Production Brainstorming Minutes

February 26, 2019

11:30am – 1:00pm

Attending: Beth S., Ann K., Charlie C., Nancy B., Jessie E. Traci R. and Steve H.

A.   **Charlie Clour presented:**

One of the main purposes of this meeting is to introduce Charlie to some of WACOSA's key financial staff and to discuss both his vision behind assisting WACOSA and the interconnected nature of WACOSA's various departments. As a recap, Charlie is a private, business consultant who is working with WACOSA to help us improve our business and financial systems in order to begin working with us on a commission only basis. Charlie's efforts have been prompted by WACOSA's impending loss of Electrolux/West Rock work by the 3rd quarter of this year. Charlie shared his background, much of which centered on his history as an entrepreneur (i.e. patent development etc.) He shared some of his thoughts related to what WACOSA's Production Operation and Finance Departments will need if he is to be successful assisting us.

Some of the questions/assertions we will need to address to improve our systems include:

    i.   **Widen WACOSA's geographical reach** – WACOSA's history of seeking out new work has historically centered on a relatively limited geographical area in the Central MN area. Charlie seeks to grow this area, in turn, growing our chances for additional work that can replace Electrolux.

    ii.   **Mapping out the journey -** Charlie understands that WACOSA still has bumpy areas that need to be addressed in our NetSuite effort so that he, and WACOSA's sales staff in general can efficiently contact new businesses, remaining confident WACOSA's infrastructure for handling orders of incoming work will be efficient enough to ensure a successful flow and completion of the new work. This effort must establish the flow of work as a new order progresses through WACOSA from beginning to end. This process necessitates a flow chart. A flow chart will be developed involving all steps and all departments. All WACOSA personnel will be expected to follow these newly structured processes. Mapping meetings will seek out bumpy areas and smooth them out. Where NetSuite does not directly address an area, we will conduct work-arounds to handle the situation.

    iii.   **Using NetSuite** – Charlie recognizes that WACOSA has made a financial commitment to using NetSuite as a tool to address the broad needs of the organization. It is unrealistic to think that any one tool can do all WACOSA needs to do, especially when this software was written more for businesses and does not specifically address the needs of programs like WACOSA. This is a common issue with such programs. Charlie feels that he has a strong enough background in using NetSuite to help WACOSA improve the translation of this tool to the WACOSA setting, something the NetSuite sales staff should have done at some point during the sales and integration process. While WACOSA staff Jesse E. and Jenna S. have exceptional skills in this area, they have not been trained formally in Customer Relation and Management (CRM) systems or on the intricacies of

software packages like NetSuite. So, while we will be taking advantage of their ability to assimilate this information quickly and effectively, we must keep in mind the limits of their immediate abilities in these areas as we go along. Charlie's philosophy moving forward will be to keep NetSuite super simple. It is important to not make it more complex than it needs to be.

iv. **Logistics –** Charlie reminded everyone the path we are undertaking to improve the application of NetSuite to fit with WACOSA's services will require everyone to be open minded to see new possibilities but also to share all challenges we face when accessing or inputting data. Otherwise, we are all likely to get frustrated and not put forth our best effort. Examples include agreeing upon drop-down menus that help to capture the types of information we need to access. Each department will be asked to write down what this should look like compared to what we currently have. Another example will be our need to develop a unified coding system as we commence this process. Coding must consider both internal (WACOSA's) and external (customer) systems. Additionally, Charlie feels that all databases will need to feed into one, ultimate database. There are ways of accomplishing this within the boundaries of what WACOSA must operate. Nancy reminded Charlie and the group that we must improve our systems but we cannot make it cost prohibitive. An example would be number of licenses needed for a particular application. Charged monthly, this expense can get inordinately high.

Charlie explained that software programs like NetSuite were designed for distributors and manufacturers. While WACOSA more closely resembles a distributor, we really are neither of these things precisely. The importance of how we approach this process cannot be overstated since we want to identify issues on paper before we transition to actions. If something is a training issue, it needs to be addressed from this perspective without introducing other variables to fix the flow of work.

v. **Next steps –** Ann and Charlie have already worked through the steps needed to track order development/work flow from a sales perspective. Ann will share this information with all committee members in order for them to see format and process for what they will be asked to do from their department's perspective. Ann commented that the process was very helpful, allowing her identify problems before they became stumbling blocks. Charlie expressed that flow charts like Ann did can be very helpful for visual learners, as well as for WACOSA Board members who wish to see progress made. Business people on the board will benefit from the process even more, since this is often how their own businesses operate.

Nancy pointed out that the issue of verbiage needs to be addressed as we move forward. Some of language we use is not consistent with that used in the business world or displayed in the NetSuite software. We will have to understand the way our use of language is different and attempt to rectify this issue to add clarity to the process.

Charlie also pointed out that a uniform coding process to label WACOSA product will be needed and should be done as one of the very next steps. This should include a simple pre-fix code that is internal to WACOSA that meets our production and/or program needs. We should not worry about external coding right now.

Operations will be the next department that will meet to address flow. Charlie pointed out that a scribe will be needed for each meeting like this that occurs. He volunteered to scribe for Beth with the help of Ann K.

Jessie E. and Jenna S. from Sauk Centre will be invited to all future meetings that are appropriate for the topic being discussed. Steve will also be sure that Charlie is on his meeting distribution list. At this time, there may be a glitch with this since he is not sure he has been receiving these emails.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:00pm.

Next meeting - TBD