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Evidence for Competency B

LIBR 257 – Records Management

Site Visit Assignment

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Running Head: SITE VISIT

Records Management at Swinerton Management & Consulting, Inc.

by

Mildred Arencibia

San Jose State University

Abstract

Swinerton Management & Consulting, Inc. is a Project, Construction Management and Consulting Services company based in San Francisco, California. SMC was born out of the need to plan, design, execute, and manage construction projects that were increasingly more complex and expensive. This paper will concentrate on one of the projects that are being managed by SMC: the Capital Improvement Program of the San Mateo County Community College District, San Mateo, California, which was started in 2000. As the project has progressed it has generated untold amounts of information and records which were not organized methodically until recently when the need to establish a comprehensive and centralized records management system became legally obvious.

Some time ago, I worked as a Senior Administrative Assistant for Swinerton Management & Consulting, Inc. While providing my services for the company at one of its main projects, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) at the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCD), it became obvious to me that the company needed to rethink the way it did its recordkeeping. I no longer work for SMC but when this site visit report was assigned, I immediately remembered SMC's recordkeeping issues and decided to revisit the company.

Upon contacting the Program Manager, K. Freeman, I learned that the company had come to recognize the importance of establishing a new recordkeeping procedure, training employees on it, and managing it on a continuum (personal communication, February 1, 2007). To that extent Ms. Freeman was also named the project's Records Administrator. She graciously offered to answer any questions related to SMC's record and information management (RIM) policy as related to the program.

#### SMC's Scope of Work

SMC is a division of Swinerton, a construction company that was established in 1888. The purpose of this business division, established in 1994, is to optimize a construction project's schedule, by providing a full range of preconstruction services that include budgeting, scheduling, value engineering, design review, and project management .

SMC was hired by the college business district to manage its CIP. In 1999, the college district did a Facilities Needs Assessment (FNA) and determined that several projects needed to be done to their facilities in order to properly serve the colleges' educational mission. Some projects involved bringing up to modern building code its aging facilities. Others called for building new facilities for new educational programs. Yet others required a modernization of the

current installations. In order to achieve its objectives, the district's office applied and was awarded a bond measure that would finance its growing physical needs. SMC came into the picture to implement and manage the CIP and provide the client with one interface.

#### CIP History

SMC's headquarters for the program at SMCCD, are centered in the main location of the college district, the College of San Mateo, at 1500 West Hillsdale Boulevard in San Mateo, California. Besides this location, SMC has two more at Skyline College and Cañada College but the one mentioned first is the center of operations and, therefore, recordkeeping for the CIP. SMC's headquarters is also located nearby the college district's office which is where the governance, accounting, human resources, facilities, and information technology departments for all three colleges reside. This is important as the district office holds a considerable volume of historical records that are inevitably needed and retrieved by SMC in its construction efforts.

The college district's facilities department houses most of the historical records that SMC works with on a daily basis. Examples of these are: original and current blueprints of buildings, previous constructions improvements to college properties, financial records related to every project, construction projects around the college properties, etc. The volume of information generated by the CIP on a daily basis is daunting as is the task of properly recording each happenstance properly and actively managing each record.

According to Ms. Freeman (personal communication, February 1, 2007), when SMC was hired to manage the CIP, it never foresaw the need to dedicate an employee to its information management. That stemmed from the fact that SMC had never done a project of the magnitude of the CIP before.

First, this was a public project so careful attention had to be paid to bond measures, fiscal accountability and responsibility, a dizzying maze of permissions and checks through the district's governance, and an extensive system of procedures at the State and County levels, in addition to the usual construction management issues (K. Freeman, personal communication, February 1, 2007).

Second, it involved conducting several constructions projects at once in three different locations with the consequent monumental coordination efforts of constructions crews, architects, designers, facilities and security personnel, and an array of contractors (K. Freeman, personal communication, February 1, 2007).

These two factors combined with SMC's inexperience handling such a complicated project, appeared to be a recipe for recordkeeping disaster which became obvious when SMC became involved a legal dispute of a piece of land destined for CIP related construction and the necessary records that could have expedited the process could not be located (K. Freeman, personal communication, February 1, 2007).

#### Records Management

The CIP has been running for about six years. SMC didn't recognize the need to implement an effective recordkeeping system for the first three years of the program per the aforementioned legal dispute occurrence.

After this, SMC approached these needs in several ways:

1. Implementation of a Records & Information Management (RIM) policy as put forth in a centralized schedule which instructs the users on record retention, management and disposal.
2. Implementation of a company wide recordkeeping system procedure for both physical and electronic records.

3. Implementation of document management software throughout the college district office, SMC, and Swinerton's complicated web of contractors, designers and architects which helps SMC manipulate, update and circulate any project related documents or directives in real time throughout its execution team.
4. Systematic training of employees on proper record management practices.
5. Centralization of all records in one location.
6. Assignment of one employee to be in charge of the RIM aspect of the CIP (currently this rests on Ms. Freeman's shoulders).

Some of the records managed by Ms. Freeman (K. Freeman, personal communication, February 1, 2007) and her employees on a daily basis are: blueprints, topographical maps, progress photographs, meeting minutes, project budgets, manuals, electronic documents, papers, e-mails, payment records, fundraising for special projects, historical documents, equipment purchases, equipment readings, and any record in general regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by SMC in connection with the CIP and preserved or appropriate for preservation as evidence of SMC's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and operations.

Since the execution of its new RIM policy, SMC has experienced benefits in quantifiable ways that have impacted the bottom line :

1. All CIP information is now organized in a logical, uniform, and easy to follow and replicate format which has improved efficiency and productivity.
2. Information is easily accessible by employees and contractors which has reduced waiting time and improved project turnaround and problem resolution.

3. Electronic recordkeeping of especially bulky records such as blueprints has reduced physical storage space with its accompanying operating costs, as well as the need for physical retrieval of the items which in turn has sped up employee and contractor productivity.

4. Regulatory compliance is now assured as no records are lost or destroyed without there being a record of such an action. This in turn minimizes the litigation risks which as we know, can have a terrible impact on a business' budget.

5. It is now easy to assimilate new records management technologies such as accounting software.

6. Management has all the data needed at its fingertips in order to make day to day better informed business decisions. Ms. Freeman can now assemble all information pertinent to a project within minutes just by performing a quick search within the electronic RIM system.

#### Observations

The physical and electronic archival system was consistent and well designed. Given its perceived complexity, I have decided to illustrate the system with an example. The Children's Center is assigned the project number 4. Each component of this project is assigned a number as well with roots on the original as follows:

#### 4 Children's Center

##### 4.1 Design Build

###### 4.1.1 Architecture Firm

###### 4.1.1.1 Meeting Minutes

###### 4.1.2 Engineering Firm

###### 4.1.2.1 Meeting Minutes

##### 4.2 Approvals

4.2.1 District Board of Directors

4.2.2 SMC

4.2.3 Voter Bond

4.2.4 County construction

4.3 Construction Phase

4.3.1 General Contractor

4.3.2 Roofing

4.3.3 Fixtures

4.3.4 Seismic retrofitting

4.4 Delivery

4.4.1 Final Approvals

Naturally, each project is more complex including far many more subcategories than represented here. The beauty and simplicity of the system lays in its logical structure.

Throughout the system, the Design Build subcategory will always follow the format X.1 where X represents the number of the project. So for the Science Building upgrade (project number 20), the subcategory 20.1 means that the records contained within it pertain to the Design Build aspect of the project. Even for an inexperienced user of the system, this is an easy way to look for information.

The Primavera management software that SMC uses is also a valuable tool. The software is an integrated product that provides project scheduling and timeline control, forecasts, up to date project costs, electronic document retrieval, custom reports, collaboration tools, action alerts, and centralized project information. The software has an easy to use interface with personalized dashboards to the user depending on their security clearance and type of

involvement in a construction project. All contractors and SMC employees, from the Project Manager to a Field Superintendent get tailored access to the system that allows them to work onsite or remotely with no loss of productivity.

Training on the new RIM policy and procedures has only happened at the administrative level. Granted, the assistants are usually the ones who are entrusted with filing and archiving most project related documents. However, to be truly successful, records management should be deeply understood and practiced at all levels of an organization. Otherwise, records can easily be misplaced or destroyed by someone whom, despite having access to the system, doesn't have a clear understanding of the needs for managing records properly.

Ms. Freeman (K. Freeman, personal communication, February 1, 2007) also expressed her worry at not having a dedicated employee who is entrusted with overseeing and managing compliance of the RIM policy. I agreed with her in that SMC would greatly benefit from creating a new position such as a Records Manager and hiring a trained professional to manage the project's information systems. Ms. Freeman can barely tend to her Program Manager duties yet she has also been assigned with supervising the project's immense flow of information. So far, she's done an amazing job at organizing what was there but clearly needs to pass the reigns of the record management task onto someone else.

On that note, I believe, a person whose education and work training revolve around managing information would be best suited to occupy this position. The position would require certain skills that are best embodied by a Library & Information Science professional. Some of the most obvious ones entail: an understanding of the flow of information within and across business entities; knowledge of data managing methods; knowledge of local, regional, national and international information policies; awareness of professional, legal, regulatory, and ethical

issues; the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate the information needs of different groups within an organization and make decisions to satisfy them; familiarity with information sources in an appropriate range of formats and the ability to identify and use the relevant ones efficiently; information retrieval skills; the ability to create and use finding aids and retrieval tools and an understanding of the standards for their conception; a perception of measures necessary to preserve information and how to implement them to ensure information availability; and, finally, a clear grasp on the basic principles of planning and management of information