FASTRAKING THE COMMON NETWORK INITIATIVE

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

The CSU's Common Network Initiative improves efficiency and effectiveness by reducing the time it takes to conduct the design phase of campus technology network projects. Condensing the process through intense, dedicated focus sessions decreases the duration for a typical campus project by approximately 40 percent.

The Common Network Initiative (CNI) is an ongoing program to maintain the baseline technology-network infrastructure of the CSU campuses as technology advances and user needs evolve. Because campus technology networks are mission-critical resources, the CSU's CNI program refreshes each campus network on a cyclical basis. The program is run centrally via the Chancellor's Office using a systems integrator – AT&T – for technical and design expertise, installation, and project-management services.

The process of designing campus technology networks requires significant collaboration between the campus network engineers and the program's design and consulting engineering team. This collaboration traditionally took place during weekly meetings over several months. In 2016, the program developed a new approach: All individuals would meet for a single week of dedicated focus on the design. This was dubbed the FasTrak approach.

With FasTrak, each campus network team meets with the AT&T design and consulting engineering team onsite for the entire week to work solely on the design process. The FasTrak approach enables a singular focus on the task at hand, without the distractions and delays that are inherent to a more prolonged approach. This effort compresses the duration of the design phase considerably and is more effective. Campus resources are often pulled in many directions, so agreeing to dedicate the week to the design phase is helpful for all resources involved. With the overwhelmingly positive feedback from campuses, the approach is now the default method for all new CNI projects.

MILESTONES

April 2016
- Develop FasTrak approach and design processes

July 2016
- Pilot FasTrak with Humboldt State University

Sept 2016
- Refine approach based on feedback

Dec 2016
- Roll out FasTrak for all interested campuses

April 2017
- Determine that FasTrak approach is the default approach for all CNI design-phase efforts going forward

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

The FasTrak approach:

> Saved time: Approximate 90 percent average reduction in total duration for projects

> Saved money: Reduced services costs by roughly 40 percent

> Improved service to campuses: The new approach has become the preferred method as it is quicker and easier for the campus teams.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

The previous design approach was less efficient because of the time between each weekly meeting. This hindered communication, and sometimes accuracy, in the design process. Changes to the campus network that would continue to take place throughout the design process also complicated the prolonged design-phase efforts. With FasTrak, each campus network team meets with the AT&T design and consulting engineering team onsite for an entire week to work solely on the design process, which has proved much more efficient than weekly meetings.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

The improvement afforded by the FasTrak approach was quickly evident and campus feedback was very positive. Campus network directors indicated that it was a more efficient use of their time and resources to have a compressed, dedicated week-long session rather than an effort that extends across months with just a few hours per week set aside. It also reduced errors and improved the quality of the design deliverables.

QUALITY, COST AND DELIVERY

FasTrak improves the quality of the campus design because the focused effort reduces opportunities for errors. Deliverables are produced more quickly and communication between the team members is enhanced throughout the design phase.

FasTrak saves money. The AT&T engineering and project-management resources are utilized more efficiently. This reduces the cost for services and allows the CNI program to allocate more funding to networking equipment for campuses.

LESSONS LEARNED

1 Short, intense sessions focused on the primary deliverable, with all the key representatives present for the duration of the effort, improved efficiency.

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