CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

Director's Word: It's All About Customer Service

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Table of Contents

Director's Word: It's All About Customer Service .......................................................3
Director's Word: It's All About Customer Service

One thing that helps to determine the results of many decision points at NERDC is the knowledge that we are a service organization. We provide our services to the University of Florida, other state agencies, and to you as individuals. As evidenced by the number of calls to the NERDC Support Desk, your interest in using the Internet continues to grow. In response to your interest, we have spent our efforts this past year in improving your access to the Internet and related services.

Early in the fiscal year, end-user demand for Internet access had grown to the point that UF -- with NERDC's cooperation -- devised a plan to improve and increase dialup Internet access for students, faculty, and staff. UF established the CIRCA Individual Dialup accounts to use a high-speed (28,800 bps) bank of modems dedicated to this service. Throughout the year, this modem pool was increased in size to accommodate growing user requests. Other NERDC modem pools were also increased substantially and were upgraded to include high-speed modems. Since then, phone numbers previously used for lower speed connections have been removed from service.

Now that the growth in demand for access has become more predictable, it is not necessary to maintain separate modem pools. All NERDC modem pools are being merged and all dialup customers will use the same dialup phone number (955-0056). This change reduces the likelihood of busy signals to you; and has allowed us to reduce customer dialup costs by twenty percent.

We also enhanced NERDC UNIX support for World Wide Web pages. First, we installed a program called "cgiwrap" that enables NERSP users to supply their own CGI programs. Previously, this was disallowed for security reasons. Using CGI scripts, user Web pages at
NERDC can now be used to collect and process information, keep Web usage statistics, and dynamically generate Web documents. In addition, our NERSP system now supports image maps, also known as clickable images. Image maps allow viewers of your Web documents to link to other documents by clicking on different parts of pictures.

Another change we made to improve end-user Internet support was to replace the Albert browser with Charlotte. Charlotte, like Albert, is a text-only browser available from NERDC's VM system.

It is a more efficient browser and supports forms input. Information collected this way is processed by CGI scripts at the host website. And, on December 15, the default Usenet server for NERVM and NERSP news readers was upgraded. The new server has more disk space and a faster CPU.

In November, we implemented a session idle timeout on the NERDC terminal servers, affecting NERDC terminal server sessions and CIRCA Individual Dialup accounts. It closes open sessions after four hours when there is no outgoing network activity. This has enhanced system availability and protected you, our customers, from excess charges when logged on but not using any services.

Although not Internet related, an important NERDC project this year was to migrate customer MVS data sets from older 3380 disk-storage units to more modern IBM 3390 drives. We did not want to risk having the older units fail, causing a catastrophic data loss. In addition to increased reliability, the 3390 units provide benefits in improved performance.

As you can see, your input is valuable to us in determining how best to meet your computing needs. We hope you will continue to let us know where you would like to see changes and improvements.

-Ron Schoenau

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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