

Florida State University: IT department redesigns 200 million dollar financial aid program



THE CHALLENGE

Florida state university (Fsu) has more than 40,000 students, about 70 percent of whom receive financial aid. the university disburses about \$200 million in financial aid each year. But until recently the university's computerized system was outdated and unable to adapt to changes in the financial aid environment.

When the FSU staff wanted to overhaul the system, they turned to Mindjet to design the financial aid process from beginning to end. Using collaborative work management technology

improved the information gathering process and significantly shortened the design period. Mindjet was a critical bridge between the school administrators who wanted to upgrade the system and the IT staff who would do the programming.

"Mindjet allows us to flow-chart business processes in an iterative and interactive fashion," says Rajiv Kaushik, director of applications in

the IT department of FSU. "It helps us clearly analyze the bottlenecks. Adapting to fast-moving conditions is possible because of the interactive environment."

"The financial aid system is a mission-critical university system: We wouldn't be where we are today without it," says Kaushik. "If we had not been able to successfully implement this new system, we would likely have been in violation of federal and state compliance rules."

"We needed a system that was flexible enough to communicate with all stakeholders involved including federal and state governments, private lenders, guarantors, private donors, departments on campus, and students," says Darryl Marshall, director of the university's Office of Financial Aid (OFA). "To effectively manage such a huge and dynamic project, we needed a tool that was flexible and user-friendly."

THE SOLUTION

Financial aid staff members met with IT staff from Kaushik's office over a period of fourteen months to break down the department's daily activities into twenty-three high-level business processes. Elements included processing students' electronic financial aid information, sending out loan information, and working with third-party lenders.

As part of the process, FSU brought in an analyst to conduct work style interviews with the financial aid staff. The analyst used the Mindjet platform to create a "spider map" of the twenty-three business processes. "Everybody could see the 'spider' develop as the analyst keyed in information from the staff," said Kaushik, "Then we drilled into each node and mapped the entire business process. We designed the main segments, then captured elements such as form intake, pending approvals, and students accessing their financial aid toolkits."

With a concise, image-based document in hand, IT staff added the technical specifications to each business process. The specs contained all of the details that programmers would need to ensure smooth database updates and information flows. From these crisp, detailed specs, IT built out the new system.



Established in 1851, Florida state university is one of the largest and oldest of Florida's ten state universities.

CHALLENGE

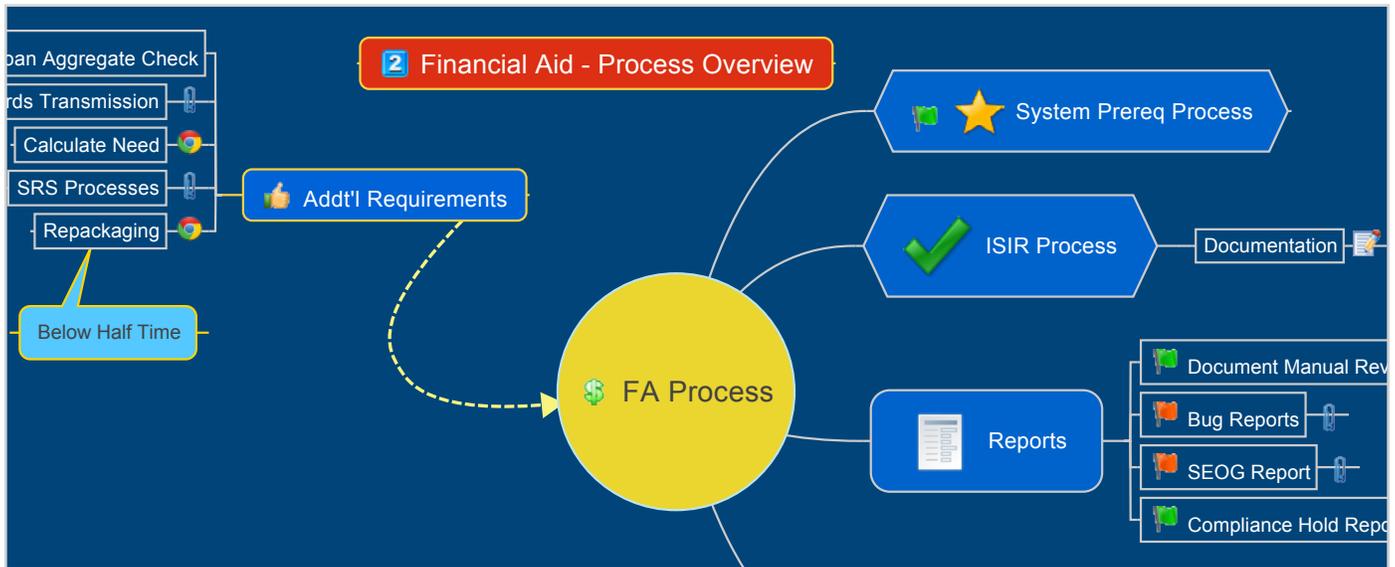
The university needed to redesign the complex financial aid system and to ensure that cross-functional admin and IT teams worked together efficiently.

SOLUTION

Florida State University used Mindjet to improve key processes, to match those processes with technical specifications, and to serve as the interactive workspace for both technical and non-technical staff.

RESULT

Generated an eight to tenfold improvement in business process analysis time. A key project that was only 20 percent analyzed after two years was able to be analyzed completely in only 14 months with Mindjet software communication gaps related to process mapping were nearly eliminated, reduced from 50 percent to 5 percent.



Project planning with Mindjet MindManager

THE RESULTS

Kaushik and Marshall appreciated how effectively Mindjet’s platform facilitated the project. “Using Mindjet, we’ve got an entire feedback loop right then and there in the room,” says Kaushik. “Being able to see the process mapped out helped trigger stakeholders to think of related issues—things that they wouldn’t have thought of had the information not been displayed in such an image-rich plan. Most people tend to think better when they have visuals in front of them versus lengthy text.”

All of the project managers on Kaushik’s staff now use Mindjet. The staff likes the platform’s ease-of-use and how it creates an image-based document rather than a traditional, text-based list. And the collaborative aspect of the platform means that both clients and developers can look at the same map from different perspectives.

“The client can look at a map and think about business process, whereas the developer can view the same map and think about drawing the technical specifications.” says Kaushik. “With a common document, everybody feels involved and part of the entire design.”

“One of the key challenges [on this project] was communicating and collaborating on business process between IT and OFA staff. We looked at a number of products, but ultimately selected Mindjet because of the combined visual representation and interactive functionality. Mindjet provides our staff with the opportunity to make changes and document new logic during working sessions. As a result, OFA and IT staffs could evaluate changes being made, and immediately see how those changes fit into the big picture.”

“ MindManager allows us to flow-chart business processes in an iterative and interactive fashion. It helps you quickly and clearly analyze where your bottlenecks are and where there is scope for improvement. All of this is possible because you are in an interactive environment where the processes are mapped out visually. ”

Rajiv Kaushik, IT Director of Applications

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