

University of Toronto Lost and Found Service Executive Summary

Background & Scope

In an effort to increase the overall student satisfaction at the University of Toronto, the Process Improvement Team (PIT) consisting of 4th year engineering students has developed an improved Lost and Found system. In the current system, items are found by custodians or given to custodians in each building, then a supervisor collects all the items from the custodians in each of their zones once a week and brings it to the Lost and Found office. There, it is stored for students and faculty to pick up in an eight-week window, after which it is donated to a Swap Shop near campus. The purpose of this report is to outline the analysis undertaken by the PIT to identify areas for improvement, and briefly describe the suggested implementations.

Process Analysis - Objectives

In order to define the project objectives, the PIT completed an examination of the current state, a customer needs assessment, and an analysis of process outputs. These analyses led to the development of the following three objectives:

1. *Increase the likelihood that an item enters the Lost and Found System*
2. *Increase the likelihood that items that enter the system are returned to their owner*
3. *Decrease the time required to return an item to its owner*

Each of these objectives was defined to be measured by the metrics of Found Rate, Performance Rate, and Length of Time Lost respectively. The PIT then set out to measure the current state of each of these values, and identify appropriate degrees of improvement for each. This also served as a foundation upon which to develop a final implementation recommendation.

Process Analysis - Approach and Findings

The approach taken in order to achieve the project objectives consists of four steps: inspect and document the current AS-IS system, brainstorm problem areas/causes of issue, design data collection method, and collect and analyze data.

The data collection methods employed included a survey distributed to University students, interviews with key stakeholders, and an artificial loss plan, which included the intentional loss of selected items by team members in order to collect experimental data.

The results of the data collection revealed several imperative findings. One of the key findings from the survey was that a majority of the students were not using the Lost and Found service to retrieve their lost items. Through the interviews, it became apparent that different stakeholder goals were misaligned, and did not support the efficiency of the process as a whole. By completing the artificial loss plan, the team was able to derive key insights into the efficiencies and inefficiencies of the system. One of the key findings was that Robarts Library, the only

location on UofT campus with a Lost and Found drop box, had one of the highest rates of retrieval of the entire study. Leveraging these insights, the PIT proceeded to target tangible areas for improvement and design actionable undertakings.

Design Solution

After completing an analysis of the results, the PIT developed an understanding of the best areas to pursue improvements. The proposed solution consists of five parts, each driven by the findings of the data collection. The first component of the solution is a Social Media and Signage Campaign, targeted toward increasing system awareness. The campaign involves the use of Facebook and other social media, in conjunction with traditional postering around campus, to inform students about the Lost and Found Services and what to do with a lost item. Drop Boxes will be found in almost every building to hold lost items in, so the need for caretakers to store items in their office can be removed. Another component of the solution is a Claim and Cataloging Software to act as a database of lost items, which involves students to submit a claim of their lost item at www.uoftlostandfound.ca and will be contacted based on query matches. Additionally, an Improved Collection Schedule will involve pickup from the Drop Boxes across campus at a much more frequent rate. A final component of the solution is a Caretaking Training program that is aimed at informing caretaking staff of new changes brought about to their process, as well as re-education of any existing policies currently not being followed.

Risks and Next Steps

The primary risk associated with this solution is the improper implementation of this solution. As much of the infrastructure needed to support this system exists and the human resource expertise is present, the primary challenge for the success of this design solution is its implementation. In order to mitigate this risk, the PIT has developed a formulaic Implementation Guide as follows:

1. Upper Management Approval: the PIT will present the findings and recommendations to the manager of the Caretaking Services for the University of Toronto.
2. Software Development: the software required for the database of the lost items can be created by the Information Technology & Services Department or a Capstone Team.
3. Drop Box Ordering: the Caretaking Services must order 25 drop boxes identical to the one at Robarts Library.
4. Social Media and Signage Campaign: the campaign includes communicating with campus newspapers, faculties, and social media managers to inform students about the Lost and Found Services and the drop boxes.
5. Monitoring System Performance: the PIT will assess the performance of the Lost and Found system and make any adjustments required.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of the AS-IS Lost and Found service at UofT, the PIT was able to set three objectives for improvement. With these objectives in mind, the team set out to collect data

surrounding the current system, and was able to leverage the affecting results in order to design a solution for process improvement. With this solution and a supporting implementation plan, the PIT is in an excellent state to begin the tangible improvement of the Lost and Found Service at the University of Toronto.