

Development of On-Line E-Commerce Solutions at www.otc.fsu.edu

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Abstract

Over the past several years, it has become apparent that a need has arisen for e-commerce in order to satisfy our student, faculty and staff population. During the past year, a team was put together to develop and implement these numerous e-commerce solutions in order to provide overall customer service to our university community. The team accomplished these goals by implementing on-line invoices, sign-up forms, payments, telephone directory updates and live web chats. The team members did an excellent job in not only developing web applications that were requested, but also in anticipating applications and services that would be needed in the future.

Introduction to Florida State University

Florida State University is a fully accredited, public, coeducational institution and a senior member of the ten state universities that compose the State University System of Florida. The main campus of the University is located in Tallahassee, the state's capital. In addition to degree programs offered in Panama City, Sarasota and the Republic of Panama, FSU offers a variety of overseas study opportunities during the regular academic year, as well as in special summer programs.

The University employs over 5,000 individuals in the areas of Faculty, Administrative and Professional, University Support Personnel Services (USPS) and OPS as well as giving support to 38,873 students.

The Office of Telecommunications (OTC) is dedicated to providing world-class customer service to the entire University community. Our mission is to provide "Success with PEP" – Serving the University Community's Communication needs Emphasizing Superior Service with Pride, Enthusiasm and Professionalism.

Statement (restatement) of the Problem/Initiative

The FSU Office of Telecommunications identified the need and has been developing its on-line E-Commerce package for several years. However, during the past 12-months, several major break-thrus in on-line services and Customer service have been realized. The OTC WWW Team did an excellent job in not only developing web applications that were asked for, but also in anticipating applications and services that we would need long

before we knew we needed them. If not for their expertise and commitment to world class e-commerce in a proactive and efficient manner our WWW site would not have been able to be rolled out on time or as effectively. They stepped up when asked to move into this new role and did an outstanding job.

Design/Implementation/Benefits

On-Line Invoices

Since 1988 FSU had distributed telecom invoices via campus mail. Between the monthly postage, paper and printing costs and man-hours required for processing, over \$26,000 was spent yearly. With the inception of departmental on-line invoices, the department can now download their invoices directly into an excel spreadsheet for local account management and tracking, better internal review of invoices and elimination of possible misuse. With the inception of the student on-line invoices, the student receives an e-mail of his/her invoice and then is able to review charges as well as pay on-line. This has cut down on the outstanding accounts receivable by \$29,500.

Sign-Up Forms

With shifts in technology and the deployment of broadband services, the University's ability to supply students with "free" dial-up services diminished. A decision was made to move dial-up services to a fee-based service and to let students sign up on-line to save time and eliminate lines and parking problems on campus. At start up, there were over 950 dial-up customers. Another need arose for on-line sign ups when a new housing complex was developed approximately 2 miles from campus. The sign-up was

developed for the supplying of voice and cable TV to the students. All sign-ups were handled by logging on to our website at www.otc.fsu.edu.

Telephone Directory Updates

FSU has its own campus phone book with over 500 pages packed with departmental, student, faculty and staff listings. The OTC is responsible for contacting all the departments for their updates/corrections to over 3,900 listings. Now with the on-line update applications, departments are sent an e-mail notice with passwords and they are able to update live. The changes are flagged internally and reports are generated to show which departments have done the updates and which need to be reminded. Also, new FTP protocols have been developed to get these listings to the publisher in a timely manner.

Live Chat

Several years ago, OTC Customer Service determined that an on-line chat was necessary and a software package was purchased. This package was not adequate so the Customer Resource Management area of OTC conducted research and this year a new and improved live chat was brought on-line. With this new service (the first and only service of this kind at FSU), there is improved customer service and quicker turnaround time for common questions. This is very important, as there are approximately 12,000 telephone lines and 2,500 cable TV outlets. We also receive 3,500 repair tickets as well as 3,500 orders on an annual basis.

All of these e-commerce solutions have greatly benefited the University community with the saving of natural resources (paper and toner) and man-hours necessary to complete the processes. All projects were worked by one or more work groups in order to bring each project in on time and to provide the best possible solution to the problem. All of these e-commerce solutions impacted the entire campus from students to faculty to staff with everyone benefiting from the final outcome.