



**Professional Association for SQL Server
Board of Directors Question-and-Answer**

Summit – October 11, 2011
Seattle, Washington

Participants: Rushabh Mehta, Bill Graziano, Rick Heiges, Mark Ginnebaugh, Geoff Hiten, Allen Kinsel, Thomas LaRock, Douglas McDowell, Andy Warren, Jennifer Moser, Lara Rubbelke, Wayne Snyder (moderator)

Attendees (not on stage): Neil Buchwalter, Rob Farley, James Rowland-Jones, Judy Christianson, Craig Ellis

Question-and-Answer Session

Wayne Snyder opened the session. The Directors introduced themselves and their portfolios on the Board.

- 1. Question (Trevor Kosa):** Trevor works for the State of Washington as a DBA and was a first timer at PASS Summit. He thanked the Board for putting on the event. He asked about future funding for people, like himself, who are deaf to participate in Summit.

Andy Warren said the Board had approved funding to improve accessibility at SQLRally Orlando. Previously at Summit there was a blind attendee and arrangements were made to accommodate his needs. There isn't a full plan yet but it is an area he wants to do more on.

Follow up: Trevor would like to see the organization come up with ideas for fundraising for this area or putting it in the budget in the future years so that it is provided. He noted that while SQLSaturdays would be more difficult, Summit is a large event and many people with different needs attend.

Douglas McDowell said he is responsible for the budgeting process for next year and would like Trevor to be a volunteer advisor on this process.

- 2. Comment (Frank Crest):** Frank has been attending PASS events since Dallas. Previously he had attended Oracle events. At their annual conference they brought in a closing speaker, more of a social presentation rather than a technical presentation. Frank suggested PASS Summit bring in a closing speaker.

Rushabh Mehta thanked Frank for his feedback. He said the Board are always looking for new ideas and appreciate the feedback.

- 3. Question (Matt Slocan):** The closest SQLSaturday events in his area were Toronto and Ohio. Matt asked the Board how he could get a SQLSaturday in his area.

Andy Warren asked Matt to speak with Karla Landrum at PASS HQ. Karla handles SQLSaturday and Chapters. We try to first set up Saturdays with the local chapters, but if not, there is a coaching program. Rushabh Mehta noted there is a contact page on the PASS website to contact the names suggested.

4. **Comment (Josh Watson):** Josh is a developer. He would like to see more Dev courses at future Summits as well as DotNet courses and new technologies highlighted.

Allen Kinsel spoke to how the program is chosen. Sessions are chosen based on feedback. When summaries come out there is prefencing that happens and the program committee volunteers get the idea that those are the sessions people want to see. Allen suggested Josh join the program committee to help decide which sessions should be chosen. Lara Rubbelke suggested Josh or his colleagues also submit sessions. Bill Graziano asked Josh to fill out his session evaluation and provide his idea on feedback.sqlclass.org, where other community members could vote on his idea.

5. **Question (AJ Mendo):** AJ formed a group to help put on SQLSaturday in Austin. With SQLSaturday expanding in the coming years, he asked the Board if there would be more support for local group in term of physical and financial support.

Andy Warren said financial support will remain stable. As a sponsor, PASS gives \$500 per event but will not subsidize events especially as the number of events increases. He wants people to work with sponsors to build relationships. Those relationships would also help chapter sponsorship. He would like to build future leaders and to do so, people at community events need to understand working with volunteers and working with sponsors. It is a local event and the Board wants local teams to own and run them.

Mark Ginnebaugh said he is working to make PASS presence at SQLSaturdays more consistent. There is a drive to have more regional mentors attend the events and staff PASS booths to let attendees know about PASS.

6. **Question (Community Member):** The community member had earlier attended SQLConnections. She enjoyed the Summit. She manages a database team is always struggling to find people. She asked what, as a community, we were doing to ensure the younger generation will be interested in going into SQL Server and to promote the career path.

Geoff Hiten said he was working with the WIT group and that there were only 10-11% women in IT. Denise McInerney (a community member) clarified the number is 25% in technology and 35% in Database. Geoff continued that there is an underutilization of the workforce and he'd like to understand why. He spoke about WIT reaching out more to younger generations to make the field look cool and appealing.

Rick Heiges spoke of his time teaching at a university and that people do not often go to school to become a DBA. The field often brings in people with the aptitude to be a DBA and it is often lateral entry into the field. Wayne Snyder spoke of a Microsoft initiative to go into high schools and training schools for certification for DBA areas. Mark Ginnebaugh suggested as SQLSaturdays and Chapters often meet at colleges that there be more attempts to reach out to the students.

7. **Question (Denise McInerney):** Denise said there used to be a scholarship given at Summit and asked if this would be considered again.

Rick Heiges used to sit on the Scholarship committee. He said the first year 3 people applied, the second year 100s of people applied then the conference moved dates and the number of applicants were down again. There were no worthy applicants and the program stopped.

Rushabh Mehta suggested the scholarship program was not being run the right way and that the Board needed community input. James Rowland-Jones suggested SQLSaturdays reach out to universities at the grassroots level.

Andy Warren said he was not in favour of scholarships as it is difficult to pick the recipient but he wants to be involved on the local level with students. For SQLRally Orlando, there was a special offer for students and teacher to attend. Jack Corbett and Andy went to IT classes to invite students with low turnout. Andy said it is easy to forget that student are years behind the level of the materials at the events. Andy felt lessons from that could be taken for future scholarship programs.

8. **Comment (Julie Smith):** Julie organized SQLSaturday Atlanta and found a lot of attendees were making career transitions – people who have training but couldn't find work as DBAs. She said there was a disconnect between people with training and others not wanting to hire people without hands on experience. The people were motivated and wanted to help these people find work. She felt it was an opportunity for PASS to tap into.

Rick Heiges agreed. He encourages people to volunteer for churches or charities or to use volunteer match websites. He suggested also leveraging chapters to find internships for people.

9. **Comment (Community Member):** The community member found there to be a quality discrepancy between presentations given by Microsoft employees and non-Microsoft presenters. He also felt the sessions titles were not descriptive and there was a lack of real world examples. He was told at the MVP Insiders events that presenting at PASS Summit was about who you know, not what you know.

Allen Kinsel clarified that the session selections were done by a group volunteers each year. He felt based on session evaluations and sitting in on some sessions that the majority of attendees did not feel there was a discrepancy. He asks attendees to fill out session evaluations to reflect if this is the case. Allen continued that while it may have been about who you knew in the past it is not the current case. Volunteers do not know who the speakers are. Abstracts and speakers are evaluated separately. Allen said speakers are required to have experience. First timers can submit but are often not chosen. People will often speak at smaller events and then move up to Summit.

Andy Warren noted there are 300 MVPs but not 300 speaking slots at Summit so speaking could not only be based on being an MVP. He said there had been discussion about rotating speakers so that one could not speak two years in a row. Wayne Snyder suggested reflecting the quality of the speakers in the evaluation forms to correct any issues for next year.

Shelia Acker (a community member) identified herself as being part of the program committee and said she would be available to continue speaking to the community member who first made the comment after the session. She spoke to how the committee polled the community to see which sessions they wanted to see. Mark Caldwell (a community member) also identified himself as a member of the program committee and spoke to the importance of scores on the evaluation forms. He said written comments really help the program committee and speakers.

10. **Question (Community Member):** The community member said most companies have budgets released in January and February. He asked if the good "book now" price could be extended to March to fit in with this. It would also give people who pay on their own time to decide.

Rick Heiges said PAS sets a pricing schedule. The earlier you book the better the price. We reward those who book early. Budgets do not always start in January. It is difficult to take into account every new year date for budgets but we can take into account things that need to be secured such as the hotel and conference center.

Douglas McDowell said if your budget releases in February there is still a discount, although not as large as the one in November. Most of PASS' revenue is from this event, if it comes in late then we are limited in what we can plan for. There are a lot of stair steps in the pricing.

Follow up Question: Why was the early bird date moved up by two months? Last year it was in January.

Rick Heiges said the pricing change is always 30 days after Summit and Summit is earlier this year. Douglas McDowell noted we aren't raising the price of the conference. There are extra stair steps being added.

Andy Warren asked if we do lay away or purchase orders for Summit.

Bill Graziano said we will look into that and that he understands the concern about the January price bump.

11. **Question (Community Member):** The community member asked since at registration a credit card is given, why the hotel and conference be charged at once like at other conferences.

Douglas McDowell said for those conferences everything would be in one area. Judy Christianson said for Summit we have different venues. Hotels will always ask an individual to provide a credit card to provide insurance for incidentals. It is very rare for hotels to not do that.

Roy Ernest (a community member) said his company contracted the organizers about prepaying and arrangements were made. He just had to bring a receipt. The hotel only asks so that if you take something from the bar it is on your card.

12. **Question (Community Member):** The community member asked for more time between sessions to get more time with vendors. He felt they didn't have enough time to talk with vendors.

Bill Graziano asked for a show of hands to see who in the room wanted more time with vendors. The majority of the room raised their hands. Rushabh Mehta said the Board was also getting input from the vendors and global advisors to look into this. More time than the Wednesday night event was needed.

13. **Question (Damu Venkatesan):** Damu is starting the Virtual Chapter in Healthcare and would like to know what PASS can do to help him.

Geoff Hiten said he has been working with Damu on this. PASS will provide networking and the Virtual Chapters Meeting. Unfortunately healthcare is the first one. PASS will help him get speakers. Rushabh Mehta said there is a list of speakers and PASS will also reach out to Microsoft to help with the vertical chapter. Douglas McDowell suggested a commentary for a Connector piece. That would reach a lot of people to see if they are interested. Geoff Hiten said there was also help on sponsorship for Virtual Chapters and that Al Shuler had been contacted.

14. **Question (Nigel Sammy):** Nigel explained how he had been wearing super hero t-shirts at Summit and ran the SQLServer Trinidad Group. He would like to run for the Board in time. He lives outside the USA and expects to be there when PASS goes global. He works for Solid Q. Nigel feels he represents more than Solid Q. He would like to drive SQLServer in the Caribbean. He feels he is losing the opportunity to do that because of Solid Q. He understands the current view of the 2 company rule but would like future consideration about the rule. As companies get bigger there will be multiple people from the same company who want to run. Nigel asked the Board to reconsider the rules for future elections.

Andy Warren said the Board can have a maximum of 2 people from any company with room for exception to be made for a third person. If there isn't a cap there could be danger of 6 or 7 from SolidQ

on the Board. It doesn't look good. Andy heard Nigel's case. If you have a company with a lot of people they have to decide amongst themselves who will run for the Board. The rules are there to keep the organization running. Or they all get on the slate and the community decides. Rushabh rolls off the Board in 2 years.

James Rowland-Jones said part of his role with Rob and Raoul is to determine what the world of the Board will look like in the future with global growth. They are committed to bringing back as soon as possible what the future may look like. There are companies far bigger than SolidQ that need to be factored into this issue. Part of the global growth mandate is to address this issue. Value added to the community is a key component.

Rob Farley said the Board understands that Nigel has a lot to contribute but there was backlash when that rule is even potentially violated. There will be people like Nigel who suffer. He hopes to get some sort of resolution but he is not sure if it will happen any time soon.

Douglas McDowell said the Board is working to make better use of volunteers as there is a gap between the Board and the grassroots level. They are making plans to use committees and leverage volunteer roles more. So while some people could not be on the Board he could contribute in a much stronger and more visible manner. This would help build up track records.

Allen Kinsel asked for details about these volunteer committees.

Douglas said the program committee was volunteer driven.

15. **Question (Frank Crest):** Frank asked about the choice of dates of Summit. Dallas was in August and now the dates are in November. There are other conferences at this time including SharePoint and Connections.

Rick Heiges said there are some conferences that have dates blocked out year ahead. PASS works with Connections to try and avoid each other's dates. There is also consideration of hotel availability. Places cost differently depending on the time of year. There are a lot of factors. Judy Christianson said PASS is growing to the size where very few venues could hold Summit. Bookings need to be made years in advance to hold this event. While room rates go down the later in the year, getting a slot is key.

Douglas McDowell said that the majority of PASS Summit attendees do not attend another conference. He is honored they pick Summit. Bill Graziano noted the dates are locked in for the next four years.

Sri Sridharan (a community member) spoke of the Dallas Rally site selection. When they were looking for a place for 500 people with certain dynamics they found only 2 suitable locations so he understands the issues.

16. **Comment (Community Member):** A first timer thanked the Board for the experience. He really enjoyed the WIT lunch, the warm environment and hopes he can attend next year.

Bill Graziano said while they were out of time the feedback did not end there. He carries a note book with him to note ideas. He asked people to feel free to approach him at any time.