

# 10 Tips for a Smooth Sakai Implementation



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## 1. Seek out mentors in the Sakai community and put them on speed dial during first year.

There are many members of the Sakai community, from CIOs to instructional designers, who are very willing to answer questions and to provide tips that will save significant time in your implementation. Don't hesitate to leverage their knowledge and expertise.

## 2. Have at least one term running both systems, but do not exceed a year.

The campus community will have a certain amount of anxiety about the change process. This anxiety will be alleviated if you offer users a fallback position and have both systems available for a fixed period. Also, when faculty members feel that their buy-in is voluntary, they're more willing to offer it. However, the costs of running two systems are significant, so do not do this for more than a year.

## 3. Start with a large initial implementation group with lots of support.

When you request a small group of volunteers to implement, you're likely to get volunteers who would have been your early adopters. Such a group will not accurately represent the support needs and costs of the full campus community. Consider seeking out some individuals who would be less likely to be early adopters and build a large initial implementation group that will give you a sense of the full spectrum of support you will need to offer your campus.

## 4. Get feedback from both faculty AND students as to how it is working.

I can't emphasize the "and" enough. The student experience in Sakai will be very different from the faculty experience. If you only have feedback from faculty, you will have only part of the picture. Getting student input will allow you to balance faculty and student needs.

## 5. Use a pilot group for PR and training with "lead" faculty.

If you have started with a large implementation group, you will have a cross-section of the campus community that will be able to help with PR and training. You will likely find that your faculty members are particularly receptive to peer endorsements and training.

## 6. Make ALL tools available for selection from the beginning.

I have my favorite tools and others I'm not so keen on, but I quickly learned that despite my own preferences, I should make all of the tools available from the beginning. Many faculty members who will want to experiment and decide for themselves the usefulness of different tools. Give them that option.

## 7. Identify all add-on systems up front and start with them on initial implementation.

Your users will not be happy if they are unable to access add-on systems that they previously had available to them. By including those add-on systems from the start, your users will feel that they have all the support that they've always had.

## 8. Run user training both before and after implementation

Even though we implemented Sakai very quickly, we offered training over a long period that spanned more than one term, in part out of a need to reach all adjunct faculty. This proved beneficial for all of our faculty.

## 9. Put out a regular newsletter highlighting what faculty are doing and giving technical tips.

A regular newsletter is a great way to address the most common support questions that you and your staff receive from users. Also, the newsletter will give you the opportunity to praise and highlight what your users have accomplished with Sakai.

## 10. Regularly highlight improvements, fixes, and new opportunities.

If someone is having a problem, chances are someone else in the Sakai community has had the same problem and is working toward a solution. If you identify those working on a solution and where they are in the process, you can communicate this information to those on campus experiencing the problem. Your users will feel they are being heard and their issues are being addressed. This will significantly impact their buy-in in the change process.