The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Bay de Noc Community College

Project Details

Title	Replacement of Telecommunications System with VoIP	**Status**	COMPLETED
Category	6-Supporting Institutional Operations	**Updated**	09-14-2010
Timeline		**Reviewed**	10-20-2010
Planned Project Kickoff	10-01-2009	**Created**	03-29-2010
Actual Completion	12-22-2010	**Version**	1

1: Project Goal

A: The goal of this project is to update Bay College's communications system to one of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), thereby improving efficiencies for communicating both externally and internally. Included among the many benefits with this new system: everyone in the institution (including adjunct instructors) will have a direct phone number; employees at both Bay campuses will be able to contact each other by dialing an extension, rather than calling from an outside line; enhanced voicemail capabilities will be provided to all, especially adjunct instructors. In addition to these efficiencies, the implementation of this system should also reduce long-term costs.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Bay College's current phone system lacks many of the capabilities offered by VoIP systems, such as those listed in the goal statement above. The reason for taking on this action project, therefore, is to take advantage of these operational efficiencies. Currently, many of our adjunct instructors are required to share phone numbers and voicemail, which is not only inconvenient for them, but can also make it difficult for students to contact them. Bay's new system will not only give all instructors their own number and voicemail, but will also allow those numbers to forward to any private line the instructor chooses, without giving that number to the caller. Instructors can, therefore, give students their Bay College number and can also have all calls to that number ring on their cell or home phone. Lastly, this project will save the College operational costs over time (approximately $40,000 per year), so it's installation is also a fiscally prudent measure.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: This Action Project will affect everyone in the organization, since all employees will receive a new handset, a new direct number, and the many enhanced capabilities that come with the VoIP system. However, members of our Information Technology department will be most involved with this project, because they will be largely responsible for overseeing the RFP process, coordinating the installation, and assisting employees with its operation. Other heavily impacted areas will be those with a high call volume, such as Bay's switchboard operators. These individuals have been highly involved in the RFP process and will receive extensive training once the new system is ready for use.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: As previously described, one of the primary improvements Bay College will realize from this project is improved communication capabilities between students and adjunct instructors. Right now, many adjunct instructors do not provide a reliable phone number at which they can be reached, since they are hesitant to give out personal numbers to their students. This system will provide these instructors with a direct number at Bay, but that will also forward anonymously to any number supplied by the instructor. This will greatly enhance the communication capabilities between Bay's students and part-time faculty. Another key improvement is in the communication between Bay's two campuses. Employees currently have to dial an outside line to call colleagues at the other campus, the new system will treat calls at both campuses as internal, thereby allowing employees to simply dial the extension of the person they want to reach at the other campus.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The industry best practice for installing a new VoIP system is approximately 12 months. Bay College has already largely completed the RFP process, so the remaining 12 months of our action project will be dedicated to coordination of schedules, installation of the system, and end-user training.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Several milestones will be setup to ensure this action project is progressing on schedule. These milestones will include implementation of hardware, software installation and staff training, deploying handsets in a test environment, feedback and adjustments, and eventually full implementation. The specific dates of these milestones will be determined in a project kickoff meeting involving members of IT and other key staff.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: In a project of this nature, successful implementation will simply result in a fully operational phone system of the nature described above. Other than monitoring the much-reduced operational costs this system will create, few outcome measures are required to determine the project's success. Please note, however, that a feedback period has been included as one of the project milestones. This will ensure that members of Bay's IT department will speak with end users to ensure their phone system is fully operational before officially going live.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Bay College developed an RFP and invited vendors to submit their responses for College officials to review. The vendor chosen by Bay is Mitel. The work remaining includes the installation of the system, new hardware and software (including new phone handsets) and end-user training. Final implementation of the system will take place over the next three months and the anticipated start date for using the new system is December 22, 2010.

2: Institution Involvement

A: IT staff developed and used a comprehensive planning scheme to keep this, and other projects the team is completing, active and on schedule. Three key events give an indication how IT staff kept this project high on the institution's list of priorities and maintained awareness of the importance of the Project and progress with its implementation.

First, the project and its associated costs were thoroughly vetted and approved through the budget development process. Second, all staff and faculty were given the opportunity to attend presentations and demonstrations provided by prospective VoIP vendors and to then give input and feedback to the IT staff after each event. Finally, the Executive Director of IT gave an update on this project (and other IT initiatives) to all faculty and staff during the College's in-service days, which were held immediately prior to the beginning of the current fall semester.

3: Next Steps

A: To provide training to end-users of the new system, go-live on December 22, 2010, and follow-up with any difficulties that may arise with using the new VoIP system.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: After fully implementing the initiative, communication via phone between adjunct faculty and students is expected to improve. Also, phone contact between Bay's main campus in Escanaba and its west campus in Iron Mountain will become more efficient as calls between the two will be treated as internal in place of the current practice of dialing a long-distance call via an outside line. This latter point will also realize cost savings as the College currently pays a long-distance charge for each call placed via the outside phone line.

5: **Project Challenges**

A: Other than the challenge of managing this initiative along with others, it is moving along as expected.

Update Review

1: **Project Accomplishments and Status**

A: It sounds like the college has the peices in place to implement the new system by the anticipated date. This project fits nicely into the principles of both agility and foresight, as well as AQIP Category 6 Supporting Institutional Operations. This action project will hopefuly provide the college with improved agility, flexiblity and responsiveness to both internal and external college stakeholders through an improved telephone system.

2: **Institution Involvement**

A: The college did well to include all affected faculty and staff in the evaluation process and allow them the opportunity to voice feedback. Hopefully, at time of implementation, this will facilitate acceptance of the new system.

3: **Next Steps**

A: The plans for implementation seem clear, and it appears that you have planned for possible problems arising post-implementation.

You should consider how to measure the success of this project. Measuring stakeholder satisfaction will allow the college to determine if this intended outcome has been achieved..

4: **Resulting Effective Practices**

A: This action project is a great example of both AQIP Category 5 Leading and Communicating and Category 6 Supporting Institutional Operations. The benefits of putting quality improvement processes into play will make a very positive difference in how your campuses and faculty communicate more effectively.

5: **Project Challenges**

A: The college may want to consider dedicating certain individual(s) from the action project team to oversee follow up post-implementation, so that outcome measures can be completed and arising issues can be addressed in a timely manner.

Project Outcome

1: **Reason for completion**

A: This project is being closed because the VoIP installation was completed in December of 2010. All project planning, equipment installation, user training, and post-installation follow-ups have been completed as planned.

2: **Success Factors**

A: Almost all aspects of this project were a success. The installation of the new VoIP phone system provides Bay de Noc Community College employees with the ability to use features like call routing, direct dialing, voicemail, web conferencing, and a digital phonebook. Employees were also offered a number of face-to-face training sessions to ensure a smooth transition between phone systems. The new system has been installed and fully operational for over six months, indicating that the new system is stable and that the overall transition was a success.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: One of the most difficult aspects of this project was the scheduling and delivery of training sessions. In order to maximize user attendance, sessions were scheduled based on each individual's availability. This led to a number of sessions with very low attendance and a high degree of required management of the training schedule. In the future, defining a set number of training sessions and asking users to fit one of them into their schedule would likely be an easier approach. Also, certain features of the new phone system, such as web conferencing, are thus far not being used with regularity by Bay de Noc Community College employees. While this is not necessarily an unsuccessful aspect of the system's implementation, it does point to the possible requirement of additional phone system training for advanced features sometime in the future.