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Technological Failure

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Technological Failure

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) implemented a new billing system that erroneously sent wrong inflated water bills to their customers, creating havoc among their customers. Such errors and failures in the new computer systems are not new as the failures are often seen in many departments like electricity and power and even the justice systems. Notably, when put to task to explain the error, the LADWP staff clarified that the errors occurred due to implementing a new computer billing system and it was not intentional (Chapter 8.1). Also promised the customers that the company would correct the mess in the following water meter reading something that was never actualized for the bills were just carried forward. Besides, the unpaid ones were written off by the company as bad debts after court intervention. For that reason, the customers who paid the inflated bills suffered stress and paid for the services they did not enjoy, which was viewed as customer exploitation.

The errors in the new computer billing system caused suffering to the customers since the system created more expenditure and significant customer disruption from their usual economic ways of life. The system did affect the customers and the company's financial expenditure because it was later ruled that the system needed an additional investment of 20M dollars to do away with the system in totality and achieve normalcy (Chapter 8.1). Notably, some computer systems applications can be very disastrous and threaten the existence of a company because such simple mistakes done by the computers can quickly force the customers to lose trust in the company and look for other alternatives. This factor can make the company run at huge losses and be grounded.

As a result, to prevent this technical error and failure of the computer billing system and avoid negative publicity to their customers, LADWP ought to have employed programmers. On the other hand, use the programmers from their IT department who were well conversant with applying the new billing system. Their programmers ought to have tested the system to ascertain that amounts charged to their customers were reasonably within the required range, having to account for the previous customers' water billings. Also, the company ought to have considered a system that allows for testing and provides for the checking of the users' inputs and the reasonable user output. The input must correspond to output for sound systems at the testing stages of the application. Testing computer application is the most critical stage of a computer system to prevent mass damage it can cause to both the company and customers before being unveiled for operation. Lastly, if the company would allow for the consultation among its stakeholders over the use of the new billing system, it would not turn disastrous because everyone would take ownership of the decision to use the new billing system. Simultaneously, more ideas on the system's improvement would be proposed before the initial use of the billing system.

Conclusively, companies must test new system applications to determine the possible advantages and disadvantages of the system. This helps the service provider avoid losses and disadvantage their clients and customers for a smooth and efficient business operation. The testing bit lacks in applying the new billing system, something that caused losses to customers and the company of LADWP.

Reference

Chapter 8.1: Failures and Errors in Computer Systems.

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