CIO Leadership in a Time of Crisis

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Session Goal

"To share how the crisis in higher education IT has impacted the industry, how my personal path into leadership roles before the crisis coincidentally prepared me for it, and finally, ideas on how to best react to it."

Disclaimer

The following material represents a personal perspective on higher education IT based upon 27 years of experience – 19 of them in leadership roles. It is not the result of formal research or study.

Agenda

– IUP IT: By The Numbers

– Defining The Crisis

– My Journey To a Bursting Bubble

– That Perfect Storm

– Get Our House In Order

– How Can We Capitalize?

– IT Provider vs. IT Facilitator

– What's Next?

IUP IT: By The Numbers

- 17,000 active wired network jacks
- 1,600 wireless access points
- 21,000 active computing accounts
- 5,700-sq. foot Tier 2 data center
- 550TB raw storage
- 35,000 annual help desk requests
- 65 IT employees excluding student workers

The Crisis

– Over 50 percent of the money, people and time invested by IUP IT are for technologies and/or needs that either did not exist at all or not in their current form in 2010

- Cybersecurity
- Border firewall
- Mobile & MDM, portal, cloud, federated identity management, wiki, business intelligence, secured synchronous two-way streaming, eforms + workflow
- Many, many others

The Crisis

Remember when IT was told to "*do more with less*" and we thought it was terrible?

Now, higher education IT is too often told "*we are going to do more without you*"!

The Crisis

– The new reality
  - Outsourcing/merged services
  - Cloud and "* as a service"
  - Non-IT and/or non-full time CIOs
  - IT moved underneath other functional areas, split apart, reduced executive presence
  - State System had four VP CIOs in 2010, now just two despite IT's huge growth
  - UC-San Francisco eliminated 96 IT positions due to outsourcing in Sept., 2016

My Journey – Leadership

– 1989-96: Systems Analyst – custom-built SIS

– 1997: Asked to become a supervisor and ERP implementation Project Manager simultaneously

– 1998: Panic and anxiety ensue in strong waves due to an incredible lack of preparation

My Journey - The Dilemma

– Tons of educational materials related to hardware, software, networking and client/ server, etc.

– But virtually nothing about how to lead technologists, technology projects or IT organizations in a traditional higher ed setting

– Higher education IT felt too unique to effectively transfer corporate leadership and project management concepts

My Journey - What To Do?

– Freedom To Make My Own Rules

1. *"If I am going to go down the tubes, I might as well make sure I do it doing what I think is right!"*

2. Be open to change at any moment, but prove to myself that the change is right (see Rule #1)

3. Present on my ideas and allow others to poke holes in them…if no one can, I must be doing something right!

4. Use this as a feedback loop for continuous improvement

My Journey – A Tiny Spark

– ERP vendor inquiries about our project management concepts almost immediately

- 'different in a positive way'
- Better, faster and less expensive outcomes
- Y2K panic and ERP vendor was overwhelmed with implementations and was seeking any ideas from customers that could possibly help

Bursting Bubble…

- The topics of IT leadership, organizational dynamics and higher ed-specific project management stagnated at best after Y2K

- The few sessions at conferences were spent trying to convince attendees that these were important focus areas

That Perfect Storm

– The late 2000s

- Recession

- Sensitive data breaches

- The 'cloud'

- Predictive modeling

- CRM/enrollment/'student success'

- Mobile

- For-profit competition

- The potential of online learning, etc.

Finally – Looking for Leaders

Although diverse in many ways, these topics all have a common need from IT in order to address them effectively…

Great leadership was finally viewed as being a difference maker!

Answers…For A Fee

– But how does one become a good (perhaps even great) higher ed. IT leader?

- CIO 'Leadership Forums' began appearing
- CAMP IT Conferences
- Product-specific Executive Summit
- UBTech/CIO Education Summit
- Gartner begins to target higher ed.
- Ed. Advisory Board initiates an IT Forum
- TDWI leadership forums separate from IT

But Press Followed…

- Campus Technology Nov., 2014 *"IT Pay: Can Higher Ed Compete?"*

- The Enterprisers Project July, 2016 *"Providing security in the wild west world of higher education"*

- Educational Technology Insights August, 2016 *"In My Opinion: Future of IT in Higher Education"*

- Sept., 2016: Campus Technology *"Outsourcing IT in Higher Ed: A Necessary Evil?"*

Get Our House in Order

– People – not technologies – are the key ingredient to great higher ed. IT organizations

- Provide a career path for all IT workers, permitting self-selection to the extent possible (in-place excellence, technical advancement, leadership advancement)

- Make it 'matter' when someone truly goes above and beyond expectations (projects, equipment, professional development – maybe even compensation!)

Get Our House in Order

- Do not permit the "repeating of the same year of experience over and over again"
- Never set someone up for failure, but hold them accountable when they have a chance to succeed

– Bake change into the culture

- IUP has had notable IT organizational changes in 10 of the last 11 years – on purpose!
  - Refine team responsibilities based upon nuances in user needs and then staff follows accordingly

Get Our House in Order

– Invest in people first and technologies second

- Hard budget times should not reduce the time allotted to professional development – use low-cost means when required

- Every leader is one day closer to leaving their job. Actively prepare self-identified potential future leaders. Succession planning is critical!

– Maximize expertise without creating single points of failure – medical center approach

Get Our House in Order

– Hire for aptitude

- Who will produce the most over the next three years, not the next three weeks?

- Promote from within if at least three solid candidates exist
  – Removes the sense of entitlement by valuing aptitude the most (not seniority)
  – Putting the organization on a more positive path will help with any short-term morale challenges this may create

Get Our House in Order

Final reminder to staff:

"IT is a customer service function. It is NOT just a bunch of IT products and services. Higher education does not exist to perpetuate IT organizations. Remember that during every one of those 35,000 help desk calls."

How Can We Capitalize?

– Go on the offensive

- Position IT as a strategic asset instead of an expensive liability

- Create a governance structure that forces IT to function as an asset and not a liability

– Facilitate the integration of IT when possible, provide IT when necessary

- IT commodities are increasingly too expensive and provide too little value added to keep in house

IT Provider vs. IT Facilitator

– Maximize the amount of money, people and time spent on true difference makers. One tactic is to move to a 'cloud first' concept for new or replacement services

  • Distance education systems, video streaming, personal storage, ERP, talent management, digital repository and (soon) email all in the cloud…but IUP IT supplies identity management/single sign-on and integration services

IT Provider vs. IT Facilitator

– With 'cloud first', create truly value-added services without increasing staff. IUP IT has seven vacancies as of April, 2017 (most in our history)

- Data warehousing/business intelligence
- CRM
- Cybersecurity
- Integrated teaching and learning technologies

What's Next?

– Help enhance the blend of business and IT

– The IT organization can enhance its value to the institution by leveraging these skills to help solve many challenges

- Analytical thinkers

- Problem solvers

- Staff with business process knowledge

- Knowledge about the potential and limitations of IT

- Get improved solutions 'better, faster, cheaper'

Key Takeaways

– Higher Education IT is facing unprecedented change and pressure – it is a true crisis

– But great opportunity exists – institutions need IT more than ever before

– Good IT leadership is critically important as a result…putting people first and really thinking through their care is the key step!

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Thank You!

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