

TIME TO PASS THE BATON

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The University of Waterloo has been an integral part of my life since 1973, as a student, staff member, lecturer, parent of 2 UW students, a volunteer recruiter for varsity athletics/students, and soon a retiree. The University has a great reputation, and I am sure this will be the case for years to come. It is important to remind people that “what got you here won’t get you there”. Things we try to capture in strategic plans is what we think of as “there”, so they are important.

I have given several presentations in the past about new technologies (well, new at the time), more recent topics about relationship building, and lessons I have learned in my career. In this presentation I selected seven key lessons that I will share and then talk about my insights into the future – things that I feel IT staff at UW should focus on to be successful in the future. I will share the advice that I will pass along to my successor, and invite the audience to add to my advice.



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7 KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM 39 YEARS

1. Take ownership of your mistakes. First thing to remember is to stay calm. Make a plan, be patient, and make sure communication is a key part of that plan. Keep clients informed...don't try to hide anything.
2. All IT Technology will change and be replaced with something else. Don't become emotionally attached to any type of technology - know when it's time to let it go, accept it, and help implement better technology.
3. For management, hire talented staff and let them do their jobs. Stay informed, and only get involved if you can help clear roadblocks. Help staff learn about culture by encouraging them to get to know people on campus. Use your experience to offer advice.
4. Schedule a meeting when emails become nasty, or appear to be going down the wrong road. This is key advice to help build/maintain relationships/partnerships. For some reason, some people don't like to meet in person.
5. If you are upset, use the 24 hour rule. In other words, don't reply to emails if you are upset. Your reply will be much different in 24 hours.
6. Wear your university hat when discussing services. Be a team player.
7. Do the right thing when making decisions.



MY INSIGHTS ABOUT THINGS IT STAFF AT UW SHOULD PRIORITIZE IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE FUTURE.

1. Project Success depends on stakeholder engagement. Some universities have adopted the “customers make final decisions” approach, and it is working for them. IT people have a hard time accepting this advice.
2. IT is only one piece of the puzzle. There are many areas competing for scarce resources. The most effective IT leaders help solve institutional problems.
3. Be accountable – write agreements down. Verbal agreements are lost and often misinterpreted.
4. Putting IT staff into management positions without training/mentoring can be a disaster. Mentoring is important. Make sure there is a “culture fit” when hiring new staff and/or creating teams. Leadership skills communication, respect, integrity, listening, collaboration, ability to offer and accept criticism (calmly), and dedication. New managers need to be able to work with university leadership and peers, both inside and outside their department. Lead by example. Bottom line, bullying doesn’t work.
5. Going forward, partnerships are key especially as cloud computing solutions increase. Work on building partnerships (grow your network, build trust). There will be a lot of new people on campus in the next 5 years due to retirements. As partners, figure out how technology can advance the university’s mission.
6. When hiring, rate client service/team skills high, very high. Carefully review your department needs when filling vacancies. Don’t skimp on front line customer support skills.



INSIGHTS CONTINUED

6. If the university gets into Lean to improve processes (which would be a very good idea), include IT in the discussions. IT as an afterthought, can become a roadblock, or at least thought of as one. Example of success for Lean is St. Mary's Hospital – number one in Canada for patient survival. That's impressive.
7. Innovation – think about and implement new services, things not already being done. Discontinue services no longer needed.
8. Slow down, do less, achieve more. This may meet a lot of resistance, but it makes sense sometimes. Say 'no', do what matters most.



ADVICE FOR THE NEW DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES

1. SLA/MOU review: meet with every faculty/department as was done in the summer of 2014. Great opportunity to start building relationships by meeting new people and talk about their most pressing IT issues.
2. Start working on a new Client Services 3 year plan (2018-2020). Current plan is for 2015-2017. The plan is an excellent way to strategize, and track initiatives. It is also a great way to keep your staff informed, and engaged. Make it a team effort, update the plan every term, and share it.
3. Review the Client Services career path. Staff are your most important resource.



FINAL THOUGHTS

- Steve Wozniak spoke recently in Kitchener, and said something that I thought was bang on... "What life is about is not your accomplishments, it is about your happiness". At the end of the day, that's all that matters.
- Make the Workplace Enjoyable. Have fun. Best ideas often come to you when you are not working (e.g. walking the dog).
- Down time is important to recharge.
- What advice do you have for the next director of Client Services, IST?



TIME FLIES



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