



The Value of Expertise

Community College Discovers Tambellini Group's Strategic Advisors Deliver High-Value and Low-Cost Relationships for CIOs

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BACKGROUND

If there is one thing most CIOs know for sure, it's that they don't know everything. As one former CIO of a community college in the south told us, he has worked with analyst firms for a number of years. He utilizes his relationships with these firms to read the latest technology research and gain knowledge quickly. Other firms had provided him with research and analyst hours, but he had worked with Tambellini in the past and decided to explore their services again because of their exclusive focus on higher education and their credible reputation in the market. When he began working with the Tambellini Group for a second time, he could sense something different.

"When I was considering a Tambellini membership, they told me that all of their members have a dedicated strategic advisor, and I thought 'what's that?'" says the CIO. He was familiar with the fact that most analyst firms had services that provided their clients with access to analysts who were market or product experts, but a strategic advisor sounded like someone who could not only help him gain knowledge but who was focused on the goals that he wanted to accomplish.

TAMBELLINI'S STRATEGIC ADVISOR

The college's technology leader learned that the Tambellini Group's strategic advisor would provide him with someone to contact when he needed to access an analyst or research. He learned later that she would also become someone he could rely on when he needed even more. Strategic advisors create a plan with each member to ensure they get the most value out of their Tambellini Group membership. The plans that are developed align with each member's strategies, and strategic advisors proactively reach out to members about resources that will help them accomplish their goals. "When I signed up, I expected someone to help me set up or schedule my analyst calls. What I didn't know is that my strategic advisor would be someone I could call and discuss an issue I was wrestling with or a problem I was trying to solve," recalls the CIO.

These low-cost, high-value conversations became one of the most significant benefits of the membership with the Tambellini Group. When he had a particularly challenging issue, his strategic advisor became a reliable resource and someone who could inspire confidence. "My strategic advisor knew community colleges. I didn't have to teach her about the nuances. She had experience working with them, and when we discussed specific topics, she could often anticipate issues before they arose. This saved me a great amount of time and helped me find better solutions." As a Tambellini member, the CIO was able to gain knowledge at scale, provide resources to his colleagues, and make faster decisions.

RESULTS IN ACTION

In 2019, the community college decided to re-platform with new financial management and HCM systems and later with a new student system. Although the team knew what they needed



to do to change to the new systems, the depth and breadth of the changes needing to occur had the potential to be overwhelming. Regardless of how much preparation and planning that the team did, through their experience, they knew there would be areas that were not fully considered prior to implementation.

Such was the case for this implementation. The team needed additional assistance on how to structure information and transactional environments for credit and non-credit instruction. To give the team the assistance they needed, the CIO turned to his strategic advisor, Karen Boudreau-Shea. Karen provided key resources and guidance on three fronts

1. She pointed the IT leader to Tambellini research reports that he could access and share with his team. The reports gave him and other senior leaders a better understanding of the available tools in the market for non-credit instruction. The level of detail available in the reports would not have been readily accessible without an independent and in-depth analysis of each vendor and their offerings. The research saved the CIO and his team a significant amount of time.
2. She also provided some assistance in creating stronger capabilities for the systems that powered non-credit offerings. Karen asked essential questions like, "If off-the-shelf solutions do not meet your needs, where can you turn to think through what is possible?" By working together to deconstruct the business functions of the transaction chain, the CIO designed a better information architecture to meet current and future needs.
3. Most importantly, Karen's ability to speak to the role of non-credit instruction within the community college as a critical factor to the success of the implementation. Her understanding of the breadth and depth of non-credit offerings helped to recenter him around a student's perspective and ensure that the team moved toward unified offerings.

From an operational standpoint, the delivery of credit and non-credit instruction can be very different. It is the role of leadership to ensure that the college is offering consistent quality and effectiveness of the different programs and services. Having an external advisor to help the team see themselves from the "outside-in" delivered a high-value perspective necessary to deliver successfully.

The CIO has moved into other areas of higher education but recognized the value that a Tambellini Group membership brought to the college and him as the IT leader. He ensured that the membership was in place before his predecessor stepped into the CIO role. "I wanted to make sure that they had all of the resources they needed to be successful. And being able to work with Tambellini Group's strategic advisor while leveraging additional resources was one of the keys to my success."

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The report is based on the experience of the Tambellini Group and the community college.

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