



UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO SCHOOL OF COMPUTING

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Academic Year 2009/2010 – 2nd Year Examination – Semester 4

IT4203: IT Project Management

CASE STUDY

eCourier-Colombo

eCourier-Colombo is a same day 24/7 courier service based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The company was formed in 2003 with the aim of providing a courier service that is focused on delivery transparency and automated customer interaction. Parcels are collected from any Colombo address and taken to any final destination requested by the client. Although the company originally delivered parcels only to Colombo addresses, they now deliver parcels to any global location requested by corporate clients. Advanced Information Based Allocation (AIBA), an intelligent dispatch and fleet management system is utilised to allocate a booking to the most appropriate vehicle (including bicycles, motor bicycles and vans of varying sizes) which sends a message to the courier to alert regarding the job through a handheld terminal. In addition to detecting the nearest vehicle to the pickup location, AIBA also undertakes an analysis of the individual performance of couriers, trends such as congestion affecting speed of delivery during peak times and weather conditions which may affect the performance of some couriers.

Couriers are rewarded and motivated with high pay for the service levels they provide, supported by the technology, thus rendering a courier service that is reliable, trustworthy and transparent. Extensive training was needed to be given to the couriers to change the way in which they worked and behaved in order to fit the new organisational practices and image, enabled by information technology. In addition to systems for employees, the customer has been provided with a real time tracking of his parcel on a map, utilising GPS technology. They are also shown the shortest route, for which they are billed, from pick-up to dispatch. On the same map he can watch his parcel en-route to the final destination. Once the parcel has been delivered at the destination, a Proof of Delivery e-mail is sent within seconds. It is this high level of human to system connectivity that is at the heart of eCourier-Colombo. Because the majority of bookings and customer queries are taken online owing to the ease of use of the website, fewer staff members need to be hired, and they can focus on any complex issues that arise.

eCourier-Colombo has entered into profitable partnerships with many International couriers (e.g. members of the World Trade Organisation - Courier Services) to offer a worldwide service to its customers. Their two key IT systems have been developed to facilitate collaboration with International courier services thus making eCourier-Colombo's practices and procedures compatible with their International partners.

eCourier-Colombo recruited and headhunted top employees for their skills and experience in specific areas to provide the greatest benefit to eCourier-Colombo project when it was developed. In the project, many skills were brought into the company by hiring employees with specific skills. The skills of the five core team members include Management and operations, Systems development management, Business risk management, Website specialisation, Information assurance, Benefits management and Project management. Staff members for Business risk management, Systems Development and Project management were highly qualified, but the rest were with lower and varying levels of skills. If the project had recruited staff with a complete set of skills, it would have helped to develop the other team members' skills even more effectively through learning from the complementary skills within the organisation. Due to the success of this project, without even having a full set of skills, it can be suggested that an incomplete but complementary set of skills can contribute towards project success.

The technology behind eCourier-Colombo aims to utilise a system to predict travel times between any two places in Sri Lanka. eCourier-Colombo developed two key IT systems: one is their intelligent backend ABIA system and the other is their website www.ecourier.co.lk. The ABIA system is written in Java and is running on a Linux platform. It combines mobile devices, GPS and IT based fleet management with an Internet platform. Their main servers include: Web server, Microsoft SQL server, Mapping server, Gateway server, Allocation server and MySQL server. Technology has been used to ensure the smooth running of the business. Disaster recovery systems have been put in place to ensure that the computers and operations have a constant supply of power. This is backed up by generators, although by the very nature of the system, it can also be run remotely. Their website is powered by an ISAP dll module written in Delphi. The advanced interactive mapping technology on their online tracking system is a key marketing point for eCourier-Colombo as it allows customers to zoom, pan and focus on couriers to street level without refreshing the whole web page. Each of their couriers is given a handheld computer and GPS equipment, which allows a client to watch and follow the progress of his delivery.
