

Look, Listen, Learn: Collaboration in the 21st century
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Presentation Abstract:

Would you like to connect to researchers abroad? Do you want your students to learn from experts in the field?

The University of Memphis is using desktop collaboration to share knowledge and experiences among academics and professionals. Experience it first-hand and discuss planning and implementation.

Presentation Content:

The University of Memphis needed to determine a cost effective solution to allow faculty, staff and students to collaborate to support the university's mission. This session will focus on planning and implementation, including technical considerations and campus culture. Examples will be demonstrated and discussed.

Members of the Advanced Learning Center and the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis researched desktop collaboration software for use in the academic environment.

A Desktop Collaboration Committee that includes departmental technical support staff, academic technology support staff, departmental leadership (Deans and Chairs) and the VP/CIO of Information Technology was formed to provide the most effective solution for the campus.

The committee's goal was to identify an easy, low cost software and hardware desktop collaboration tool that would allow for real time communication to support teaching, learning and research.

Consideration was given to ROI (Return on Investment) by analyzing current campus network and server infrastructure, end user hardware requirements, ease of installation and use of software. Both quantitative and qualitative data were captured on user experience. This data provided a foundation for the needed training and support strategies to pursue the current collaboration tool.

Throughout the pilot year surveys were conducted with users to evaluate the selected tool and the effectiveness of participant interactions. From this data we were able to identify different types of collaborations (i.e. one-to-one collaboration, multi-person collaboration or one-to-many collaboration) that illustrated potential obstacles and provided suggested strategies for conducting these collaborative sessions effectively.

The pilot has allowed for effective, low cost communication and collaboration. The following three examples will be discussed:

1. The University of Memphis' Groundwater Institute collaborated with colleagues from around the globe to assist in the writing of a National Science Foundation (NSF) Grant. Without the use of the selected desktop collaboration tool, several individuals/groups would not have been able to participate.

2. The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), The University of Memphis and other TBR institutions (from across the state) collaborated with the desktop tool to formulate the RFP (Request for Proposal) for the course management system contract renewal. By removing the need for travel, saving both time and money, this allowed for a cost effective solution for the necessary individuals to participate in the RFP process.

3. Faculty members who normally meet with their students face-to-face have also been able to set up a desktop conferencing session for students to meet for advising and to learn from subject matter experts. These interactions can also be archived on the server and then retrieved for later reference.

Using a desktop collaboration tool can provide the opportunity for academics and professionals to share experiences and knowledge. For example, this can be done by bringing in subject matter experts, providing collaboration opportunities for students in an online learning environment and connecting researchers at different institutions.

Suggested Audience:

Decision makers for colleges and universities involved with teaching, learning and IT integration; faculty, online faculty, individuals promoting virtual communities of practice