Teaching IT

IT Pro Forum
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Dave Mussulman
mussulma@illinois.edu
Roles of IT

- Detectives
- Engineers
- Architects
- ER doctors
- Firefighters
- Janitors
- Plumbers
- Teachers?
IT support is teaching

- Helping the user figure out what they want
- Negotiating information seeking behavior
- Enforcing policies, best practices, rules
- Connecting users with resources
  - Even if we don’t provide them directly
- “We can’t tell our faculty what to do”
  - Might be the most important thing we do
  - But takes skill to do it right
“Teaching IT”

• Embrace teaching as a part of IT support

• Reframe our approach to IT
  – Maximize our users’ experience
  – Minimize ITPro effort

• Talk about technologies and ideas that can help
Agenda

- Perspectives
- Know thy users
- Know thyself
- IT is situational
- Teaching about IT early
- IT Open House

- Writing Documentation
- Menu metaphor
- Elearning for IT learning
- Sudo Quiz
- Informatics Modules
Know thy users

• IT Pros tend to compartmentalize our environments, our users
  – Organizational boundaries
  – User classifications

• Failure to realize, use, leverage the multifaceted nature of our users
  – LAS undergrad, taking CS courses, living in UI housing, in a sorority, working for campus rec, spending all her time at the UGL, chatting on Facebook
Know thyself

• Users lump all IT Professionals into one group
  – We’re all CITES

• Users don’t see our organizational boundaries
  – Or care.
  – Not important to them.
Perspective Strategies

• Leverage the IT learning occurring in one place wherever else possible
  – Campus-wide services (IllinoisNet wireless)

• Missing: An understanding of what IT learning is used cross-campus
  – IT orientations
  – IT experiences

• Makes ITPros better brokers
Perspective Strategies

• Watch out for terminology pitfalls
  – CITES password, Active Directory password, AD password, NetID password, Kerberos password, Bluestem password, EnterpriseID password

• Pay attention to the terms your users use so you can leverage them
  – Don’t make it worse.
IT learning is situational

• People want their IT knowledge when they need it
  – Not sooner, not out of context or situation
  – Problem? Solution.

• “Teachable moment” concept

• You cannot teach IT early.
IT learning is situational

• Provide great, interrupt-driven user support
  – Helpdesks
  – 1:1 user support is expensive, not scalable
    • Little economy of scale – still takes ITPro intervention

• Promote self-learning, self-discovery, self-help
  – Users want this
  – Scales better
Teach about IT early

Teaching the IT topic early doesn’t work, but you can teach:

– That info on the topic exists and where to find it
– Pique the user’s interest in the topic
– Warn them of future changes
  • “Here’s how to tell if you have a computer virus...”

These “hooks” bridge the gap to real IT learning when the user is ready for it.
Teach about IT early

Methods for teasing about IT knowledge:
• Tip of the Week
• Knowledgebases
  – Refer back to them
  – Mentioned in email signatures, etc.
• Status pages
• Leverage social media (facebook, twitter)
• Digital signage
IT Open House

• Siebel Center atrium first week of fall classes
• Posters on IT topics to grab attention
  – Networking, Software/WebStore, campus maps with IT locations, Security topics, What’s New
• Handouts about topic to take / review later
  – Includes URL for further learning
• IT Answer Desk to resolve face-to-face issues
IT Open House results

• Users loved it
  – Everybody was learning

• Start-of-semester support ticket counts dropped
  – Users were self-solving their problems
  – IT information went viral, peers helped each other

• Tickets that needed ITPro action had required info on the first email
  – Faster turn around, less effort
Menu metaphor

Consider the self learning that goes on with a menu:

- Awareness of what’s available
- Cost and other expectations
- Familiarity with dishes you know and like
- Discovery of new dishes
  - Maybe with ingredients
  - Explanations of new words
- Springboard for questions
- Menus posted on-line or on display outside
- Enhance them with pictures, reviews, specials, etc.

Now consider if restaurants didn’t have menus.
Writing Documentation

• Documenting for self-learning makes our jobs easier
  – User documentation
  – Internal documentation for other ITPros

• Write it as you need it
Writing Documentation

“There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer”

—Ansel Adams
Park your bike responsibly.

(Because if you didn’t, it won’t be there when you come back.)

No Handrails
No Landscaping/Trees
No bikes indoors

UI Student Code §2-601 prohibits parking/storing bicycles in University buildings.

Bike racks can be found:

SC south-east entrance
SC north-east entrance
SC north-west entrance

Overflow spots are available south of Newmark Lab
Good Documentation

• Write documentation FOR the users, not AT them
  – Realize their information seeking need, answer it, and get out of the way
  – Search engines help with this
• Perfection is the enemy of Good Enough
• Crowd-source what you don’t know or support
  – IllinoisNet Android documentation on the CITES wiki
  – Engage the users, give them ownership
Elearning for IT

• We hear a lot about IT supporting elearning
• Any pointers for using elearning to support IT learning?
  – Learning Management Systems like Compass, Moodle for IT documentation?
  – Quizzing about IT topics, self-evaluation
  – Screencasts, podcasts
Sudo Quiz

Leverage an online quiz tool to process workflow for users requesting super-user access

• Ethics quiz-type web tutorial explaining and quizzing rules/responsibilities for getting admin access on Engineering linux systems

• Back-end workflow processing
  – Approval authorizations to sudoers deployment
Informatics Modules

https://www.informatics.illinois.edu/display/infomods/Home

• Project to create self-contained, self-guided-instruction on foundational IT topics
  – High level context, info, links to deeper study
  – Self-guided exercise for hands-on experience
InfoMods list

• Basic and advanced text editing
• Creating a simple webpage
• Using CSS to adjust the appearance of a website
• Basic digital photo or video editing skills
• Getting comfortable with a unix shell
• Experiencing accessibility software
• XML, AJAX, Web 2.0 technologies
• Understanding Internet concepts
• .... and more (but we need your help!)
Informatics Modules

• To-do list of modules will be posted soon
  – We’re still taking suggestions
• Development over the Summer 2011
• Modules posted publicly for Fall 2011
• Designed to integrate into courses needing IT primers
  – Useful for IT learning anywhere
Recap

• Good IT support means teaching
• User guided self-service is a win-win
  – More satisfied users, less work for ITPros
• Consider others perspectives
  – What does your user want?
• Embrace technologies
  – Maybe in new ways for teaching IT
Wrap up

• Questions? Comments? Feedback?

• mussulma@illinois.edu

• Thank you!