



Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Net.Visual closes the gap for Texas Higher Education Board and increases accessibility to the public. The Texas Higher Education Board is a government agency that oversees public colleges and universities in the state of Texas. Its mission is to encourage higher education for the people of Texas, to close the gaps in student participation and success throughout the states' educational system. To further this goal it provides legislative advice, administers statewide programs and coordinates the effective delivery of higher education.

The Coordinating Board aims to be the leading authority and source of higher education statistics in the state of Texas. It strives to provide timely access to data resources for its constituents and the Legislature. Access to and quality of information are critical factors, but information held on the legacy systems was not available easily, often reliant upon multiple databases and the input required from external institutions was not received in a timely fashion.

Twincentric's Net.Visual was first used by the Coordinating Board in 199x,. At that time it wanted to make profiles of alternative Texas Institutions of Higher Education (PROF) available over the Internet rather than through difficult-to-use connectivity to the legacy servers. Now thanks to Net.Visual, students may learn more about the educational institutions available to them far more easily and quickly than ever before, through simple Internet access.

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Net.Visual reduces work-load by one-third

Inspired by the success of accessibility to PROFS, further uses for Net.Visual were discovered. A counter-productivity issue, concerning the double entry of vouchers into both spreadsheets and databases, sparked a redesign of this process. What was once a cumbersome data entry task was transformed into a slick update of information. "This has been really ground-breaking for us," explained John House, Assistant Director, Educational Data Center, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. "There is now one-third less data entry work to perform, so that makes a big difference to what was a really cumbersome data-entry job".

As an oversight agency the Board receives data from all of the public colleges and universities in the state. They should be able to have access to their own information, but historically it could not be downloaded to the Board's legacy systems. "Now, courtesy of Net.Visual, outside institutions have access in much faster timeframes," said House.

Net.Visual as a motivation tool

Transparency of information can prove to be a motivator for the submission of *timely* information, whilst providing information previously not available to reporting officials. Addressing a concern that reports from outside institutions were not being submitted on time, the president of the university can now see at-a-glance which reports have been submitted from outside institutions and can consequently measure of the effectiveness of these parties.

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Piloted with commitment

The original facelift to PROFS was implemented following a successful pilot exercise. Within 2 weeks Net.Visual had been designed and at least 12 programmers trained in the design and implementation of client/server applications. "We were very impressed by both the functionality of Net.Visual and the skillsets of twincentric's people," said House. According to House the functionality of Net.Visual is superior to competition from G-web and Web-8. "It's a pretty unique application with a lot of extensibility - code is written, then data pulled out of the screen and rearranged as you want it. But, not many other companies go about it with the same vigor as twincentric - it takes a lot of commitment to turn our demanding visions into reality. Everything we conceived of they came up with a solution for. Lots of companies talk, but twincentric delivered and that really impressed a lot of people here."

Way of the future

The Board is committed to a future comprised of windows applications in visual basic. "That is the way of the future as far as we are concerned," said House. So Net.Visual has served as a valuable tool for the Board to reposition itself for the future of its computing lifecycle. The transition from dumb screen data to web-based applications has proven to be a real breakthrough for the Board. "We are so much more efficient now," said House, "We are far more accessible to the public and after all, the public is our customer."

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