



CASE STUDY

Client: Northcentral Technical College (NTC)

Industry: Higher Education

Service Focus: Technology Evaluation Services, Strategic Planning, Staffing and Project Management

Helping Northcentral Technical College **Align Technology** with Its Mission

A Mission to **Build Futures** Through Education and Economic Impact

Northcentral Technical College serves communities across Wisconsin through six campus locations and three specialized centers of excellence.

As a public institution, NTC's mission is to provide high-quality, learner- and employer-focused educational pathways designed to enrich lives and strengthen the economy.

To uphold that mission, NTC needed to ensure that their IT systems and staffing strategy could meet growing internal demands while supporting staff, students, and long-term planning. River Run was brought in to conduct a full technology evaluation.

The goal was to assess current systems and propose a future-ready path that aligned IT capabilities with NTC's strategic objectives.





A Strategic Evaluation Led by Finance, HR, and IT Leadership

NTC's Finance, HR, and IT departments collaborated to select River Run for a comprehensive technology review. *"Our main goal was to get a thorough evaluation of the technologies we were currently using and poise ourselves for future technologies needed,"* said Roxanne Lutgen, Vice President of Finance and General Counsel.

The evaluation focused on Customer Service, Project Management, and Staffing. River Run was tasked with benchmarking the college's current performance against industry standards to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. As Associate Vice President of Information Technology and CIO Chet Strebe explained, *"We wanted to identify the best ERP technology for Customer Service, Project Management and Staffing."*

Thorough Interviews to Capture Campus-Wide Feedback

River Run conducted a multi-day campus visit, meeting with faculty, staff, and department leaders both individually and in groups. The team asked consistent questions to gather insights across departments and built a broad understanding of the organization's operational needs and technical goals.

"Our main concern was replacing one of our core systems due to a discontinuance of enhancement services," said Lutgen. *"This was the heart of our Student, HR, and Finance System. I liked that River Run met with individuals across campus and asked for input in a consistent and professional way."*



Recommendations That Aligned IT With NTC's Organizational Mission

One of the key recommendations was to align the mission of the IT department with the broader mission of NTC. River Run encouraged each department to develop its own values statement, defining how it would support the college's overall goals.

To elevate customer service, River Run proposed:

- ✓ Standardizing service processes
- ✓ Implementing time tracking and service level agreements
- ✓ Setting clear reporting metrics and service thresholds
- ✓ Developing department-wide performance benchmarks

These improvements provided a framework to support staff and student needs while reinforcing accountability and communication.

Building a Project Management Office to Reduce Backlog

River Run's evaluation reinforced NTC's growing recognition that improved project management was critical to long-term success. Using industry benchmarks, River Run outlined best practices and helped define an optimal IT organizational structure.

"We are streamlining our IT projects, adding resources, and creating a Project Management Office," said Strebe. The firm also helped identify staffing needs and provided market-rate salary benchmarks to inform hiring plans.

"River Run helped us determine what we needed and how to plan for it," added Lutgen. *"They provided clarity on how to define roles and scope work effectively, which supported better recruiting."*



Defining Roles and Improving Recruiting Strategy

River Run guided NTC in refining job descriptions and role distinctions, ensuring technical staff were focused on their core strengths. *“We wanted to make sure our network engineers are focused on network engineering, and no other IT tasks,”* said Strebe. *“We realized some positions need to be specialized instead of jack-of-all-trades positions.”*

Lutgen noted that recruiting remained a challenge due to low statewide unemployment and competition for technical talent. However, with clearly defined roles and realistic market data, NTC was better positioned to attract and retain qualified candidates.

A Blueprint for Implementation and Accountability

River Run’s Executive Summary Report acted as a foundational guide for implementing change. The report was reviewed by executive leadership and used to prioritize action items across departments.

“I think we understood their recommendations, discussed them thoroughly with all levels of our organization, and we effectively and efficiently utilized the information to make desired changes,” said Lutgen.

With public funding limitations, all decisions had to meet strict budget standards. *“We are a public institution, taxpayer funded, so operational and capital expenditures are limited,”* she added. *“That’s why this evaluation was so important.”*

Improved Communication and Long-Term Customer Satisfaction

NTC continues to evaluate its performance through user interviews and feedback tools. The establishment of the Project Management Office has improved visibility into project lifecycles and created a clearer picture of internal progress.

“Project communication is the main reason we created the PMO,” said Lutgen. *“Our ultimate goal is to increase satisfaction through improved project visibility and delivery.”*

Flexible Engagement That Delivered Results

Both Strebe and Lutgen praised River Run’s flexibility throughout the engagement. River Run worked around schedules, tailored their agenda to match NTC’s needs, and delivered the final Executive Summary Report promptly.

“River Run accomplished their work quickly, produced the Executive Summary promptly after their on-site visit, and met with the top leaders in a timely fashion,” said Strebe. *“I was very satisfied with the engagement performance and the work product produced.”*