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The Application of IT for Competitive Advantage at Keane, Inc.

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Mark R. Andrews has been in the Information Technology industry since 1996, primarily as consultant. He has provided PC technical support for such firms as General Electric ED&C and BancOne Commercial Credit. Currently, Mr. Andrews is serving as an External Consultant at the Government Information Technology Agency, State of Arizona, as a Web Developer and Application Support Analyst. He was recently a member of the Web Masters Task Group, whose goal was to develop a set of guidelines for all State of Arizona Web Masters.

Raymond Papp is an assistant professor in the Department of Management Information Systems at Central Connecticut State University. Dr. Papp's current research interests include strategic impacts of information technology, Internet-based learning, strategic alignment, and emerging information technologies. His research has appeared in several academic and practitioner journals, and he has presented research at professional and executive conferences. He has worked as a computer programmer and senior analyst and continues to practice as an independent consultant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Keane Company, founded in 1965 by John F. Keane, has grown from a local software service company into a national firm which has three operating divisions and over 45 branches throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Within these operating divisions are multitudes of consulting opportunities, ranging from supplemental staffing, project management and application outsourcing.

This case will focus on Keane's approach to Project Management and how they provide this service to their clients. This includes not only how Keane is hired for Project Management but how they train their clients on how they too can implement the Keane philosophy of Productivity Management.

Instead of focusing on any one client of Keane, their overall technology strategy will be highlighted, from their early days through the present to illustrate how Keane has successfully incorporated information technology and Project Management to become a major player in the software service and consulting field. The goal of this case is to provide the student with an example of business-technology strategy in action and allow them to explore future paths that Keane may take based on how they use technology today and in the decade to come.

Several discussion questions are included which focus on Keane's IT strategies and their implementation. These questions can be used to stimulate class discussion or given as written assignments to be handed in.

BACKGROUND

In 1965, John F. Keane, having worked for IBM for several years, saw the need for a software service company that would cater to firms interested in using technology to improve their operations. It was at this time that Keane decided to venture out onto his own and established The Keane Company in a small, one room office above a donut shop in Hingham, Massachusetts. From these humble beginnings, Keane has grown over the past three decades to a national firm with over 45 branch offices throughout the United States, Canada, as well as the United Kingdom. The firm has grown to such an extent that by the end of 1980s Keane was incorporated and listed as one of Forbes' "Top 200 Small U.S. Companies." Revenue has correspondingly increased from \$99 million in 1992 to over \$1 billion in 1998, and based on the most recent earnings report, the trend will continue.¹

Keane has not always been so successful. Problems in the early 1970s with project overruns led Keane to develop its own project management process called Productivity Management. Today, this process is the foundation of Keane's application development and outsourcing methodologies. During the 1980s, Keane continued to grow and its Application Management Methodology (AMM) was the catalyst for its outsourcing solutions (see Appendix A). 1989 saw the standardization of its software development process into its Waterfall, Rapid Application Development and Client-Server Frameworks development life cycles. These frameworks continued to evolve into the 1990s.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw Keane acquire several consulting firms, completing 17 acquisitions over a 10-year period. These acquisitions have allowed Keane to enhance its repository of processes and methodologies and prepared them to take their next major step.

In 1996, Keane debuted its Resolve 2000 service to address the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem. The growth of its Y2K solutions has allowed it to surpass its goal of \$1 billion a year in revenue, two years earlier than originally planned. It has also diversified in the past few years, expanding into European markets with its acquisition of Bricker & Associates (<http://www.keane.com/about/history.shtml>).

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