

A Journey Shared

(Sydney's Shared Service Odyssey)

Abstract:

The University of Sydney has been on Shared Services journey for the past four years. As the journey nears completion we are now able to share the experience – our approach(es), our learnings, our documents and some helpful tips.

The Problem:

The University of Sydney, in common with many Universities around the world, had been for some decades committed to a devolved management model that empowered Faculties, schools and other entities to directly manage core academic support functions such as Finance, HR and IT.

From an IT perspective the organisation had wide duplication of technologies (e.g. more than 145 email systems), problems with software licensing (too much and too little), poor utilisation of IT skills (capabilities spread too thinly) and excessive exposure to risk (e.g. research data not being securely managed).

This model led to a wide diversity of approaches to implementations of processes, policies and technologies. The Senate of the University determined that a Shared Services model would be implemented to improve services, risk management and cost impacts for enablement of improved academic outcomes.

The Solution:

After initial attempt to implement IT shared services using existing operation teams, it was quickly identified that a dedicated project team and a formal implementation procedure was needed. An implementation team was created and processes were developed from the ground up, encompassing both technical and HR components.

Key to success of the project was the recognition that a “one size fits all” approach was not appropriate and each situation needed considered and consultative evaluation.

This team developed and documented a repeatable implementation process consisting of 5 phases: engagement, due diligence, proposal, implementation and post implementation. Each “unit” (sometimes a single school, sometimes an entire faculty, sometimes another type of entity) was approached individually and assessed based on its technology requirements.

Due to the wide-ranging technology needs across the University, particular attention was placed on ensuring thorough technical due diligence was conducted for every unit. A great deal of emphasis was also placed on the HR change management process to ensure that existing support staff were placed into new roles that benefited both them and the University.

A key strategy that enabled flexibility in implementation involved establishing agreed positions for management transition approach – The Full Monty (due diligence first) or the Python (responsibility first).

The Outcome:

The shared service implementation program is due to conclude in the first half of 2011.

Approaching 90% of the University is expected to be on IT shared services by this time, equating to 15,000 desktop computers, 500 physical servers, 1,000 virtual servers and other components. 80 staff have been successfully appointed into roles in the central ICT department as a result of the program.

There are a few remaining parts of the University that do not currently plan to move to ICT shared services. There is no formal mandate in place to enforce these remaining units to migrate so the program will be closed once any scheduled transitions are completed. Any additional units wishing to migrate after this time will be migrated by existing operational teams.

The focus is already shifting to the next part of the journey which involves improving, rationalising and replacing the myriad of legacy faculty infrastructure that is now under central management. The intention is to complete the most urgent improvement work by the end of 2011.

Benefits from the Shared Services Project include (already or soon to be realised) include improved:

- support for academic purposes (data protection, systems availability, provisioning)
- student lab management
- technology supportability (desktops/laptops, phones, Audio video)
- licensing coverage
- career situations and prospects for IT people
- infrastructure management (virus, software patches, authentication, problem resolution)
- capability for enterprise systems / process delivery and operational support

In summary the success of the IT Shared Service project has delivered a wide array of benefits throughout the projects and positions the organisation for substantial ongoing improvements.

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