**(Investigating the Role of Stakeholders Engagement and Collaboration in the Transitioning of Friends Group of Companies from Manual Inventory Management System to Automated Inventory Management System.)**

**Client Company : FRIENDS GROUP OF COMPANIES**

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**1.0 PROJECT INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

The transition from a manual inventory management system to an automated inventory management system is a critical decision for companies looking to improve efficiency, accuracy, and overall performance in their operations (Salih, et al. 2023). Inventory management plays a crucial role in the success of a business, as it directly impacts factors such as customer satisfaction, cost management, and supply chain optimization (Kamisli Ozturk, 2020).

Manual inventory management systems are often time-consuming, error-prone, and inefficient, leading to challenges such as stockouts, overstocking, and inaccurate inventory data. On the other hand, automated inventory management systems leverage technology such as barcode scanning, RFID tracking, and inventory management software to streamline processes, reduce human error, and provide real-time visibility into inventory levels (Shukaili, et al., 2023).

The transition to an automated inventory management system requires careful planning, coordination, and collaboration (Salih, et al., 2023) among various stakeholders within the organization. Key stakeholders involved in this transition may include management, employees, IT department, suppliers, and customers. Each stakeholder group may have different expectations, concerns, and interests related to the transition, making effective engagement and collaboration essential for success.

Therefore, investigating the role of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in the transitioning of a company from a manual to an automated inventory management system is important for gaining insights into best practices, challenges, and strategies for successful implementation. This research aims to provide valuable recommendations and insights for companies looking to improve their inventory management processes through technology-driven solutions.

**CLIENT INTRODUCTION**

Friends Group of Companies is a well-established retail company with a strong presence in the market, operating multiple branches across the country. The company specializes in offering a wide range of products to its customers, ranging from electronics to household goods.

Currently, Friends Group of Companies relies on a manual inventory management system to track their products. However, this system has proven to be inefficient, time-consuming, and prone to errors. The manual processes involved in inventory management have led to challenges in maintaining accurate stock levels, tracking sales trends, and managing inventory across multiple locations.

Recognizing the limitations of their current system, Friends Group of Companies has identified the need to transition to an automated inventory management system. By implementing an automated system, the company aims to improve efficiency, accuracy, and overall inventory management processes. This transition will enable the company to streamline operations, reduce errors, optimize stock levels, and enhance customer service.

**1.2 PROJECT SCOPE AND EXCLUSIONS**

This project will focus on understanding the needs and expectations of key stakeholders and developing strategies for effective engagement and collaboration during the transition process.

**Project Scope**

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| **SMART OBJECTIVES** |
| **Specific** | **Measurable** | **Achievable** | **Relevant** | **Time-bound** |
| Identify key stakeholders involved in the transition process, including management, employees, IT department, suppliers, and customers. | Number of key stakeholders identified and categorized. | Feasible through stakeholder analysis and consultation. | Essential for understanding the breadth of involvement required for the transition. | By end of Week 2. |
| Understand the needs, expectations, and concerns of each stakeholder group regarding the transition to an automated inventory management system. | Percentage of stakeholder needs and concerns documented. | Attainable through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. | Crucial for tailoring the transition plan to address stakeholders' specific requirements. | By end of Week 4. |
| Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that outlines communication strategies, feedback mechanisms, and involvement opportunities for stakeholders. | Completion and approval of the stakeholder engagement plan document. | Realistic through collaboration with stakeholders and management. | Fundamental for ensuring effective communication and participation throughout the transition. | By end of Week 6. |
| Analyze the current inventory management system and identify areas for improvement that can be addressed through the transition to an automated system. | Number of improvement areas identified and prioritized. | Feasible through inventory system assessment and analysis. | Vital for determining the rationale behind transitioning to an automated system. | By end of Week 8. |
| Evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of transitioning to an automated inventory management system from a stakeholder perspective. | Percentage of stakeholders' perceptions regarding benefits and challenges documented. | Attainable through surveys and interviews. | Essential for weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the transition. | By end of Week 10. |
| Develop recommendations for effective stakeholder engagement and collaboration throughout the transition process. | Number of actionable recommendations proposed. | Realistic through synthesis of stakeholder feedback and best practices. | Crucial for facilitating smooth transition and minimizing resistance. | By end of Week 12. |
| Present findings and recommendations to Friends Group of Companies management for consideration and implementation. | Successful presentation and approval of findings and recommendations. | Achievable through effective communication and persuasion. | Essential for obtaining support and resources for implementing proposed strategies. | 31/07/2024 |

**Exclusions**

1. The actual implementation of the automated inventory management system.
2. Technical details of the automated inventory management system, such as software specifications and hardware requirements.
3. Training and support for employees during the transition to the automated system.
4. Financial aspects of the transition, such as budgeting and cost analysis.
5. Legal and regulatory considerations related to inventory management systems.
6. Any changes or modifications to the organizational structure of Friends Group of Companies as a result of the transition.

**PROJECT RESOURCE, NEED AND REQUIREMENT**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Resources**  | **Resource Required** | **Resource Need** |
| **People** | Project Manager | A seasoned project manager is indispensable, tasked with overseeing the entire project, managing resources, timelines, and ensuring objectives are met. |
|   | Human Resource Manager Team | A proficient HR team is vital for stakeholder engagement, communication, and training, ensuring smooth transition and adaptation |
|   | Technical Team | An adept technical team equipped with IT expertise and experience in inventory management systems is essential for the successful implementation and support of the new system. |
|   | Database Administrators | Competent database administrators are needed to manage and maintain the database for the automated inventory management system. |
|   | Stakeholders | Active engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, and customers, are crucial for garnering support and facilitating a seamless transition. |
| **Processes** | Implementation Process | A well-defined implementation process outlining steps from system setup to user training is necessary for a systematic transition. |
|   | Change Management | Effective change management strategies to mitigate resistance to change and ensure smooth adoption of the new system among employees. |
|   | Training Program | Comprehensive training programs tailored to various user groups to ensure proficiency in utilizing the new inventory management system. |
|   | Communication Plan | A robust communication plan to keep stakeholders informed about the transition progress, updates, and support channels available. |
| **Technical** | Inventory Management System | Adoption of a suitable automated inventory management system that aligns with the company's requirements, ensuring scalability, compatibility, and reliability. |
|   | Hardware and Software | Acquisition of necessary hardware and software components for system implementation and operation. |
| **Data** | Data Migration Plan | A structured plan for migrating data from the manual system to the automated one, ensuring data integrity and accuracy. |
|   | Data Security Measures | Implementation of robust data security measures to safeguard sensitive inventory information from unauthorized access or breaches. |

By ensuring that the necessary resources are in place and adequately qualified for their roles, the project can proceed smoothly and efficiently towards achieving its objectives.

**1.4 KEY ASSUMPTIONS, CONSTRAINTS, AND DEPENDENCIES**

For any project endeavor to be a success, it is essential to identify and address key assumptions, constraints, and dependencies to ensure the successful completion of the project. These factors can impact the project timeline, resources, and overall outcomes.

**Assumptions**

1. Stakeholders are willing to actively participate in the research process.
2. Sufficient financial and human resources are available to support the project.
3. Stakeholders have a basic understanding of the transition from manual to automated inventory management systems.
4. Stakeholders are open to providing honest feedback and insights during the research process.

**Constraints**

1. Time constraints may limit the amount of data that can be collected and analyzed within the project timeline.
2. Budget constraints may restrict the scope of the research and limit access to certain resources.
3. Limited availability of key stakeholders for interviews or meetings may impact the depth of information gathered.
4. External factors such as market conditions or regulatory changes may influence the project's progress and outcomes.

**Dependencies**

1. The availability and cooperation of key stakeholders are essential for gathering relevant data and insights.
2. Access to relevant data and information, such as inventory management records and system documentation, is crucial for conducting a thorough analysis.
3. The project timeline and deliverables may depend on the timely input and feedback from stakeholders.
4. Collaboration with internal teams, such as IT departments or inventory management staff, may be necessary to ensure the successful implementation of research findings.

Identifying and addressing key assumptions, constraints, and dependencies is vital for the effective planning and execution of the research project. By acknowledging these factors upfront, the project team can proactively mitigate risks and challenges, ultimately leading to a more successful outcome.

**1.5 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS & COMMUNICATION PLAN**

Effective stakeholder engagement and communication are crucial components of any successful project (Ibraheem, 2018), especially when transitioning from a manual inventory management system to an automated one. By identifying key stakeholders, understanding their interests and expectations, and developing a comprehensive communication plan, we can ensure that all parties are informed and involved throughout the transition process.

Stakeholder Analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/n** | **Stakeholder** | **Role/Position** | **Interests** | **Influence** | **Expectations** | **Engagement Plan** |
| 1 | Management | Executives  | Efficiency, ROI  | High | Smooth transition  | Regular updates, decision-making involvement |
| 2 | Employees | Store staff | Ease of use, Training  | Moderate | Minimal disruption | Training sessions, clear communication |
| 3 | IT Department  | IT Managers | System integration, Efficiency  | High | Technical support  | Collaboration on system implementation, troubleshooting |
| 4 | Suppliers  | Vendor partners  | Timely orders, Payment  | Moderate | Smooth transactions  | Communication on system changes, payment terms |
| 5 | Project Manager | Project Management | Project Success | High | Smooth transition  | Regular updates and Report |

Communication Plan

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/n** | **Stakeholder** | **Action to Manage Stakeholder** | **Frequency of Communication** | **Means of Communication** | **Who is Responsible** |
|  1 | Management | Regular updates on project progress  | Weekly  | Email, meetings | Project Manager  |
|  2 | Employees | Open communication channels  | Bi-weekly  | Team meetings, surveys | Project Manager |
|  3 | IT Department  | Tailored communication strategies  | As needed  | | Meetings, emails | Project Manager  |
|  4 | Suppliers | Updates on inventory system changes  | Monthly  | Phone calls, emails  | Procurement Manager  |

A well-planned stakeholder analysis and communication strategy will be essential in guiding the transition of Friends Group of Companies to an automated inventory management system. By actively engaging with stakeholders, addressing their concerns, and keeping them informed, we can facilitate a smooth and successful transition that benefits all parties involved.

**PROJECT PLAN**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Task** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Who is Responsible** |
| 1 | Conduct research on stakeholder engagement and collaboration in inventory management transitions | 1/6/2024 | 15/06/2024 | Research Team |
| 2 | Analyze data and findings | 16/06/2024 | 30/06/2024 | Research Team |
| 3 | Develop recommendations for effective stakeholder engagement and collaboration | 1/7/2024 | 15/07/2024 | Research Team |
| 4 | Present findings to Friends Group of Companies management | 16/07/2024 | 31/07/2024 | Project Manager |

**GANTT CHART**



**NETWORK DIAGRAM**



**1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CASE STUDY**

**Stakeholder Engagement in Inventory Management Systems**: This topic is relevant as it provides insights into the importance of involving key stakeholders in the transition process and how their engagement can impact the success of implementing an automated (Mukherjee, 2019) inventory management system.

**Best Practices for Change Management**: Understanding best practices for change management is crucial for effectively transitioning from a manual to an automated inventory management system. This topic can provide valuable strategies for managing resistance to change and ensuring a smooth transition process.

**Technology Adoption in Inventory Management**: Exploring the adoption of technology in inventory management systems can offer insights into the benefits, challenges, and considerations involved in implementing automated systems (Masudin, et al., 2020). This knowledge can help in understanding the impact of technology on inventory management processes.

**Supply Chain Optimization**: Supply chain optimization plays a significant role (Koteswara Rao, 2023) in inventory management, and understanding how it relates to transitioning to an automated system can provide valuable insights into improving efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing overall performance.

**Communication Strategies in Change Management:** Effective communication is key to successful change management (Malek, & Yazdanifard, 2012), and exploring communication strategies in the context of transitioning to an automated inventory management system can help in developing a comprehensive communication plan for engaging stakeholders.

**1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How can effective stakeholder engagement and collaboration facilitate a successful transition?
2. What are the best practices for engaging stakeholders in inventory management system transitions?

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