

ABSORBING A LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM INTO A GENERAL COLLABORATIVE

ENVIRONMENT

The emergence of the *Learning Management System* genre of information management systems in the mid 1990's can be seen as a prelude to what we know today as collaboration platforms. Over the years, educational institutions have adopted and modified learning management systems to support and extend the teaching and learning processes, and more recently to manage complex social collaborations. Although administrative and business units within Universities have not historically adopted such a broad collaboration model (relying instead on simple shared drives to manage static content), recent developments would suggest they are moving rapidly to do so. Naturally, the question quickly arises as to whether a single system could be utilized to service the collaboration and information management needs of these various divisions of the University.

Maintaining multiple collaboration platforms is expensive and introduces complexities for data integration and 'source of truth' data creation. Inevitably the systems must develop data interfaces not only with each other, but with major data repositories (student information system, finance, HR, and timetabling). Multiple platforms also introduce issues around security and privacy, where staff and students need role-based access to features and functions that reside within the various platforms, yet the platforms are inconsistent in or incapable of providing those roles.

At the University of Auckland we have embarked on the development of a core unified collaborative environment based on the Microsoft SharePoint platform. Our goal is to provide the most effective collaboration support for all members of the University community including students, teachers, researchers and professional staff. This centralized collaboration system will act as a point of focus for the integration of a number of specialized cloud functions (such as the QuestionMark assessment system) while giving the University the ability to utilize a single core team for support and ongoing maintenance across the various platform development projects.

This presentation will share our progress to date, and will include specific discussion around resource requirements, Sharepoint platform issues, architecture and planning, support and training, and strategies for community acceptance.

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