

Project Workshop Background Information

Travel Agency profile:

The travel agency is located in Calgary, with a branch office in Okotoks and plans to hire more travel agents and open new agencies in the future. The agency has determined that an easy-to-operate system for storing information on customers, suppliers, sales and commissions is necessary. They would like to use their sales and customer information to identify marketing opportunities. In addition, although suppliers calculate commissions, the travel agencies do not have an easy way of identifying whether commissions are outstanding or properly calculated. There are few travel industry related software packages available, and none of them meet the needs of the travel agency.

As a result, the agency has set up a budget of \$250,000 for the development of a database/reporting system. Although the Calgary office is funding the project, other Canadian travel agencies might be interested in purchasing the system once it is developed.

The agency has some general ideas on what they want from the system:

1. A database loaded with their existing data which will be converted to fit the new database structure.
2. An application with an easy-to-use graphical interface for entering and administering data in the database.
3. A website where customers can browse available travel packages and place orders online.

Although the agents are probably capable of learning some simple SQL commands, they would prefer an easy to use interface for accessing their data so they can focus on their main work. Since they are located in different agencies, web access would be the best approach, but it will require authentication to prevent unauthorized access. To ease the training of new agents it is essential to have an easy-to-use graphical interface for the internal applications. Agency management understands that there may not be sufficient funds in the budget to develop all of the components of the system at this time. They have developed a number of prototype components which they want developed first, to help them decide which programming languages, tools, database system, and operating systems they should choose for the full system.

As this is a new way of collecting information and producing reports, there are no processes at the Agency that could be used to model the system. However, each of the agents has contributed to the project some information that they currently collect.

Project task:

A prototype database, internal application, and web application will be designed and developed using a number of technologies. The prototype will be used to assist in the preparation of a proposal to the Travel Agency outlining the suggested database and application design for the full implementation. The proposal will include an appropriate schedule, budget, personnel and future enhancements for the project.

Data:

The Agency has supplied us with a database developed by a database designer, and exported to work on a number of database platforms. As you develop the prototypes you may find better ways of doing it, so you are free to improve the database if necessary.

Hardware:

Each travel agent has an obsolete, underpowered computer running an old version of Windows. Each machine is equipped with a network card, but the communication rate is not up to modern speeds. The machines are connected to an internal network, but we currently don't have any machines that are powerful enough to be used as a server. We do have a couple of HP laser printers, but they are attached to the machines of the senior agents, and are inconvenient to use. The agents are connected to the Internet, but we are not confident about the security of our network.

Travel Agents:

The travel agents are reasonably computer literate as they currently record customer travel bookings in an Excel spreadsheet. Most are familiar with software packages such as Word and Excel. Without exception, the travel agents are excited about the project and they are eager to participate.

The agents have varying levels of experience, and have been assigned position titles -- senior agents, manager, intermediate agents and junior agents.

Customers:

The company's customers include both corporate and leisure travel clients. The downtown location is well situated to capture the corporate travel market, although customers have been asking when it will be possible to book online from their offices or using their Smartphones. Future expansion plans will take the agency into new branches

in other locations around the city and into new cities as well, but there is also a potential to offer a virtual travel agency that is independent of any specific location.

The following customer information is generally available, although not all of the information is in electronic form.

- Name, address
- Phone numbers for home and business (if available)
- Reward travel program information, eg. airline frequent flyer number
- Credit card information for our corporate clients (is it safe to keep this on our database?)

The Agency is willing to consider collecting additional information that might be helpful for marketing purposes.