

Digital Government Application: Government to Citizens

Boise State University

Touchnet Upay Portal Serving BSU Students, Campus Community and Citizens of Idaho

Executive Summary

Background

Prior to 2004 Boise State University processed student tuition and fees through direct, hands on cashiering. The long lines of students, parents and others waiting to make timely payments and avoid late fees at peak times of the year created significant problems. Manual cashiering demanded the hiring of temporary staff, extended business hours and resulted in manual payment processing, data entry and regular error resolution.

In addition to student tuition and fees being taken and processed manually, a variety of other services, organizations, conferences and points of sale on campus relied upon manual cashiering and processing. This too resulted in a lack of convenience for students, faculty, staff and members of the community, created additional staffing requirements and represented inconvenient, inefficient and expensive business practices.

Overview of Project

In the spring of 2004, the university began implementation of the Touchnet Payment Gateway. The first step for this payment gateway was focused toward processing student tuition and fees and consisted of three main features: 1 - online credit card payment for student tuition to accompany the existing online registration, 2 - secure processing and refunding of payments through an offsite secure facility, and 3 - easy reconciliation of payments against student accounts and receipting.

Having successfully completed the first step, attention was then turned to all other campus and community services which could benefit from this secure and convenient technology. In February of 2007 Boise State implemented the second step of the payment gateway, the U-Pay Portal. This system expansion allowed all university colleges, departments and business units to establish the general use of credit cards for supporting their individually unique online business transactions while assuring that all transactions were centrally recorded, managed and secured.

Current Status

As of April 2008, Touchnet Payment Gateway has become the campus standard for online credit card transactions, processing over \$42 million in transactions per year. The campus continues to operate the gateway for student tuition and fee payments as well as applications for admission. There are currently 35 U-Pay sites and that number continues to grow. Sites consist of everything from processing requests for transcripts; payments for child care, parking and library fees; to registration and payment for state conferences and workshops.

Outcomes

- Improved security of personal information for BSU students, faculty, staff and community members
- Reduction in temporary staff and processing costs
- Reduction of errors due to manual data entry and processing
- Absolute accessibility and convenience for all students, faculty, staff and community members who now can make payments from anywhere at anytime
- University-wide standardization and security for all university credit card processing

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NARRATIVE

Background

Prior to 2004 Boise State University processed student tuition and fees through direct, hands on cashiering. The long lines of students, parents and others waiting to make timely payments and avoid late fees at peak times of the year, such as the start of a semester, created significant problems. These manual cashiering demands required the hiring of temporary staff, extended business hours and resulted in manual payment processing, data entry and error resolution as a result of the manual processes.

In addition to student tuition and fees being taken manually there were a variety of other services, organizations, conferences and points of sale on campus that manually took in payments, processed the related transactions and also extended resources for error resolution. This type of processing resulted in a lack of convenience for students, faculty, staff and members of the community, created additional processing requirements and represented inconvenient, inefficient and expensive business practices.

a. Description and Time in Operation

In 2003 the Touchnet Payment Gateway was selected as the web based credit card processing solution for Boise State University. The project was completed in two parts. The first was focused on the Tuition and Fees and the second was focused on additional service areas.

The general requirements for the first part of the project were:

1. Allow web based payment of tuition and fees.
2. Integrate the payment solution with PeopleSoft Student.
3. Establish a secure solution.
4. Reduce issues caused by current hand entry of payment data and credit card information.
5. Simplify reporting and reconciling.
6. Improve availability of payment services for the campus and community.

In the Spring of 2004 the Payment Gateway was implemented. At implementation it was fully integrated with PeopleSoft Student system which allowed students to view their invoice online and post a credit card payment through Touchnet. All of the defined general requirements were met at go-live.

In February 2007, the second phase of the project began. The second phase was planned to extend the online credit card processing service to other areas on campus, provide the same consistency and reduce issues and costs in those departments and offices. The general requirements for the second part of the project were:

1. Establish a way to extend web based payments into other services areas to better serve the university and community members.
2. Maintain security and integrity of the data.
3. Establish as scalable solution, so that it could be easily deployed to a variety of areas.
4. Reduce the handling of physical credit cards and numbers.

In February 2007, the Touchnet U-Pay Portal was implemented. As of April 2008 over 35 U-Pay sites have been deployed and all requirements for the project have been met. Those sites consist of everything from processing transcripts, to child care, to state conferences and workshops. A variety of programs throughout the campus and the state have been able to take advantage of Boise State's highly configurable setup.

b. Significance to the Improvement in Operation of Government

The implementation of the Touchnet U-Pay Portal and extended implementation has improved operations in the following areas:

1. **High Availability of Services without Man Power**
The extension of the U-Pay Portal to more than 35 sites around the university has allowed offices to receive payments at times that are convenient to the customers. In areas such as the Child Care Center that operates during regular business hours the ability for parents and students to pay fees any time of the day or night has been achieved without the need for staff. Further the U-Pay collects the needed information from the community member reducing the need for "after the fact" data entry.
2. **Reduction of Temporary Staff and Overtime**
Prior to Touchnet's implementation, temporary cashiers had to be hired and trained for at least a month each semester to handle long lines and high in-office volume. Over the last 3 years the lines have become virtually non-existent. As a result of the Touchnet deployment, the students' ability to pay online through both credit cards and web based checking, has reduced the need to come into the Cashier's office. The students are able to pay at their convenience around the clock and have the payment posted to their accounts real time. Temporary cashiers are no longer required thus eliminating more than 2 months of temporary labor and staff overtime.
3. **Security**
With Touchnet being the official system for credit card processing university wide, security has been significantly increased. The credit card numbers are never stored on any system on Boise State's campus. The numbers for both processing and resourceing are maintained in Touchnet's PCI certified data center. This allows Boise State to avoid maintaining expense hardware necessary to PCI compliant. In addition to the credit cards being stored off campus, the cashiers who process the payment transactions do not have to see any credit card numbers. This reduces any possible compromise of credit information on Boise State's campus.
4. **Error Reduction**
Prior to Touchnet's implementation, there were a high number of hours devoted to correcting manual entry errors. Due to the volume processed by hand in the cashier's office it was easy to miss-key data. With the deployment of Touchnet campus wide, BSU was able to integrate PeopleSoft with the Touchnet Payment Gateway. This has allowed the system to verify and update directly from the payment information. This eliminates the need for manual entry and puts the data through validation so data errors are significantly reduced.

c. Benefits Realized by Service Recipients

1. **High Availability & Convenience**
The Touchnet system allows students, faculty, staff and community members to make payments at a time of their choosing. The system allows payments by customers at times when the University is not physically open. As an example on Christmas Eve last year the

University processed over \$1 Million transactions for a variety of areas. The credit cards were processed and systems updated around the University all without on campus staff. For the service recipients this availability is a true benefit, as there is rarely a time they cannot post payments to their account.

2. Customer Service

The processing of information directly from the U-Pay Portal system into the subsequent systems such as PeopleSoft and the reduction of manual entry errors means that customer rarely has account issues. Thus there are fewer phone calls to the campus and the information needed for activities such as transcript request, is correct the first time through the system.

d. Cost-benefit analysis, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations)

1. Time to Setup New Department or Office Merchant

Prior to the Touchnet Payment Gateway it took several days and sometimes weeks to setup a department or office to accept credit cards. Credit card machines had to be ordered, processing standards had to be established and training had to be done. Today departments can be added to the system and functional within a day and taking credit cards within two days. No additional hardware is required saving approximately \$3,500 per department.

2. Reduction of Temporary Cashiering Staff and Extended Hours

Over the last 3 years the need for additional staff in cashiering offices has been eliminated. Cost savings in staff and overtime campus wide are estimated at over \$32,000.00 per year over the past three years or a total of \$96,000 since the initial implementation.

Additional Staff Cost Per Semester

Staffing/Item	Num of Staff	Cost per. Hour	Hours	Total Cost
Temporary Cashier	5	\$10.00	120	\$6,000.00
Staff Overtime	4	\$20.00	60	\$4,800.00
				\$10,800.00

3. Security/Hardware Improvements and Savings

With credit card data and transactions hosted off campus in Touchnet’s data center, the need to maintain campus systems in support of transactions and to assure PCI compliance has been reduced. Over the past three years BSU has experienced a net savings of approximately \$42,000.00 in hardware, maintenance and licensing costs. Additionally, BSU does not have to provide administrative staff to support and manage the systems. This represents an additional cost savings of \$85,000.00 per year in salary and benefits. These staff are reprioritized.

Hardware Cost for Remaining PCI Compliant

Item	Quantity	Cost	Total Cost
Server	2	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00
Load Balancing	1	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
Security Camera	1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Backup	1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Licensing	1	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
			\$42,000.00