



The User Group Goes International!

Well not exactly – what we're really doing is joining together with several other user groups around the world to work more effectively with SAP.

User groups from Australia, USA, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Holland and of course the UK & Ireland have got together along with SAP AG to form SUGEN. SUGEN is the SAP User Groups Executive Network. The first meeting of these User groups took place in December in Boston in the USA, where Henning Kagermann met representatives to support this venture. Regular conference calls and meetings are scheduled across the rest of the year – for example at SAPPHERE in Berlin during May.

Why this new activity? Following discussions with user groups around the world, it's become clear that there are some very common themes for discussion with SAP. It's also clear that working together and with SAP that User groups represent large numbers of customers through single bodies and can aid the direction of SAP and help align SAP with its customers.

At our last conference, In an opening keynote, SAP's UK MD Steve Rogers said: "A little complacency had crept in to the way we managed relationships with customers... We have focused hard on [overcoming] that in the past 12 months." Customer satisfaction scores are improving, Rogers said. "We are nowhere near best-in-class, but we are making progress," he said, adding, "You guys will be the final arbiters on that."

So it's clear that SAP is listening and trying hard to improve its customer relationships. This is great news and a sign of the influence that User Groups can bring by uniting organisations with common goals. International user groups working together is a true reflection of the global nature of things today, but it also demonstrates the challenges of an international body. A conference call bringing together the organisations above means that there are difficulties with language (from our point of view less so as we've agreed to use English) and simple things like time zones – for example on a call this week it was 11PM in Australia, 9PM in Japan, noon in the UK, 1PM in Europe and 5AM on the West Coast in the US. It's early days in the development of this organisation, but all the indications look promising to add value for SAP customers worldwide. More on this subject later in the year as things develop.

So back to the UK & Ireland! So far this year our Special Interest Groups are attracting more people than last year – proving the value they clearly give. What this means is that you need to book into these sessions early, but please when you book try to keep your booking or if business issues mean that you can't attend (it happens!) please let us know so that anyone on the waiting list can get into the sessions.

Alan Bowling
Chairman