MANAGING E-COMMERCE_MMGT_543

Assignment 1: Identifying a Problem That E-Commerce Can Solve

Title: Improving Medicine Availability through a Digital E-Commerce Platform

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Part 1: Problem Identification

In my professional life working in the pharmaceutical supply chain in Saudi Arabia, I have noticed a recurring problem that creates a lot of inefficiency and frustration for all parties involved. The issue is related to the **availability and delivery of medicines between suppliers, hospitals, and pharmacies**.

Although companies like mine use advanced systems such as SAP and we coordinate with NUPCO for tenders, there are still big gaps in the process. Many times, hospitals request urgent medicines, but because of slow approvals, missing visibility of stock, or miscommunication, the delivery is delayed. In other cases, the wrong batch is delivered or rejected because the expiry date is too short. This causes wasted time, higher costs, and more importantly, risk to patients who need their medicine on time.

From my daily experience, I have seen situations where the warehouse prepares an order, but the hospital suddenly changes the request, or the planner approval does not reach the warehouse team clearly. The result is cancelled deliveries, emergency rescheduling, and extra logistics costs. It feels like we are always reacting to problems instead of having a smooth and transparent process.

Who is Affected

- **Hospitals and Pharmacies:** They struggle with uncertainty. They often don't know exactly which stock is available or when it will arrive, which affects how they treat their patients.

- **Suppliers and Distributors (like Salehiya):** We face high costs because of cancellations, re-deliveries, and urgent shipments. Also, relationships with hospitals are affected when things go wrong.

- **Patients:** At the end of the chain, the ones who suffer the most are patients. When critical medicine is not available or is delayed, it directly impacts their health and safety.

Why It Matters

This is not just a small inconvenience — it is a **serious healthcare problem**. A small delay in cancer medication, for example, can cause big consequences for the patient. Hospitals want transparency and speed, but the current system is still too manual and fragmented. Distributors want efficiency, but we end up wasting resources because of last-minute changes or miscommunication.

At the same time, the market is moving toward digitalization. According to Saudi Vision 2030, healthcare is one of the priority sectors for transformation, especially with technology and e-health solutions. The e-commerce industry in general is growing worldwide, but B2B healthcare supply chain platforms are still limited in this region.

Based on what I see in my work, there is a strong need for a digital solution that connects all sides together in real time.

Part 2: Hypothesized E-Commerce Solution

The solution I imagine is a **B2B e-commerce platform specifically designed for pharmaceutical procurement**. This would be like a centralized marketplace where hospitals and pharmacies can log in and immediately see what stock is available, which batch numbers, and what expiry dates. They could place orders directly, and the system would automatically update inventory levels and send confirmations.

Some features I think are important:

- **Real-time stock visibility** so hospitals know exactly what is available.

    - **Expiry and batch tracking** to avoid rejections of wrong lots.

    - **Automated approval process** so urgent requests are not delayed.

    - **Delivery tracking** similar to how we track online shopping orders.

- **Mobile access** so pharmacists can order quickly even from their phones.

This type of platform would reduce a lot of the miscommunication I see every day. It would save time and money for suppliers and hospitals, and most importantly, ensure that patients get their medicines without delay. I also believe it is scalable — if successful in Saudi Arabia, the same idea can expand to other Gulf countries that face similar challenges.