10 Steps to Starting a PASS Chapter

If you have the time to go through the ideal process of starting and running a PASS Chapter, you can find a detailed PowerPoint **here**. We recommend you skim through this, and then revisit it once you have your Chapter up and running.

Here are 10 steps toward rapid creation of a PASS Chapter:

1. **Read about the benefits of becoming a Chapter**

2. **Ask yourself the following questions:**

   - Is there already a local Chapter? **Click here** to locate Chapters near you. Just click on your region, and you will see a list of Chapters in your area.
   - How many attendees will it take to make a new Chapter worthwhile? PASS Chapters range from small study groups to groups with more than 100 attendees per meeting.
   - Will I be able to get some help from other local SQL Server professionals? You will need ongoing help, for sure.

3. **Download and read through the Chapter Agreement.** You will need to provide PASS a signed copy in order to become an official PASS Chapter.

4. **Find a meeting venue.** Consider the following:

   - Inexpensive (or free!) - The lower the cost, the less fundraising you will have to do.
   - Available every month so that the meeting won't have to move around.
   - Internet connection available.
   - Easy-to-get-to location central to your likely attendees.

5. **Select your meeting date and time.**

   - Meet at the same time on the same night every month (1st Thursday, 2nd Tuesday, etc.).
   - Check your local meeting schedule to avoid conflicts with other meetings (i.e., SharePoint, Data Warehousing, .NET). Avoid the same evening, but also the same week if at all possible.
   - Avoid competing cultural events. For example, in the US it is good to avoid competition with Monday Night Football.

6. **Create a web presence.** Free website hosting is available through PASS.

7. **Get speakers.** Line up your first few speakers and topics. As you start to publicize the group, you will want your prospective attendees, sponsors, and future speakers to see that your new group is in it for the long haul.

8. **Get sponsors.** If you have to pay for meeting space, or if you want to serve free refreshments, you will need one or more sponsors. There are various models. Some groups have ongoing sponsors (i.e., annual payments from sponsors), while others get sponsors on a meeting-by-meeting basis. Here are some options:

    - PASS can sponsor an initial meeting.
    - Contact local consulting organizations.
    - Reach out to vendors that sell SQL Server-related tools.

9. **Get the word out.** Here are a few ideas:

    - PASS can do a mailing to members in your area. You will need to provide the content of the mailing.
    - You can assemble your email list and use tools provided by PASS.
    - Some Chapters use Vertical Response, Constant Contact, or other commercial providers. The main reason to do this is to look at open rates and forwarding. It can be helpful to maintain multiple lists. Your needs will dictate the service you decide to use. Vertical Response provides free emailing to non-profits.
    - Ask your speakers and sponsors to get the word out as well.
    - Ask similar groups to do a mailing to their members.
    - However you get the word out, make sure you capture names and email addresses of everyone who ever attends a meeting or expresses interest. This list is vital to the success and sustainability of your new Chapter.
    - Use the email list you develop responsibly, and make sure people can opt out.

10. **Engage via Social Media.** Maybe this can wait, but I recommend it for those of you already Social Media-savvy. Set up Chapter accounts for Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Once you have your Chapter rolling, we recommend you revisit the detailed PowerPoint deck and decide which of the steps you want to circle back to. Will it make sense to incorporate? Create a charter document? Build out your management team?

PASS wants you to be successful. You are our direct connection to the local community. We will share your enthusiasm, and provide help wherever possible.