

Institutional Excellence Award 2015

Reorganize and Redefine KU IT



A bronze Jayhawk statue by sculptor Elden Tefft keeps vigilant watch over KU students on the University of Kansas Lawrence campus.

Great technology organizations don't start with technology. Rather, success begins with a focus on their customers and the employees who serve and support them. Success is also determined by an organization's willingness to do the right thing for their customers, knowing the choice may mean more work and a steeper climb. Implementing a vendor solution is a complex and challenging endeavor, but a different kind of innovation is needed to re-imagine, reorganize, and redefine an established technology organization. When technology organizations seek to innovate in areas that matter as deeply to people as jobs, funding, control, and institutional history, there is inherently tremendous risk; but over the past three years, KU Information Technology (KU IT) at the University of

Kansas has proven that when this is done well, the rewards far outweigh the challenges.

Reorganize and Redefine KU IT

KU IT has developed and implemented a new technology-support model designed to improve customer service, ensure consistency and compatibility in services and systems across campus, provide operational savings, and create new career growth opportunities for campus technology staff.

The outcomes for the "Reorganize and Redefine IT" initiative met or exceeded original expectations, and the process has allowed the organization to grow and develop in new and exciting ways. Through the implementation of a new "locally supported and centrally managed" technology-support model and related centralization projects, KU IT provided significant benefits to its customers, campus technology staff, and the university overall. Through the process, KU IT fundamentally improved as an organization, bolstering its reputation as a trusted campus partner and establishing KU as a leader in organizational change.

Like many tier-one research universities across the country, information technology at KU grew organically as computers and the technology industry evolved. This emergent process resulted

in the inefficient dispersion of technology staff and resources in individual units (i.e., schools and departments), and a lack of central management and no comprehensive, campuswide strategy. Unit administrators took on the management of both technology staff and the implementation of new technologies. And because there was no comprehensive strategy or coordination, little thought was given to how new solutions would integrate with existing technologies on campus. This silo effect also led to duplicated services and a loss of collective bargaining power for vendor purchases.

Over time, the real impact of a decentralized support model could be seen most in the missed opportunities to improve teaching, learning, research, and the campus experience as a result of the inability to implement integrated technology solutions across the entire institution.

To support KU's 5-year strategic plan (launched in 2011), university leaders identified a number of initiatives to improve efficiency and save operational costs, which could then be reinvested in strategic priorities. Reorganizing and redefining the role of decentralized IT staff at the Lawrence campus was one of several initiatives focused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of technology resources across the university. By centralizing the management of all technology services and support functions, associated personnel and expenditures, KU IT could improve customer service and provide cost savings that could be redirected toward the academic and

research mission of the university.

At the start of the project, KU IT faced two major hurdles. First, some campus customers viewed KU IT as an inconsistent organization in need of a more clearly articulated strategic plan and vision. Before KU IT could move the university forward with a culture-changing solution, it first had to look inward and become a more strategic and customer-focused organization. Second, beliefs about centralization and natural apprehension about organizational change made it even more imperative for KU IT to establish itself as a trusted campus partner.

Under new leadership in fall 2011, KU IT took decisive steps to become a more customer-focused and professional organization. KU IT leaders began to articulate a clear vision and instituted new practices that allowed for more consistent support and services. The organization also began an on-going practice of more broadly listening to all stakeholders and communicating the results and outcomes of major efforts with partners and university leadership.

Over the life of the Reorganize and Redefine project, KU IT remained focused on changing the perception of the organization by demonstrating accountability and transparency. As the organization became more open and accountable, relationships improved and trust grew with partners across campus.

Planning, Leadership, and Management Support

The locally-supported-and-centrally-managed model is a true collaboration between KU leadership, KU IT, and partners from across the institution. Because the efforts to reorganize and redefine IT support on campus are directly aligned with the institution's vision and five-year strategic plan, the project had early buy-in and on-going support from top leaders.

The scope of this on-going, multi-year, multi-phased project is substantial, involving hundreds of employees and 19

campus units (schools or departments) to date. Work began in 2011 with a comprehensive look at KU IT and thorough exploration of the ways the organization could change to better serve its customers. In parallel, there were regular interactions with university leadership, including deans, directors, staff, the chancellor, the provost, vice provosts, and vice chancellors, to better understand the vision, strategy, needs, and pain points of each unit on campus. Success required active participation from across the entire university.

In 2012, KU IT formed project teams that included KU IT leadership and departmental staff, campus partners, and external advisors. Guided by an evolving customer-first philosophy, the teams worked to identify opportunities and risks for the initiative. Together they reviewed the pros and cons of centralized and decentralized support models and designed a hybrid model that capitalizes on the best aspects of both. Having technology support staff located in campus departments with their faculty and staff customers was among the most valuable aspects of the decentralized approach. That's why in the new locally-supported-and-centrally-managed model, technology staff members remain in their current locations, while reporting to central IT through managers at newly formed Technology Support Centers (TSCs).

Leaders in the partner units work with their TSC manager and KU IT's Deputy Support Officer to propose and prioritize technology projects and provide input into the performance of the IT staff supporting their unit. KU IT is then responsible for providing the most effective technology solutions to fulfill the business or academic needs of the unit.

For each campus unit, the process for implementation begins with an assessment of the current personnel and resources, along with an evaluation of their specific customer needs. In each case, workstation and server support, application and web support, and classroom and

lab support are assessed to get a holistic view of the technology in the unit and identify duplicated services and potential cost savings. Finally, a master service agreement (MSA) is negotiated for each unit, which clearly articulates expectations and deliverables. With the MSA complete, funding lines for technology staff positions are transferred from the unit to KU IT and departmental technology staff begins reporting to KU IT.

Promotion of Technology and Maturity of Effort

In the past three years, KU IT has successfully partnered with 19 of 22 campus units to provide technology support under the new model, and is currently in discussions with leaders of the other three units. KU IT worked closely with leaders in each unit to develop individualized master service agreements that address their specific needs and priorities. The new model has fundamentally changed and improved how KU IT delivers technology support and services on the KU campus. Now there is a single point of contact for all technology needs for the units. As a result of this dialogue among units, TSC managers, and KU IT departments, KU IT is better able to incorporate the feedback and priorities of campus partners in university-level technology decisions. The new model allows for enhanced sensitivity to local needs and processes; service-centric decision-making; unified systems, policies, and procedures; and greater sharing of IT knowledge and resources across the university.

Even after building stronger relationships and trust on campus, asking unit leaders to relinquish a degree of control was not easy. Neither was convincing technology staff that giving up some of their autonomy would ultimately make their lives easier and help them advance professionally.

To overcome these challenges and further enhance the perception of KU

IT as a trusted partner, the organization remained focused on accountability and transparency through open and meaningful communications.

Before approaching units directly, KU IT began strategic communications efforts to build awareness of the initiatives among faculty, staff, and students. At the same time, KU IT leaders and project

Quality, Performance, and Productivity

Operational cost savings was the only formal key performance indicator (KPI) for the larger Reorganize and Redefine KU IT project. To better serve its customers, KU IT leadership and project teams developed their own KPIs for the Reorganize and Redefine IT initiative specific to the TSCs that were created by the project.

Cost, Benefit, and Risk Analysis

The resources required for this project were significant, primarily in the area of staff time related to project teams, partner engagement, and communications. KU IT identified numerous risks and challenges, including the following:

- Build trust and relationships with customers and campus partners
- Overcome concerns about impact on jobs (e.g., layoffs, salary cuts, etc.)
- Overcome distrust and perception of IT imposing the change on other units
- Resistance to change
- Service levels must be maintained or improved rapidly after implementation to prove change positive and protect partnership status
- Overcome perception that centralization of management equals standardization, loss of local priorities
- Overcome concerns of departmental IT staff who experience change in reporting structure, and build relationships and loyalty with new managers
- Continued inconsistencies in service and continued incompatibility of systems across campus if new model is not implemented
- Degree of complexity and need continues to grow if decentralized model persists

Overall benefits of the initiative include:

- Improved standard of service across the university
- Operational cost savings
- Improved governance/collective bargaining power on enterprise software licensing and hardware purchases
- Customer-centric decisions
- Streamlined processes and efficiencies gained
- Consolidation of knowledge
- Enhanced perception of KU IT as a trusted campus partner

In practice, the benefits of the locally-supported-and-centrally-managed model include benefits on four levels:

1. Benefits for the university
 - Efficiency in support and procurement

team members met with the stakeholders who would be affected by the changes. They listened, and sent direct and targeted communications to these groups that addressed frequent questions and focused on the benefits to individuals, departments, and the university.

What is perhaps most significant about this project is the fact that KU IT was able to achieve the university's cost and efficiency goals for the initiative by focusing on the needs of partners and employees and delivering a higher standard of service. This project proves that thoughtful, people-centered approaches to organizational change can yield enhanced trust and partnerships in addition to financial gains and improved business processes.

These KPIs include:

- Customer satisfaction
- Total number of help tickets
- Average time to assign ticket to staff
- Incident resolution, whether it met the service agreement
- Total first-call resolution (i.e., problems resolved on first call) maintained or improved
- Average time to resolve/close ticket

KPIs are communicated to partners via the MSA for each unit, and results are reported to university leadership. To date, expectations for all project KPIs have been met or exceeded. Additionally, KU IT has identified and implemented more than 300 business process improvements (BPIs) since the beginning of the Reorganize and Redefine IT initiative in 2011.



The University of Kansas Lawrence campus is located on Mt. Oread in the center of Lawrence, Kansas.

- Greater consistency in service and increased technology compatibility across the institution
 - Cost savings through the elimination of competitive hiring of existing technology staff among departments within the university
 - Cost savings through avoidance of duplicated services, systems, software, facilities and operating costs
2. Benefits for IT staff transitioned into new TSC model
 - Career advancement opportunities
 - Training and professional development
 - Back-up from other support staff for vacations and other absences
 - Increased access to central IT resources
 - Ability to escalate issues through tiered support system
 3. Benefits for units
 - Consistent technology support
 - Increased access to IT resources
 - Improved ability to communicate local needs/priorities to central IT
 - Joint authority for technology decision-making between units and central IT
 - Knowledgeable back-up staff to cover primary IT staff absences
 - Cost savings through reallocation and cost avoidance
 - IT support for schools/departments that lack funding
 4. Organizational impact for KU IT
 - Enhanced reputation as a trusted partner on campus
 - Ability to correct/avoid inconsistencies in services
 - Ability to correct/avoid compatibility issues between systems
 - Partnerships with deans/unit leaders and schools/departments pave the way for future collaboration
 - More responsive to local needs and priorities/processes

Customer Satisfaction/Results to Date

The Reorganize and Redefine IT initiative shows how aligning IT initiatives with the university's strategic plan through a

customer-focused approach can drive institutional excellence and provide lasting benefits for the university, employees and, most importantly, individual customers.

As a result of the new locally supported and centrally managed model, faculty and staff at KU have seen improved service and response rates as the tiered system allows local support staff to escalate issues and get help diagnosing and resolving the toughest problems. Post-service surveys show that on average approximately 95 percent of KU IT's customers "agree" or "strongly agree" they are satisfied with the service they received. First-call response rates in most cases are about 85 percent or above—well exceeding the industry average.

The university has gained improved efficiency in support and procurement and has seen significant cost savings from the avoidance of redundant operating costs, equipment purchases, and elimination of competitive hiring of IT staff between units within the institution.

Technology staff in campus units, who often worked alone before the change, now have much-needed back-up for vacations and unplanned absences, access to far more resources—including system and application experts—and new professional development and career advancement opportunities. No employees were laid off as a result of the new model, and a number of previously decentralized staff have already experienced professional advancement through promotions to management positions in the new Technology Support Centers.

The immense success of the project is unquestionably a result of the direct involvement of KU IT's campus partners in both the planning and implementation stages, and the unwavering support of university leadership. With the help of this coalition of campus partners and KU leaders, project outcomes have met or exceeded initial expectations on all measures.

Thanks to a thoughtful planning and development process, there were

virtually no unanticipated challenges. Leaders from partner units have been overwhelmingly pleased with the results and have shared their experiences with others.

News of KU's innovative approach to organizational change has started to spread beyond campus. A number of peer institutions have reached out to KU IT to learn about the support model and implementation process.

As a result of the project, KU IT has fundamentally improved as an organization. It has solidified its reputation as a trusted campus partner through improved business processes and a demonstrated commitment to putting customer needs first.

Centralizing management of IT support and services is an organizational challenge that many institutions of higher learning will face in the coming years. This kind of project is complicated and deals with essential topics that matter to customers and employees of the institution: jobs, funding, control and institutional history. These fundamentally human concerns can be seen only as risks to be mitigated, or they can be viewed as invaluable opportunities to elevate and enrich an IT organization's role as a trusted partner. This project demonstrates that in addition to financial and process successes, how an organization chooses to address the necessary changes will largely determine whether the project significantly enhances, or detracts, from the perception of IT at the institution.

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