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CUSP (CU I&E) Submission: Reporting System Blog [1]

It sounds simple enough — if you think outside the University. We set up a blog to be used by the head of the "new" Cognos Reporting System so that he and campus users could share their knowledge, experience, and suggestions (praise AND criticism) in a completely open forum. But higher education is not always known for being on the bleeding edge of technology or social networking. So we were going out on a bit of a limb, here.

We first tried to implement Cognos — a reporting tool that the University felt could effectively replace the inefficiencies and costs of numerous other systems — several years ago. At that time, communication and training had been only a few of the pitfalls we encountered. Move on to Fall 2010: we had a new lead staff person for the reporting system and Carl Sorenson was an able listener and communicator in the small campus groups with whom he met…but how could his knowledge and empathy be conveyed on a larger scale and impact a greater audience? Enter the blog idea. Carl had never been a blogger before, but his familiarity with technology, his training ability, and his genuine desire to help campus department staff do their jobs — all contributed to making him seem like a natural for the blog approach.

I turned to our communication technology manager, Travis Chillemi, for his technical expertise and strong sense of graphic design, to research a platform and implement it as quickly as possible. Travis constructed a WordPress application and wisely designed it so that Carl had considerable flexibility in layout and publication. And we established an important operating rule, with the approval of the Director of Financial & Reporting Systems (Calvin Anderson) and the University Controller (Robert Kuehler)…that this would truly be Carl's blog, Carl's voice, and none of us would edit or control it.

Carl blogs about new report development, and enhancements to existing reports. He discusses the status of converting reports from secondary systems so that users can not only find the data they need — they can also find it more effectively and see it displayed more logically. He uses the blog to solicit feedback — both general and specific — and his readers use it to tell him what they think, and what they need, in the complex world of financial reporting. Over the past six months, readers of the blog posts and subscribers to the blog's RSS feed have been able to learn Cognos tips and tricks, run previews of reports under development and provide comments, share problems and obtain resolution, and generally express their needs to a knowledgeable and interested key figure.

How Does This Impact the University?

The m-Fin blog (named after the new wave of Cognos reports and on the web at https://www.cu.edu/controller/initiatives/reporting/ [2]) is not only enhanced communication and training — it is transparency and accountability in action. Each of Carl's posts receive up to 55 unique visitors (this does not include counts on the number who receive them by RSS). As an example of the highly active and interactive nature of the blog site: in the space of just a few

weeks, Carl published over 30 brief posts and users responded with almost 60 comments.

Implementation Status

Carl’s blog has been successful beyond our expectations, both in terms of his ability to convey timely information and the demonstrated campus followership. It’s not the way of our normal business to date. But it has been so valuable in its widespread impact and consciousness-raising, that we may consider adopting a blog approach for other financial initiatives in future.

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Groups audience:
Controller

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Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/controller/cusp-submission-reporting-system-blog
[2] https://www.cu.edu/controller/initiatives/reporting