Administrative Processes and Roles
- There’s Got To Be A Better Way!

IT Pro Forum 2011 Spring Conference
Introductions

- Dick Harris, Asst. Vice President for Application Development, Support & Data, AITS

Panel Members

- Sally Mikel, Director of Information Management Systems, Graduate College
- Michelle Rome, Manager of Application Development and Reporting Services, LAS Administration
- Ryan Thomas, Director of Information Technologies, College of Education
- Kris Williams, Director of Operations, Materials Research Lab
Presentation Format

Dick will present the “radical” idea of units adopting standard processes in order to enable the use of shared systems.

The Panel, with experience and knowledge of units, will express their opinions on the reasonableness and applicability of this approach.
Goals for this Session

- Understand the challenges that make it difficult for units to share technology and the impact of inconsistent business processes
- Have a common understanding of what a business process is
- Reflect on the origin of business process differences among units
- Identify the problems and challenges that business process differences cause
Goals for this Session (cont.)

- Identify the benefits of eliminating business process differences
- Identify “appropriate” reasons for business process differences
- Understand approaches followed by private and commercial organizations
- Understand and discuss a proposal to improve the situation
- Learn how this can benefit the IT Pro community
Proposition

Units and the Enterprise would gain tremendous advantage from sharing and/or using common systems.

But, the most significant challenge to doing so is the lack, if not the aversion to, common business processes.
Challenges to Using Common Systems

- Willingness to use a common/shared systems
- Willingness and budgetary complexities of one unit relying on another to host a common/shared system
- Incompatible technologies discourage code sharing
- Insufficient support for the unit’s business processes
Discussion

Is this a fair assessment of our situation vis-à-vis shared systems?
What Is a Business Process?

Definition: A collection of related, structured activities or tasks that produce a specific service or product (serve a particular goal) for a particular customer or customers. It often can be visualized with a flowchart as a sequence of activities.

There are three types of business processes:

- Management processes
- Operational processes
- Supporting processes
Observations

- “While a system may work for you, it won’t meet my needs” ➔ Processes are dissimilar
- Using a common system DOES NOT IMPLY common processes
  - E.G. Units all use Banner but we don’t have the same processes
  - System “flexibility” or “configurability” needed to support different processes
Process Flow Map

Roles

Actions/Decisions
“We Are Where We Are”

Colleges Grew Up As Independent Businesses

- Developed processes that met internal, HR, OBFS, Registrar or research admin data needs
- Current processes are the cumulative result of point by point optimal decisions over time made by a constantly changing management
- Changing management led to unique measures, metrics from unit to unit
- No need/desire for consistent processes across units
Problems and challenges that process and operational differences cause

- Difficulty adopting or sharing a common systems/solutions
- No standardization of job roles or training
- Inconsistent staff skill sets
- Difficulty borrowing/sharing staff
- Promotion paths for staff are ad hoc
- Need for multiple shadow systems to support unique processes
Benefits of Common Processes

• Increase use of shared systems by eliminating the “it won’t work here” factor (technical infrastructure reasons may still remain)
• Total cost of ownership/support decreases
• Job roles can be standardized, along with training
• Individuals performing the same role in different units would have a consistent skill set
• Easier to borrow and share staff
• Logical promotion paths emerge
• Potential to eliminate multiple shadow systems
Discussion

Is there agreement that the benefits are worth pursuing?

Which of the benefits would be the most valuable?
When Do Process Differences Make Sense?

Differences of Scale, e.g. reviewing thousands of graduate student applications vs. a few dozen

Unique steps within a process, e.g. a unit requiring telephone interviews of all graduate applicants

Unique businesses or activities, e.g. Vet Med operating an animal clinic, or the College of Education needing to schedule and evaluate student teachers

Others . . .
Discussion

What other examples are there for “valid” process differences among units?
What About the “Real” World?

Examples where similar operational units execute common business processes:

- Sexy: Movie/stage production
  - Hospital Operating Room
  - Law Firm Case Management
- Not so Sexy: UPS
  - Target
  - McDonalds
  - Branch banks
How Achieved in the “Real” World?

- By-product of industry evolution movie, stage, hospital operating room
- Designed from the top:
  - Organizations with branch operations
  - Seek a consistent customer experience
  - Usually a “Field Operations Office” at HQ that:
    - Defines business processes
    - Specifies/tests IT systems that support those processes
    - Creates and gives training to unit staff

→ Think OPERATIONS MANUAL
Proposal

- Given: A “Field Operations Office” would not work
- Instead, ask peer recognized college and departmental staff to design the processes for a “model” college and department
- For candidate processes, identify the best 2 or 3 examples and choose 1
- Establish standard and consistent roles within each process
- Future IT support initiatives focus only on the “model” processes to maximize opportunities for shared systems
Anticipated Challenges

- Achieving buy-in to concept of “model” college or department processes
- Finding process designers with a strong belief in common processes and who can identify real vs. perceived unique process differences
- Unit willingness to migrate to “model” processes
- Central offices willing to participate, not direct (OAR, OBFS, HR, CITES, AITS)
- All participants agreeing on baseline constraints
How can this benefit the IT Pro community?

- Using shared systems for common business processes frees up time for high value faculty support
- Collaboration among IT Pros should increase as they exchange information on shared systems
- Opportunities for progression and advancement increase as processes become more consistent
- Can train in business process analysis and join the UIUC process office. (A virtual, shared service center providing methodology experts for business process analysis initiatives. Contact Michele Raupp, mraupp@illinois.edu or Kelly Block kjb@uillinois.edu)
- Can become team members that create the supporting IT systems for the model processes
Final Discussion & Questions from Audience

- Can the proposal work at the U of I and will it lead to a better future?
- Comments and observations about:
  - Benefits
  - Challenges
- Questions / Comments from the Audience
Interesting Read

Atul Gawande delivered this year’s Harvard Medical School commencement address on the subject of Cowboys, Pit Crews and Healthcare.

His observation: "We train, hire, and pay doctors to be cowboys. But it’s pit crews people need."

Do a search for Atul Gawande on Twitter and you’ll see lots of links to the New Yorker article.
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