Involving local students with local business: Network documentation.

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WWW in this case means win, win, win. Win for local industry, win for students and win for lecturers. The impetus for the research is to build and develop ongoing relationships to industry connections within the Bachelor of Information and Communications Technology (Applied).

This paper examines the planning for use of network documentation as a means to get students using real skills for the real world. The network documentation exercise will be an annual event for business which allows the computer networking skills of the year three students to be applied in the workplace. Depending on the maturity level of the documentation it could be a maintenance or inaugural event. Year one students will gain fieldwork experience and add realism to a case study. The opportunity for co-operation between the real world and the academic is to be realised.

A pilot for an auto parts business and a IT consultant's client was undertaken by two students under academic supervision at the Palmerston North campus. The industry response was that it was a valuable exercise for them. The documentation was vital as it had not been provided in any cohesive way in the past. For instance, different consultants' work was drawn in pencil, on scraps of paper, and some devices went through three firewalls for connectivity –when physically traced.

Based on local networking presence; the business sectors will be targeted. The network statistics to be gathered from the identified sectors will involve students documenting network baselines, traffic analysis, mapping physical and logical details. Network software tool selection can be provided by UCOL, at no cost to the organisation. A proposed improvement would be based on the current information gathered.

Conclusions were that the pilot project identified the local business network documentation needs. The pilot provided the basis for the procedures for students to work on site. The Bachelor of Information and Communications Technology (Applied) curriculum was scrutinised as to what amount of formative or summative assessment would match an organisation's network requirements. It was decided that year one students could do fieldwork, and the year three students could do the initial and maintenance documentation. This is able to occur on an annual basis. The fieldwork provided invaluable real world experience for students and lecturers.

Keywords

industry relationships, student work experience, programme delivery, network documentation