Spring 2009

ACUTA Journal of Telecommunications in Higher Education

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Events Calendar

Event	Date	Location
Annual Conference	April 19–22, 2009	Hyatt Regency Atlanta, Georgia
Summer Summit	July 12–15, 2009	Marriott City Center Denver, Colorado
Fall Seminar	October 25–28, 2009	Marriott Downtown Waterfront Portland, Oregon
Winter Seminar	January 24–27, 2010	Sheraton New Orleans New Orleans, Louisiana

ACUTA's Core Purpose is to support higher education information communications technology professionals in contributing to the achievement of the strategic mission of their institutions.

ACUTA's Core Values are:

- Encouraging and facilitating networking and the sharing of resources
- Exhibiting respect for the expression of individual opinions and solutions
- Fulfilling a commitment to professional development and growth
- Advocating the strategic value of information communications technologies in higher education
- Encouraging volunteerism and individual contribution of members

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Contents

FEATURES

Cover by Dixon Design

66

Technology changes are inevitable and necessary. Customers who are kept informed and receive high-quality support will not only accept such changes, they will embrace them. The secret to success is to make customer satisfaction top priority.

—*Suzanne Kane and Donna Taylor*
page 18

The ACUTA Journal of Information Communications Technology in Higher Education

Submissions Policy
The ACUTA Journal welcomes submissions of editorial material. We reserve the right to reject submissions or to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Send all materials or letter of inquiry to Pat Scott, Editor-in-Chief. Author's guidelines are available upon request or online at www.acuta.org.

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CORINNE HOCH
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
ACUTA PRESIDENT
2008–2009

What Client Relationship Management Means to Me

The theme of our spring *Journal* is "Best Practices in Customer Service," which I translate into "What Client Relationship Management Means to Me." I struggled with the definition of this topic when I was first asked to help develop the CRM area within Columbia University Information Technology. Just as you will inevitably get five different sets of directions when you ask five New Yorkers for directions, you will inevitably get multiple answers when you ask others what CRM may mean to them.

I read. I searched the Web. And, yes, I also asked others. The most comprehensive definition of CRM that I found is best stated in five principles adapted from the "One Boise Guiding Principles" by Boise Cascade Office Products:

1. Learning and remembering
2. Interacting seamlessly
3. Anticipating needs
4. Keeping promises
5. Exceeding expectations

We saw some excellent examples of CRM at the Winter Seminar in Palm Springs. Reinforcing what we know to be true, the topics "Unified IP Communications Applications across the Enterprise" and "Communications Technologies for Emergencies and Disasters" were designed specifically for, by, and with the customer, or else the implementation process would *be* the disaster. From the opening session, "Strategic Views," presented by two higher-education IT leaders, Melody Childs (deputy CIO, Louisiana State University) and David Ernst (CIO and associate vice president, University of California System) to the closing session, Northwestern's "Emergency Communications Strategy," presented by Jay Needleman (IT field operations manager), the importance of the customer was evident.

1. Learning and remembering each unique need of our customers was obvious in the VoIP pilot conducted at Wellesley College and shared with us by Lisa Diethelm, project manager, IS/technology infrastructure group, and Geoff Tritsch, vice president, Vantage Technology Consulting Group. A pilot is a trial operation upon which many of us rely to determine whether the proposed product or solution will provide the anticipated benefits to our customers.

2. Interacting seamlessly. Jennifer Van Horn, manager, network distribution, Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis, and Chuck Aikman, manager, online support, UITS, Indiana University, brought together all of their resources in a way that appeared seamless to their customers, and presented to us their unified communications solution for more than 1,200 clients. Access to remote call control, video, email, Web collaboration, presence, and instant messaging increased client efficiency and productivity threefold.

3. Anticipating needs and offering solutions even before we're asked was apparent in the presentation "Managing Classroom Technologies with VoIP Demon Controls" given by Joe Salwach, associate vice president of information services, DePaul University. We learned how DePaul uses VoIP for more than just phone service as the VoIP phones in all classrooms are now programmed with emergency numbers as well as Demon controls to make adjustments and to report problems with projectors, computers, and other equipment upon which professors, students, and the administrators who support them rely.

4. Each of the corporate presentations exemplified the guiding principle **keeping promises,** doing whatever it takes to keep each promise made. That promise might be providing mobility for your campus, discussed in the presentation "Using IP Communications Applications to Unify Your Institutions" by Aastra and

in DiVitas Networks' presentation "Mobile UC Makes Educators More Available and Productive." Or the promise may be security, as examined in "Enhancing Campus Safety with Wi-Fi," presented by Aruba Networks, and "Are You Totally Prepared?" presented by Genesys. The promises to deliver the right information to the right person in a timely manner, handling the "return wave" of inbound requests, and leveraging the campus WLAN for emergency warning, video surveillance, and disaster recovery applications are, gratefully, all taken quite seriously.

5. **Exceeding customer expectations.** This isn't about you or me; it's about knowing our customers. It's about us being One CUIT.

Emerging industry standards and governmental guidance help us to exceed our customer expectations, as we saw in the presentations "Toward an Integrated Notification System" and "Deciphering the Federal Warning, Alert, and Response Network (WARN) Act." Dewitt Latimer, deputy CIO and chief technology officer, University of Notre Dame, covered the latest developments in the federal government's efforts to develop an integrated public alert and warning system and a common alerting protocol as well as the technological infrastructure and processes that must be in place in order to send out geographic-based mass emergency notification to cell phones. Walt Magnussen, director of telecommunications at Texas A&M University, and Art Botterell, community warning system manager

for the office of the sheriff, Contra Costa County, California, discussed efforts to implement a solution that would allow a dispatcher to send multiple alerts with one simple interface, along with the common alerting protocol, industry's effort to implement a standard for this sort of integration.

And I believe in those fundamental guiding principles with every fiber of my being.

Handouts from the Winter Seminar can be viewed or downloaded from the ACUTA website at www.acuta.org/?2319.

"One Boise Guiding Principles" was a marketing campaign created by Bader Rutter & Associates. http://officemax.mediaroom.com/index.php/press_releases/120.

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Optimism Ahead for National Policy Changes

JERI A. SEMER, CAE
ACUTA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A number of developments are under way in Washington, D.C., that bode well for consumers of information communications technology services. There is cause for optimism for both individual consumers and organizations such as colleges and universities.

Economic Stimulus

At the time this column is being written, the U.S. Senate and House are still in negotiations on an unprecedented economic stimulus package. Both the House and Senate versions of the bill contain several billion dollars of support for our nation's cyberinfrastructure. So, although we don't yet know the specifics of legislation that will eventually be passed by Congress and signed by the president, it is virtually certain to contain a huge investment by the federal government in the deployment of broadband services to unserved and underserved areas of the country.

Only a few short weeks ago, we were lacking a national government commitment to broadband deployment. While we are still without a cohesive national broadband policy, this legislation will jump-start bringing a critical service to communities that have been handicapped by a lack of access.

As negotiations continue with the goal of bringing the entire stimulus package into a form that will garner enough votes to pass, billions of dollars are being shaved from the spending plan. Over the last weekend, funds earmarked for renovation and repair of buildings on college campuses were significantly reduced, and $2 billion was cut from the broadband provisions in the Senate bill. We will definitely keep you informed of ways in which the economic stimulus is likely to affect higher-education institutions. In the final analysis, thousands of jobs will be created or preserved, and badly needed investments will be made in our physical and cyberinfrastructure.

Other Bills in Congress

Although the majority of attention has been focused on the economic stimulus, a couple of other bills of interest have been introduced and are moving quickly through the committee process in Congress. Legislation has been reintroduced in both the House and the Senate to resolve the burdensome record-keeping rules by removing cell phones and similar PDA devices from "listed property" under the IRS Code. You can keep up-to-date on these bills via a widget on the ACUTA website at www.acuta.org.

In addition, a bill was recently introduced and has already passed the House of Representatives (H.R. 748—The CAMPUS Safety Act of 2009) that will create a National Center for Campus Safety within the U.S. Department of Justice. This legislation is supported by the campus law enforcement community, and would have an important role in research, promoting collaboration and information dissemination, developing threat assessment models, and coordinating the activities of various government agencies concerned with campus safety.

Changes at the FCC

While Congress is debating economic stimulus legislation, major changes are also taking place at the FCC. These changes are positive as well, and they are designed to create greater openness and transparency at this important agency.

We are observing a real initiative toward bipartisanship, collegiality, and open communication among the interim chairman and the other two remaining FCC commissioners. Efforts have begun to promote better communication among the career professionals who bring tremendous value to the FCC and

the commissioners' staffs. Simple ideas such as announcing upcoming meeting dates a year in advance, making the FCC's website more user friendly, and ensuring that commissioners have sufficient time to review proposed decisions in advance are receiving positive reviews.

There has also been talk of bringing more technical expertise (engineers and other technology professionals) onto the professional staff over time and retuning the agency's strategic plan to bring it into line with the current environment. Based on the FCC's statements about the importance of advanced broadband services and their role in promoting advanced technologies, it will be interesting to see what direction the agency moves in once it escapes the quagmire of the digital TV transition. As an outside observer who has interacted with staff and commissioners under several FCC chairs, these seem like very positive developments that will benefit both consumers and the industry.

By law, the FCC has a 3-2 split between the majority and minority parties. There are currently two vacancies (the chairman and one commissioner), and one of the remaining members is being considered for another job in the administration. This all means that the president will need to appoint a permanent chair and, presumably, one more Democrat and one Republican to the Commission.

Dept. of Education Negotiated Rulemaking

Another potentially positive development has occurred at the Department of Education, where very early efforts are under way to develop regulations to implement the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. The three areas of most interest to ACUTA members are peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, emergency notification and response, and identity verification of distance-learning students.

ACUTA had the opportunity to nominate rulemaking negotiators on these topics. We learned this month that one of our nominees, Matt Arthur from Washington University in St. Louis, was accepted as an alternate negotiator on P2P. This means that Matt will have a seat at the table at all three negotiation sessions on this important subject. We will keep you informed as negotiations proceed throughout the spring and final rules are put in place by a target date of November for implementation in summer 2010.

This is a fast-paced and fascinating time for ICT issues at the federal level, and ACUTA is increasingly involved in these issues, both independently and in concert with other higher-education associations. I am constantly reminded of our dual roles of advocacy in representing the interests of our members at the national level and keeping you informed of issues that will affect your campus. If there are issues you are particularly interested in, please don't hesitate to contact me at jsemer@acuta.org.

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Abundance of Services at IU

Sue Workman
Indiana University

The horrible economy might in fact be a gift that forces us, in all areas of our life, to back up, reconsider, rethink, and perhaps take advantage of opportunities we might otherwise not have prioritized at this point. Similarly, the current economic situation gives IT professionals in higher education pause to stop, reprioritize, and rethink how we can deliver services better. Often, hard budgetary times require cuts in service. How can higher education leverage IT support organizations and provide even more for the same amount of money, or better yet, more for less money?

I believe it is time that we in IT in higher education take a fresh look at how we leverage support—not only intra-institutionally (within our own universities) but also inter-institutionally (between universities)—for the greater good, and also further leverage our budgets and resources. It is time we stop thinking about the support organization as the warm and fuzzy, nontechnical smiley staff, and begin to think of them as a strategic key to our institutions' success. If we do, the higher-ed IT support organizations of the future may look very different from those of today.

IT Support Is Strategic

Indiana University has just released a new IT strategic plan, the title of which is *Empowering People: Indiana University's Strategic Plan for Information Technology 2009* [http://www.indiana.edu/~ovpit/]. As the title suggests, the plan is human-centric and is all about Indiana University's aspirations for empowering people across our university in their use and application of information technology.

One particular action states: "IU should pursue strategies that approximate a philosophy of abundance, within reason, towards unmetered availability of basic IT services, support, and infrastructure for creative activity, storage, computation, communication, and other activities fundamental to the work of the university via any appropriate sourcing strategy."

Hmmm, abundance, in this economy? Yes, that's what it says, and that is what we will do in the support organization.

Whether or not one has a mandate from a strategic plan, many of us face the challenge not only of providing core support services with less funding, but also of providing more services than we have in the past, with less funding. In fact, some institutions are facing the possibility of reductions in force.

Before considering IT Support as a target for reductions, however, consider the strategic importance of IT support in higher education. Our institutions are growing in the use of IT for our core missions of teaching, learning, and research. Our workdays are no longer confined to a defined workweek, a defined workday, or even a defined work space. Our users anticipate immediate answers to their questions and expect an application to load easily and be self-explanatory for use. They have no time

for a learning curve. The sheer number of devices we support increases on a daily basis. Anyone thinking that support is not a core service is very shortsighted. Support is about empowering members of the university community to succeed in their work. Keeping faculty, students, and staff on task is the reason for our existence. While reducing support services may trim the IT budget, such reductions can more severely impact the productivity of the university community.

At Indiana University, we have leveraged our self-service systems and enterprise negotiations over the past several years to serve more people who use more devices, 24/7, wherever they are—on campus, at home, in residence halls, or around the globe. Our users do not confine themselves to a narrow list of supported devices or applications. We also have not increased our human resources for many years, even as new systems and new technology have been introduced and hours of operation have expanded. Instead, we have concentrated on leveraging our resources by using technology and smart vendor negotiations to deliver our business.

We employ many metrics, one of which is activity-based costing, which is the fully loaded cost of providing a service. We know that in the 2007–2008 fiscal year, a phone call to our Support Center cost $11.41, a walk-in consultation cost $16.70, support via email cost $9.39, and support via chat cost $26.24. (The high cost of chat is due to initial investments in the technology. The demand for chat rose 121 percent over the prior year.) We also know that delivering a solution via our self-service online knowledge management system cost $.06 (yes, six cents). While personal one-on-one support is very valuable, by leveraging our internal support systems the cost of each of these services is far below industry standards.[1] Even if it takes 10

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searches for a user to find an answer, the cost is far below that of personal support. Most people will not make 10 unsuccessful searches, so we have to make sure our online systems are accurate, easy to use, and very efficient. For those who do not have 24/7/365 personal support, online knowledge management systems can fill a huge void during the hours you do not staff. In the context of the economy, online knowledge management is an example of a system one can leverage for expansive growth and expansive demand—at very little incremental cost.

The IU Knowledge Base

Many think of the ticket-tracking system as the foundational support system. However, I consider the foundation to be the knowledge management system (KMS). The IU Knowledge Base (http://kb.iu.edu/) is the foundation for support at IU and the foundation of training and support for our IT staff. New hires do not have to be trained on everything because the answers are at their fingertips, and seasoned staff don't feel the need to remember everything (if you're over 40, you'll understand this).

Moreover, our faculty, staff, and students can find information easily themselves and don't have to wait in a queue for answers. The system is built and populated to serve repetitive answers. We can anticipate questions and prepopulate for new or changing systems. The old 80/20 rule applies to IT support—addressing the top 20 percent of the community's questions will cover about 80 percent of the support demand. So preloading or quickly addressing these questions in an easy-to-use KMS fast-answer system will cut down the need for personal contact. We can then use our precious and scarce human resources for IT problems that require complex logic and troubleshooting—problems that may be new, or have nuances that may not be obvious to users.

Perhaps one of the most useful portions of a knowledge management system is the ability to create and maintain documents in a single repository and use them in many places. Our KMS is a repository of information that one may access via a Knowledge Base search. Additionally, utilizing Web services technology, these documents are also used in class materials, online application help systems, online tutorials, step-by-step support tools, newsletters, IT notices, RSS feeds, and more. The beauty is that we maintain the information, the most expensive part of a KMS, in one place; and then it is automatically populated in many places immediately upon any change.

While the KMS is mission critical for IU, there are other essential support systems, such as IUware,[2] an online software distribution system; the Personnel Information Environment, with which one manager effectively manages more than 300 consultants in 708 lab locations with one manager; our online support environment (http://uits.iu.edu); our IT Notifications systems for communications about system status; and our GetConnected[3] application to easily and safely configure machines as students move into campus housing. By using these systems and continually looking for ways to proactively address support issues, we are able to leverage our human resources to provide the critical one-to-one personal support required.

What's in Store for the Future?

The knowledge base of yesterday was about searching for and retrieving what experts had compiled. The knowledge management system of tomorrow is about two-way communication, collaboration, and shared content generation. Along with certifiable expert answers, there is an enormous potential for our communities to contribute support to each other.[4] Such a vision for the future requires a software platform for relevant, collaborative knowledge sharing and just-in-time content delivery that supports the entire academy 24/7/365.

Indiana University, along with the University of Illinois and others, is in the process of developing what we believe is the first community source cloud computing environment dedicated to higher education.[5] This system will modernize and extend existing KMSs using new paradigms such as wikis, crowdsourcing, community-source software, and service-oriented architecture, including cloud computing. This project promises another first: the KMS will be the first higher-education community-source software project to share content as well as code and will allow participating universities to collaborate and leverage resources required to create and maintain information in common (estimated at 40 to 60 percent of existing Knowledge Base documents). Who knows? This may be the foundation system for a broad community-source support-system platform, with the KMS as the foundation.

In Summary

Whether trying to move an organization forward strategically or address budgetary issues, or both, the IT support organizations of today are strategic, high-tech organizations. Yes, we must provide high-quality and helpful information. The way to do this with ever-increasing demand is by utilizing technology to assist and deliver information to our communities—just what they need, just when and where they need it. The future will leverage system and content sharing to add even greater value at less cost for the higher-education community.

Sue B. Workman is associate vice president, office of the vice president, Indiana University, and CIO. She can be reached at sbworkma@indiana.edu.

1. HDI. *2007 Practices & Salary Survey* (2007).

2. Indiana University, University Information Technology Services. "What Is IUware?" http://kb.iu.edu/data/agze.html.

3. Indiana University, University Information Technology Services. "What Is Get Connected, and What Does It Do?" http://kb.iu.edu/data/aoxc.html.

4. Brad Wheeler. "In Search of Certitude." *EDUCAUSE Review* 43, no. 3 (2008):14–34. http://connect.educause.edu/library/EDUCAUSE+Review/InSearchofCertitude/46604.

5. Indiana University and the University of Illinois are participating in a knowledge management system project that will allow community-source involvement in a knowledge management solution. See http://kb.iu.edu/data/ayvbz.html.

Thanks to Our Exhibitors and Sponsors!

Thanks to these companies that exhibited or sponsored at one, two, three or all four of our events in 2008. ACUTA members are their potential customers, but representatives from many of these companies have also become our partners in success as well as our friends. As they determine whose events they will attend each year, ACUTA is glad they have chosen ours!

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1 EVENT

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Customer Relations and Technology: Practical Solutions from Two Campuses

Chris Amisano

Today's campus technology professionals, faced with more diverse populations, geographic spread, and sometimes "old-school" customer perceptions, are using both technology and human solutions to increase efficiency and improve and maintain customer relations. As this trend develops, IT departments are examining their customer relations processes and setting the standard for customer relationship management in a technologically advanced environment.

Davidson College: Changing the Mind Set

In order to better serve customers and change the mind set that technology staffs are not customer-centric, Mur Muchane, executive director of information technology services at Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina, is using technology and increased customer interaction to improve client relations. Muchane says that one of his most important strategies is simply to know the department's customers.

Knowing the customers means knowing what *matters* to each one. Since campus departments tend to operate autonomously, IT's role is to understand the sense that each department has its "own issues, needs, and rhythms." To go against the "old-school" ideas of technology professionals as uncaring and unsympathetic, Muchane insists that the staff spend time with departments in order to understand their issues. With this knowledge, IT professionals are able to understand what's going on in each campus area and to respond to issues and planned projects accordingly.

Another effective relationship builder, according to Muchane, is the basic advice to "keep communications straightforward." In the past, he says, IT at Davidson focused on technology-centric customer communications. Now, the standing rule with the department is "don't speak geek" to customers. "We are proud that we understand technology," Muchane says, "but communication that tends to be full of jargon. . . turns people off."

Instead, IT focuses less on technical details and more on the outcomes of projects and service calls. Muchane gives an example of an email message that was intended to communicate a planned Internet service outage. This particular message was technical and full of details that might have been of little interest to the audience. Upon review, the communication went back to the drawing board to refocus on outcomes and benefits and to offer a more high-level explanation of what the end user could expect.

Practice Makes Perfect

The Davidson IT department is also aware, thanks to Muchane's guidance, that practice in customer relations makes perfect. As the example of the back-to-the-drawing-board" email illustrates, Muchane reviews most wide-audience communications before they are sent out. He hopes that over time communication will become more user centered through coaching and rewriting. Muchane even discusses potential communications with nontechnical campus staff to obtain input on their perceptions and the information they receive from IT. This discussion, he says, helps to "hone the department's message."

In regard to practice and technology, Muchane advises that multiple channels must be considered for communication to be effective. Overuse of one channel can turn the audience off just as technical jargon can. The IT department is very selective about messages that go out campuswide, and takes extra time on communications to ensure that they are targeted only to specific audiences—in their preferred channels. Less noise from IT, Muchane says, allows the group to tailor an effective message.

Effective Channels

So just what technologies does Davidson use to communicate, practice, and build relationships with customers? Email is used where appropriate and to audiences that will most likely respond to it. The IT department also maintains a blog called "It's News," which publishes information and is organized by audience, such as faculty, students, and staff, and also by specific tools. Along with the blog, Muchane's division maintains a website with a "What's Happening?" section that consistently lists the top three issues affecting widespread customer groups.

In a further departure from the ordinary, Davidson's IT group created an experimental podcast in the hopes of making difficult topics a little easier to communicate as well as easier for the audience to accept. In this particular instance, Muchane says, IT needed to communicate the dangers of downloading music and the penalties for doing so. "IT doesn't want to be a rules organization," he says, so student workers in IT wrote and recorded a skit for the podcast. The skit was also used as background audio on cable TV in student residences. The skit, Muchane says, was humorous and light in nature, but appears to be very effective.

Moving forward with new forms of technology, Muchane says plans are in the works to bring in student workers for the creation of IT pages on social networking sites such as Facebook. This, Muchane says, will open a new mode of communication on campus. IT at Davidson will continue looking for nontraditional ways to reach all of its customers.

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In addition to technical channels, Muchane uses three advisory committees to improve customer relations. The committees, which consist of technical and nontechnical staff members from multiple departments, meet regularly to discuss trends and coming issues. With communication as the key, he says that the IT department is setting the expectation that "we are a service organization." Each person understands that customer relations is part of yearly evaluations, and that partnership with the campus is expected. The focus of Davidson's IT department, Muchane summarizes, is using technology efficiently, knowing customers, and spending time with them to understand their business.

NIU: Human Solutions

Meanwhile, a few states to the west, Sabrina Hammond of Information Technology Services at Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, Illinois, shares a similar service orientation. But one of the first things Hammond points out is that ITS's best customer relations strategy is "not a technology solution but rather a human solution." In a series of regular seminars and open forum discussions called "Let's Talk," ITS takes the time to discuss key issues such as new products, security, and business processes. Hammond says that technical leaders serve as subject matter experts both in the audiences and as seminar leaders and that issues are being addressed quickly. Not only has Let's Talk created the perception that ITS is part of the community of service providers, but it has also become a regular cultural event. "People are asking for the schedule," says Hammond.

Consistent Communication

When it comes to technology, ITS at NIU also deploys its strategy in the form of multiple communications channels. The communications mantra is to "communicate early and communicate often" via three separate listservs for technical issues, lab management, and planned outages. Hammond says that the listservs create the need for ITS "to be more thoughtful" about their work and that the breakdown of topics and audiences keeps overload to a minimum.

Another technology used for general communication at NIU is called "Project Town Crier," a subscription-based voice-mail broadcast. The information in the voicemails is targeted to specific phone numbers for subscribers and carries information on planned and unplanned service impacts and interruptions. ITS, again standing behind the fact that communication is vital, also uses a subscription-based RSS feed that sends out information via email or text. Hammond says that the extensive use of

technology to push information was a response to customer complaints that ITS was not informing them of technology-related activity. This lack of information affected ITS customer productivity as well as the customer service abilities of affected departments. IT departments in general, according to Hammond, should make it a practice to "communicate more often and in a preferred format."

"A by-product of the information push," Hammond says, "was the need to develop more venues for customers to provide input to ITS." So the department developed regular, campuswide roundtable focus groups led by senior technology managers. Hammond points out that this is, again, not necessarily a tech solution but a human solution to technical issues. She says that these discussions can be "wild and dicey" due to frustration, but that the opportunity for customers to vent tends to mitigate the rumblings.

In addition to the roundtables, a Computing Facilities Advising Committee, made up of members from several different campus departments, meets regularly to set priorities related to IT projects. One of the biggest outcomes of these meetings is the centralized help desk, which now exists via ITS at NIU. Prior to the centralization, there was no primary contact point for ITS customers.

Periodic customer surveys are also used to obtain feedback from ITS clients. These surveys create the opportunity for customers to provide information that is incident-specific and helps ITS to understand how to improve services going forward.

A Culture of Self-Service

The help desk also uses an incident-tracking system that allows ITS to embed troubleshooting tips and just-in-time training for customers. In addition, escalations are monitored to make sure that incidents are handled within prescribed timelines. Another technological improvement to this customer relations strategy is a new self-service portal that allows customers to track the status of their tickets online. The incident-tracking system, says Hammond, is also used to increase knowledge capital. This illustrates ITS's promise to take leadership in developing new culture. Part of a new service culture, Hammond says, is to recreate business processes for self-service. More technologically sophisticated students and staff no longer see self-service as "special"—they've come to expect it.

The future of customer relations at NIU, according to Hammond, is increasingly dependent on technology because the department has moved to an off-campus location. The move

caused some to feel that ITS was "divorcing" the campus, so being available virtually is vital. In the past, ITS staff had a "go-and-visit" mind set because they were located on campus. Because of this, visits were sometimes delayed until the staff member made it to a particular department or building. Since the move, staff members are helping people right away remotely via collaborative applications like Blackboard. Through necessity, ITS is developing "more practical use" of collaboration tools to serve customers. This technology is also becoming an expectation as opposed to an exception.

Hammond recommends that IT departments "allow early input into decisions and problem-solving discussions" so that customers are part of the solution and not part of the problem. She says this orientation helps maintain the "perspective about who we serve." Technology, Hammond explains, is simply the "backdrop of our business."

Conclusion

The current economic environment has required many businesses to take a serious look at the quality of their customer service, and higher standards have been one result. Colleges and universities are also a part of this trend, well timed as it coincides with the convergence of technologies on campus, which frequently requires restructuring and reorganizing. Davidson and NIU are good examples of campus IT departments that recognize the value of customer relations and know how to use technology to improve service. From consistent communications via a variety of media to the introduction of new technologies to face-to-face contact in non-traditional settings, plenty of tools are available to today's ICT manager.

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FSU Converges Support to Follow Technology

Suzanne Kane
Donna Taylor
Florida State University

Convergence implies the carriage of different types of traffic such as voice, video, data, and images over a single, integrated network based on the Internet protocol (IP). Throughout most of the 20th century, communications media were separate and services were distinct. Voice telephony, online computer services, and broadcasting were separate, and each had its own platform. Each was also regulated differently and by different entities. These concise business models had support that was easily defined.

The trend toward convergence combines all of these different media into one operating platform. This merger of telecom, data processing, and imaging technologies is creating a new era of multimedia that customers not only want, but demand. One of the challenges presented by this demand that receives less attention but is critical to success is support. Customer service groups must be formed that can cross all technological boundaries to support the breadth of products, services, and features required to satisfy our customers' expectations.

Florida State's Westcott Building

In response to this development, The Florida State University (FSU) made the decision to converge its computer help desk and telecom call center/directory assistance section with reporting lines to the telecommunications customer service area. This coincided with a restructure that reassigned reporting of the telecommunications department to the Office of Technology Integration (OTI). All support for computer and telephony would remain intact; however, this unit had a more comprehensive, university-wide role to fulfill. The merger was announced in December 2005, and although the process was not without obstacles, it was managed expediently and seamlessly. Here is how FSU made this work.

Early Decisions

Early in the process, it was decided to scale back, define the areas of need, and distinguish between short term and long term. Rather than looking at the big picture, the focus was on the short-term, critical need so the process could be manageable. As for any other project, parameters were defined, plans were developed, a timeline was established, and tasks/leaders were assigned. It was time to set the start date and roll up shirtsleeves.

The following six project parameters, initial areas of critical need, were identified:

1. Location. The goal was to bring the staff from both sections together. Regardless of the location selected, one of the two groups (if not both) would need to be physically relocated. Because space was limited in our main building, the computer help-desk location was selected, and the staff from the main telecommunications building relocated. While this was not ideal from the standpoint of building a cohesive department, it ultimately helped build relationships and

bridge trust with the newly formed alliance with other technology departments. Because this location was more closely connected to other IT departments, it confirmed that the help desk was still there to support the entire division.

Another advantage to this location was the ability to act quickly. Fall was rapidly approaching, and neither section was adequately staffed. The options were to either fill the vacancies in both sections and operate in two locations until peak time settled down or to bite the bullet, move and train existing staff, and hold on until fall rush was over! Choosing the latter was one of the toughest decisions made, leaving most staff members very apprehensive; but in the end, it proved to be the right decision because it worked.

2. Positions/staffing. The strength of any successful business resides with its employees. FSU had two great units that functioned well separately. The goal was to capitalize on the technology strengths of the help desk and the customer-centric attitude of telecom's call center to establish a broader help-desk identity. With that in mind, the blended Florida State University Technology Services Help Desk was born.

3. Telephone system configuration. Both help desks used automatic call distribution (ACD) systems, with long-term, established numbers. Functionality and telephone numbers had to be merged and/or forwarded into one system, with 644-HELP as lead number. Telecom's call center evolved from campus operators, which introduced a third long-term number and system to support FSU's directory assistance. Historically, this directory assistance number was globally published as the university's main number, which also had to be factored into the configuration. Once the techni-

cal configuration was complete, all of the newly united employees had to be trained to collectively support computer help desk, telephony help desk, and FSU directory assistance prior to fall rush, August 2006.

In October of that same year (2006), 60 percent of the directory assistance calls were diverted when FSU launched its interactive voice response (IVR) system for directory assistance, routing only overflow or attendant-assisted calls to the help line. This automation was crucial as it allowed staff to turn attention to support issues and other more critical tasks.

4. Customer contact points. Success required consolidating points of contact,

highlighting the word HELP. To inform the FSU community, a campaign was launched via all campus media, such as mass email and website news flashes. It took over two years to cancel old numbers, eliminate outdated literature, and forget "the way it was before," but for the most part the campus now knows how to reach someone for assistance: phone (850) 644-HELP (4357); email help@otc.fsu.edu; or visit the website at www.helpdesk.fsu.edu.

5. Website Consolidation. Both help desks had dynamic websites, each serving unique purposes to distinctly different customers. Significant time was spent reviewing the sites to determine the

best course of action. The goal was, and remains, to develop one useful, customer-friendly website, while preserving the various roles.

An important component in the combining design, which remains a challenge today, was multiple ticketing systems. One system was used for university-wide tickets such as FSU email, human resources, computer account access, and password resets. The other system was specifically integrated into telecom's trouble ticket and billing system.

6. Contact management. To establish and strengthen communication with clients as well as customers, meetings were held with key personnel, specifically within the technology departments. In these meetings, plans were reviewed and working terminology defined:

• Customers: people (students, faculty, staff, prospective students, parents) who contact the help desk with a question. We define a customer as anyone you come in contact with (i.e., students, parents, coworkers, vendors, departmental peers, etc.), or "the one who gets it next!"

• Clients: the group we are representing to the customer with the question.

• Tier 1 support (help desk): basic questions with routine answers.

• Tier 2 support: support that cannot be provided by the help desk and must be sent to our clients for more in-depth assistance (typically provided by our clients).

• Knowledge base/scripts: a collection of preformatted solutions, developed with our clients, that address known or common customer problems.

• Turnaround times: standard time for the resolution of a problem or ticket.

• Tracking: the process of reporting on status.

• Escalation procedure: established process used to assist with difficult problems.

Common Sense Approach

Once the foundation was established, the plans were executed and observed following the principle of leadership that is structured yet flexible. Following a one-year review, these observations led to structural changes and responsibility shifts to strengthen support. For instance, it was evident that the duties associated with customer contact had to be separated from the duties of content management (i.e., support for client interaction, ticketing systems/administration, knowledge base, and website maintenance). To accomplish this goal, a customer resource management area was created, not separating what had just been converged, but creating a whole new section to help support the help desk. To more accurately match skill sets, several employees were repositioned and a supervisor was reassigned to lead this new area. Now help-desk staff could get back to the basics and clearly focus on customer and client support.

Customer Service 101

Technology changes are inevitable and necessary. Customers who are kept informed and receive high-quality support will not only accept such changes, they will embrace them. The secret to success is to make customer satisfaction top priority.

It did not take long to discover that technical staff much preferred email contact with customers to actual conversation. Conversely, our most outgoing, customer-oriented staff was similarly frustrated with technical tasks. Applying basic telephone etiquette, such as to clearly identify area and state names to callers, presented a burden to longtime IT help-desk staff.

At this point, customer contact job listings were rewritten as level 1 help desk services. Interpersonal skills were emphasized, and technical ability deemphasized. It appeared to be easier for effective communicators with the inherent ability to serve customers to learn repetitive technical skills than for technical staff to learn the level of "people skills" required for good customer relations. Gradually, attrition brought with it renewed energy, and clearer goals were communicated focusing on the customer's experience.

Measuring Success

The next ongoing challenge became how to determine that these changes in philosophy were successful. Reports to ensure uniformity in services and quality metrics were developed. Processes and procedures were written or rewritten to provide internal training, as well as to update our Web-published knowledge base. Involving employees heavily in the development of these tools accelerated learning curves and helped promote teamwork from the outset.

The character of any team is reflected in the standards it sets for itself. Here are some examples of what is working for FSU:

1. Defined standards and rules of thumb, such as the following:

• Customer service employees are provided these customer contact expectations as part of training:

(1) Guaranteed response time on email, voicemail, or verbal inquires

(2) Phone and email etiquette

(3) Coverage: maintain work schedules and leave requests on a shared calendar

(4) Out-of-office procedures: Change voicemail greeting, activate "out-of-office assistant" on email

• Defined turnarounds for all services

- Customer contact instructions to confirm satisfaction

2. Examples of defined monthly benchmarks:

- Number of repairs (opened/closed)
- Calls to help-desk line (offered, answered, and abandoned)
- Calls to directory assistance IVR (offered, answered, and abandoned)
- Number of website visits
- Number of online chats
- Number of password resets

3. Examples of weekly management tools and reports used to keep us on track:

- Repairs open > 24 hours
- Email notice to tier 2 clients and vendors seeking updates for past-due tickets and accounts that had not been accessed for a prespecified time frame
- Client/customer call tracking (defines trends in who is calling and what their needs are)
- Monitoring IVR calls to identify success rates.

What Lies Ahead?

As we look to the future, FSU continues to seek areas of improvement. Some projects that have been identified include the following:

- Consolidate and improve reporting capabilities for university-wide ticketing system, rather than multiple systems.
- Increase the presence and communication with clients who provide tier 2 support.
- Separate tier 2 support into a tier 2 and tier 3 structure (defining tier 3 and redefining tier 2).
- Implement improved call center
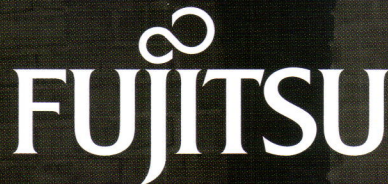
software and hardware to increase efficiency and improve automation.

- Solidify and clearly communicate computer software and hardware standards and configurations to students, parents, and professors.
- Continue to enhance online services based on customers' needs.
- Seek continuous feedback from clients and customers through surveys, focus groups, and open forums.
- Explore options for moving all help-desk staff into the main department's building.

In a university environment, it is important to establish benchmarks in order to track trends and measure volumes. Defining the elusive measurement to ensure that clients and customers receive the level of quality customer care they deserve is a requirement. Typically help-desk staff are trained to accept the fact that complaints will be lodged no matter how well they perform. At FSU, a basic goal is to measure success not by a lack of complaints, but on the abundance of compliments. Based on this measurement, The Florida State University Technology Services Help Desk is well on its way to transforming two help desks into one unified and highly successful service and support center.

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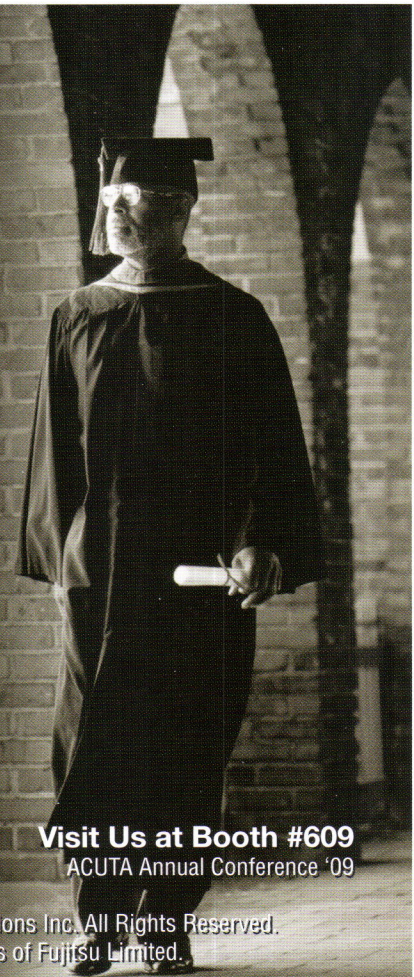
Service Catalogs and the Value of Just 12 Minutes

Randy Burns
Compco, Inc.

The University of Kansas Medical Center and others are empowering their customers with an online service catalog that reduces request errors and cuts request-processing costs by as much as 60 percent.

Can your IT, telecom, network, and data center customers order services online, or are overworked customer service staff still holding your customers' hands as they guide them step by step through a maze of choices?

Does your customer service staff spend valuable minutes tracking down customers to get missing information?

To put this in perspective, assuming just 12 minutes saved per request, for each 1,000 requests you process, you save 200 hours. For anyone who wants to use their time more productively, that's the same as five 40-hour workweeks.

A well-implemented service catalog can help you manage the service delivery process more efficiently and govern demand for services, and help your customers make more informed decisions. Since university telecom is already well positioned as a customer-focused, fee-for-service operation, telecom is a great starting place for initial service catalog deployment across the broader IT space. It's a significant step toward aligning IT with the business.

What Is a Service Catalog and Why Should You Care?

For our purposes, the term *service catalog* refers to a combination of three important components:

1. an online list of available services,
2. a request-submission process, and
3. integration.

The browser-accessible catalog defines the services you offer in clear, customer-friendly terms. The request-submission process prompts the customer for the specific information you need for each type of service requested. Integration lets the request work in concert with your service and billing management software system(s).

This definition comes from people who were kind enough to share their experiences with me recently. They include Matthew Fuoco and DeAnna Villarreal at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC), Anthony Prete and Maura O'Donnell at Hartford Hospital, Debbie Britt at the state of Mississippi, Geoff Tritsch with Vantage Technology Consultants, and Phillip Beidelman at WTC Consulting as well as others not mentioned here. All are smart, informed, professional, gracious, and tenacious people. Many thanks.

They concur with Forrester Research's statement that "service catalogs are the cornerstone of service delivery and automation, and the starting point for any IT organization interested in saving money and improving relationships."

That's a strong statement and a powerful promise, especially in tough economic times.

A Familiar Scenario Repeated Thousands of Times Every Year

A familiar scenario might lay the groundwork to explore the problems a service catalog may solve for your university.

Connie's boss in the Office of Admissions was very clear. An important project is kicking off next week. Connie needs to work with IT/telecom to implement several

new services within five days in order to be ready. She doesn't fully understand the terminology or the options available, but she does her best.

The email request Connie sends is very clear on a number of points, especially the due date. Unfortunately, the email does not contain several basic pieces of information, such as the exact location for the installation (Admissions has space in three separate buildings) or the GL funding code that will pay for the request.

Reaching Connie and getting the missing information takes the better part of a day and all total takes an extra 20 minutes of Susan's time, and time is precious in her Customer Service group.

Connie calls Susan for status updates several times over the course of the next few days. Each call takes a few valuable minutes.

A portion of the request requires coordinating with an outside vendor, and, unfortunately, the one day lost getting the request started could not be recovered. As a result, the services cut one day late.

Does this sound familiar? Similar scenarios are repeated thousands of times every year in universities and other organizations across the country. It sounds innocuous, right? However, the negative impact on productivity, customer satisfaction, processing costs, and service delivery times is considerable. This ties in with the push for the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL®) on many campuses.

ITIL is a customizable framework of good practices for IT designed to promote quality, efficiency, consistency, and customer value. ITIL includes a systematic approach to the provisioning and management of IT services. ITIL has evolved over a period of years with each new version building on the experience of the previous one.

ITIL version 3 stresses the development of the service portfolio and the customer-facing portion (called the service catalog) as a wise starting point for an ITIL implementation.

Since the intricacies of ITIL v3 may not be on the tip of your tongue, you may find it helpful to know that several of the people I consulted either already had or were implementing what they called a "customer shopping cart" or "customer self-service portal" even though they were not overly familiar with ITIL terminology. You and your staff can probably benefit from the service catalog tips and strategies discussed here, whether you are concerned with ITIL or

not. A well-implemented service catalog is a best practice in any environment.

Why Should You Care?

Just because your IT budget has tightened doesn't mean your customers' demand for services will decrease. Scarce resources don't mean customers have lower expectations. If anything, exactly the opposite may be true.

I asked many sites about the number of requests they process. My sources reported that the number of service requests customers generate is growing rapidly. This is due, at least in part, to a broadening array of technologies and services and a growing number of new devices that hang on the network. ▶

As internal IT/telecom departments embrace ITIL, with its focus on the customer and repeatable best practices, standard service delivery times (SLAs) have become the norm. From the customer's perspective, the clock starts the moment they hit SEND on the email requesting the service, whether they provided all the information needed or not. Your staff's performance and your budget requests may be judged, at least in part, by how well service delivery standards are met.

Sources say that only 40 percent of the requests they receive contain all the basic information needed to process the service request. With the number of service requests on the rise and more than 60 percent not "process-able" as received, no wonder the customer service staff is getting swamped. It takes time to

• manually enter the requests originating from email, paper, and phone calls;

• track down customers and get the basic information needed to process the request; and

• answer routine inquiries about the status of a request.

For Hartford Hospital, the Web-based service request process has paid big dividends. Keeping customers up-to-date using automated emails decreased the number of "status calls" dramatically. More accurate information up front has helped maintain an impressive 90+ percent on-time delivery rating. Customer satisfaction surveys show that customers are delighted, giving the telecom group the highest rating in IT.

At KUMC, 60 to 75 percent of the telecom and network service requests do not provide the accounting budget code to be charged (among other things). By designing their service catalog to require this critical information as well as data for specific types of services, KUMC

expects to drastically cut processing times and improve service delivery.

Your customer's budgets are tightening as well. Customers want to get the maximum bang for their IT buck. Even if you centrally fund IT service, customers want the service that best fits their needs. As a result, customers want information that helps them make more informed business decisions. The terminology for that in ITIL is "aligning IT with the business."

In a large, distributed operation such as the state of Mississippi's Information Technology Services, Debbie Britt says, "It's hard to keep customers informed about exactly what is available, what their options are, and the costs involved. Today our customers must go to several different places to request various services from the IT/telecom group. That is why we are implementing a service catalog. Customers can go to one place, see up-to-date information and request services. Customers must provide the basic data we need to process the request up front."

No doubt, live customer interaction is vital. You can never eliminate the entire front-office process. However, a well-implemented service catalog helps you streamline the operation using technology to handle the routine processes, freeing your customer service staff to do just that—provide customer service.

WTC's Phillip Beidelman said, "We see interest in creating service catalogs accelerating. To do this type of service deployment well, you must be able to present services in a very straightforward manner. For some, review and analysis of both services and rates are required to simplify service offerings and establish rates that reflect true costs. Clearly defining services and their true costs is a complex process but pays big dividends."

Tips to Help Avoid Common Pitfalls

1. Measure today

IT projects need ROI in the first 12 months, especially in these budget times. The first step in determining ROI is to fully understand and develop metrics about what is happening today. Get a list of all the services you offer and develop metrics that tell you which 20 percent consume 80 percent of your resources. How many lack the basic information you need? What data are most often missing? How much time does that waste? According to Geoff Tritsch with Vantage Technology Consultants, "You can't manage what you don't understand, and you can't fully understand what you don't measure."

2. Get management backing

No project can be successful without appropriate sponsorship and backing. Show a few customers how a service catalog would benefit them, then enlist their support. You will want strong support to handle potential flack as you phase out other request-submission options (such as email and paper) and require customers to submit requests through the service catalog.

3. Select the right tools for development

Developing a service catalog through conventional Web programming can be very costly and time consuming. It's best if your management system offers service catalog development tools. In any event, make sure that the service catalog uses a "table-driven" design. This means you set up the service catalog by entering data into various tables that create the look and feel, as well as the contents, of the service catalog. The table-driven approach allows you to prototype quickly and to maintain the catalog without programming. Rapid prototyping helps you complete the project quickly by shortening the revision-feedback-revision cycle.

4. Simplify, simplify, simplify

Service catalog projects can easily run aground on the rocky shores of the overly compex. Keep it simple and make it easy to use. Define services in simple business terms that customers will understand. The ability to associate customer-friendly names and descriptions with items is critical to simplicity. Enlist customers to help simplify and refine the presentation language.

5. Intuitive layout is a make-or-break proposition

The service catalog is an interactive webpage designed to deliver information and, when necessary, create customer orders. The best designs use the familiar concepts people encounter with other shopping portals. You want customers to be free to look around, explore, read, and then come back to order what they need. Service catalog projects fail when customers will not use them. If your catalog is hard to use and specific items hard to find, customers give up quickly then call your boss to complain.

Hartford Hospital suggests a target of 60 seconds for customers to complete a request. Maura O'Donnell's axiom is "start with vanilla and add the sprinkles over time." KUMC puts the most frequently requested items first. Your tools must allow you to control the order of presentation rather than simply listing categories and items alphabetically. Define, refine, and simplify. KUMC and the State of Mississippi arranged for several key customers to provide feedback in the design and prototype process. (Contact me if you would like to view examples these concepts.)

6. Integrate with service management and billing system

According to DeAnna Villarreal at KUMC, "Since our management system provides a service catalog, we have seamless integration with our work flow, request, and billing processes. This helped make it much simpler for us." Since integration is critical, involve the technical staff for your service management and billing systems early on so that you understand the interface options.

7. Provide helpful content and tutorials

Good content and tutorials help customers answer questions for themselves. This is especially true when rolling out new services. Every question customers answer for themselves cuts your processing costs. Consider using students to help develop content and tutorials. The content helps customers make better decisions and understand costs, normal delivery time frames, and the basic information you will require to process the service request.

Summary

It takes work, but following these tips can help get you on your way to creating a well-implemented service catalog that will pay big dividends in managing the service delivery process more efficiently, governing demand for services, and helping your customers make more informed decisions. That is a very large step toward aligning IT with the business.

Randy Burns is vice president of Compco in Brentwood, Tennessee, and a longtime ACUTA exhibitor and supporter. Reach Randy at rburns@compco.com.

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Warren J. Baker, Ph.D.

President, California Polytechnic State University

A civil engineer registered to practice in four states, President Warren J. Baker takes great pride in the university he has led since 1979 and acknowledges the contributions of his distinguished faculty and staff to Cal Poly's success. He is particularly proud of the recognition the University has received for excellence in undergraduate education.

During his career in higher education, President Baker has achieved distinction as a teacher, scholar, and administrator. A few of the honors he has received include:

• 2004 Chief Executive Leadership Award, Far West Region, CASE

• 1997 Cavanaugh Award, Univ. of Notre Dame

• Presidential Appointee, Natnl. Science Board

• Presidential Appointee, Board for International Food and Agricultural Development

• Outstanding Alumnus Awards, Colleges of Engineering, Universities of New Mexico and Notre Dame

President Baker earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Civil Engineering from Notre Dame and his Ph. D. in Geotechnical Engineering from the University of New Mexico. He continues to relish his job; occasionally, however, he wishes he had a bit more time to ski and polish his golf game.

ACUTA: In the current global economic crisis as well as California's particular situation, colleges and universities that are striving to meet the growing technology demands of students and faculty face serious challenges. How does a leading institution such as Cal Poly maintain its forward momentum in light of shrinking resources, and what are your key considerations in prioritizing and making difficult choices for technology investments to ensure the continued leading-edge position of the institution?

Baker: Cal Poly maintains its momentum by staying focused on the highest priority initiatives that address key university goals. We are currently revising our campus strategic plan. As part of that effort, IT is engaged in conversations with students, faculty, and staff to better understand how advances in technology can support the university's educational mission.

In recent years we have been able to reduce the cost of providing current and future services. That has been possible by leveraging Web services, decreasing hardware and software costs, and using virtualization technologies to reduce hardware and software costs.

We are using virtualization to:

• minimize the number of servers we must deploy. This reduces the costs of the servers and the administrative overhead associated with them. (It is a green technology in that it uses less power—we can replace multiple physical servers with one server.) We can also provide "virtual servers" to departments on campus, thus reducing administrative costs for the departments. This is a way off, though, before it becomes prevalent on campus.

• share storage more effectively. Virtualization of storage allows the allocation of storage to be changed more dynamically. Again, this reduces costs and saves power.

To take full advantage of the changing technology landscape, we have improved the processes to provide and manage IT services. We are improving how we provide IT services across the campus to colleges and administrative areas; for example, consolidating management of storage and local area network infrastructure.

We have also been aggressive in giving priority to those things that directly support student success, and support the work of faculty, as teachers and scholars.

By focusing on anytime/anywhere access for students; providing more information through the campus portal; and making available improved collaboration tools, we make it easier and more possible for students and faculty to carry out administrative tasks and access learning resources.

For faculty, we are working to provide greater access to advanced cyber infrastructure tools, including things like advanced networking through Internet2, access to high performance computational tools using grid computing, and access to E-science resources via the Web, such as the biology site, "Cold Springs Harbor," Google Earth, and Microsoft's virtual earth and "World Wide Telescope."

ACUTA: How do you perceive the role of technology in reducing costs to the

university while also increasing the educational leverage that Cal Poly has always had? Do you see this role changing over the near or long term, and at what point is technology critical to the university regardless of any potential to reduce costs?

Baker: Technology is key to providing students and faculty with greater access to information and to tools that enable collaboration that is not limited by space and time consideration. By providing this sort of infrastructure, we not only improve the educational and research environment for students and faculty, but we reduce costs to the university by making use of the information, laboratory, and science resources available over the Web, e.g. Teragrid resources at the San Diego Supercomputer Center, Google Earth, etc.

More important than reducing costs, access to the breadth of tools and information available through the Web expands our capacity to help students learn and improve student success. It also provides faculty with a vast array of resources that Cal Poly otherwise could not afford in these difficult budget times.

At Cal Poly, access to information resources for research and instruction are maximized by the library's participation in CSU licensing arrangements. Consortial licensing uses the buying power of 23 campuses to provide broader and deeper access to information for faculty and students. Journals and indexes in digital form mean anytime, anywhere access.

Internally, technology is being used to support student advising, provide access to the courses that students need, and

give both students and faculty better access to related data and information.

In the long term, we see continuation of these trends. Technology has already become critical in that it is part of the infrastructure used for the administrative functioning of the university. With each year, technology provides more information and analysis for effective decision making (through the expanded capabilities of our data warehouse), tools that support collaboration among faculty within and beyond the campus, greater access to learning resources by students, and support for collaboration among faculty and students.

ACUTA: Some say that keeping up with technology is necessary to remain competitive, and you mention information technology in your strategic plan. Do you believe that information communi-

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cations technology is a strategic asset of the university, or do you believe that it plays a more tactical role? Please explain.

Baker: We believe information technology is a strategic asset for learning. It provides tools for communication and collaboration that are essential for education in an increasingly global, connected environment where working on multi-disciplinary teams is becoming essential. Students and faculty expect to be able to communicate and work with their peers anytime and anywhere. Information technology enables our faculty and students to find and analyze information and data that is stored on super computer nodes across the world, and collaborate with experts in academia and industry.

It enables better decision making by making information and the tools to analyze it easily available.

ACUTA: How do you address the technical demands of today's students who are looking for anytime, anywhere classes and still support the needs of the traditional classroom? How do you see distance learning affecting learning and growth? Do you see a time when the traditional classroom will be replaced by a virtual one?

Baker: Cal Poly is taking a hybrid approach to meeting students' expectations for anytime/anywhere classes, trying to incorporate the best of both traditional classroom experience and online learning experiences. We have almost completed building out our wireless infrastructure, our classrooms have broadband connectivity, and most have modern display technologies.

We expect distance learning to augment and improve how students learn in a global society, giving them a wider exposure to professionals from different cultures. By expanding our distance learning capabilities strategically to collaborate more effectively with other universities and with industry, we can build

on our traditional strength in "learn by doing" to include a more global and diverse experience for our students.

We don't see the traditional classroom being replaced by a virtual classroom except in a few niche areas, but anticipate the most prevalent teaching and learning model will evolve to a more hybrid approach that capitalizes on the best of both approaches, while preserving the strong mentoring role of the faculty. This will free faculty to be more creative and interact more directly with students. Two approaches that exemplify this are the Open Learning Initiative at Carnegie Mellon and the TEAL initiative at MIT.

Beyond the classroom proper, student access to computer labs is a genuine collaboration of ITS and the library. ITS provides infrastructure, technology, and technical expertise while the Library provides access to lab space 110 hours per week, space design and maintenance, and user support. The collaboration plays to each unit's strengths while avoiding duplication of effort.

An expanded Library Learning Commons and a 24-hour study space mean better support for student work beyond the classroom. The addition of technology enhanced collaboration rooms means that student project teams are better supported for their project-based learning. Collaboration rooms are large new rooms with flexible tables and seating, white boards, large flat-panel displays, and wireless connectivity.

Cal Poly has developed an online institutional repository that allows the intellectual work of our community of scholars (papers, presentations, symposiums and thesis) in digital form to be shared among faculty colleagues as easily as it is discovered by the world through Google.

ACUTA: Given the recent shifts in engineering education to be less theoretical and more "hands on" and practical, how does Cal Poly embrace technology in the

classroom? Will simulations and remote control of devices be used to enhance the learning? What other directions and changes do you foresee for this particular discipline?

Baker: Cal Poly has a long tradition of hands-on learning in its curricula, including its engineering programs. We've been increasing and growing our relationships with companies throughout California and the nation so that students not only get hands-on experiences in our own laboratories but also by working and learning in industry settings. This builds on the "learn by doing" approach that Cal Poly has fostered since its beginnings and extends its reach to include more global and diverse experiences. IT also strengthens our ties with industry and other universities, which is important to us given our geographic location.

Additional directions and changes for engineering education that we see as important to the Cal Poly learning experience include the ability to get real-time feedback on student learning through the use of online learning tools. For example, students might work through an online tutorial, answering questions and giving the instructor immediate feedback about areas in which the students are having difficulty. This enables the instructor to tailor their interactions specifically to address student difficulties and improve student success.

ACUTA: As a university president, what are the characteristics you value most in the senior information communications technology leaders on your campus? What are the most important skills needed by technology leaders in our culture, and what tactics does Cal Poly use to identify, support and develop tomorrow's leaders?

Baker: The most important quality is the ability to move IT away from its traditional top-down silo structure toward working more with campus constituencies to better understand their needs for technology to support their roles and

to put in place an infrastructure that encourages rather than inhibits innovation. This involves enlarging the focus of IT from providing a secure and reliable set of services to also building a platform that encourages innovation and then provides the infrastructure to make successful innovations scale to the entire campus.

Cal Poly seeks to identify and nurture tomorrow's leaders by looking for people with a broad set of technology and interpersonal skills (emotional intelligence), by identifying appropriate professional development opportunities, and by looking for projects that will stretch their capabilities. In addition it is essential to grow the culture of the IT organization to not only be disciplined but also to be agile in reacting to the rapidly changing technology and student/faculty expectations for technology. Almost all students now come to campus with cell phones and laptops along with a corresponding set of expectations about how they should get information and be able to interact with their peers and faculty.

ACUTA: Considering that ACUTA's audience consists of people who provide voice, data, and video services on campus, can you describe any innovative, creative, or ambitious technology projects on your campus that contribute to Cal Poly's outstanding reputation as a leader in higher education?

Baker: We're incorporating virtualization for our servers and storage to do two things: Provide better services to the colleges in a largely decentralized IT environment and achieve improved reliability and disaster recovery capabilities. This requires our central IT folks to build stronger partnerships with other universities and the other IT folks in the colleges and departments across campus.

We also have technology projects that involve providing much more information to students, faculty, and administrators through our portal, and analytic tools that enable administrators to make better decisions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we are continually reexamining how to better support the use of technology in our courses as we move to a more hybrid model of learning that uses technology to support the learning process. Again we believe that person-to-person faculty-student interaction will always be the core of the learning process. We are developing ways, as are other leading universities, for technology to enhance faculty-student interaction and make learning more effective.

ACUTA thanks Dr. Baker for taking the time to respond to our questions and to his staff for their assistance. Learn more about Cal Poly at www.calpoly.edu. ▼

Essential Telephone Skills

Nancy Friedman
Telephone Doctor

Many years ago, a client said to me, "Nancy, congratulations. Some people take a simple idea and complicate it; you have taken a simple idea and kept it simple."

Yes, we have. Answering the phone properly and effectively isn't rocket science, but if your staff hasn't had the benefit of a basic, common-sense program of telephone etiquette, they may not be aware of the ideas, tips, skills, and techniques that create a superior experience for your callers. The person who answers your business phone is, for most callers, the face of your organization. What they say and how they say it make a lasting impression on those who call. So, here are five basic skills that are *essential* for better communications and handling of customers and, believe it or not, each other.

1. Answering a business call

Well, what's so difficult about that? Right. It's not difficult. But if I called 100 people within your own organization, I'm betting I'd get a variety of greetings from people who answer the phone. There should be one uniform greeting to answer the call by everyone, every time. Your greeting projects an image and reflects your business culture. Consistency makes it work for you.

To start, use buffer words that welcome the caller, such as, "Thanks for calling," then your company name, and then your name. As in, "This is Sue." Then stop! Anything after your name erases your name. "How can I help you" is simply not necessary on that initial greet-

ing. You are there to help. That's why you answered the phone. It looks like this: "Thanks for calling Telephone Doctor's office. This is Nancy." Nice and simple.

2. Thanking a caller for holding

Being put on hold remains one of the top three frustrations of the American public. That being said, it's something that needs to be done during many phone calls, as we all know. Knowing how to put someone on hold is certainly important, but then so is thanking them for holding after you've come back to the phone. Again, simple. But how often is it done? I'm amazed at the number of times I'm put on hold, and when the person comes back to the phone, they just start back in on the conversation like they weren't even gone. (Sort of like stepping on someone's toes and not saying *excuse me*.) And normally they're gone longer than they should be. So that "thank you for holding" sure would sound nice and would sure be appreciated. I always wonder why they don't thank me for taking the time to stay with them.

3. Monogramming the call

For whatever reason we all seem to like our name. Maybe not when we're children, but as we grow, we become used to our name and like it. I have many items on my desk and at home that have my name engraved on them. Some just initials. But it makes them "mine" and I'd probably never pitch them in a cleaning-out process. Why? Because they have my name on them. Most people save things with their name or initials on them.

Same thing should happen on a phone call. When you know the caller's name, use it. Don't abuse it, but do include it throughout the conversation.

Most people not only like to hear their name, they want to hear it pronounced properly and they like to see it spelled right. Don't be afraid to ask the caller the correct pronunciation if you're not sure. They'll appreciate it! It's much better than hearing you butchering their name as, no doubt, others have done.

Don't assume you know the correct spelling of a name. There are 19 different ways to spell the last name Nichols in the New York phone directory. Not everyone spells their name the same way. Tom, Thom, Christy, Kristy, Charlie, Charley. The list goes on. It's important to get it right. Ask!

4. Avoiding mouth noises

Simply put, when you talk with something in your mouth, it sounds as though you have a mouthful of mush, be it gum, candy, or the last of your lunch. The only things that should be in your mouth when you're on the phone are your tongue and your teeth. Remember, the phone is a microphone, and anything that's in your mouth will sound 10 times louder to the caller than you might think it would. Rule: Empty your mouth before you pick up the phone!

5. Leaving a positive *last* impression

Most of us have been taught about making that great first impression. And yes, that's so very important. That old saying, "you don't get a second chance to make a great first impression" is so true. Well,

consider making a great last impression as well. Let the caller know, "It was so nice to meet you by phone" or "thank you for calling" or "we appreciate your call." Say something that will make that lasting positive impression, because when they hang up, they think to themselves either *Wow that was a great call* or *I'll never call there again*. How do you want your callers to remember you?

There are many more essential telephone skills, but here are five important ones and our best wishes for your success at hello, goodbye, and everything in between.

Nancy Friedman is president of Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training in St. Louis. She can be reached at nancy@telephonedoctor.com.

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Email Services: Beginning of the End?

Curt Harler
Contributing Editor

Just about the time ACUTA members adjust to losing PBX revenue from students who migrated en masse to cell phones, they may have to face the loss of student email accounts, too. In fact, a recent study predicts students will abandon email as a communication method altogether.

On one level, that could be a good thing. Administering passwords and server space along with the concomitant hassles takes time. IT might be just as happy to wash its hands of the spam and music downloads that come with many of those accounts.

On another level, there is pressure from administrations to increase the cybercontact schools have with various communities. Many colleges have redoubled efforts to tighten ties with alums and others who identify with the school (parents of students, people in extension or remote education courses, athletic team fans).

Most administrators will be reluctant to let those users of email accounts drift away from the old school ties. At many colleges and universities, that college.edu account is one proven way to keep alums connected to Old Main. Alums who have a college email account are not as apt to hang up on solicitation calls for the annual drive. In fact, that solicitation often goes right to that college.edu email address, reinforcing the good things the school continues to do for them.

Still, there is a growing trend for students to move away from college.edu

email addresses and, more recently, for colleges to move away from offering students college.edu addresses. Brigham Young University in Utah took a big step at the first of this year to eliminate free student accounts with the byu.edu extension.

"In the past, we offered basic, Linux-server-type email that we gave to students and faculty for free," says Steve Carlson, product manager/communications at BYU. That has ended for students who are not on the payroll. "If students want an account, they have to get one on their own." BYU does offer students a free alias account through its byu.net url.

Student-employees and faculty members still can get a byu.edu account for free. The latest iteration resides on Exchange Server. "We have limited the Exchange Server to 25 MB," Carlson says. There are 5,500 email accounts served by the communications staff at BYU. IT spent most of late 2008 taking down the old accounts and preparing for the roll-over to the new system.

"The only time we give students a byu.edu account is if they need it for a special, specific reason—say, to purchase software at the university discount," Carlson says. "Then, it is a temporary account that we take down after two weeks or a month."

BYU is among several schools that noticed a trend among first-year students coming to campus with their own email

account already set up. Many students simply decide they prefer the freedom and familiarity of their existing accounts to setting up a new account with the school. Sound like what happened with cell phones?

A graduate student in turfgrass science at the University of Maryland steadfastly maintains loyalty to his Gmail account. "It gives me nearly unlimited download potential," he says. He is not referring to music downloads, however, but to downloads of complex chemical spreadsheets that are an integral part of his research effort and which he shares with other students on campus and at two other university locations.

Losing Email Altogether

In fact, there is a trend among today's college-age people to move away from email altogether. Shocking? According to a report[1] from Accenture (www.accenture.com), there is a slow but steady shift away from email as a preferred way to communicate.

Accenture found that older millennials (those students—and eventually faculty or staff—born in the late 1970s and in the 1980s) still spend around 9.5 hours a week writing and receiving work-related emails. But younger millennials (those born in the late 1980s and 90s) spend only 7.7 hours on email. More worrisome if you

have invested heavily in email (and who hasn't?), the study found that typical high school and college students spend only about two hours a week on email and clearly prefer instant messaging, text messaging, or social networking sites to talk to their friends. They love blogs, vlogs, and Twitter RSS feeds.

Ponder this: It is nearly certain that your college offers email support. Does your college offer Twitter or IM support? In some cases—perhaps reporting emergency situations—texting may be a major part of your communication strategy. But what about the run-of-the-mill notifications that teachers send students? Or announcements of departmental meetings for professors? Do you support network-

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ing sites for astronomers or dairy science majors?

One can argue that Twitter is just another flavor of Internet IM or email activity. Even though Twittering limits postings to 140 characters in length (and they can be sent via mobile texting, IM, or the Web), don't try to tell 19-year old college sophomores that it's all the same thing. They see it as a different critter altogether. It's as baffling to them as insisting a Harley and a Schwinn are the same because both are "bikes."

Accenture's study found Millennials want to choose their own technology. Both in the workplace and in school, they expect to use their own technology and mobile devices for work rather than those supplied by their employer. In nearly every category of workplace technology, more than 20 percent of the respondents stated that employer-provided technologies did not meet expectations, while one-third of the mid-millennials said they expect not only to use the computer of their choice, but also to access the technology applications of their choice once in the workforce (32 percent and 34 percent respectively).

Younger employees insist on state-of-the-art technology. More than half (52 percent) of millennials surveyed said state-of-the-art technology is an important consideration in selecting an employer—and, presumably, a university as well. More than half (56 percent) of mid-millennials and two-thirds (67 percent) of older millennials still in college claim that whether an employer has state-of-the-art equipment will be an important factor when choosing where to work.

The study says organizations have to provide new communication and collaboration channels. Only 6 percent of those surveyed say their organization provides online chat and IM, while 21 percent say they should. Similarly, five percent say their organization supports text messaging, although 18 percent felt they should since it is an important channel. In addition, just five percent said their organization provides RSS feeds versus 12 percent who felt they need to do so.

Alums, Friends, Family

Email could become like the standard gear shift in automobiles. Almost every car today has an automatic shift. But some people prefer standard five-speeds and certain communities, such as sports car enthusiasts, actually demand them (a Miata or Mustang with an automatic is a travesty).

Constant email communications might evolve the way shifting gears did: something that appeals to an aging or niche population of the university community. Or, the move away from email may be a step en route to blending several methods onto one platform.

Meanwhile, schools like Miami of Ohio and Penn State University are actively encouraging alums to maintain a name.psu.edu or miamialum.org email account. Penn State has a Friends of PSU (fps.psu.edu) account that alums or others who are involved in activities in any way related to any of the college's hundreds of programs can establish.

The town of State College, which surrounds Penn State University, has a Professional Development program, and it requires a current psu.edu email account or a Friends of PSU account for access. Likewise, Penn State extension education programs in areas like natural resources require the Friends of PSU account for access.

At Miami of Ohio, the university licenses its online community from iModules, Inc. The website is maintained by iModules, and it is responsible for providing help. Alums get an email account (name@miamialum.org), and many of them forward that email to another, personal account that they maintain with providers like MSN, Cox, or Roadrunner, or at their place of employment.

Not every school offers such an option. Says one alum who felt it is a good idea, "If they did offer it I might use it, as opposed to a Hotmail account as my backup email. It would have a little more personality and say a little more about me."

He notes that he gets "99 percent" of his email through a work address. "One nice thing is that our employer doesn't mind if we mix personal and work email," he adds.

Therein is another challenge to college-run accounts. If alums use them as a backstop against spam and to sign in for offers and the like, the college will see an influx of unimportant email targeted at a growing number of alumni and friends.

The Oklahoma State University Alumni Association knows its mission is to serve as a lifelong connection between alumni and the school. As a member organization, it serves more than 200,000 alumni worldwide, as well as OSU students, faculty, staff, and friends.

By supporting the extensive alumni network from OSU, the association provides a connection back to the university through a number of outreach programs as well as a complete directory to connect alumni to each other.

Add Facebook

Where are young alums today in the cyberworld? Same place they were as undergrads: Facebook and other online communities.

The latest release of the iModules Encompass product, made in November 2008, supports Facebook Connect. This iteration of the Facebook platform allows users to "connect" their Facebook identity, friends, and privacy to any site.

Today, at least four colleges use this functionality on their alumni association websites including Ithaca College, Oklahoma State University, Oregon State University, and the University of Toronto.

"When looking to engage young alumni, you have to become part of their conversation, and many of those interactions start on Facebook," says Mike McCamon, vice president of marketing for iModules. "Using Facebook Connect, Encompass just became more social by allowing member activity, like an event RSVP or a donation, to be published on members' Facebook News Feeds. Along with trusted authentication and dynamic privacy, Facebook Connect is what our market needs to achieve their development and advancement goals."

For instance, when young alumni register for a holiday mixer hosted by their alma mater, they can elect to have a story automatically appear in their Facebook News Feed like, "Steve Miller is planning to attend Holiday Mixer 2008 hosted by Ithaca College Alumni Association." Both the host and event title are hyperlinks back to the alumni website, which gives institutions a unique viral marketing tool to promote their activities.

Tom DeBacco, CEO for iModules, adds, "Our support of Facebook Connect is part of our overall strategy for Encompass to engage young alumni. This also includes evangelizing institutional support of Facebook pages and other future initiatives using the Facebook platform." The company has a white paper on leveraging Facebook to engage young alumni (http://imodules.com/s/539/images/editor_documents/Leveraging_Facebook.pdf). "We believe alumni offices need a strategy to connect with every segment of their alumni population."

"We have already launched our Facebook page and are excited to see the results from Facebook Connect," says Melissa Mourer, director of communications with the Oklahoma State University Alumni Association. "Being able to share social actions on the Facebook News Feed is a killer feature and one we expect will make our events and campaigns even more successful."

Many subcommunities do similar things. The Penn State *Daily Collegian* newspaper alumni group committee's face to the world is on Facebook.

Other Options

BYU offers a byu.net account (not .edu). "It just comes in-and-out with an alias," Carlson explains. One big benefit to the byu.net accounts is that they run through all of the BYU filters to control spam and other malware.

And, the school is mindful of alums who want to keep a tie to the university. BYU will allow alums who have an existing byu.edu account to keep it—if the department they left is willing to support them. "It's about $2 per month," Carlson says. The only alternative is to go with a byu.net account.

Retiring faculty are an exception to the byu.edu rule. They are allowed to keep their existing byu.edu accounts. All of the people on the new Exchange Server system at BYU will get their accounts for free—as they did with the old accounts.

Miami of Ohio populates its alumni website with the standard school news and recounting of sports events. But, more to the point, there is always an invitation to join the alumni association and usually a promotion for one of the school's fund-raising campaigns, including a cute mouse-like graphic link to help alumni "make a gift." School merchandise is available, too, on the site (dues-paying alumni association members get a 10 percent discount).

Still concerned about the move away from email? There might be one bright spot. The Accenture study says blogging is more myth than reality. Regardless of age, millennials spend an average of only 30 minutes a week blogging. This is far less than the time they spend searching for information on the Internet, listening to portable devices, text messaging, instant messaging, communicating on social network sites, or interacting in virtual communities.

Curt Harler is a freelance writer and contributing editor for the *ACUTA Journal*. Reach him at curt@curtharler.com.

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[1] To understand how the technology-driven culture of today's "millennials"—the incoming workforce—would affect IT organizations' decisions in the future, Accenture conducted a quantitative online survey in June 2008 of more than 400 U.S. consumers between the ages of 14 and 27. This survey is available through Accenture. To learn more about the company or to contact them about the survey, visit their website at www.accenture.com.

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Institutional Excellence Award
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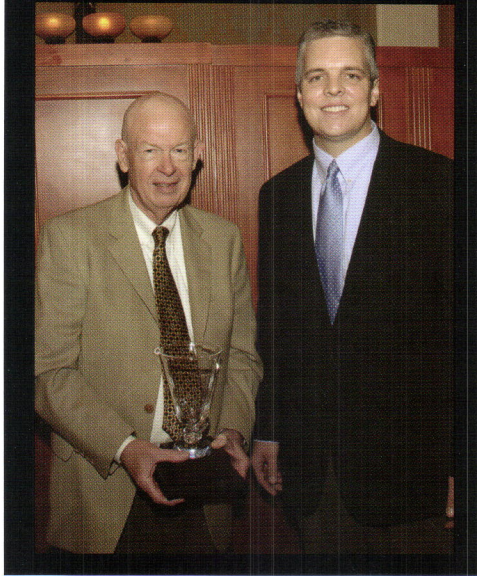
Art Gloster accepted the award from
Chris Muller, PAETEC

In an age when campus safety has become a critical priority, Bryant University has forged a unique partnership between its campus and Rhode Island's first responders. To address its need for interoperability with local first responders and improve response to normal day-to-day events as well as life-safety events, Bryant University extended its interoperable communications network to public safety agencies within a tristate region.

The Need for a Network

Three years ago Bryant upgraded its LAN to enable campuswide IP telephony and other voice, video, and data applications to enrich the learning experience and extend networking resources into the local community. Then in 2006, Bryant deployed an IP Interoperability and Collaboration System (IPICS) to improve campus operations and increase security by enabling direct radio communications among Bryant's public safety, campus management, and residence-life departments.

With IPICS, campus organizations using different types of radio systems can communicate directly with each other or with local public safety agencies, thus eliminating the time delays associated with communicating through a central dispatcher. IPICS enables communications interoperability among the different campus organizations and agencies using various push-to-talk radio devices, IP phones, and PCs or laptops.

Bryant's goal was to use its IPICS network to improve public safety response time and tighten integration between Rhode Island's public safety agencies and the campus. Starting with the state's fire safety agencies, Bryant found that while the state had made progress toward first-responder interoperability, lack of countywide dispatch capability meant that each fire dispatch center throughout the state operated its own independent radio frequency. Not only did this present a problem when coordinating dispatch of multiple agencies to a disaster, it also limited the number of radio frequencies available to interoperate with other public safety agencies.

This meant that public safety departments in the area didn't have secondary channels for patching different departments together. Therefore, fire departments in Rhode Island relied heavily on a single intercity fire channel. As a result, that channel is often so congested that when a dispatch center needs to contact another center for backup, dispatchers have to wait for a break in the radio traffic. Rather than wasting valuable time, the dispatcher often resorts to a landline.

Bryant worked with regional agencies in several towns throughout the state as well as with Connecticut's Quinebaug Valley Regional Dispatch Center, demonstrating how a virtual public safety network, enabled by the university's IPICS network, could connect regional dispatch centers through OSHEAN, a nonprofit corporation that provides high-speed networking to education and government agencies throughout the state. Using a windows-based application that enables push-to-talk functionality for PC users, Bryant's IPICS system would create a virtual public safety "incident channel" that allows the various dispatch centers to communicate and monitor broadcasts over multiple channels.

IPICS provided Bryant and first responders the capability to send firsthand information from the source directly to the right group of people in the shortest possible time, no matter where they are or what they use to communicate—shrinking time and distance and speeding time-to-citizen safety.

Planning, Leadership, and Management

Bryant's technology initiative has been and continues to be a campuswide effort involving campus leadership. The president mandated as a goal for each of the five functional vice presidents that they implement and support technology initiatives that will assist in meeting the university's mission. The unique method of goal setting across functional lines had a positive influence on building an institutional foundation for technology. The network is viewed by the administration as the infrastructure on which all technology is built.

The joint goal setting among the divisional vice presidents provided complete buy-in at the highest level. Since all VPs are tapping into the same budget, it is helpful when they all have one common goal—upgrading technology.

Not unlike its technology plan, Bryant's campus safety plan continues to be a campuswide effort involving campus leadership focused on the goals of prevention, deterrence, detection, notification, and response when it comes to crisis management and life-safety situations. More important, meeting these goals requires collaboration among campus administration, campus and community public safety agencies, the campus facilities organization, and the campus IT organization.

Bryant's IT organization worked closely with its on-campus stakeholders to develop a long-term strategy for the campus IPICS network. After spending time understanding each stakeholder's priorities, the university deployed a phased implementation over three years. As a result, technical issues and other related obstacles were virtually nonexistent. By the time the decision was made to extend the IPICS network to the com-munity's first responders, the technology was proven, the application was ready, and very little additional expense was incurred.

Promotion of Technology / Maturity of Effort

The most critical elements of a highly effective campus network are flexibility, agility, and scalability. With this in mind, Bryant implemented an extensive technology initiative as part of its larger strategic plan. The university began by covering its campus end-to-end with a single converged IP network infrastructure, wireline, and wireless. The single infrastructure supports voice, video, and data and enables Bryant to layer on innovative applications and services to its community of students, faculty, and staff, including the following:

• IP telephony to provide enhanced phone service to more than 3,200 students, faculty, and administrators

• State-of-the-art videostreaming, collaboration, and conferencing services delivered to students and classrooms to enrich the learning experience

• Unrestricted mobility that enables students and faculty throughout the campus to take full advantage of their university-issued, wireless-equipped laptops

• Immediate access to reference content in multiple electronic forms accessible to librarians and researchers

• Real-time financial market data feeds delivered to Bryant's financial services laboratory

Because the network foundation provides both the capacity and the intelligence needed to deliver multiservices, Bryant next extended its network to monitor and control building management, heating, ventilation, air condition-ing, card-swipe locks, access control, video surveillance, radio frequency interoperability, time-lock systems, and tracking and reporting systems.

Bryant then turned its focus to using the network to improve campus safety, providing one of the primary delivery transports for emergency mass notification and situational awareness updates for the entire Bryant community. With that success under its belt, Bryant then decided to further develop its emergency response capabilities by extending the network and public safety applications and collaboration services to public safety agencies in the community. The university is now providing these services throughout three states to multiple public safety agencies, and working with several higher-education institutions interested in replicating Bryant's success.

Cost-and-Benefit Analysis

Bryant's IPICS deployment and the community partnerships formed have resulted in value propositions for everyone involved. The value to both Bryant and the Rhode Island community goes up exponentially as more organizations and agencies become part of the system.

On its campus, Bryant achieved return on investment (ROI) in less than one year. Deploying IPICS cost less than deploying multiple bridging products, each of which would have bridged just two radio systems—and not all of them. It also enabled the university to defer purchase of radios for new staff. These employees, who work from their desks, can instead participate in radio conversations using their existing IP phones or PCs. IPICS is also accelerating ROI on Bryant's wired and wireless IP infrastructure by extending its value.

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Customer Satisfaction

Bryant has been able to leverage its technology infrastructure and capitalize on its technology investment in numerous ways—enriching the teaching and learning experience, evolving the technology to meet newer challenges with prior investment, improving student preparedness and career opportunity, enhancing Bryant's competitive advantage, and improving overall public safety on and off campus.

The system has become a true working model for interagency communications and collaboration within the state, especially among fire agencies. The reality is that every agency cooperates using its own unique communication frequencies, thereby creating individual communication silos. The IPICS system penetrates those silos, enabling information to flow quickly and securely. The system has already changed the way information is conveyed from dispatch center to dispatch center.

Longtime, traditional two-way radio users, the public agencies that have worked with Bryant, have come to recognize and accept the real value of the IPICS system. For these users to adopt a technology other than traditional radio for commu-

nications, the technology must integrate seamlessly into their radio landscape, bring with it more options, and help them communicate more effectively. IPICS does that. As these users continue to become more comfortable and gain respect for the overall capabilities of the system, Bryant expects IPICS to become a standard operating procedure.

Bryant and system participants believe the IPICS system would be a beneficial, regionwide, public safety communications platform. System participants in Connecticut have indicated to Bryant that they plan to expand the system to 17 additional communities along the Rhode Island border. Additional Massachusetts communities are now inquiring as to how they may also participate. Today the system has eliminated the distance and terrain restrictions of the traditional radio network. Tomorrow it will evolve even further as Bryant works with users to integrate real-time video and data. Because of IPICS, there is now the inclination within these agencies to look at the data network for solutions, where solutions tend to be more robust and quicker to implement and can cost-effectively build upon what's in place.

ACUTA congratulates Bryant University as the winner of the Institutional Excellence in Communications Technology Award for 2008. Contact Art Gloster, vice president for information services, at agloster@bryant.edu.

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proactively break these costs down to smaller "phased" projects and continue to keep pace wherever possible.

Q. Aside from funding, what issue are you, as the CIO, currently spending most of your time addressing?

A. Strategic planning for the technology and library services area has been the most demanding in terms of time for the past few months. We're seeking to expand the fiber backbone across many areas of the campus now and also planning how best to prepare for the students that arrive here in three years and what they'll require. We have everyone involved, so we're confident of a positive outcome, but it still involves time above and beyond the daily workload.

Q. What is the impact of this issue for your campus? What is your strategy for addressing this issue?

A. There is an opportunity in new ventures such as this to plan and implement projects the right way, or to simply relent to budget pressures and deliver something less than exceptional. We're being stubborn about moving forward with the right solutions and not shortchanging ourselves for the future. That takes a great deal more involvement with the key decision makers to explain why it is important to complete something correctly the first time, and to build for growth. That is a real

challenge at this specific time when the first impulse might be to settle for less. But, that's really where you earn your paycheck and demystify technology for those who don't want a complex explanation of IT when a simpler one will do.

Q. Given that a key function of the CIO's responsibility is preparing the campus to support future technologies, what technology changes do you see for your campus as you look forward five to seven years?

A. Considering what we have seen arrive on our campuses in just the past three years—and YouTube is only one example—it is virtually impossible to predict what is next. IT moves that quickly. I do think that the amount of video that will permeate every aspect of the student experience along with its use in the classroom is still underestimated, and I suspect that we'll adjust to new requirements by possibly working more closely with like institutions—hospitals come to mind—to share some of the technology costs in creative ways. It will be difficult for colleges and universities to hold tuition costs going forward and still provide all that will be demanded from newer technologies.

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Q&A with the CIO

William A. Brichta
Vice President for Technology & CIO
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Q. Much of the technology we now support in higher education is driven by consumer electronics. What decisions about your technology infrastructure have been affected by this and how?

A. Students always keep it interesting in our line of work. Whatever services they currently enjoy at home—and at play—are expectations when they arrive on a college campus. Outdoor wireless and greater interest in gaming online seem to be the two areas that impact how we configure bandwidth on our campus. Like many other institutions, we've had to deal with explosion of video through the network as well, and continually increase Internet bandwidth proactively as the next freshman class arrives and the seniors depart. Staff can readily predict many of the trends before we actually experience them, and that is a plus. It helps to have exceptional staff.

Q. Freshmen at most institutions today are far more extensive users of technology than those of even five years ago. What is the most challenging technical aspect this presents for your campus?

A. Well, as ACUTA members, we've accomplished our own goal from the 1990s of convincing campus planners and higher administrators to include technology as a "utility" in every new building, every new initiative. Now that we succeeded in a sense, every student expects that they will have access to everything right now, and that it never falters. So, there are fewer degrees of freedom for IT. They are accustomed to those premier service levels, and take for granted that it is as reliable as the water and electricity. That is the IT analogy we were proposing 15 years ago. The balancing act in 2009 is how to maintain those exceptional levels of service in an increasingly tight economy and funding model. It is relatively easy to know what needs attention; more difficult to acquire all the funding needed to stay there.

Q. In what ways has this affected how you deliver support services?

A. Interestingly, it has made us better. How we treat customers, and students particularly, when they arrive with a service demand means everything now. We're all inclined to surpass what they request with great personal service because it is one area that does not cost money to improve. Basically, we're all here to serve, is how we phrase it, and that really helps when other expensive technologies have to be postponed a bit.

Q. Since higher education seems to be perpetually in challenging budget times, what is your most important financial issue? How are you addressing it on your campus?

A. Focusing on what really matters to students first, followed by faculty and staff needs, aids in keeping the priorities where they should lie. Like many institutions, we charge a technology fee and are constantly ensuring that the students themselves can answer: "What am I getting for this?" If they can't answer by pointing to new services, then it is fair to question the existence of a fee. Our toughest financial issue then becomes if we satisfy all student needs, will there be anything left to replace aging servers, fiber runs, and more behind the scenes that are taken for granted? We strive to