

[00:00:01.02]

Hello, greetings.

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My name is Terry Patterson.

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I am from the University of St.

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Thomas in Houston, Texas, Space City,
and I am the Director

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of Learning Technologies there.

[00:00:13.29]

And I'm here to talk to you today
about implementing institutional

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hierarchies for academic oversight.

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This is a presentation I gave at
Building Blackboard Together in July 2026.

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So how are we going to get things started?

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So today we're going to,
uh, at the end of this,

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we'll understand why institutional
hierarchy is a critical foundation

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for your institution,
and you're going to learn to generate

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a custom hierarchy structure
that mirrors your institutional needs.

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Then we're going to talk about how to gain
access to online tools for developing

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initial hierarchy nodes.

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And then we're going to understand how
to associate those nodes, the users,

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and even tools to specific institutional hierarchy nodes within Blackboard.

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And then we want to discover programming guidelines for automating the hierarchy

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management process using either the SIS framework that you might be familiar with,

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or, and/or REST API structure.

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So let's, uh, touch on our agenda for the moment.

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We're going to talk about— we're kind of breaking things down

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into 5 different topics.

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We want to talk about defining your digital institution structure and why—

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the whys for using institutional hierarchies,

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how you can break down your organizational chart, your accreditation bodies,

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and how you accredit, uh, how you, uh, get— gain accreditation,

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and your degree programs and how those impact your institutional hierarchy

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structure, including integrating programs, centers of learning,

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and even teaching modalities into your hierarchy structure as well.

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So we can take on multiple different roles here.

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Then we're going to take on in the fourth section converting and inputting

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the structure into Blackboard and then deciding on how we're going

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to automate or statically update that information when need be.

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So lots of things to get to.

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Let's jump into our first topic, which is basically just looking at

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hierarchies within an institution.

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So let's talk about my institution, the University of St.

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Thomas in Houston.

[00:02:35.12]

It— we utilize institutional hierarchies that empower our academic leaders to have

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more abilities to oversee faculty

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interactions, and to provide

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real-time assistance if need be.

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So by implementing— by creating a digital structure that mirrors our institutional

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structure, we work to develop targeted course

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abilities to allow deans, department chairs, program leaders

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access to content to courses

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and allow them to do data collection,

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to do oversight, to support faculty.

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And think about this,
you have a dean or a department chair,

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you may have had this before, where
they come to you and they say, oh no,

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somebody had an accident,
somebody was in a car crash,

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Professor So-and-So was there.

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And they're supposed to teach at 3 o'clock
this afternoon,

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and I need to get a message out
to our student, their students.

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Well, sufficiently doing
that in Blackboard is great,

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but they have no access to— if you don't
have institutional hierarchy set up,

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they may not have access to Blackboard.

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They are coming to you in a panic.

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They're coming,
they don't know how to deal with it.

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You, you know,
heaven forbid, you're going off to get,

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you know, going to an appointment,
dental appointment, doctor appointment,

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you know, meeting, whatever,
and you're not available.

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And time sensitivity is at its utmost.

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So giving the instructor or the program
director or the department chair or

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the dean the ability
to access that course within Blackboard

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is very important,
and to give them access when they need it,

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not to every single course that they
oversee, but only

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to access certain courses
at certain times when they need it.

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So giving them that access is how we— how
the institutional hierarchy,

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how the institutional hierarchy
can benefit your institution.

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It's a foundational piece
of what really sets up a way

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of distributing
over oversight and distributing support.

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And you're gonna see that we'll take
on the role in multiple different ways,

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uh, as we continue this conversation today
of how institutional

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hierarchies can benefit you.

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I promise you, you're going to understand
why, uh, institutional hierarchy should be

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something that you're tackling, uh, today.

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So let's introduce institutional hierarchies from Blackboard to you today.

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So institutional hierarchies, this is the audience.

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Audience is institutional hierarchies.

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All right, now moving on.

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No, just kidding, just kidding.

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Uh, one of the things that we talk about, uh,

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not only is, well, what are institutional hierarchies?

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Well, institutional hierarchies are just— think

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of them little groups, just like your departments, your,

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your colleges, your schools.

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Your academic units, maybe even your assessment, your programs,

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your centers of learning, your centers of specialization that you

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may have to deal with on a regular basis.

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And one of the primary reasons that you're going to roll out institutional

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hierarchies and why hierarchies are there are— there are many of them, but let's

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focus on the management administration.

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As I said earlier,
the ability to empower deans

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and department chairs with The
oversight that they need

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to efficiently manage faculty in the
online sphere is vital to their success.

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And giving them that ability to be able
to hop in and out when they need to,

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to either provide functional support
to an adjunct, to help

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when a faculty member is out or has
an emergency or has a family

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situation where they have to step out.

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Those deans and department
chairs, that's their job.

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As all of us know in academics, they,
that's, you know, they're

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given release time for that.

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And because of that,
you need to empower them to be able to do

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that and do so efficiently,
because Blackboard is a,

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for most institutions, is
an integral part to the academic process

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and to the academic life
of students and faculty.

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It also allows you to take support staff
and give access to various

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college departments, etc.

If your institution allows for, uh,

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uh, technologists for institutional or

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instructional designers that focus
on specific schools or colleges or

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maybe a specific department or program.

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Those can be given access to be able
to support those faculty,

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uh, with the instructional design process
and be able to get into various different

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tools and, uh, only get access, uh,

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to those specific courses as part of

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the college or the department.

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So institutional hierarchies really give
the administration and management to that,

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to your users and your, you know, your—
think of it as a middle management.

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And it lessens the load
that sits on your shoulders.

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You're now not having to take on the role
of, you know, having to deal

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with everything all the time.

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You can, you know,

in some ways share the load with various

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people to give them the ability
to support the people that they support.

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So for an administrator,

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it's a vital, vital help.

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Now when we're talking about— let's take
our admin hat off and let's talk about

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accreditation, assessment, and oversight,
because those are very important

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processes as we continue to see financial,
uh, and, and fiscal,

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uh, accountability being tied to, uh,
success in the classroom for students,

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uh, and success in accreditation.

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So
institutional hierarchies allow us also

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to have institutional
oversight and assessment.

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We can streamline data collection
for departments and degree

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programs relatively easily.

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Uh, instructor can go in and pull data or
department chair or dean can pull data

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from various different courses, uh,
that are within a program or within

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a specific department and be able
to pull that data efficiently.

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And accreditation data becomes easily accessible for academic leaders

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and assessment coordinators with this as you utilize maybe other tools such as

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EAC,
also tools such as Blackboard Outcomes

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for Learn or Blackboard Outcomes.

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All these various different tools will provide you, uh,

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with the— when you have the institutional nodes in place

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and institutional hierarchy,
they're going to provide you

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easy processes to be able to whittle down and zoom in or,

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or focus in on data that comes, uh,
that will be vital to your

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accreditation and assessment processes.

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So that's one of the benefits for institutional hierarchies.

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Then the last one I want to talk about is the learning object repositories

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and tool management.

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How many of you hopefully have learned about learning object repositories?

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Those are— LORs are very,
very important in the success for, um,

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of a successful new tool that we're really
seeing very useful

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at the University of St.
Thomas.

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And so The hierarchies allow you to enable
a better core and third-party

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tool and content management.

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You can roll out certain tools,
for example, things like Perusall, or,

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you know, maybe
a specific product like YuJa,

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or various tools that may only be utilized
by a specific department or

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a specific school or college.

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You can tie those specifically
to that node and only

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that node gains access to it.

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If you're limited on funds,
if you're limited access,

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if you have to limit who gets access
to these items, you can do so by simply

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utilizing that tool and,
and being able to tie a tool

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or a content item or a content

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option to the node and only

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the courses within that node.

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Learning Object Repositories have been rolled out for institutional,

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at the institutional level, and are now being rolled out for the node level.

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So you'll be able to develop object repository objects,

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learning objects for various things such as data, you know, maybe a common,

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you know, syllabus or a program, program

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guidelines or new program

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standards or requirements.

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Those kind of things that you might roll out to a program or to a specific

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department that are only specific to that group

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You can simply make that available in a learning object

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repository only for that node.

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And then you can, you know, like I just said, deploy

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the specific content, the resources, integrations that only to those nodes

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and only to the departments that actually require them.

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So hopefully you now understand why hierarchies are important and how

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they're going to impact you.

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Today we're going to step into the next lesson and we'll talk about developing

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and delivering your digital institution structure

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into the institutional hierarchy.