SAS CONSULTANT'S USERS GROUP--CONSUG

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the recently formed SAS® Consultant's User Group. It covers its goals and purpose, recent meetings, and future activities.

HISTORY

Prior to SUGI 17 in Hawaii, various consultants at different times felt they had inadequate representation within the SAS user community and with SAS Institute. Previous attempts at focusing attention on consultant's needs resulted in mixed success (e.g., the meeting rooms at SUGI 14 in San Francisco). The Consultants Registry gave limited exposure (to those who requested it) but still didn't address other issues dealing with SAS consulting such as types of consulting, rates, government contracts, etc.

Judie Mopsik of Atlantic Research Corporation (ARC Professional Services Group, 1301 Piccard Drive, 2nd Fl, Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 258-5542) emerged as a spokesperson and focal point for these discussions and concerns. By SUGI 17 in Hawaii there was enough interest to conduct a Consultant's BOF. Sally Roberson from SAS Institute attended, as did about a dozen consultants. People presented different ideas and mechanisms for forming a user's group. Why form one? Could it meet common goals? What were these goals? How does a group meet that is geographically widespread? Who is a consultant, anyway?

The last issue covered so many different variations that we offered no strict definition. Consultants can be independent, can work for a consulting company, work as employees of a company and 'hire out' to different departments, or work at a help desk.

We decided there was enough interest to form a Consultant's User Group, and common interests and that goals existed apart from other user groups to warrant formation. Sally Roberson reported that the idea was brought before the SUGI executive committee and approved. We established two representatives—Eric Brinsfield for the east coast and Ben Conner for the west coast. Bill Calvert (Service Research, Inc. 401 Hull Place Rockville, MD 20852 (301) 738-1024) agreed to write a statement of purpose and also create a survey for prospective members so we could better focus on their needs. We also decided to meet as a formal group in a half-day session following the SUGI 18 closing ceremonies in New York.

Breakfast meetings were also held at the NESUG meeting in Baltimore, MD in October 1992 and at SESUG in St. Petersburg, FL in February 1993. Open panel discussions followed some presentations and included topics such as: running your own business; estimating project size, time and cost; hiring a consultant; and getting new clients.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The "Consultant's SAS User Group" is constituted to facilitate communications and information exchange among and between consultants who are users of SAS Information Delivery Products; such interchanges to include business, marketing and technical information.

SUGI 18 MEETING

Following the SUGI 18 closing session, the first official CONSUG meeting started. Three speakers gave talks:

Judy Loren—"Making the Transition From a Full-Time Permanent Employee To A Part-time Consultant With The Same Company"

Debbie Buck—"Having Multiple Clients Concurrently"

Bob Virgile—"Being Both a Trainer And a Consultant: Can You Cover Both or Do Clients Typecast You?"

A panel discussion followed with questions directed toward all three speakers. Judy's main point was that it is indeed possible to become a consultant with the same company. She is able to work as much (or little) as she wants: currently about 20-30 hours per month. The drawback is that her client is the 'only game in town.' To expand her business would require travel and additional complexity that she doesn't desire at this point in time.
Debbie contrasted this approach by discussing her business and the problems that arise when several clients need projects completed 'yesterday.' She operates as a statistical consultant, so she often works independently offsite. She cautioned that anyone going into consulting with a notion of having 'normal' hours will have a substantial reality check soon thereafter.

Bob gave some interesting insight into how much time it takes to develop training materials for a SAS course. To do it right requires several hundred hours per course. He often teaches short duration courses and in so doing risks being typecast as a trainer only. Bob constantly emphasizes his other skills to clients and by doing so gets follow-up work for consulting projects.

The panel discussion covered topics such as liability insurance and potential risk, health insurance issues for consultants, and a few words about the ICCA (Independent Computer Consultants Association). A lively discussion broke out concerning the possibility of having SAS Institute arrange a third tier pricing schedule for SAS Consultants. The justification was that we didn’t actually use the product for our own needs, but rather to meet the needs of existing clients of SAS Institute. Some members agreed to approach SAS Institute with the idea, but weren’t hopeful about its outcome. Current regulations restrict the creation of a pricing schedule to other groups below what SAS Institute charges the government. The only exceptions to these rules are for degree-granting institutions. They would check with SAS Institute, however, to press the issue.

In lieu of the presentation that was scheduled by a representative of the Small Business Administration, Judie spoke briefly about consulting opportunities with the United States Government. It awards each year a certain percentage of contracts only to small businesses. Firms such as ARC are too large to bid on these contracts—but could act as partners in bidding for this business. The size of some of the contracts often runs from $300,000 to $750,000. She suggested contacting the local Small Business Administration office and asking for more information.

Following the panel discussion, this author gave a brief overview of methods of communication—

electronic (national commercial service providers, local BBS systems, and the Internet), fax, and mail. A show of hands indicated about half the attendees had electronic mail addresses of some kind. Another attendee pointed out the existence of a Consultants Forum on CompuServe® (GO CONSULT).

Finally, the future direction of the group came up. Judie wanted to back out of direct involvement due to time constraints, so Dave Riba (Jade Tech, Inc. PO Box 4517 Clearwater, FL 34618 (813) 726-6099) agreed to take over the reigns and organize next year’s meeting.

The meeting closed with a call for topics for next year—and to carry the word to regional user groups.

**CONCLUSION**

The Consultants Users Group serves a definite need with information not readily available elsewhere. If you are a consultant (or considering becoming one), this group can provide insight and guidance in these pursuits. The original survey sent out to prospective members and results are also attached.

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**REFERENCES**

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CompuServe is the registered trademark of CompuServe, Inc.
Tutorials  

Consultant SAS® USER GROUP SURVEY

* Please supply contact information:

Your Name ________________________________

Your Title ________________________________

N° & Street ________________________________

City, State __________________________________

Phone1 (____) __-____

Please specify if phone1 is: _home _work _fax

Phone2 (____) __-____

Please specify if phone2 is: _home _work _fax

EMAIL address______________________________

1. How many years have you used SAS? |____|____|

* As you respond to the following questions, please mark ALL applicable responses.

2. In what capacity do you use SAS?
   _Technical support
   _Application development
   _Supervision of SAS users
   _Training of SAS users
   _Research data analysis
   _other, specify:__________________________

3. In what kind of environment(s) do you use SAS?
   _multi-platform environment __ DOS PC
   _Mainframe __ OS/2 PC
   _Mini-computer __ Windows PC
   _Unix workstation __ PC LAN
   _other, specify:__________________________

4. How do you rate your SAS expertise?
   _novice _intermediate _advanced
5. What is the best means for SUG-member communication?
   - US Mail / Newsletter
   - Telephone Chain
   - FAX chain
   - CONSUG Electronic Bulletin Board
   - Networks (Internet, Bitnet, etc.)
   - CompuServe
   - other, specify: __________________________

   • Please indicate your priorities (1 = highest):

6. Proposed projects
   - Annual meeting
   - Consultant Registry/Directory
   - Establishing information exchange
   - other, specify: __________________________

7. Proposed topics for presentation or information exchange.
   - Starting a consulting business
   - Job estimation
   - Taxes and corporate structure
   - Effective business practices
   - Marketing
   - Obtaining 'global' network services
   - Government contracting
   - SAS licensing policy
   - other, specify: __________________________

   • Please check all responses that apply.

8. Would you like to join us?     _ NO?     _ YES!

9. What level of participation could we expect from you?
   - contribute articles to newsletter
   - make presentations at meetings
   - serve in leadership role
   - serve on committees
   - attend meetings
   - contribute to electronic discussions
   - pay dues and read the newsletter

© Thank you for your time.

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WUSS 1993 Proceedings
135 Total Responses

Years Using SAS

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In What Capacity do you use SAS?

100 Research Data Analysis
93 Application Development
87 Technical Support
56 Training of SAS Users
43 Supervision of SAS Users

In What Environment do you use SAS?

103 Mainframe
93 DOS
39 Windows PC
34 OS/2 PC
31 UNIX Workstation
31 Multi-platform
29 Mini-computer
15 PC-LAN

How do you rate your SAS expertise?

93 Advanced
44 Intermediate
5 Novice

What is the best means for SUG-member communication

113 US Mail/Newsletter
24 CONSGU Electronic Bulletin Board
23 Networks (Internet, Bitnet, etc)
17 FAX Chain
13 Telephone Chain
11 Compuserve

Proposed Projects

127 Establishing Information Exchange
122 Consultant Registry/Directory
91 Annual Meeting

Proposed Topics for Presentation or Information Exchange

97 Marketing
89 Job Estimation
83 Effective Business Practices
68 Starting a consulting business
59 Obtain 'Global' network services
52 Tax and Corporate Structure

What level of participation could we expect from you?

117 Pay dues and read the newsletter
71 Attend Meetings
58 Contribute electronic discuss
42 Contribute articles to newsletter
39 Serve on committees
32 Make presentations at meetings
11 Serve in a leadership role