NextGen Implementation Charter

The NexGen Implementation Task Force will work to carry out the recommendations passed down from the campus Messaging Technical Oversight Committee regarding the integration of faculty and staff into the Google Apps Education Edition (GAEE) environment.

Background

As needs change on campus, the technology supporting those needs must change as well. For years, NC State has had multiple solutions on campus for e-mail, calendaring, and collaborative work. With the move of students to the Google Apps Education Edition (GAEE), the need for the e-mail services that supported them (primarily the Unity mail system) dwindles. Dr. Marc Hoit, Vice Chancellor for Information Technology & CIO, formed a task force in mid-2010 to evaluate the suitability of GAEE to replace both Cyrus and the GroupWise groupware product for faculty and staff. That task force determined that GAEE would sufficiently meet most of the needs of campus employees, and recommended more in-depth testing and evaluation in a live environment. That is the charge of this current task force -- to put employees into the live GAEE environment and evaluate the system in their day-to-day routines and, ultimately, begin the process of moving the rest of the faculty and staff into GAEE.

Migration Phases

The task force will proceed in four phases. The first phase involves a core team of technical staff working on defining and resolving the processes involved in getting faculty and staff members moved to GAEE, including, but not limited to:

- Account creation procedures
- Data migration options and steps (both for Unity e-mail and Groupwise users)
- Environment configurations required for data retention

Once these processes have been formulated, the next phase will involve the selection of a small group of volunteers from the college/departmental/unit IT support staff on campus. These staff members will then participate in an "alpha" migration phase: testing the provisioning and data migration procedures created in the first phase. This will be a very limited group -- likely only folks within the core technical team and some of their colleagues -- as it will only be used to confirm a working procedure for getting an employee into the GAEE environment; and may involve the recreation and "import" of the users' data multiple times. Among these folks, we intend to include members of the NC State Help Desk.

Once the alpha testers have gone through the phase one processes, and resolved any issues that arise, we will open the pilot for "beta" testers. This third phase will involve the migration of entire (but small) departments or units to GAEE, who will then test more routine e-mail, calendaring, and collaborative actions. These individuals will be selected based on representative needs and in coordination with the Campus IT Directors who will also provide us with a list of features and concerns for the beta testers to resolve and document for any future faculty and staff users of Google Apps. Representatives from these beta units will comprise the bulk of the Client Migration Team. It will be their responsibility to identify any issues and solutions reported by these units and to assure that all documentation necessary has been created.

Numerous staff (both IT and administrative) and faculty from throughout the university have already indicated a desire to assist in the NexGen effort; the task force will work to include as many as feasible. The beta testers will be supported by the alpha testers -- assisting these units through the migration and helping with any issues that arise, reporting back to the task force when necessary. As previously mentioned, it will be during this phase that user documentation will be developed -- for this reason, members of the OIT Outreach, Communications & Consulting team will be asked to migrate to GAEE at this time, as well as any remaining NC State Help Desk staff. Any departmental or college-level Help Desks would also have an opportunity to migrate at this stage.

Barring any major issues, the last phase would involve the option of faculty and staff opt-in for those who wished to move immediately alongside the coordinated migration of the remaining faculty and staff to GAEE. A formal plan for moving the remaining units will be expected from the task force.

Given the technical and use-case differences between users in the WolfWise system and non-calendar users in the Unity Cyrus system, the migration paths for these two systems will differ. Unity e-mail migrations have already been tested with students, with more than 50,000 accounts successfully migrated, so the need for extensive testing is not as crucial as it is with WolfWise. The current goal is to move the remaining faculty and staff in the Unity mail environment to GAEE more quickly, barring any unforeseen issues that arise during testing.

Outcomes

The goal is to move all faculty and staff to Google, providing campus with its long sought after single e-mail and calendaring system. Only if there is a critical business requirement that can not be met and cannot itself be adapted, will an alternative be considered. In such an event, it would be the goal to first attempt to supplement, rather than completely replace, the GAEE environment. The determination of a critical business need will be handled through the Messaging Governance process and the decision made by the Vice Chancellor for IT.

Summary reports, outlining the findings of the task force, will be presented to Dr. Hoit and the Campus IT Directors following the conclusion of each of the testing phases. These reports should contain detailed information on the testing results, from both the support staff as well as the departmental/unit users. In addition, the following goals must be met:

- Phase 1 (technical): creation of migration process
- Phase 2 (alpha): confirmed migration of alpha tester; any data loss must be documented
- Phase 3 (beta): enduser documentation -- including web and video tutorials, cheat sheets
- Phase 4 (mass migration): opt-in Web site and formal migration timeline for major units

NexGen Task Force - Implementation

Chairs
- Dan Green, co-chair
- Chris King, co-chair

Core Technical Team
- Nick Young, GAEE technical liaison
- Tim Lowman, Postini/GAEE
- Lee Pipkin, WolfWise
- Billy Beaudoin, Campus Active Directory
- Noah Genzel, Organizational Resilience/Project Management

The Client Migration Team must include:
- Representatives from each beta group provided by Campus IT Directors
- Representative from NC State Help Desk
- Representative from OIT OCC
- Academic departmental and college IT representatives
- Administrative unit representatives