

CAN A USER GROUP PROVIDE ANY VALUE?

What is a user group?

A user group is a collection of end users that established a formal partnership to:

- To share and exchange value added system application, implementation, and maintenance information
- To focus vendors, product system development on the key needs of the user community

Traditionally, user groups are independent entities with their own set of bylaws and officers.

Why might you want to join or form a users group?

A user group provides numerous benefits for its membership.

First of all, it provides a national forum for users to network and share value added system design and operational information with other users. This provides each and every member with the opportunity to keep abreast of the latest and most creative solutions in a neutral forum without getting a "sales pitch". This in turn allows them to evaluate the operational efficiency of their systems vs. users with similar requirements and incorporate system designs or ideas to increase their own operational efficiency.

Additionally, these users have easy and consistent access to a vendor's product, training, and product development teams, which ensures that their operational needs and vision will be incorporated into the introduction of new products/ systems and enhancements to current products/systems. As a result, users can be confident that vendors will not risk their investment by developing products "in a vacuum".

Finally, this facilitated communication path to the vendor is an adjunct to training. It significantly improves the cycle time on problem resolution as well as provides the membership with up front assistance in planning and implementing systems and system enhancements.

How does the vendor benefit from the relationship?

The ongoing dialogue with the user group makes the vendor and the user group partners in the strictest sense of the word. Some of the concerns or system requirements voiced by you may not be as unique as you or they might believe. The group provides you with opportunity to profile and prioritize your needs in a forum of peers and leverage these requirements through the facilitated communications path to the product development teams. This, in turn, makes it easier for the vendor to make well informed, cost effective, product development decisions that will directly address the needs of the group of users rather than just a few.

An active and satisfied user base is a valuable showcase for promoting a vendor's distinctive competencies with communications systems.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting!

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