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NOT FOR PROFIT INFORMATION SYSTEMS ADOPTION AND USAGE: THE CASE OF BIG FOOD PANTRY

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ABSTRACT

Across the entire organizational spectrum, technology is a necessary tool to enable efficient operations. Nevertheless, scant attention is paid to small and medium enterprises, especially not for profit charitable organizations. This research aims to elucidate why technology is necessary, the challenges in implementing and maintaining technology as well as the specific requirements for hunger relief organizations.

Keywords

Information systems implementation, maintenance, small and medium enterprises, hunger relief agency

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Technology is ubiquitous in organizations and much of the Information Systems (IS) literature is devoted to large for profit firms. The literature is largely silent regarding small and medium enterprises especially those that are not-for-profit charitable organizations. Research has investigated phenomena such as the impact of technology acceptance of crowdfunding on charitable organizations (Li et al. 2018). While others such as Lee and Bhattacharjee (2011) investigate strategic use of the Internet at not for profits. Within small and medium enterprises IS is employed as a tool to enable growth (Street and Meister 2004) The investigation of technology adoption and use at not for profits is important for several reasons. Data collection and analysis is now a necessity for organizations to understand their client base, to achieve efficient operations, and provide metrics necessary for strategic planning and attracting donors.

Specific to the Big Food Pantry, the case will attempt to elucidate its technology and data needs to better serve its client base. The case will address issues revolving around the ability to acquire technology, technical expertise e for its staff and maintain its operations. Specific data needs include government reporting on food recipients due to receiving food from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, financial reporting, inventory tracking for food items especially perishable goods, asset tracking including delivery vehicles, warehouse equipment, and office equipment (i.e. computers, printers, etc), donor engagement and farm management. The case will address the lack of funding to pay for software licenses, provide salaries for in-house technology professionals as well as pay for ongoing training for current employees. Employees tend to be passionate and mission-focused, however, they lack business acumen and digital literacy to efficiently manage data to day business operations. The case will also show how technology is necessary and the challenges staff face while attempting to manage without technology. To explore these differences theoretically, the resource-based theory of the firm (Wernerfelt 1984) will be used as a lens in so much that not-for-profit agencies operate in resource-constrained environments and must creatively employ their limited resources to achieve their mission. The resource based view suggests firms are a set of resources, capabilities and routines that are heterogeneous across firms.

As such the case will attempt to address the following research question: What technology resources are available and how are they employed in a not-for-profit food pantry charitable organization?

To understand the phenomena a case based approach (Yin 2011) will be used. Interviews will be conducted of staff and documents collected revolving around manual and technology based record keeping. Results will bring to the fore the critical need for efficient and effective information systems in not-for-profit organizations and how heterogeneous resources impact the acquisition and deployment of information systems to support charitable organizations.

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