DEVELOPING A PORTAL: CHALLENGES AND EVOLVING PRODUCTS

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Summary of Focus:
This panel presentation is designed to assist organizational leaders and webmasters in exploring the advantages and disadvantages of information-sharing portals that serve faculty, staff, students, and clients. As more educational information is placed on the web and accessed by internal and external users, organizations are devoting increased time and effort to develop portals to channel users to current information and materials. This panel presentation will explore the challenges and successes of three local portals at The University of Utah in sharing information resources and using technology innovations to promote more interactive user engagement.

Introduction:
As organizations attempt to serve the information and collaboration needs of their users, new challenges evolve for addressing those needs. Within or associated with the University of Utah, three portals emerged to serve a variety of targeted users with various skill levels. The variety of information being delivered through these portals includes general, personal, technical, scientific and medical information and involves collaboration among multiple users and groups. Some of the many challenges involved in the delivery of this information include: security, content development and maintenance, and the design of user-friendly and easily accessible user interfaces.

Details:
The student Portal, http://www.my.utah.edu/, provides a customizable space for students of a large commuter campus to securely access general campus information and personal student records. The Brain Institute, http://brain.utah.edu/, is developing a Web site that provides clinical and research faculty at the University of Utah and at other research institutions with a virtual collaboration space for sharing research data and working collaboratively, as well as a forum for peer review. The Brain Institute Web site will also serve the public by interactively delivering the latest news and information on brain research and disease treatment. The MedHome Portal, http://www.medhomeportal.org/ is an expanding site that provides medical information, tools, and resources for primary care providers serving children with special health care needs and the families of those children. The panel of presenters will 1) share development challenges including technical issues, content development and maintenance and user interface issues; 2) share successes including current utilization trends and features of interest for internal and external users; and 3) invite audience members to share their challenges, successes, and new ideas for portal development.

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