Portals for Mortals

Randy Ebeling
Associate VP & Chief Operating Officer
Information Technology Services
The University of Texas at Austin
Agenda

- Introduction
- What is a Portal?
- Why are they Important?
- UT-Austin Experience & Case Study
  - Context
  - Timeline & Demo
  - Statistics
  - Critical Success Factors
  - Indicators of Success
  - What would we do Differently?
- Benefitting from our Experience...
Introduction

- Portals are like Teenage Sex...
  - It’s on everybody’s mind all the time
  - Everybody talks about it all the time
  - Everyone thinks everyone else is doing it
  - Almost no one is REALLY doing it
  - The few who ARE doing it, are:
    - Doing it poorly
    - Sure it will be better the next time
    - Not practicing it safely
What is a Portal?

- Entrance to Intranet
- Personalized
- Customizable
- “One-Stop Shop”
- Common Look-n-Feel
- Non/Less-Intrusive “push” mechanism for information
- Front Door to University / Home Page (ie, list of links)
- Integration with ERP and CRM systems
Why are they Important?

- Order and Structure
- Branding
- Consistent Sign-On
- Seal of Quality and Integrity
- Elementary Content Management
- Less Time spent on User Interface
UT-Austin Case Study

- **Context:** Environment
  - Flagship for 15-campus System
  - 52,000+ Students (170,000+ in System)
  - 20,000+ Fac/Staff (88,000+ in System)
  - Run Core Financial Apps for 6 Components
  - **Apps:** Bldg Const, Road Const, Phone Company, Land & Cattle, Oil & Gas, Grow Grapes/Make Wine, Carry Insurance, Investments, Locks/Keys, OEHS, ... (9th largest “city” in TX)
UT-Austin Case Study

- **Context: Development Environment**
  - 1200 MIPS MF; HP/SUN Web Servers
  - ADABAS, Natural, EntireX/BROKER, JwebAgent
  - Extensive Technical Training Program (~30/yr)
  - 185 Developers (+40 in Management)
  - 225,000+ Programs; 2,000+ Applications
  - 450+M Calls to Database / Day
UT-Austin Case Study

Context: History of Web Efforts...

- 1st Campus Web Servers Jun’93
- 2 of 125 web servers in the world!
- Mosaic Installed on Campus Mar’94
- 1st Web-based App Apr’95
- Developer Toolkit Released Aug’96
- Plethora of Apps (250+) May’98
UT-Austin Case Study

◆ Context: History of Portal Efforts...
  ◆ Executive Workstation Mar’90
    ◆ HyperCard front-end to screen-scraped MF/3270 screens
  ◆ My 40 Acres Aug’98
  ◆ UTDirect (v1) Aug’00
  ◆ UTDirect (v2) Mar ’03
UT-Austin Case Study

◆ Timeline...

◆ President articulates need at Dean’s Council Retreat  Aug’99
◆ Prototype presented to President & Selected VP’s  Nov’99
◆ Conduct Buy vs. Build Review  Dec’99-Feb’00
◆ Budget, Detailed Plan, & Commitment  Feb’00
◆ Development started  Mar’00
  ◆ 14,000 hrs (42 developers involved; 14 people - 6 mon)
◆ Logo and Name Contest; Video Clips Created  Jun’00
◆ UTDirect v1 delivered  Aug’00

◆ Demo:  <https://utdirect.utexas.edu>
UT-Austin Case Study

- Statistics...
  - 400+ BROKER Services (ie, ~150 Apps) Available
  - 40,000+ Unique Users Daily
  - 100,000+ Logins / Day to some secure service
  - 2+ Million Requests for Service Daily
  - <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/dputil/>
UT-Austin Case Study

- Critical Success Factors
  - Executive Sponsorship
  - Campus Consensus
  - Project Management
  - Clear Delivery Target Date
  - Robust Set of Features / Functions
  - Excellent Online Response Time
UT-Austin Case Study

- Indicators of Success
  - Student, Faculty, Staff response
  - Spotlighted in “UT @ 2015”
  - Inspired “Be a Longhorn” initiative
  - Foundation for Knowledge Gateway
  - UTDirect being created for UT-San Antonio
UT-Austin Case Study

- What would we do Differently?
  - Infrastructure Independent from Services
  - Accommodate Other Technologies
  - Consolidated “Usability Testing”
  - Better Integration with Public Website
Benefitting from our Experience

- Draw Clear Lines of Responsibility
- Collaboration Required
- Performance, Speed, and Security!
- Keep Statistics from which you can Learn
- Resolve Authentication Issues
  - For whom will services be provided?
  - Password Changes / Resets
  - Value of “roles”
- **Conclusion:** Starting from scratch? Use “uPortal”!
Q & A

- Randy Ebeling
- r.ebeling@its.utexas.edu
- 512 / 471-0012