Networking Groups Join Forces

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The major industry in Canberra, Australia's capital city, is overseeing Australia's national and local governments. And where there is government, there must be computers and technical professionals to maintain those computers. With such a large pool of potential members, the Canberra NetWare Users Group (CNUG) has never had a problem recruiting members during the eight years of its existence. Never, that is, until recently.

Uncertain Times

During recent months, Canberra has witnessed massive government downsizing, funding freezes, privatization, and indecision about how remaining networks should be run. CNUG has felt the effect of these changes in the form of dwindling numbers. Some CNUG members have left the area, and potential members were hesitant to join CNUG because they didn't know how long they would be employed or in which direction their job was heading.

CNUG officials quickly realized that the group would have to evolve in order to survive. CNUG committee members began searching for solutions. One CNUG member attended a Network Professional Association (NPA) meeting to learn more about that group's membership, objectives, and procedures. This CNUG member was surprised to learn that the NPA group was suffering problems similar to CNUG. After a brief meeting, CNUG and NPA officials soon realized that the two groups had much in common. To ensure each group's survival, the groups resolved to join forces.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Even though the idea of legally merging the two groups was very attractive, the groups decided not to rush into anything. Many questions needed to be answered. For example, each group had made certain alliances, and members did not want to lose any benefits or jeopardize any business relationships by merging with another group. Moreover, some CNUG members were surprised to learn that the NPA group was suffering problems similar to CNUG. Another CNUG member attended a Network Professional Association (NPA) meeting to learn more about that group's membership, objectives, and procedures. This CNUG member was surprised to learn that the NPA group was suffering problems similar to CNUG. After a brief meeting, CNUG and NPA officials soon realized that the two groups had much in common. To ensure each group's survival, the groups resolved to join forces.

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A New Direction

Although ACTNA is just a few months old, we have already seen great benefits from our merger. For example, we no longer compete as two separate groups. Not only is the number of members increasing, but the membership is also becoming much more diverse: The group now includes students, sales people, administrators, engineers, NetWare instructors, and Microsoft instructors. Each member brings a unique set of skills and knowledge to the group, making group meetings lively and informative.

Because ACTNA members automatically receive membership in both NUI and NPA, members enjoy even more benefits. For example, former NPA members are thrilled with the benefits associated with being a member of NUI—benefits such as receiving NetWare software, NetWare support, and a subscription to NetWare Connection. In addition, by pooling our groups' financial and physical resources, we can provide more services to group members. These benefits, in turn, attract even more members to join ACTNA. As a result, ACTNA is becoming an important part of the networking community in Canberra and in the surrounding regions.

Len Carriage is the president of ACTNA and the president of the NUI Australia Region.