

HPGSUG SAN JOSE USERS MEETING
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SESSION
GETTING THE MOST FROM THE USERS GROUP

Douglas J. Mecham
Comercial Doméstica, S. A.
México, City, México.

The broad spectrum of possibilities for hardware, software, documentation, training and consulting can leave a computer facility manager perplexed. A users group can offer a concentration of information and contacts for these topics. Exploitation of such an advantage can enhance your facility's success, especially where expediency is concerned. However, there is no free lunch and the information gained is only because someone else contributed it. My thesis is that if all members contribute something there will be a wealth of benefits for any one member to take.

As the newcomer wanders through the crowd at a national users group meeting he could hear discussion topics ranging from detailed techniques of IMAGE to general philosophy of networking. The users meeting are only one of several significant resources available to all members. First I would like to review the resource areas available then show how a user might best take advantage of them.

The HP General Systems Users Group (HPGSUG) is administratively a single group but is actually made up of involved individuals and active smaller groups all over the world. The latter groups may have a local regional or country orientation. Except for the annual International or U.S. National user meetings, much of the user activity is dispersed in the smaller groups. The smaller groups provide an opportunity for users to maintain frequent contact with other users. Additionally, there are special interest groups, for example in education and manufacturing, which can address specialized problems and techniques.

The most significant services the HPSUG provides to all members are the Contributed Library, Publications, and User Meeting Sponsorship. The Library contains many items of software useful for many computer environments. Each item contributed has been reviewed for completeness and problems to insure inclusion of quality items. An example of a useful contribution is the text formatter, called GALLEY. It should be noted that there is a library containing videotapes of technical presentations. The publications services include two important items, the Journal for technical articles and the Newsletter for other user information. The latter contains information on user and group activities as well as technical information on available software packages and hardware. User group meetings provide the opportunity for individual information exchange, prepared technical presentations, user training and vendor information. Implicit in users group support are special administrative services to assist local or regional groups to form, or assistance to individuals who need to make contract with other users to solve a particular problem. Such services also include assistance for technical publication and interface with H.P.

Your involvement is dependent upon your personal requirements and objectives, and upon your facility's requirements. As in any system approach you need to list, in order of priority your requirements. These may include software, hardware, techniques, or services desired, as well as needed solutions to problems. One of the best concepts of the HPGSUG organization is that it addresses a wide range aspects for new users putting in a new computer system for the first time and more experienced users involved in conversions or new systems automation projects. Now list the HPGSUG services and specific activities such as vendor shows, technical advertisement specifically for the HP3000, and technical seminars. By connecting a line between appropriate items in each list you will be able to concentrate your involvement in the users group to best meet your requirements. A list of user group activities that could be useful in meeting your requirements is listed in the appendix of this paper.

The first action on your part is to join the group as an individual or as a site, if you represent a computer facility. Your participation is then a function of your requirements. It may be that HP3000 users in your local, area needs to meet to discuss common problems or interface with the local HP office. One good method of optimizing your time and HP support is to involve the local HP office in your local group. Organizing a local group of HP3000 users is as simple as organizing a businessmen's lunch or dinner. The HPGSUG offices will be glad to provide help and perhaps assist you in arranging for a speaker. If a local user group is already active the HPGSUG or the local HP office can assist you in getting in contact with the group.

If you are the computer facility manager keep in mind the computer group is not only for one computer site representative to participate but it is for all users of HP computer systems whether they are part of the computer center staff or not.

Thus, for your users to take advantage of user group dialog, especially at the local level, they need to participate. Keep in mind that HPGSUG services and local user activities are beneficial to the non-technical as well as the technical user. Also, the more company managers know about the computer systems and about what other users are doing the easier it is to support your center activities, likewise, the more your non-technical users know the easier it is to communicate with and support them.

Probably one of the most useful advantages of the users group is assisting you in gathering information to meet your requirements. The Journal provides a direct access to technical information, while the Newsletter, on the other hand, provides indirect access to information by listing software packages for sale and consultant services offered, not to mention user groups activity that may be of benefit. For instance, the BAYRUG (San Francisco Bay Area Regional Users Group) has sponsored a very technical seminar on computer operation peripheral maintenance. The Contributed Library offers direct access to thousands of lines of code that may be useful to your site by saving you the time and money to redevelop it. User meetings offer a contribution of direct advantages. You may gain insight to the solution of a problem/dilemma you have been struggling with by talking to another person experienced in the problem area. At user meetings you are likely to chat with very experienced users and consultants as well as HP factory experts; perhaps you can

offer solutions to other users; what is obvious to you may not be another.

The user group meetings are very useful to HP since this is one mechanism for obtaining new ideas and desires from users for system enhancements. The HPGSUG Interface Committee meets directly with HP Laboratory Personnel to discuss user problems brought to their attention through individuals and user group meetings. Local HP offices are very receptive to meeting with their local users since this gives them an easy way to communicate with them. The local users meeting provides valuable feed back to the local HP office to better meet users needs. The SCRUG (Southern California Regional Users Group) were successful in initiating a very successful but unique SPL course for users- a course offered one day per week over 5 weeks instead of the usual 5 solid days of study.

From the training point of view the users group offers several opportunities. For instance, the aforementioned Operation Peripheral Maintenance Seminar is being offered at the San Jose National Meeting. SPL techniques train talks have been offered at past user meetings. In the area of users group administration, training sessions have been offered regarding local users group organization & implementation and techniques of publication. Therefore look for special sessions at users meetings (or better yet suggest them) to train your users.

One of the most rewarding experiences from your involvement in the users group is a personal one. At the simplest level you can gain personally and grow technically by listening to the experts talk and by discussing your ideas and problems with other users. If you have completed a project or have developed a technique, other users might like to hear about it. This provides you with an opportunity to speak professionally and have your work published, If you are not an experienced presenter nor writer you may take confidence in gaining experience by taking advantage of an opportunity to address a familiar group on a subject you know well; it is easy (I personally offer my assistance to any user group member who desires to present a topic but needs some ideas on how to accomplish the task...easily)

Taking on the responsibility as a member of a users group committee to sponsor a users meeting, to interface with HP to support the Contributed Library, to support users group publications , or to support a special interest or a local group is most certainly a challenge and experience in administration and project management. In such a capacity you are likely to meet some very interesting people and expand your horizons of available knowledge in the HP3000 and computer field. This is all in addition to the satisfaction gained in accomplishing your users group task.

If you seek deeper involvement in the users group you can seek the chairmanship of an international committee or directorship. These positions require significant contribution on your part but also provide the opportunity for significant accomplishment. The responsibilities of these positions are nothing short of similar to industrial corporate level responsibilities. While on the one hand the Users Group needs dedicated and qualified personnel these positions are open to less experienced persons who have a desire to learn and expand their own personal capabilities under the guidance of experienced

members. These jobs are not difficult but do require concentration, responsiveness, and cooperation with other members of the team.

My last point is the most significant in my mind since it is the source of HPGSUG resources. The staff at HPGSUG offices, local user group offices; or even HP offices can provide some direct contributions but can better provide the framework for user contribution. User contributions from all users, technical and non-technical, are the heart of the Users Group, any users group. While it is up to the leaders to inspire contribution it is up to the members to make contributions. Everybody enjoys the contributions of other and are quick to take advantage of them. But again, your advantage of the contribution is only because someone else contributed it.

I feel sure that most users, at least user sites, could find one item to contribute during the year. The contribution may be a software item, technical article, or personal time to assist with the mechanics of the user organization. To be sure there are those who will always take without giving. If each users group site member met an annual objective of contributing 1 software item to the Contributed Library, 1 technical article to the Journal, and took responsibility for 1 small task in support of user group operation (at any level) the success of you and your site would be enhanced.

APPENDIX - USERS GROUP ACTIVITIES LIST.

PERSONAL USER CONTACTS
CONTRIBUTED LIBRARY
Verified Indexed Software
Subroutines
Programs
Subsystems
Command Sequences

USER GROUP MEETINGS

exchange of ideas with other users
technical presentations
vendor show of useful products
special interest group discussions
discussions with HP experts & managers
panel of experts to discuss user problems
training courses
published proceedings

JOURNAL

technical articles on particular solutions
technical articles on general topics in
computer science
technical articles on related topics

NEWSLETTER

user group activity
vendor advertisement
new vendor products
consultant services listings

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

membership processing
editors and publishers of Journal &
Newsletter
coordination of user group activities
technical assistance referral
speakers bureau
HP interface
contributed library distribution
assistance and guidance for local, regional, &
national user groups
user survey's
user group documentation library

maintenance and distribution

USER EDUCATION / TRAINING

special seminars
videotapes of technical presentations
Specially coordinated HP technical seminars
COMMITTEES

Interface
Contributed Library
Publications
User Meetings
Educational Special Interest Group
Manufacturing Special Interest Group
Others.

LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL USER GROUPS

contact with local users,
interface with local HP organization
 considerations of local technical problems
local, regional, national meetings

PERSONAL

Individual technical proficiency growth
Experience in group leadership, project
 management and group administration
Technical presentation experience
Technical publication experience
Opportunity to meet a wide range of users
Opportunity to present technical accomplishments.