Rightsizing with Real-Time Data = More Bang for Your Buck


BACKGROUND

With so many changes happening at Hartford Healthcare, including new partnerships and the streamlining of services it was apparent that we were wasting our money by providing resources for departments, locations and customers who didn’t need them. We realized we lacked the ability to purchase resources based on need. What we needed was a business model of resource acquisitions based on need rather than all for one and one for all.

A major deterrent to changing to a needs-based solution was that all departments and locations share the same set of IP addresses. Which gave us no choice but to purchase everything for everyone regardless of need. Furthermore, we lacked reliable and useful usage statistics. But even more importantly we had no way to drill down to find out who was actually using our resources - not by location, not by department, not by role and not by individual. To support our budget requests we needed to prove that a broad spectrum of customers were using a specific resource and not just a few individuals which could be serviced by non institutional subscriptions.

We are a virtual library serving a multi hospital system consisting of community, specialty and teaching hospitals. Based on my experience, discussions with fellow librarians and directors (small consortia meetings), listserv postings / commentary these same issues apply to large, small, solo and multi site.

DESCRIPTION

Our HHC Administration values knowing who is using our resources not just the numbers of times a resource is used. We were advised that the library was not to purchase items for a "limited audience". Resources needed to meet the needs of "many" from all entities in our system.

Five questions necessary to develop and validate needs-based resource purchasing:

We asked... What is being used?

Since vendors have not standardized their reporting methods or formats, it is necessary for us to determine what usage data is similar and reliable. Useless data left us without an accurate answer.
We sorted through endless amounts of data provided by our vendors. We charted the usage data we felt was answering the "same question".

We asked... Who is accessing library resources?

The vendors are not able to tell us who [by which role] or from where [which institution] our resources are being used. By being virtual, we lost our "face to face" time and we no longer knew our customers. Better needs-based resource development depends on knowing our customers' profile e.g. role, regional location, department, specialty, committee served on, etc.

We asked... What is the cost per use?

Historically, we manually calculated this on non-standardized old data. Instead of educating and supporting our customers, we spent hours each month downloading and massaging vendor data. Cost per use results were sometimes discouraging as all entities did not utilize the available resources.

CONCLUSION

We found a partner in LibLynx to help us convert to a needs-based solution. Queries and access statistics are now possible real-time. Drilled down reports allow us to understand usage by user group, department, location and individual customers. This information is essential in order to right-size our resources, negotiate renewals and new purchases.

We asked... What future organizational changes are on the horizon?

Newsletters and PR announcements provided only OLD news. We realized that to change to a needs-based solution that it was necessary to know about changes before they happened.

We asked... Can the IT department provide location and department specific IP addresses?

We realized that shared IP addresses were limiting our ability to purchase based on need. Unfortunately, after speaking with IT we were stuck sharing the same IP addresses with all enterprise entities.

We have replaced our location specific intranet and internet library portals with a personalized user portal. Since LibLynx eliminated the problem of shared IP addresses we now have the ability to restrict access to resources based on need.

Changing to a needs-based purchasing model has allowed us to take back control of our budget. We now make data driven decisions based on customer usage and needs. Library staff are welcomed committee participants and react with needs-based resource support. Being proactive is necessary to base our budget on actual needs.