile devices
Using cloud computing to store information sources
Build discovery systems to navigate information resources available outside the company
Implementing search tools beyond Boolean operators
Interpreting and adding value to social media content

Other services (Please list)

4. How important are the following activities for managing internal information in your company? Please indicate the important on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=Not required, 2=Not sure, Useful, 3=Needed, 5=Must have).

Function/Activity
Document management (processes used to track, store, and control documents)
Content management (administration - creation & editing of digital content).
Record management (keeping records for long time use because of regulations or business practices).
Archiving (saving and keeping content for preservation).
Enterprise portals (online site for a single gateway to company information and knowledge).
Institutional repositories (storage of aggregate data with ability to extract data selectively).
Web sites (creation, review and publishing of web-based content and content re-use management).
Other functions (please list)

5. What strategy is deployed in your company for managing internal information?

   o Information is managed in relevant units using database management or specialized applications.

      Please list the applications _____

   o An integrated system is in place that receives information from relevant units and makes available as and when needed to relevant sections or staff.
      Please list the system

      _____

   o An enterprise-wide content management system is used to manage documents, records, and other digital assets.
      Please list the system in use

      _____

   o Information is managed in relevant functional units and made available through company website or enterprise portal
      Please briefly describe the features

      _____

   o Any other strategy, please list

      _____

6. How are information support responsibilities assigned in your company?

o A senior level officer is assigned to oversee the information access and management functions. Please specify.
    o Chief information officer
    o Chief knowledge officer
    o Chief technology officer
    o Other, please list _____

o Information professionals/specialists are assigned to perform information support work in functional areas. Please specify the position titles:
    o Librarians
    o Records managers
    o Archivists
    o Content managers
    o Web Developer
    o Others, please _____

o Information access and management responsibilities are assigned to relevant existing departments:
    o Corporate Planning
    o Public Relations
    o Marketing or Market Research
    o Strategic Planning and Development
    o Competitive Intelligence
    o Research, Development, and Innovation.
    o Business development
    o Information Technology and Information Systems
    o Any other arrangement, please list
    _____

7. If currently some information access and management systems are in place in your company, please list the improvements/enhancements needed:

    o Features and capabilities need to be enhanced
    _____

    o Additional functions/systems need to be added to enhance the information support?
    _____

8. If your company does not currently have information access & management systems in place, what systems your company would like to implement in future for providing the information support to exploit external and internal information?

Please list

_____
_____

9. Pleaser list/describe anything else relevant to information access and support in your company but not covered in the above questions:

_____
_____

10. Please provide the following contact information about your company:
           Company name: _____
           Contact person: _____
           Phone number: _____
           Email address: _____