Portals: An Antidote to IT Invisibility

Presented by: Rick Bunt, Monisha Shukla and Simone Knapp
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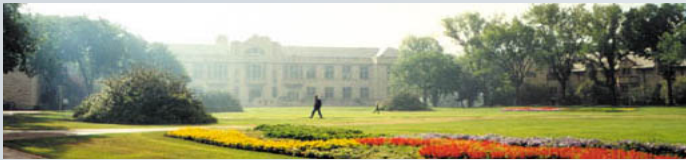**Session ID: 1101**

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Portals:
An Antidote to IT Invisibility

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"If we're doing a good job IT should be invisible"

Is invisibility all that it's cracked up to be?

Why might we want to be invisible?

- Best to stay under the radar.
- They can't hit what they can't see.

What's wrong with being invisible?

- "Out of sight, out of mind" doesn't work at budget time.
- Squeaky wheel gets the grease.
- Success goes unnoticed.
- No appreciation of the challenges we face.
- We don't build a base of supporters.

Outline of our presentation

- Challenges for campus IT
- Overview of our portal project
- Portals as an antidote to invisibility

Our challenges are truly mythical in their scale

Central IT sails the dangerous waters of campus culture — battling storms, monsters, temptation — to bring new technology to our colleagues.

Central IT

Storms:

The sea god Poseidon lashes the sea into a storm with his trident ...

- ## Storms of mistrust:

  Some of our colleagues mistrust technology and those who provide it.

Monsters:

Scylla the 6-headed monster that's hard to kill ...

- **IT's credibility damaged by experiences with unsuccessful technology projects in the past.**

Other Dangers:

Charybdis swallows the sea in a whirlpool ...

- Scope explosion can suck projects into the abyss.
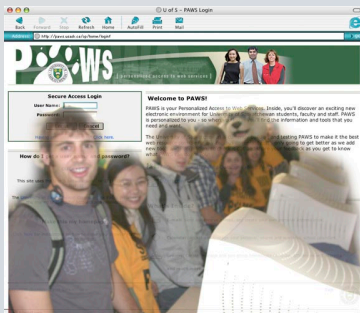
And sweet singing sirens lure sailors to their doom …

- Sound like vendor promises?

In 2003 we began a project to build a campus-wide portal (PAWS).

More than a technical project

- We had non-technical issues to address as well.

Our "aha" moment

- Implementing technology is a social exercise as much as a technical one.
    - —Campus-wide IT projects are community projects.
- Communities share common interests, common goals, a common purpose.

Working together to achieve a common goal

- For our portal project we adopted a new model

- Co-development
  - —Local unit develops the application, central IT integrates
  - —Highly successful approach

Some of our co-developers

Colleges and Schools

Some of our co-developers

Student & Enrolment Services

Some of our co-developers

Financial Services
Human Resources
Library
Alumni Affairs

Why is co-development effective?

- Offers everyone on campus a voice.
- Captures ideas from the broad campus community.
- Provides local units the opportunity for business-specific, value-added applications and content.

Why is co-development effective?

- A deeper sense of ownership and engagement in the project and its outcomes.
- Improved standardization and campus-wide acceptance.
- Frees up central resources.
- We share success.

Growth in Usage

PAWS Usage
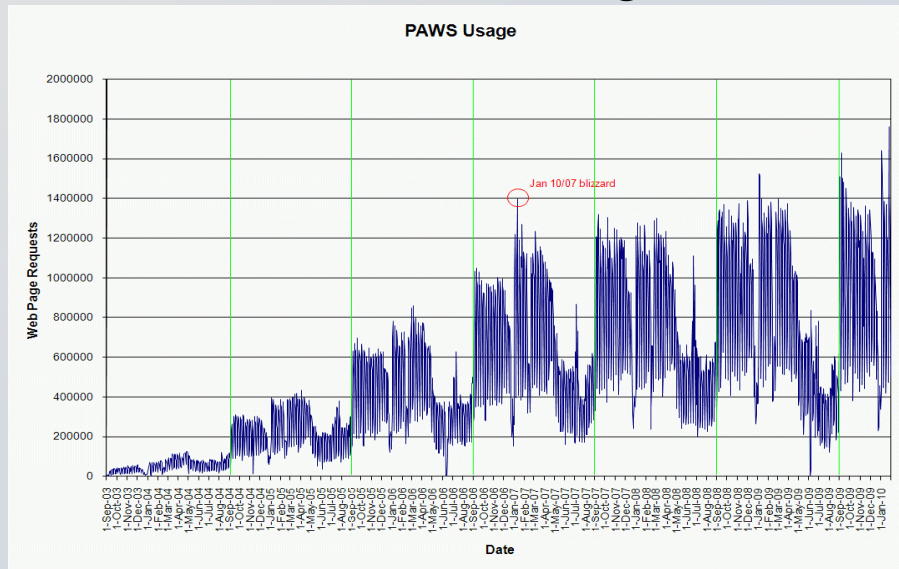
Why is a portal an effective antidote to IT invisibility?

- Central IT works hand-in-hand with service providers in developing and deploying their applications.
- Clear delineation of roles.
  - —Local unit responsible for the service, central IT responsible for the delivery.
- Provides a mutual sense of accomplishment.

How has our portal made us (central IT) visible?

- PAWS is the common gateway for accessing campus online services.
- A campus meeting place where 18,000 users gather every day.
  - —No other place, real or virtual, can say this.
- Everyone now wants their service to be on PAWS.
  - —And they understand better what that entails.

Growth in Channels

Number of Channels in PAWS

How can a portal reinforce central IT's role?

- Campus IT standards.
- Scale efficiencies.
- Consistency in service delivery.
- A place to go for help meeting **their** business needs.

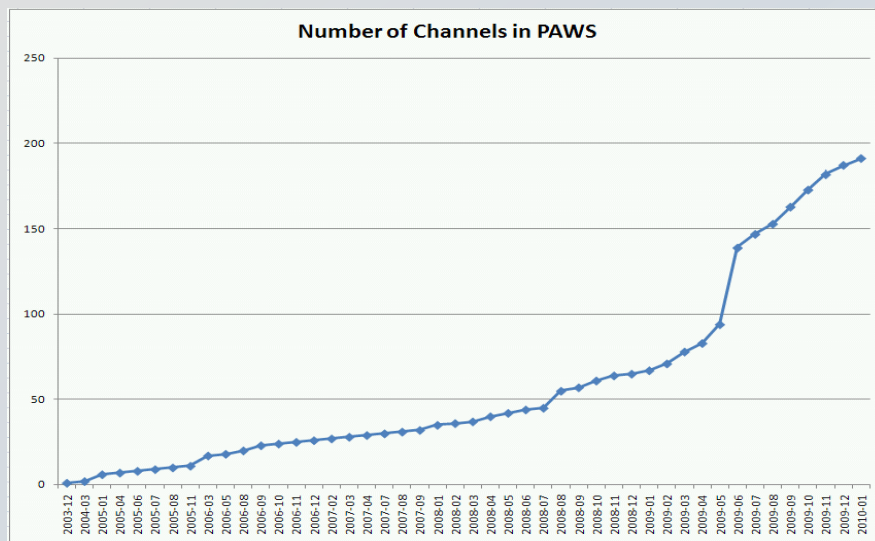## How has our portal reinforced our (central IT's) role?

- The login ID used for the portal became the campus standard.
  - —Single-sign on to services is a requirement.
- The portal became the common gateway to access online services.
  - —Provides consistency for the community.
- Visibility of portal provides opportunities to solve business needs of units.
  - —Online elections, surveys

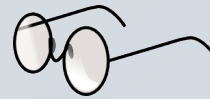## Once central IT becomes visible how do we stay visible?
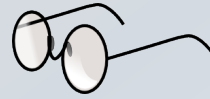
- Continue to demonstrate that their interests are our interests.
  - —Balance the needs of local units and central service providers.
- Keep the engagement going.
  - —Encourage co-development in campus IT projects.
- Build on joint success.

How does the portal contribute to visibility?

- Monthly meetings of PAWS stakeholders and one-on-one meetings for proactive relationship building.
- We seek out opportunities to partner with others on campus to provide services in PAWS.
  - —We embrace our supporting role.
- We redefined our definition of success.
  - —When our partners succeed, we succeed!

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Questions?

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