
Case - Collaboration Framework for IT Problem Solving for Community Organizations

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Abstract

This poster shares insights from a funded project to develop long term organized collaboration between School of IT and a Not-For-Profit (NFP) community organization.

Keywords

Applied R&D, Capstone Projects, Tertiary Collaboration

Introduction

Community organizations face considerable challenges re resources and technical/computer skills – needing to do more with less. This research project will survey one community partner of Wintec embarking on an ambitious ICT strategy, consider practices and capability in the School of IT and recommend a way forward to have students be more involved with ICT projects for community organisations. Outputs were planned to be a report on IT needs of the community partner and associated projects and identify opportunities for collaboration including a model for management of the arrangement. Funding of \$4,000 was available, ie. about two weeks of senior person salary. This initiative follows on an IT Service Continuity assessment done for the organization in 2009.

Steps taken and scope refocus

Initial steps involved:

- Project planning, resourced project and communication
- Identify ICT requirements aligned with business plan
- Established internal resource requirement at Trust
- Met with key staff at School of IT to understand capability in terms of student involvement

This poster paper appeared at the 2nd annual conference of Computing and Information Technology Research and Education New Zealand (CITREnz2011) incorporating the 24th Annual Conference of the National Advisory Committee on Computing Qualifications, Rotorua, New Zealand, July 6-8. Samuel Mann and Michael Verhaart (Eds).

Apparent third year projects alone were not sufficient due to mismatch of student interest, skills required and lack of depth. The Trust needed to develop its internal resources and knowledge base to save costs and build longer term capability. Student perspective was untainted and fresh - how could they be more involved? How do we attract them? How do we manage them? Project scope was refocused.

Further steps involved:

- Understanding scope and capability of 3rd year projects
- Created list of projects suitable for 3rd year projects
- Investigated possible additional levels of involvement
- Implement Intranet/Extranet in MOSS 2010
- Develop integrated client management system
- Develop programme management tool in MOSS 2010
- Redesign and reconfigure internal network
- Telecommunications migration to VOIP
- Change management including staff training

Possible levels of involvement (examples)

- Student 3rd year projects
- Student internships (nationally funded)
- Staff secondment for work experience
- Staff research or involvement in software development
- Wider Wintec input including ITS and Inter-School

Delivered for action

- Project list including timeframes and resources required
- Recommendations for aligning School of IT
- Management framework

Project observations

- ICT strategy for NFP primarily focused on improved services for client base rather than efficiencies alone
- Reliance on internal resources rather than outsourcing
- Important to align timeframes between School and NFP given the different sectors within which they operate

- Look into what other leading ITP's are doing
- Investigate mechanism for managing involvement

Challenges facing the organisation

- Increasing need for organizational reliance on ICT
- Relative little internal ICT knowledge/skills at the moment
- Untapped potential with some ICT in organization
- ICT supplier approach
- Time pressures, priorities and limited money available

Possible opportunities (examples)

- Opportunity to involve graduates as well as students
- Several sources of small pools of national funding that could/should be explored for covering project costs
- Important to align projects with curriculum, School's strategic plan and student interest
- Obvious fit with higher level strategic partnership and created a reference model for developing initiatives for all Schools at Wintec and with other organizations
- Took longer than the three months planned, due to ICT supplier involvement in defining requirements, understanding resource needs causing scope refocus, and taking the opportunity to explore opportunities in-depth

Conclusion

This NFP's IT needs are growing swiftly with a range of mutually beneficial opportunities for collaboration identified. The existing alliance agreement was beneficial in drawing together the possibilities but more work needs to be done at both parties to take advantage of potential added value.

References

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