Project Title – MS Office Alternatives

Project Team –
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Executive Summary – The MS Office Alternatives team investigated the opportunities, issues, and concerns associated with moving from MS Office to a different tool suite(s) to support word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation capabilities. Google Apps as well as other open source and cloud based solutions were considered. Email and calendaring functionality were outside the scope of this investigation.

Alternatives Considered – The committee executed two surveys in order to determine feasibility and campus readiness towards a move to a different tool suite. One survey, directed to Purdue’s eleven peer institutions had responses from 7 institutions. The other, directed to all 10,409 faculty and staff on the WL campus had responses from 1,310, 18% faculty and 82% staff.

Of the peer institutions that responded, 100% offer the MS Office tool suite to faculty and staff and noted it was the predominant tool suite on campus. However, 71% use Google apps in addition to the MS Office tool suite and expressed the need for more robust collaboration and sharing tools. Two institutions had made changes in the past five years with a move to Google apps for email and calendaring.

The faculty and staff who responded did not express a lot of interest in moving away from MS Office. In fact, we heard quite the opposite. We were a bit surprised that 73% used MS Word on a daily basis with another 16% reporting weekly use. In addition, 63% noted the need to collaborate with colleagues and peers.

Recommendation(s) – Based on the results of both surveys, the committee recommends staying with the MS Office tool suite at this time and revisiting the topic again in 18 to 24 months. We also recommend, based on the wide-spread use of externally hosted email services for personal use that this is a good time to look at outsourcing email to an external service provider. In the past when we have considered external service providers for email, security concerns have been raised. Therefore, in addition we recommend a project/operational oversight committee conduct a risk assessment to identify risks and concerns associated cloud based solutions.

Impact Assessment

Key stakeholders – faculty, students, and staff.
Impact on stakeholders – 84% of those that responded to the campus survey said they would be substantially/moderately impacted in a negative manner if an equivalent product was substituted for MS Office. In addition, the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the major products of the MS Office tool suite.

Identify assumptions – 926 (71%) of those who took the campus survey responded that they had a personal Gmail account. In addition, 1,064 other personal email accounts were used. This suggests that Gmail and other external email service providers are familiar to faculty and staff and are widely used. The committee also noted that the requirement of a Gmail account for android devices may be elevating the numbers.

Risks associated with the recommendation – To help determine the “readiness” of the Purdue community in terms of cloud based solutions our survey asked about use of other cloud based solutions. About 80% have a Facebook account that they view and of those 83% view it at least once a week. For iTunes, 70% have an account and 77% use it at least once a month. Based on this information we believe most people who responded are comfortable with cloud based alternatives.

Identify organizational units responsible for implementation – operational oversight committee track for future revisit.

Timeline – 18-24 months.

Cost Savings – The West Lafayette campus currently licenses 10,119 copies of MS Office for faculty and staff and another 14,532 for student employees. Since this is part of an overall contract it is difficult to determine the exact amount allocated to the Office tool suite. For purposes of this cost savings estimate we’ll assume a savings of 1/3 off the existing contract pricing for faculty, staff and students to project an approximate savings of $250K/year in licensing cost. However, before any MS Office license saving could be realized an alternative for email and calendaring would need to be identified.

Resource Requirements – unable to determine at this time.