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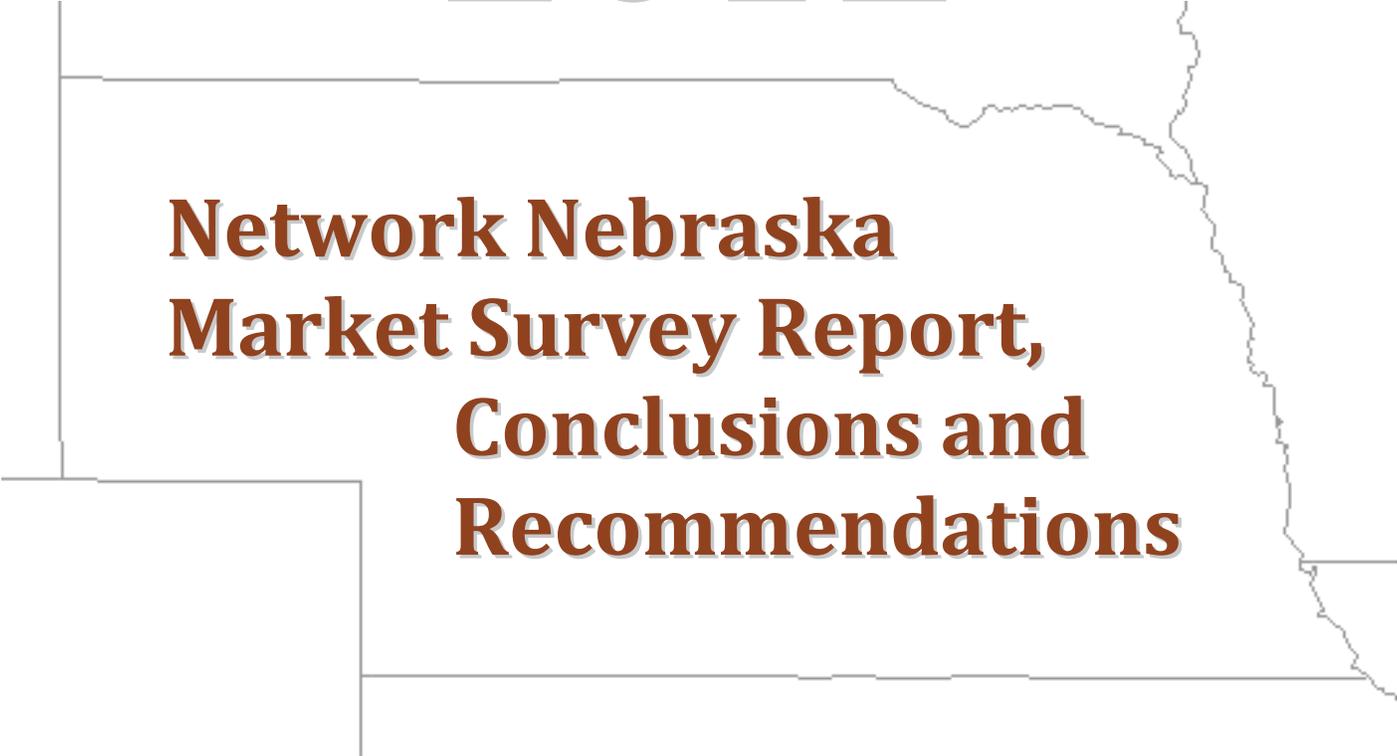
Network Nebraska Market Survey Report, Conclusions and Recommendations

Nebraska Information Technology Commission

Education Council

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DRAFT

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About the Nebraska Information Technology Commission and the Education Council…

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission (NITC) was formed by the Nebraska Legislature in 1998 to "determine a broad strategy and objectives for developing and sustaining information technology development in Nebraska, including long-range funding strategies, research and development investment, support and maintenance requirements, and system usage and assessment guidelines; and to establish ad hoc technical advisory groups to study and make recommendations on specific topics, including workgroups to establish, coordinate, and prioritize needs for education, local communities, intergovernmental data communications, and state agencies." (Neb. Rev. Stat. 86-516)

The Education Council of the NITC is one of the Commission's six advisory workgroups. The Education Council is composed of 16 members, 8 from K-12 and 8 from Higher Education, to represent the educational technology interests of public and private education. By its charter, the Education Council may convene task groups to carry out its responsibilities. The Marketing Task Group is one of five such task groups to carry out the Statewide Technology Plan, which includes the strategic initiative called Network Nebraska.

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I. Introduction

Network Nebraska is the term used to describe the statewide multipurpose, high-bandwidth, telecommunications backbone and all of its associated service offerings and support. Network Nebraska-Education serves public and private K-12 and higher education. It offers network management, interregional transport, Internet access and Intranet routing for distance education, and provides access to the nationwide Internet 2 research and education network. Network Nebraska-Education is a collaborative initiative coordinated by the State Office of the CIO, University of Nebraska, and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, and is funded by the participating public and private education entities of Nebraska.

This survey, conducted via Internet among current and potential K-12 and higher education public and private users, was designed to provide quantifiable baseline data to guide the Education Council's communications and marketing strategies by providing data on the following:

- General information on strengths and weaknesses of Network Nebraska services.
- Specific perceptions about Network Nebraska services by current and potential users.
- Motivational drivers in choosing Network Nebraska services.
- Services that might be of interest to the member community.
- Current awareness level and perceptions toward Network Nebraska.
- Differences in perceptions between current users and potential users of Network Nebraska.

See Appendix A: NITC Education Council Network Nebraska Survey Instrument

II. Executive Summary

This is the fourth year in which the Network Nebraska (NN) market survey has been conducted. Each year a larger percentage of those who start the survey complete the survey – an average increase of about 3% over each of the last three years. The overall participation, that is the number of participants starting the survey, has declined annually from 335 in 2008 to 217 this year.

The survey was issued in December 2011. Of the 217 participants who started the survey, 165 or 76% completed it. In December 2010, 178 individuals completed the survey out of 242 who attempted the survey, or a 73.6% completion rate. In December 2008, 364 survey participants started the survey while 178 or 48.9% completed the survey compared to 335 starting the survey in December 2009 with 236 or 70.4% completing the survey.

Partners: December 2011 survey results suggest that for existing members in both the K-12 and higher education demographic groups the top three attributes of Network Nebraska include student learning opportunities, increased bandwidth, and cost sharing. This is consistent with results in both the 2009 and 2010 surveys. In 2008 lower cost was defined as the single most important attribute. As a stable and trusted network was realized, partner interests migrated to better utilization of the shared resource.

Potential Partners: This year there were very few potential member responses to the survey in the K-12 demographic and even fewer in the higher education demographic. Issues of greatest importance for K-12 were student learning opportunities, increased bandwidth, and Interactive Video Conferencing. Of potential partners in the higher education community recruiting and retaining members, communication and collaboration, as well as new shared services ranked as the top issues of importance.

Overview of Existing Network Nebraska Partner Results

K-12 partners:
- Of the 129 who rated network attributes based on relative importance to their institutions, 98.5% said student learning opportunities are either very important or important. This was followed by increased bandwidth and cost sharing as being very important or important.
- Other attributes rated highly important to current K-12 partner institutions are distance learning and video conferencing, communication and collaboration, shared services, and technical support services.

- Among current K-12 partner respondents, value, governance, and Esprit de Corps are identified as strengths of Network Nebraska compared to last year's results of reduced costs, bandwidth, collaboration and shared services.
- Weaknesses of the Network included reliability, improvements and governance compared to last year's results of distance education coordination, connectivity concerns, and communication and collaboration.
- Indicated as the single most compelling competitive advantage that makes Network Nebraska's services distinctive and motivates educational entities to partner with Network Nebraska is its value followed by teaching and learning opportunities, and partnering.
- When asked what services current Network Nebraska partners would most likely participate in, data backup and recovery received the highest score followed by virus/spam filtering, shared email, and cloud computing.
- Recruiting and retaining members was identified as less important to current partners
- K-12 members indicated they would be least likely to participate in IPv6 workshops and VOIP services.

Higher Education partners:
- Among current Higher Education partners 95% felt that student learning opportunities, increased bandwidth and cost sharing as the most important attributes of Network Nebraska.
- Other attributes considered to be highly important to current higher ed partner institutions include value, Esprit de Corps, and network reliability.
- Existing Network Nebraska higher ed partners identified reliability, improvements, and governance as network weaknesses.
- The single most compelling competitive advantage that makes Network Nebraska's services distinctive and motivates educational entities to partner with Network Nebraska is value followed by partnering, and programs and services.
- When asked what services current higher ed partners would most likely participate in, security workshops, cloud computing, and data backup and recovery received the highest scores followed by virus/spam filtering, directory services/single sign-on, and IPv6 workshops.
- Scheduling of distance education classes was identified as a service less important to current higher ed partners followed by Internet 2.
- Services that members indicated they would least likely participate in included web hosting and email services.

Overview of Potential Network Nebraska Partner Results:

There were no survey responses in this category from higher ed institutions.

- K-12 respondents identified costs savings, quality of service, and more distance learning resources as compelling advantages of Network Nebraska that would encourage them to partner.
- Little to nothing was the answer most received when potential partners were asked what they knew or had heard about Network Nebraska. Additional responses included that it was a collaborative and worthwhile endeavor.

Conclusions

This is the fourth year in which the Network Nebraska-Education survey has been conducted. Total logins and responses are down overall. This may be due to acceptance of the service as a normal day-to-day expectation as long as there are no outages or other issues. It may also indicate a better understanding of Network Nebraska's mission.

Partner concerns of reliability, improvements on the network, and governance, as well as newer realizations of Esprit de Corp and creating a culture of entrepreneurship seem to indicate that the membership has embraced the network as its own.

This survey instrument has been replicated with very few changes since it was first administered in December 2008. Initially the purpose of the survey was to understand member and non-member perceptions of Network Nebraska and determine ways to meet identified needs. While the total percentage of those starting and completing the survey has shown a steady increase, the total number of individuals completing the survey has decreased. In addition, the number of responses to all questions has decreased over time. This suggests that perhaps this survey instrument is in need of change to reflect the changing needs of its members.

Recommendations

Network Nebraska partners are beginning to seek ways to contribute to the partner community. A significant effort needs to be put into developing a process to identify and provide services and support structures to benefit the network and its members. This task will require significant time and effort from a broad representation of interests. Adding support structures and services could influence non-public entities to reconsider membership; failure to do so could result in loss of K-12 members as distance education incentives provided through LB1208[1] begin to sunset.

1. New terms like *entrepreneurship* and *Esprit de Corps* were gleaned in this data collection. These are important avenues of growth across the network. Determine how network leadership, task groups, and local agencies can build on these concepts.

    a. Clarify the role and contribution of groups, such as the Network Nebraska Advisory Group, ESUCC, and others in governance, decision-making, and building a shared vision for the Network.

2. Institutions find great value in partnering over Network Nebraska. As identified, shared services are the obvious next step in bringing additional value to Network partners. All Education Council representatives and task groups need to work with stakeholders to identify, develop, and market these resources.

3. The Marketing task group needs to review and redesign the survey instrument to better serve the Network and determine partner needs.

4. Communication to partners needs to be improved. The Network Nebraska web page must become active and kept current as a primary means of disseminating information, and as a communication tool for both existing partners and potential new partners.

5. Create workshops (learning opportunities) hosted by Network Nebraska to focus on previously identified areas of common interest and to enhance members' understanding of established governance procedures.

See Appendix E: Work Group Action Plans

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[1] Information on LB1208 http://www.networknebraska.org/denu/NN_WhatisLB1208.pdf