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DoIT Communications Strategies: Challenges and Recommendations

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

DoIT has been unevenly effective in communicating with the university community. Some initiatives, like the recent rollout of two-factor authentication, have been widely and consistently conveyed, others have not. Communications around service tickets, outages, and software upgrades are well-known pain points. DoIT is working to address them, but its incremental efforts would benefit from a more comprehensive strategy.

INVESTIGATION METHODS/DATA/CONCLUSIONS

To develop such a strategy we focused on two questions:

1. What are best practices for on-boarding (or re-boarding) faculty, students, and staff to DoIT?
2. What are best practices for encouraging dialog around campus-wide DoIT issues?

We articulated two broad principles to guide our brainstorming:

1. DoIT communications should aim to reach faculty, staff, and students “where they are” by using the communications channels they use, providing timely responses, and acknowledging that people in different roles need different information.
2. DoIT communications should transcend the organizational chart. They should develop horizontal connections across campus divisions in addition to facilitating flows up and down the management tree.

We generated several concrete ideas to investigate further.

1. What happens on other campuses?



- a. A query to a listserv reaching university foundations nationally revealed that most get information from their IT departments through email and listservs. The IT department website is also used.
- b. One possible strategy for increasing communication between DoIT and other IT professionals on campus would be to form a group to discuss specific IT issues and initiatives. A similar group exists at the University of North Carolina and could provide a model for USC (see Appendix B).
2. What are needs particular to USC system schools?
 - a. IT contacts at system schools did not indicate communications challenges that differed substantially from those of the Columbia campus.
3. What would be involved in including Twitter in ServiceNow workflows?
 - a. From a tool perspective, DoIT could integrate Twitter API into ServiceNow to automate certain actions that create a tweet on the DoIT account. For example, if a public-facing knowledge article is published, DoIT can configure the workflow so that ServiceNow can send a tweet containing the short description and a link to the article--a login would be required to access.
4. What kinds/levels of role definition might it be possible to integrate into Knowledge Base?
 - a. This access/role definition to the Knowledge Base (KB) can be customized down to individual users. ServiceNow manages access by using User Criteria. As of today, User Criteria can apply to Network Usernames, Assignment Groups, Departments, or Locations. It may be possible to expand on this (e.g., include Network Managers as a criteria) in the future.
 - b. By default, no restrictions are placed on KB articles to ensure information flows freely throughout the organization. Knowledge Management can restrict access based on the above criteria at the individual article level, but justification is needed.
 - c. Criteria can be set so that only certain users/groups can read content, or vice versa.
 - d. Departments or Managers interested in having their own ServiceNow KB or want to submit & manage KB content should contact DoIT.
5. Could the directory template/tag structure in OU Campus be used to display all NetAdmins on one page and offer a comprehensive directory to support available in every unit?
 - a. This seems likely, but further investigation is necessary as this functionality is in the process of being deployed.
6. What are the possibilities for integrating such a directory in ServiceNow?
 - a. The most straightforward solution would most likely be to utilize OUCampus's XSL API for Tag Management. Information is [here](#).



7. What would be the cost of providing some useful DoIT token, such as USB drive, to every new employee?
 - a. It would cost about \$1000 annually to provide a \$5 USB drive to every new (tenure track and non-tenure track) faculty member in the system.
 - b. For a one-time cost of less than \$1000 a \$5 USB drive could be provided to each department to onboard new staff.
8. What resources/permissions are available/would be required to redesign the DoIT landing page/service portal?
 - a. The redesign is in process and has already incorporated committee recommendations. No additional resources are needed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DoIT should redesign its website's landing page, integrate Twitter with its Service Desk (including outage reporting), continue regular "Get Connected" email communications, make more visible listservs that link employees with IT responsibilities/interest, use faculty and staff orientations to introduce its services, and pilot a monthly "Lunch and Learn" series encouraging dialog between DoIT staff and faculty/staff on the Columbia campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS

Landing page/Portal

The website should provide a front door for all DoIT services and, insofar as possible, all IT in the system. This page should be where everyone thinks to start when they have any IT question. The new page should be aware that different users have different roles/needs. It may develop as a portal that would anticipate some of these needs on login. A list of functional requirements is included as Appendix A.

Email Updates

DoIT should continue to generate regular "Get Connected" email updates of the sort sent on Oct. 17, 2017 to inform campus users of service changes. These email updates are scheduled every other month at this time.

Twitter

The use of Twitter for notifications of service outages and service queries should be incorporated as part of continual service improvements.

Lunch and Learn

Topics and presenters for a monthly brown bag series might include:

- Office 365 status and roadmap - or maybe there's a "what everyone needs to know when we migrate" type talk.



- Best practices for Content Management Systems (e.g., WordPress, Drupal). This could either be from the person running the CMS or maybe an overview of making sure any instances on campus are secure.
- Using Shibboleth and other campus authentication systems when building apps and websites.
- An overview of services available that people might not know about (e.g., free SSL certificates, Adobe Breeze, Gartner research, etc.) and how each can be used - if it's involved enough, maybe each service gets its own intro.
- Using IBM Watson and what's services are available from IBM.
- Any sort of best practices from departmental IT personnel - what are people doing in their units that work.
- An example topic for more of a lay audience might be "Tell me why I need to be using OneDrive for Business," which could outline features and security considerations vs. other file sharing services such as Dropbox.
- Office 365 (from an IT and end user perspective) and services available. I
- VPN, also from two perspectives, for the IT staff and as an end user.
- An Intro to Windows 10 for end users to learn navigation.

New Faculty/Staff Orientation

Because orientation time is limited and information dense, and because many faculty and staff will have an IT contact in their departments, DoIT should not attempt to explain its services but rather provide a pointer to them. A DoIT-branded USB drive might serve this purpose. It could be loaded with few of the most helpful start-up guides--or a page of links to such guides--and a welcome letter from the CIO. It could have the 7-1800 number on the back.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND STRATEGIES

Landing page/Portal, Email Updates, Twitter

All recommendations fall within the scope of continual service improvements anticipated by DoIT. They should be made a priority, but no additional resources are required.

Lunch and Learn

We recommend piloting this as brown bag series. DoIT staff support would be required to assist in room reservations, and DoIT personnel presenting in the series would need to be released from other duties.

New Faculty/Staff Orientation

Branded USB drives can be obtained for \$5 per unit or less (depending on quantity).

In FY 16-17, the system hired 114 tenured and tenure track faculty, and 114 non-tenure track faculty (many of these will be rehires). 228 x \$5 = \$1140, or about \$1000 recurring to provide every new faculty member at USB drive.

There are 174 regional departments (x \$5 = \$870). A one-time expenditure of around \$1000 would give each department a USB drive it could use to onboard new staff.

APPENDIX A: Functional Requirements of Landing Page/Portal

- Provide a front door for “all things IT.”
- Service status “dashboard”--outages planned and unplanned.
- Link to Self Service Portal (or portal may “swallow” the link-list function--which would allow content to populate based on end-user campus, role)
- Quick Help Guides should (and will) become part of Knowledge Base, where there is a formal revisioning process.
- Knowledge Base access--filter content by role and provide calendar sensitivity (e.g., password change instructions should rise at times with password changes are required).
- Link to FAQ new employees.
- Link to FAQ for new students.
- Links to all subscribe-able IT related listservs, we with clear description of allowable topic and the anticipated audience of each.
- Link to directory of all campus IT staff if possible via OU Campus, allow users to filter by department, title.
- “Spotlights” on new DoIT staff, services.

APPENDIX B: Carolina Technology Consultants

The Carolina Technology Consultants (<http://ctc.unc.edu>) describes itself as “a cooperative organization of Information Technology professionals at UNC-Chapel Hill. We are a grassroots organization powered by IT professionals at Carolina.” It was founded by members of UNC’s DoIT with the following mission:

The mission of the CTC is to provide resources to help IT professionals at UNC-Chapel Hill in their daily work and professional development through better communication and collaboration. To effect these goals, the CTC provides regular updates on problems facing IT professionals on campus, a forum for asking and solving common issues, and an annual fall Retreat and spring BarCamp for IT staff across campus.

In addition to an active listserv, the CTC hosts a combination of formal and informal events, including occasional seminars, an annual retreat (with an IT awards luncheon) and monthly networking lunches at a designated off-campus restaurant (the lunches are informal and everyone pays for their own meal). Membership is not limited just to those providing direct desktop/server support, rather it’s comprised of support



personnel, programmers, web developers, instructional designers, and others with an interest in IT issues on campus. The IT awards recognize outstanding service from various departmental and central IT units on campus, and are determined by university-wide nominations from students, faculty, and staff (see the [2017 event page](#) for more information).