Choosing the Right Payment Technology Solution and Partner

A conversation with West Valley-Mission's Ron Smith

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CAMPUS COMMERCE

Ron Smith

Director of Information Systems,
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Getting started with Nelnet Campus Commerce

In early 2017, West Valley-Mission Community College District implemented a new ERP system that did not support their existing payment plan application. After going in circles for months with a different vendor, their project stalled. With just 12 weeks until the new payment plan system needed to launch, West Valley-Mission reached out to Nelnet Campus Commerce for help.

"From the start, the Nelnet Campus Commerce team was upfront about the challenges of such a tight turnaround. Most vendors overpromise and under-deliver, saying yes to everything. We appreciated their honesty. They really worked within our tight 12-week deadline," said West Valley-Mission's Executive Director of Information Systems Ron Smith. "The vendor we were previously working with was slow to engage with us; Nelnet's quick response time—often less than 24 hours—was appreciated."

West Valley-Mission's payment technology solution checklist:

- Does it seamlessly interface with our ERP system?

- How easy is it to maintain and support?

- Is the system intuitive and user friendly for the back office?

- Is the system intuitive and user friendly for the students?

- What is the cost of the software and consulting?

While compatibility with their existing ERP system was important in choosing a partner, Ron knew there were other features that were also needed when implementing a new campus-wide product. Maintaining and supporting both the system, and its reception on campus, were an important part of the product's success.

"Nelnet Campus Commerce looks at their products from the eyes of the user, not the support staff," he said. "We did a lot of research and Nelnet always surfaced to the top. Their products are built for the end user, which adds a human touch."

> " Under the Nelnet solution, we have our staff spending less time figuring out how to use the system and more time serving the students."

- Ron Smith, West Valley-Mission Community College District

The implementation process

Each new Nelnet Campus Commerce partner is assigned an implementation team. This team is responsible for guiding the institution through the major implementation milestones — kickoff, planning, configuration, integration testing, acceptance testing, and go live. This six-step process includes assignments at each step for both the Nelnet Campus Commerce team and our partners. This ensures an opportunity for feedback and collaboration throughout the implementation process.

"We were very satisfied with our implementation process and had weekly meetings to discuss the products and process," Ron said. "Any questions we had were answered quickly. On the testing side, the Nelnet Campus Commerce team was very patient with us."

Nelnet Campus Commerce implementation overview:

- **Kickoff:** We start by assembling the right internal and partner teams to meet scope and requests.

- **Planning:** Next, we determine the time frame and implementation details to launch successfully.

- **Configuration:** Here, we work with our partners to validate the requirements and begin coding.

- **Integration Testing:** Next, all team members test integration points, troubleshoot, and resolve any issues.

- **Acceptance Testing:** This is where we further test the solution(s), providing sign off for production.

- **Go Live:** We complete our six-step process by deploying the solution(s) and transitioning our partners to client support.

Launch and reception on campus

Not only was Nelnet Campus Commerce able to meet West Valley-Mission's 12-week timeline, they also worked to create efficiencies for the West Valley-Mission team. After launch, Ron's main concern was the reception of the payment plan product on campus. Much to his delight, the product proved intuitive and easy to use for the back office, while students marveled at the friendly and modern interface. Students especially loved the paperless option that the eBill product provided.

"Under the Nelnet solution, we have our staff spending less time figuring out how to use the system and more time serving the students," Ron said. "I work with a lot of vendors," Ron said. "Nelnet Campus Commerce is out for our best interest. We don't find that with most vendors."

Nelnet's implementation team works with all partners to configure and deploy the system, closely monitoring it for two weeks after it has gone live. And while Ron was thankful to have the Nelnet Campus Commerce team readily available for troubleshooting and support, he found that his campus didn't need it.

After the two week monitoring period, Nelnet Campus Commerce officially closed the implementation and transitioned West Valley-Mission to client support. From there, Nelnet asks partners to provide feedback on their experience to help improve the implementation process. Partners also receive a satisfaction survey, which allows the implementation team to further refine the process and provide best-in-class customer service.

"Our partnership with Nelnet Campus Commerce has brought a state-of-the-art solution to our staff and students," Ron said. "I wish we would have chosen Nelnet from the beginning. They're sincere and genuine. We have no second thoughts."

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- Ron Smith, West Valley-Mission Community College District