

Getting a Better Grip on Your Application Portfolio: An Easy Approach

Pia Wolters & Michiel van Geloven, 4-nov-09

Abstract

In order to get more insight in the actual health of educational applications, we developed a simple method to support our new process of application lifecycle management. Thus we can discuss with user panels and retrieve objective information in a short time. All information gathered also supports our process of application portfolio management. (53)

Statement

INHolland University has always been very active in achieving a high-end digital campus. However, we now are at a point that investments need to be focused a bit more, and the coherence between educational applications may need to be reconsidered. We did not have a good and actual in the users' view on the different applications. On the other hand, we are struggling with an increase of specific customization in our application portfolio, which is more and more problematic in terms of stability, performance and cost effectiveness.

Description

We set up a simple workshop that can be used both with specialists (IT people, project managers, consultants) and end users (teaching staff, students). We ask them to score for all applications they work with on a simple form on five aspects, both functional and technical. In each workshop we gather the scores of all panel members. These results form a fine basis for discussion on more details and also to find out on other issues panels members are dealing with, most of the IT related, others organizational.

Outcome

Within four months, we developed our method and applied it: we discussed with about 10 panels on 12 applications, thus retrieving a lot of information that gave us a very clear understanding of the actual 'health' of our applications. In the mean time we analyzed policy documents and discussed with policy leaders, and we gathered details information on costs of our applications. These three perspectives were used to elaborate our application portfolio management and this brought a very clear advice to the University.

Importance/relevance

For many institutions struggling with a growing portfolio of educational applications, our method provided a fast and effective method that can be used in any university or college, as it has no specific context. The outcomes of our method help you to clarify your future investments into educational IT.

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Application Portfolio Management in a few steps

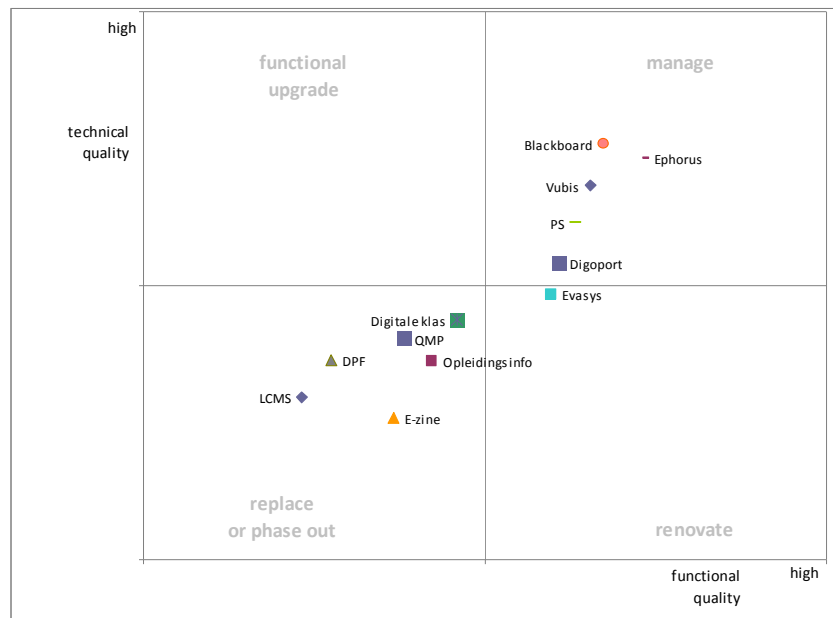
Step 1: investigating the health of the applications

- using the form below (fragment) with both stakeholder panels and user panels, to be filled in individually in one hour workshops across the institution
- in the same workshop, all data are gathered at a large sheet to be able to discuss unexpected outcomes

	Does this application offer suitable functionalities?	Are users happy with this application?	Is this application being used a lot and/or intensively?	Does this application function properly?	Is this application easily manageable and serviceable?	Do you expect the use of this application to increase in the near future or not?
Schaal	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4	- of +
LCMS (SharePoint)						
Digital study guide (SharePoint)						
Digitaal portfolio (SharePoint)						

Step 2: data consolidation in a diagram

- all data are put into a spreadsheet in order to calculate the actual health parameters
- the parameters are merged for all panels and plotted into one diagram as shown



Step 3: merging diagram outcomes with policy issues

- not only actual health is an important parameter for your applications: also policy issues may influence their future in the institution
- so, combine actual health and policy issues into the actual and future lifecycle position, thus bringing up a next steps approach for each application individually and also for the application portfolio as a whole
- this can be plotted into the application lifecycle as shown in the figures.

