



Case Study

Florida State University



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ROI

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 MindManager; communication gaps related to process mapping have been reduced from 50 percent to 5 percent.

Company Profile

Established in 1857, Florida State University (www.fsu.edu) is one of the largest and oldest of Florida's 10 state universities.

Challenge

To ensure that cross-functional teams work together efficiently to redesign complex business processes.

Process Management/Education

A university uses MindManager to help administrators and IT staff redesign the financial aid system

Florida State University has more than 38,000 students, about 70 percent of whom receive some form of financial aid. In fact, the university disburses about \$200 million in financial aid each year. But until recently the university's computerized system was outdated and unable to quickly adapt to changes in the financial aid environment. When FSU wanted to overhaul the system, it turned to Mindjet MindManager to visually map the financial aid process from beginning to end. Use of this visual mapping technology resulted in marked improvements in the collaborative design process and a significantly shortened design period. MindManager was a critical tool that facilitated communications between the schools's administrators who wanted to upgrade the system and the FSU IT staff who would actually do the programming.

“MindManager 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 you visually 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.”

Adapting to fast-moving conditions

“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 effectively communicate with all the major stakeholders involved with the student aid delivery process including, but not limited, to 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). “In order to stay on course and manage such a huge and dynamic project, we needed a tool that was flexible and user friendly. The flexibility and the ease of using MindManager was most important to us.”

Mapping out complex processes

Financial aid staff members met with IT staff from Kaushik's office over a period of 14 months to break down what the department does everyday into 23 high-level business processes. Elements included processing students' electronic financial aid information, sending out loan information, and working with third-party lenders.

At the beginning of the project, a business analyst interviewed financial aid staff about how they did their work. “As he talked to them, he was using MindManager to create what we call a 'spider' [or map] of the 23 business processes,” says Kaushik. “Everybody could see the spider develop as the analyst keyed in information from the staff. Then we drilled into each one of these nodes and mapped out the entire business process. We mapped out the main segments of the process, then drilled into each, capturing such element of the process such as the FSU staff member getting the form, signing off on it and entering it into the system, or a student signing onto Web and accessing his financial aid toolkit.”

With a clear visual document in hand, IT staff added to the map the technical specifications to each business process. These notes contained all the details that programmers would need to make sure databases get updated and that information flows correctly when someone hits a button on their computer. From these detailed specs, IT staff could go off and build the new system.

Solution

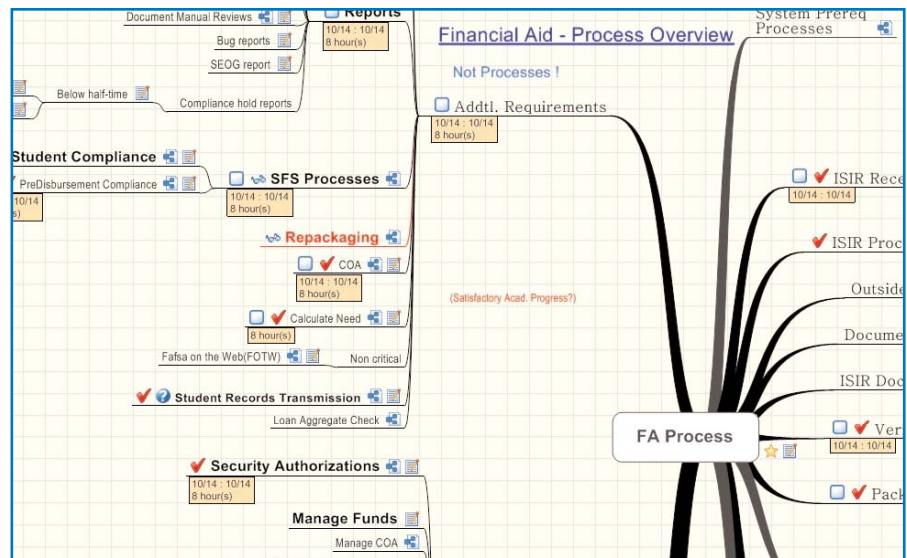
Florida State University uses MindManager to map key processes that need improvement, to match those processes with technical specifications and as the common language enabling technical and non-technical staff to clearly communicate with one another.

Product

Mindjet MindManager

Result

Team members from different functional areas are able to work together to quickly map out and improve important business processes.



Project planning with Mindjet MindManager

A better way to work

Kaushik and Marshall both appreciated how well MindManager facilitated the project. “When we’re using MindManager, we’ve got an entire feedback loop right then and there in the room,” says Kaushik. “Being able to see the process mapped out before them helped trigger our internal customers’ brains to think of related issues—things that they wouldn’t have thought up otherwise were the information not displayed in such a visually rich environment. Most people tend to think better when they have visuals in front of them versus text.”

In MindManager, each element of the financial aid process is captured in a visual map that uses a “tree trunk and branch” style of interface to map out the information. The visual nature of the resulting map clearly shows how each element of the process relates to other elements and to the process as a whole.

All the project managers on Kaushik’s staff now use MindManager. He says his staff likes how simple MindManager is to use, that it creates a visual rather than a text document, and that both clients and developers can look at the same map from different perspectives. “The client could be looking at the map and thinking about the business process, whereas the developer could be looking at the map and designing the architecture and drawing the technical specifications from the same map,” says Kaushik. “It’s a common document. And everybody feels involved and part of the entire design.”

Marshall thinks the team could have done the project without MindManager, but “it would have been much more difficult.”

“One of the key challenges was being able to communicate and collaborate on the business process between IT and OFA staff. We looked at a number of visual modeling tools that were out there, but we preferred using MindManager. Some of the advantages had to do with the visual representation that it provides. The staff could easily view a particular branch and the logic associated with that branch to determine whether or not we needed to make any adjustments. They could also determine whether the proposed solution was meeting the need that we had assigned to that particular process. MindManager provided staff with the opportunity to make changes or document new logic during working sessions. As a result, OFA and IT staff were immediately able to evaluate the changes made and to see how the changes fit into the big picture.”



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