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Developing an Open Source Community of Practice

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Topic Preview

- What is a Community of Practice?
- Origin of the Open Source Community of Practice
- Why Open Source?
- Goals of the Open Source CoP at OU
- Current Progress at Ohio University
- Future?
What is a Community of Practice?

• The Domain: a shared body of knowledge and a shared competence

• The Community: members engage in joint activities to share information and learn from each other

• The Practice: members develop shared resources, tools, etc.
Provos’s Advanced/Emerging Technology Council

• Informal Group - NOT a Committee

• Examine New Technologies for possible Projects

• Initially 4 Members from Central and Embedded IT

• Lent itself well to the Community of Practice concept
Initial Communities of Practice

- Open Source - Interest in the use of Open Source Software to further Educational and Research Goals of the University
- Tablet PC - Interest in the use of Tablet PC technology in the classroom to improve quality of learning
Current Communities of Practice at OU

- Open Source
- Tablet PC
- IT Community Communications
- Distributed IT Managers
- Web Development and Management
- Active Directory
Open Source Pyramid

- Apps
  - Sakai, Merlot, Croquet, Kuali

- Middleware
  - Shibboleth

- Utilities
  - Apache, Postfix, Tripwire, PHP, MySQL
Why Open Source?

- Locally built applications are being replaced
- Vendor applications don’t meet needs and force work arounds
- Software market not focused on Higher Education
- Commercial vendors moving toward consolidation
- Version upgrades disrupt implementations
- Proprietary standards
Goals of the Open Source CoP

- Develop Strong IT Community Collaboration
- Develop relationship between IT and Faculty
- Support IT Professional Development
- Encourage Innovation and Open Standards
Ohio University’s IT Topology

- Provost
  - CIO
    - CS
    - CNS
    - CITL
    - Leadership Council
      - Major Projects
      - Embedded Professionals
      - Visioning Group

Communities of Practice

Faculty
Seeding the Community

- Initial OSCoP Meeting in June, 2004
- 2 Faculty saw a presentation on Sakai at a conference in September 2004
- Pre-existing project researching ePortfolios
- Combine these projects under Sakai/uPortal framework
A Pilot Opportunity

- The Longsight Group
  - Member of the SEPP
  - Provides an instance of Sakai, ePortfolio, Drupal, phpCollab
    - Can provide us with training and documentation
  - Cost much less than joining the SEPP ourselves
Making things work

- Not all Open Source CoP members were interested in Sakai/ePortfolio
- Split the Longsight project into a sub-group
  - Interested IT professionals self-select the group
  - Smaller group to interact with faculty
- One hour “lunch and learn” sessions for the general group
OU-Longsight Collaboration

- OU IT staff is the first line of defense
- Problems beyond our capability to solve are passed up to Longsight Support
- Longsight manages/updates our Sakai instance
- Bug reports are passed through Longsight to the Sakai developers
- At our option, on site training can take place
OU-Longsight Hurdles

- No direct access to source code for our running instance
- Policy problems especially in regard to authentication and authorization
- Indirect Access to SEPP
Faculty-Staff Collaboration

- Contact primarily through e-mail
  - Set up group accessible e-mail address
  - Set forth a set of rules for reporting bugs
- Faculty gain trust in IT staff as they see us work through problems
- Faculty help IT identify bugs that can be reported upstream
Faculty-Staff Hurdles

- Relatively slow process to get everyone on the same page
- Arriving at a common “language” for both IT and faculty
- Managing expectations
  - Ease of use
  - Functionality
Lunch and Learn Topics

- Overview of Open Source Use at Ohio University
- Subversion/Version Control Management
- Shibboleth Introduction/Implementation at Ohio University
- Web Content Management Systems
Future Plans

- “General Assembly”
- Continue Lunch and Learn meetings, encouraging new presenters and topics
- Ensure self-sustainability
- Longsight Project
  - Fine tune Faculty/Staff interaction
  - Determine a method for assessing Open Source Software as an alternative for Commercial Software
- Kick off ePortfolio Pilot
References/Resources

- Communities of Practice
  - http://www.cpsquare.org/
- Sakai
  - http://www.sakaiproject.org/cms/
  - http://www.longssight.com
  - http://www.math.ohiou.edu/~hyclak/oscop/