

Vision for IS&T Website and Service Catalog

10/11/10

MTS

I have been thinking a lot about our website and what it SHOULD and CAN do for us and for MIT. I would like the group planning and working on our new website to BLUE SKY a brand new website for IS&T: start with a clean “screen” or “piece of paper”. I hope the following high level ideas and advice will be helpful and serve as a guide.

For the past almost twelve months the IS&T leadership team has been working to redefine ourselves and our services to the Institute, with the guidance we received from Terry Stone and from the task forces, especially IT@MIT. We define ourselves in the strategic and operational plan and our new organization reflects that. We provide information technology services to MIT, working in partnership with MIT community members. We should use this work to direct the design of the IS&T website.

Our website should embody and directly reflect our mission of service provider and our vision of making IT easy for our customers and ourselves. It should support our vision of self-service. It should reflect the major themes of the IT@MIT task force report. It should be based upon “What do members of the MIT community want from IS&T”?

Our customers and our employees should be able to easily find information and to easily find contact points-people- who are responsible for the specific services we offer to the community. The use of our website should decrease the burden on our help desk and on others who provide assistance to the community. Our website should be designed around our service catalog and our strategic and operational plan.

The information and navigation should be simple, clear and self discoverable. Simplicity and ease of use are crucial. And responsiveness to community needs. In an elegant way, our website should communicate what we do and what is exciting about IS&T.

We should solicit customer input around what information they would want the “ideal” website to provide to them: services, state of systems (3 Down), service level agreements, the strategic and operational plan, progress against plan, operational metrics, etc. If we have them, we should also examine statistics around the use of the current website to map out potential use. What our customers are doing now as well as what they say they want will be valuable information.

Integral to the design should be the partnerships we have within the community, including project sponsors, the IT Governance Committee, IT Leaders, IT Partners, Faculty and Student Experience, etc. As we move towards a supported self-service model, partnerships with our customers will continue to drive more of our work.

Navigation should be easy and the “whats” and the “how tos” should be clear, concise and easy to find. There should be an associated search engine/function.

The service catalog will say, “Here are our community functions” and the website will be designed around these functions. I suggest we use the high-level organization model to form a framework for the services/functions. What services do we offer to our customers and how do we offer them? In designing the website, you should reference the following material: the memorandum we distributed to present and explain our new organization in late June, the plan document (which is well underway), and Terry’s charge and the key themes of the MIT task force report—the latter two are in the plan document.

There are different ways our customers use our services. For example, we develop and support enterprise applications in partnership with our customers. We also help our customers develop their own IT solutions (for which they bear the cost). We offer network services to support our customers’ day-to-day work. We work in partnership with our customers to solve thorny business problems and to create ideas for the future. How can the IS&T website help to facilitate that?

In terms of designing the website, please start with the vision and the information architecture to support that vision. Map the services and the plan and other material to that. Then define the navigation. Then develop the wireframes, the user-based mockups which should precede the actual website design. Then proceed to the website design. I have suggested to Christine that we use an external design firm, one we have not used in the past. David Foucher is willing to provide referrals to us. At some point we will have to decide how and where to develop the site: whether to outsource or insource the actual development.

I hope you find this helpful and I would be happy to answer any questions. I did speak with David Foucher and he is willing to review our material at any stage; he suggested prior to website design and when the wireframes are complete.

David and I also talked about branding. IS&T is a meaningful name and I had decided not to change it just for change sake. I want to emphasize that I do not want to do anything which costs a lot or even just appears to cost a lot and for which the objective is not clear and understandable to our customers.

David Foucher communicated he thinks the name itself is meaningful but was puzzled about the logo and in particular the “and” sign in the logo. (Christine, does the “and” sign have particular meaning?)

The logo should also embody our mission and vision. I am not suggesting changing it at this point in time but I would be open to ideas and will do some more thinking about it. Can we poll selected customers and ask them what it says to them?

Thanks. I look forward to reviewing your scope and plans!