Strategic Use of the Web

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Overview

• Web Taskforce
  – Reviewed Penn State’s use of the Web

• Executive Steering Committee
  – Gary Augustson, Rod Erickson, Steve McCarthy, Gary Schultz

• Advise Steering Committee
  – Bridge business and web strategies
Web Discussions

- Individual discussion with each dean
- Discussions with vice presidents and vice provosts
- Other stakeholders
- Forty-four discussions
- Learned something in each one
  - Shared understanding of the issues
Overview of Activities

• Building on Web Task Force report; not replacing it
  – Focus on coherence, policy, standards, and coordination

• Purposefully tried to keep an open mind and not come to conclusions too rapidly
  – My report contains my conclusions formulated after all interviews completed
Conclusions: Coherence and Policy

• Wide range of uses of web
  – Must target intended audience
  – Conceptual framework for all web activities

• Need for an Internal Home Page
  – Needs are individual focused
  – Portal can serve this role
Home Pages

• The current University home page serves both internal and external audience.
  – Not really perfect for either

• Need home pages for each audience
  – Current home page primarily for external audience
  – Portal is a customizable internal home page
    • [http://portal.psu.edu/](http://portal.psu.edu/)
    • Automatic dynamic tabs tailored to needs of the individual
      (e.g., advising tab for undergraduates, retirement tab for individuals nearing retirement)
Conclusions: Standards and Coordination

• Too much information is hard to find
  – Consistent location for “buttons” on pages
  – Search Engines need Taxonomy of Tags

• Development environment is heterogeneous
  – Webmaster and designer Bag Lunches
  – Common Development Environment

• ADA Compliance is a moral and usually a legal obligation
Taxonomy of Tags

• Search engines do not always find web pages
• Tags help search engines to find pages with the desired content
  – Need a coherent and standard set of tags for all of PSU
• Small group
  – Librarians who know keywords
  – Business Services
    • NACUBO group
  – ITS representative for Information Technology
Webmaster Bag Lunches

- Webmasters and editors control layout and form
  - Others control content in most cases
- A number of interviewees noted that webmasters and editors don’t often know others that work in other units
  - This meeting serves a very useful role
- Bag Lunches focus on common best practices
  - De Facto standards that lead to de jure standards
  - Appropriate common look and feel
  - Monthly bag lunches supplement this meeting
Development Environment

• Coherence can be achieved with appropriate technology

• Dreamweaver
  – Common development environment
  – Provides appropriate common layout

• Usability and ADA considerations
  – LIFT from UsableNet
  – Site licensed University-wide
    • $5 from MOC
  – Workshop, demo and discussion at this meeting
Content Management

• Content management has potential to distribute task
  – Most content is local

• Need to balance between productivity and management systems
  – Lessons from project management systems

• A continuum between single person & large team
  – ZOPE, RedDot
  – Cold Fusion (extended), phpWebsite, Newswire
  – Macromedia Contribute
Recommendations

• Appointment of a Coordinator
• Internal and External Home Pages
• Academic Units should Educate Students on Effective Web use
• Unit management and Web developers need to ensure coherence for their site
Recommendations (Cont)

• Creation of a Taxonomy of Tags Task Group
• Formulation of University-wide Standards
  – First three levels or so
• Training of Web Developers
• Foster Convergence of Development Environments
Future Effort

• LIFT Training and Support
• Link UP and other locations’ developers
  – Regional meetings
  – Network conferences
• Core Search Engine Replacement
  – ITS and others working on now
• Taxonomy Group
• Standards!
Who will make it happen?