

Below please find minutes/notes from the Distributed Technology Support Constituent Group Main Session, held on Wednesday October 19th at 10:30am. (Special thanks to Brian Hancock for sending along his notes to add to this). Although this email is coming from me, I'm writing it in the third person since the content will be added to the DTS web site as our minutes.

AJ Kelton opened the meeting with a brief discussion of what DTS is currently, where the idea for a group first came from, and how this became a part of EDUCAUSE. As part of this discussion, the idea that the language of "faculty" and of "techies" is sufficiently different enough that this difference can, and does, create confusion and distraction from the goal of educating. Kelton related a conversation with a CIO who noted that central technology support, generally, focuses on the process whereas distributed support, generally, focuses on the outcome, or "central focuses on doing it right, distributed on doing the right thing"

Kelton related his experience attending the CIO CG meeting. The CIO CG meeting was presented in two sections, the first was a full group discussion of CALEA and the second half was a break down of six discussion areas, of which DTS was one. Some of the others topics were: Disaster Recover, Open Source Applications, and Security. Given the high profile nature of the other topics, and the relative unknown and confusing nature of the name "Distributed Technology Support", it came as no surprise that nobody came to the DTS table. Kelton noted that he sees two primary reasons why CIOs don't see DTS as important: they don't fully understand what the name means (not that they don't understand the concept) and they don't realize the connection between the importance of a properly functioning distributed support structure within their own environment and how it can impact the other areas. Kelton make it clear that this observation is not because CIOs don't understand the concept, it is just that the profound impact of DTS is not on the center of the radar at the moment. Kelton committed, between this years annual meeting and next (in Dallas), to working with the membership of this group, and CIOs, to raise the level of awareness of the importance of this issue.

Every organization has some form of DTS, officially or unofficially. Members attending could not identify a working model/institution where there is NO distributed support of some kind.

A brief discussion took place about changing the name of the group to make the purpose more clear. Although no solid alternative was discussed, the group agreed that it was an important discussion and should continue after the meeting. (NOTE: A recent email to this list suggested an alternative and requested discussion). Aside from the usual listserv activity, several other alternative methods of cooperative interaction were discussed, such as blogs and wikis.

An informal poll (show of hands) was taken and the following was determined:

* 54% of those present identified themselves as part of "central" IT, 46% as part of a "distributed" support structure.

* 42% indicated that they felt the central/distributed structure at their institution was working (for the most part), 17% indicated that (for the most part), the structure was not working, and 41% indicated that it was working "more or less" (some less than more).

The group decided to try and identify the "top ten" issues that face distributed support structures. Once a definitive list could be determined, the membership would be asked to survey/vote on the list and a 1 through 10 (most/least) determination would be made. That top ten list would also be considered in relationship to the EDUCAUSE Top Ten list as published each year. It was discussed that the identification of this list (as a working document) might be a good candidate for a wiki.

The following main headings were noted on an easel:

Communication
Work Load
Adequate Staffing
Disparity
Standards (added later, Interoperability)
Competency
"The Line"

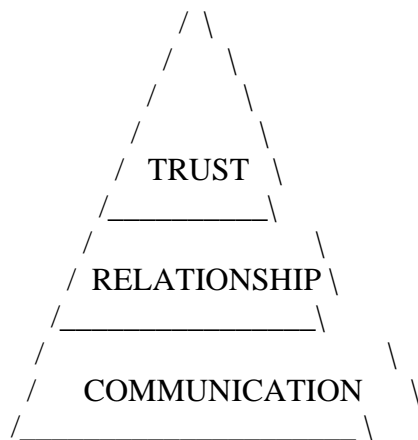
Transparency
Ownership
The Future (Organizationally)
Mission/Model
Financial Resources (Haves/Have-Nots)

Communication was tied to Transparency
Work Load, Adequate Staffing, Disparity, and Competency were tied together
Standards (Interoperability) and "The Line" were tied together

"The Line" refers to "what is yours and what is ours".
The following was also discussed, primarily in relationship to the above list:

Financial and political problems
Multiple IT departments and the challenge of dealing with researchers, grant funded equipment, and "rogue" servers
Security
Discipline specific needs
Faculty attitude

Finally, the pyramid model of Communication, Relationship, and Trust developed a few years ago was again discussed and diagramed. Since there are so many different types of organizations and needs, the common thread between all, which lays the foundation for each to work is: communication between organizations, which develops relationships, which ultimately leads to trust.



(hey, its rough - but you get the idea! :->)

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"May you live in interesting times." - Ancient Chinese Curse

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