



Wake Forest University

Wake Forest IT Supercharges Credibility and Expertise with Tambellini

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MUR MUCHANE

Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, Wake Forest University

INTRODUCTION

Since Wake Forest University's (WFU) founding in 1834, all those who have come through its doors have one common denominator—passion for learning. With aspirations of exceptional teaching, research, and discovery, the private, mid-sized institution has a student body of 8,000 on campus in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Committed to innovation, WFU named Mur Muchane Associate Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer (CIO) in 2014 (promoted to Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer in 2018). With interest in modernized, needs-based technology, Muchane saw fit to compose a strategic plan for the entire institution that prioritized the adoption of a cloud-first strategy.

THE PROBLEM

When Muchane arrived at WFU, several technological challenges awaited him. After evaluating the technology, processes, and teams in place, he was convinced that a strategic plan that included cloud migration could help overcome obstacles and set the institution on a path for success. As a new CIO, Muchane knew that one of his challenges was convincing others that moving to the cloud was the right decision for the institution. After all, a move like this required market research, knowledge, expertise, and the element of persuasion. "When you are trying to push through a new initiative, how do you build credibility? Particularly when you're new to an institution?" Muchane asked. "When you're having conversations at the board level, as CIO, they want to know what you think, but they also want to know what industry experts are saying." Muchane not only recognized the need to build credibility, but he also knew he needed support from executives outside of IT, such as the CFO, COO, and Provost, to begin the transition successfully. "CIOs need to build institutional partnerships," stated Muchane. "Having the support of others is critical to decision-making and avoiding inhibitors to progress."

In addition to carrying out a new strategic plan, Muchane had his day-to-day work responsibilities. And despite being an experienced technology professional, the job was rigorous. "We think of technology as one big thing, but there are many different things. It's a lot to keep up with," Muchane said. "Much of what we do in an IT organization is make sure the trains are running—the proper operations are running—that COVID-19 documentation is being gathered, that payroll is working, grades are being reported, etc. That often doesn't leave much time for a technologist to do a heads up and look forward."

SOLUTION AND RESULTS

Muchane first heard of Tambellini Group early in his career, prior to his days of holding any CIO titles. He was at a Consortium of Liberal Arts Colleges conference and heard Tambellini referred to numerous times by CIOs during complex technology conversations. "Tambellini has a great reputation," he recalled. "What I've found to be true across all institutions is that



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you need an outside entity that spends a good bit of its time looking forward and trying to assess solutions. That is where Tambellini comes in.” For Muchane and the Wake Forest community, Tambellini assisted in these important areas:

Expertise and Negotiation: “Tambellini has a wealth of people who have expertise not only in technology but who are also deeply knowledgeable about higher education.” In the early stages of the plan, WFU used Tambellini to help understand what was going on in the market. Research publications were used to navigate the planning of technology selections. Tambellini also proved helpful when it came down to contract negotiations with vendors. “We leaned heavily on Tambellini as we vetted the proposals we received. Tambellini has been immensely helpful and has saved us a lot of money just from negotiating contracts.”

Credibility: The market research Tambellini provides is diverse. From case studies to snapshots, information can be pulled, dissected, and used to draw various implications and insights. WFU uses the figures and conclusions in the research to support the notion of building credibility. “It is not solely about the statistic, but what the statistic means for us as a whole.” Executives outside of IT want to know what the market experts are saying. “It goes beyond market research; it lends CIOs credibility when they can bring that kind of information to the table.”

Time-Management Learning: CIOs are expected to remain up to date on their industry while fulfilling their daily operational tasks, but many often find themselves short on time. Muchane found that Tambellini’s Top of Mind podcast and the webinar series offer digestible, relevant information in a short period. “These formats offer you the chance to learn a lot in 20 to 30 minutes.”

CONCLUSION

For Muchane, Tambellini gets it right. “There are other market research firms, but I do not know that there is any other technology market research firm like Tambellini—that is as accessible as you are and is focused on higher education,” he shared. Muchane also noted that access to an unbiased strategic advisor is a game-changing advancement that allows for personal growth. “It’s a journey for a lot of people who go into technology. The more you know about it, the more you realize how much you don’t know. You begin to have a fuller appreciation of the complexity of the field. As you move up to the management level, you learn that it’s not just about selling the technology; it goes far beyond that. I advise CIOs and management to seek the guidance of those further down the line, and for me, firms like Tambellini quickly come to mind.”



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