

Chapter 5

IT & Information Systems

The management of companies in highly competitive markets depend heavily on data and efficient processing of documents. This is even more true for service related companies like TNPG that make use of data repetitively, continuously. To survive the company need to invest in creating database and information technology.

TNB has to a large extent computerised many of its operations. It has therefore prepared its subsidiaries to the technology well in advance. Currently, there are several systems operating the TNB database. The latest is the Financial Management information system (FMIS) where divisions were given greater autonomy on how they make use of the budget allocated to them. This improved level of empowerment also asks the division general manager to be responsible for his division's profit or loss. This financial system can be extended to TNPG although on a smaller scale. Among the benefits of the FMIS are:

- better control of budget spending
- real time information on expenses
- faster turnaround on billing process
- common format for internal rechargeable jobs

Another information system that is in place is the CEO Business Review. At a push of a button the CEO is able to get data regarding the cash flow of the company, the number of staff on leave, the productivity level of each station, etc. This system too can be duplicated in TNPG as this keeps the CEO informed of any changes in the operations of the company and able to take corrective action immediately. He is also able to access accurate information should he

require them at any time without waiting for those in the hierarchy to report to him.

Another information system that is available is the human resource information system. It stores data regarding the staff employment records, compensation package, career track, etc. This is a very powerful management tool for decision making regarding human resource from promotions to transfers to training. It helps in making a more effective and efficient processing of information.

What is not available at the moment is the engineering database that is essential to the daily operation of the engineers in the company. This database require years of input from many sources. This require painstaking collection of data and it has to have a custodian to keep the information updated, ensure its integrity and prevent theft of the data which is very valuable and can tip the balance between profitability and loss for the company.

Apart from software, the company need to invest in technology hardware. As mentioned earlier, the top engineering services company have highly sophisticated draughting and design equipment that is able to produce designs at a fraction of the time normally taken by conventional computerised system such as the AutoCad system. To acquire such a system will require heavy capital commitment which may not be possible in the first year of operation. However, the company need to keep this in mind.

The work of the company's professionals require them to be on the move but at all times to be in constant contact with the home office. The availability of Internet through CompuServe allow them to do just that. The staff is able to contact home office from his hotel room half a world away via his notebook. As his equipment benefits the company in many ways, there should be no question as to its widespread use within the company. It will keep the company in line with the competitors.