Intentional Technology
Keeping Goals and Values In Mind
As We Explore New Technologies

Rick Ells

Computing & Communications

University of Washington

Seattle, WA

rells@cac.washington.edu

As new technologies force their way into our toolkits, we need to deliberately keep an eye on our values and goals to avoid having them swamped by technology, change, and narrow perspectives. Accessibility is a prime example of a priority goal threatened by undirected innovation with Flash, AJAX/ATLAS, and other promising but hazardous technologies. These new toolkits promise real improvements in usability and functionality. but winding our way through their many features and implementations to solutions that support our goals requires good management, flexible development, and constant evaluation.

Forces Pulling Us Away From Values and Goals

- Rapid evolution of technology
- Lack of contact between developers and users
- Uneven rates of change in interacting technologies
- Toolkit bias - "The software I use does not do that!"
- Mashup Diffusion - Multiple independent developers
- Fragmented management support of values and goals
- External locus of innovation
- Goody goody gadgetitis - "Look at this cool effect!"
- Incremental evolution without checkpoints
- Out of date guidelines and standards
- Single solutionitis - not exploring alternative approaches
- Lack of team learning about interaction of values, goals, and technology
- 80% Thinking - It works for most people

Forces Supporting Values and Goals

Participating in developing and maintaining standards and guidelines

Articulating values and goals within organization

Get high level management buy in

Monitor what peer organizations are doing

Provide opportunities to meet and interact with experts

Connect with peer discussions on use of technology - blogs, conferences

Foster alignment of purpose among team

Empower individuals to be advocates

Make case that values-based decisions are cost effective

Foster within team communication and sharing - wikis, Web sites, email lists

Connecting Values, Goals, and Technology

Connect to information about legal and policy basis for values and goals

    Build resource lists

    Develop organization summary statements

Sponsor regular across workgroup lunch meetings to present and discuss methods

Make advocacy of values and goals a defined role in workgroups

    Set up a wiki

    Start topical blogs

Host guest speakers to talk about issues, methods, directions

Support individual learning and skill development to explore topics related to use of technology

Support staff involvement in professional societies exploring issues relating to change in technology