

N2HE Minutes 5-8-12

Tuesday 5/8/2012 @ 11 EST

Attendees: Chris Eagle, Jim Phelps, John Grover

1. Set up Google Hangout. Seamless start this week! Next month we expect to record the meeting.
2. Introductions. All introduced themselves. John works for the University of Maine and has been there since 1988 when he left his dairy farm to become a student. He is the Director of Systems of Operations. One of the challenges of U of Maine is that it is very geographically diverse with many different campuses. This led to a discussion of Central Systems vs. Edge systems.
3. Discussion:
 - a. Central vs. Edge: How do you decide what runs where? How to you get buy-in? How do you get the Edge to stop and Central to start? There was much discussion following. John commented that Maine has a new-ish CIO (1 year) who is improving the process for Edge-to-Central. The noted that most requests to Central come from CFO's or Presidents (business folks) and not very often from Edge IT. This provides Edge buy-in as well as ensuring that value is created.
 - b. Methods used to track problems and issues. John explained that there is a manual step to get from their help desk software (for level 1 and level 2 support) to their development tracking system (when a ticket was escalated to level 3). All three people on the call noted that their campus worked the same way. Jim commented that this isn't necessarily a bad thing, since this provides a 'smart' gate for tickets to be escalated into the developer's system, and tickets with trivial solutions could just be handled directly in the help desk system.
 - c. Portfolio management. John asked what the different campuses were doing for portfolio management. Short discussion on prioritization and tracking. John: "How do IT projects surface?" Jim: "Like Kraken from the deep." (Yes, these discussions are VERY serious!) All three participants commented on their maturing governance structures, but none are mature enough to use as a case-study.
 - d. How do you get grassroots projects moving? (Chris asks this question, in some form, pretty much every month). SOA was used as an example. John commented that he is able to use their Chief Information Security Officer as an ally. Jim commented on the importance of getting a 'poster child' project to be able to show a success. The consensus was to "find ways to keep spinning the flywheel until it spins by itself." There was also some discussion about using outside consultants to bring "weight" to recommendations and projects.
4. We did not cover the question in item 4. These questions are going to be answered via a survey.