

Project Status Report

To: Prof. C. Gibson, Allison Dolan, Evan Mamas

From: John Cloutier, Jennifer Peng

Re: Project Randomize VoIP status report

Date: April 28, 2005

In the time since our last status report we have made significant strides. All of the primary interviews with MIT administrators have been completed and we have collected and tabulated over 75 student surveys. The feedback we have gotten, both from students and staff have significantly altered the conclusions we had expected. Our intended goal of devising a suitable suggestion for a pilot has given us insight into the process of network and telephony interactions both at MIT and in the United States.

Accomplishments

John has completed interviews with Larry Lavine from Dartmouth and Jeff Schiller from MIT IS&T. Larry was able to describe the VoIP installation at Dartmouth as well as give some insight into the transition from analog to VoIP on their campus. Most of the information he gave us had to do with the technical aspect of VoIP, both advancements in the field as well as hurdles which have yet to be crossed.

In many respects, John's interview with Jeff was more meaningful in respect to the direction of the final project. We had intended to ask Jeff about the network infrastructure concerns of VoIP including how they factored into renovations, but instead we got a better perspective of how facilities, IS&T and telephony at MIT works. As is true for many organizations, the interaction between various parts of a company have a profound impact on how progress is made. Jeff gave us an interesting perspective on the evolution of the internet and telephone systems in the United States and how that is continuing to play a role in the adoption of this hybrid system of VoIP.

Jennifer interviewed Dennis Barron to get a better idea of what MIT is currently doing in the area of integrated communication. Although his work has been fairly limited as far as deployment, he is the foremost VoIP guru at MIT. Dennis shared with us the various high-tech features of VoIP. He is very much a techie who fell in love with VoIP because of its 'cool' factor. This added insight in fundamental to the push for VoIP and the conflict it has created. Established business administrators seems to be less interested in the latest technology because they don't see much practical benefit from it. This insight will dramatically effect our recommendations.

We have also collected and compiled student surveys to gauge interest in VoIP and on phone service at MIT in general. Student opinion was intended to be a primary driver of our recommendations.

Issues

As we continue to compile our data and are beginning to formulate a recommendations, we have been reminded of the human factor involved in this project. It would seem that there is some degree of resistance from the various parties involved to endorse VoIP in

full force. From what we can gather, each party (facilities, IS and telephony) have different approaches to communication services and don't always agree on a best course of action. This will have to be taken into consideration when presenting our findings so as not to step on anyone's toes.

Actions to be Taken

Data collections is nearing its completion. Now we turn to evaluating the information we have and making some decisions on how to proceed. It seems very likely that the conclusion of our project will not be a suggestion of a particular dorm to begin a pilot, but rather an evaluation of the current state of the program at MIT as a third party consultant.

Over the next two weeks we will be compiling our presentation for class as well as the final report. The presentation will describe what we have learned so far and will be geared towards receiving input from the class on how to craft our final recommendation.

Reflections and Learning

The project as it stands now looks very different from the one we had originally planned to complete. Our proposal to find a suitable pilot location has shifted to an evaluation of the landscape of MIT information services and how they work. It has been a great learning experience to see how real businesses work (even at universities). The solution that will best serve our project champion is not to pick a dorm where students will most likely embrace VoIP, but rather to give an outsiders perspective on the way these departments are interacting and suggest possible ways to increase collaboration.

Every time we interview an administrator, we get a slightly different perspective on the issue and how to best solve it. VoIP is perhaps not unique in that it will require the cooperation of several different groups, and in the quickly changing world of IT these types of relationships are very important. Much like Barker University was able to develop a brand new system that integrated all parts of the university only to find that its customers didn't really want that, VoIP at MIT is suffering from a similar disconnect within its own organization. And, as with Barker, for this project to succeed, it will require the support of all parties involved.