

# Mentors Quarterly

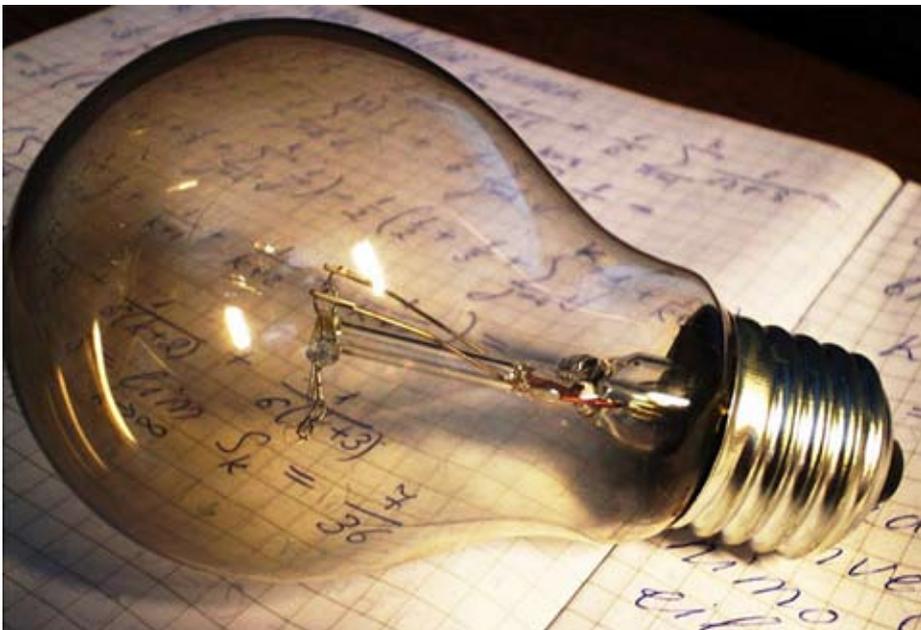


Not to be missed:

**My first SAP Mentor by Tammy Powlas (read on page 3)**

## TOPIC OF THIS ISSUE: Innovation without Disruption

Article by Matthias Steiner



Picture by qisur (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/qisur/>)

This year I've found myself involved in a lot of meetings and events revolving around innovation again (the ultimate ones being the Innovation in Berlin and Vegas), and let me tell you – innovation is a tricky beast! Especially in the enterprise space - Sure, everybody wants to be innovative...

hip... pushing the limits! However I strongly believe that in the enterprise world innovation needs to be applied in well-considered doses especially in times like these where the entire economy is still recovering from a fundamental cr.. aeh... – experience.

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## How is it to host a Teched session

Speaking, presenting, hosting a session, are all a great way of saying getting up in front of your peers. Yes, I am crazy enough to want to get up in front of my peers. It is very scary, exciting, exhilarating and fun!

I really don't like speaking in front of people. However, when I spoke at Teched I knew that the people were interested in what I was presenting. They were not the usual crowd of people bored or only half paying attention to me. They were there because they wanted to be. There were a ton of sessions going on. They picked mine to go to. (Amazing)

**Story by Michelle Crapo  
continues on page 4**

## Influence SAP: This time about Idea Place

Everyone connected with SAP in any way, be it user, be it developer, or be it manager, has once wondered about the ways to influence SAP to do "things" the way it would fit one's needs better. This is what this article is about: introducing ways how to influence SAP.

Different people in different roles (with different opportunities) see different ways of how to do it. I would like to offer a comparison of the ways today. I hope this help people learn about the ways they didn't know before. Only you know if you can benefit.

**Article by Otto Gold  
continues on page 2**

## Mentors Quarterly: who, why, when and what

**Dear reader,**

what you are reading now is one of the attempts how to bring the SAP Mentors activity closer to you. The team of the Mentors Quarterly will hopefully grow and will deliver you the news about the mentors' activities, thoughts and highlights. I hope that the content of this issue will entertain you, educate you and more. I also hope you will read the next issue of "Quarterly" in future again.

**Otto Gold, Editor in chief**

# Influence SAP: This time about Idea Place

A comparison of ways how to influence SAP products and services and an introduction of the most recent one

## Continuation from page 1

To justify the motivation let me provide an example: me, member of the internet SCN Community, didn't know about the Influence Councils of the User groups (read further if you don't know what the Councils are). My fellow "mentorette" Tammy Powlas didn't know about the "new ways" (the Idea place). That made me realize that if the comparison could be useful for some of the Mentors, it could be also useful for other readers.

Not everybody working with SAP is a member of SCN or a regular visitor of SCN (where the Idea place is a part of the navigation). That is why I think Idea place could use some marketing targeting people outside SCN. Because of the same reason the other "ways" could use some marketing among the SCN users.

## What is Idea Place?

Idea place is a part of SCN website, where one can post his/her idea, a suggestion, a change request or a possible bug to be corrected. Other users can comment on the idea, vote pro or con the idea. SAP employees can recognize how many users support the idea this way (and so how many people would it benefit if the suggestion gets implemented). Any registered user can submit ideas, vote and/or comment. This is the theory.

The practice is slightly different. Not because there is a catch in the intended ideation process. It is because

### Topics covered

**Idea place does not cover all the products or services offered by SAP nowadays. The most covered products are Business Objects products (170 ideas today) and SAP CRM. An important part of the Idea place ideas are about IP itself and how to make it better and also SAP Community Network.**

**By the way SCN Community demand was one of the important reasons for starting Idea Place few months back. Since SCN was started, the Community members suggest new features, changes and improvements and IP became a common place for such discussion.**

the Idea place is a bottom-up pilot – a prototype, a proof of concept if people will like and use this way how to influence SAP products and services. It slowly gathers the attention and traffic to justify its existence.

It seems like people have found their way to Idea place, hundreds of ideas were already submitted and some of them have already been implemented. It means people like this transparent way of expressing their wishes and suggestions about SAP. Technical upgrade of the current Idea place engine is expected and so we can expect even more visiting users, submitted ideas and implemented changes in the future. Then Idea place might get rid of the "beta" stage mark and enter its "teen ages".

## What are the other ways how to influence SAP?

I promised to describe how Idea place differs from other ways how to

influence SAP. What are the others? Today I would like to talk about these three: a) Idea place (IP) b) User groups Influence councils (IC) and c) Customer engagement Initiative (CEI).

First of all it is obvious that the other two ways are not open for everybody – if you are not a customer then you cannot use the CEI channel, if you're not a member of a User group, you cannot use the IC channel either.

The Idea Place is open for everybody. In this regard IP wants to become the most transparent channel of all, I believe. Any registered SCN user without any special status or profile can take part. Also the whole ideation process is publicly visible; one can interact with all other users and play a role. Everything is done publicly, directly, in real time.

One does not have to go through the gathering process, consolidation of the gathered ideas and does not have to rely on somebody else's who represents the consensus (which obviously does not have to cover all the suggested ideas, only the "approved" ones). You cannot fight for your idea from the beginning to the end, be it implementation or a denial.

There are also pros of the "old ways". If your idea makes it to the top (the IF part is important), it means it attracted attention, support was gathered for the idea the SAP sponsor is aware of it.

Did I say SAP sponsor? You may have noticed that things do not happen in the real life unless there is so-

### Milestone reached

**It feels like not all the "internet numbers" about SAP are reliable. A typical example is a number of SCN users. It is something above two million. Not all the users have ever logged in and some did that only few times. When one compares this with a number of the contributors one comes to realize that a part of this number is a little "virtual".**

**When starting this article I was going to announce that a milestone of two thousand ideas was reached few weeks ago. At least one can see ideas with ID above 2100 now. Unfortunately I was not able to find any idea with ID below 1000. So let me announce a milestone of more than 1000 ideas reached instead.**

mebody who fights for them, care for them, pushes them. And that 's who the SAP sponsor is – the insider who takes care of the internal part of the consideration process.

You don't have such person when you submit your idea on Idea Place. Your idea is just another input from a Community member. You need to build the support for the Idea, persuade other users and especially SAP people, who follow the topic, that your Idea makes sense, it will help as many users as possible, it brings some important added value.

## What to take home

This space is not sufficient for me to describe all the details, to pay attention to all the important points you need to know to take your part in the ideation process to a next level. That 's why I would like to recommend you some reading to get a better picture. First of all: if you have not visited Idea Place yet, visit it right now. You can follow the SCN navigation link, you can Google it down or just type ideas.sap.com into your favorite browser. To learn more about what is behind Idea place, visit the SCN blog category Idea place (you can find some blogs about IP by me and other people involved and interested).

To learn more about the User group Influence councils search for the blogs by the fellow Mentors Tobias Trapp (DSUG) or Karin Tillotson (ASUG). The blogs by Karin called "Why I believe in the power of ASUG Influence Councils" share a nice experience with ASUG Council and helped me understand how do the Councils work.

As for the CEI you get plenty of search results using keywords: SAP Customer engagement program in Google.

All three described ways work slightly different and are intended for different target audience. Because I don't have access to two of three of the described channels and have only access to Idea Place, it is highly probable that some of the points I make are not objective and you may think different. So take this article as an inspiration what are the ways and maybe as an impulse to learn more about the channels you have not used before.

**Otto Gold**

# My first SAP Mentor

## A personal story by Tamara Powlas

I met my first "SAP mentor", Diane Fanelli, who is now SAP's Regional Vice President, Industry Business Solutions, North America, on my first SAP implementation. I was the SAP customer and Diane was the SAP Platinum consultant and the driving force behind our implementation. I remember that she always worked extremely hard and marveled at how she handled many things at once. How she remembered to do so much without any paper I will never remember. She was task-oriented but always told me her first priority was knowledge transfer.

Since becoming a SAP Mentor, and reading the book "The New Polymath: Profiles in Compound-Technology Innovations" by Vinnie Mirchandani where he discusses why there are so few women in technology, I have wanted to reach back to my first SAP mentor, Diane Fanelli. I asked her if she would be willing to discuss why there are so few women in technology today and what we could do about it.

She explained to me that she is currently mentoring 4 other women at SAP; she talks with them every 90 days, working with them to discuss the differences between leadership and management. Long-term and short term goals, SAP helps colleges and universities to try get students excited about technology work. She said SAP wants to get the ranks diversified.

She offered to help the SAP Mentors get connected with the Business Women's network inside SAP and help that network reach beyond SAP. We discussed how we can get



**Diane Fanelli, Tammy Powlas' first mentor**

more women SAP Mentors; Diane has just returned from a 3 year tour in Asia and has seen the potential of women there.

According to Diane, a key component is building confidence in women and not just through e-mail or a PowerPoint presentation but also in business discussions with executives. She said confidence is built once you become a domain expert -

**Confidence is built once you become a domain expert - not arrogant, but open to new ideas and concepts as well**

not arrogant, but open to new ideas and concepts as well. Confidence is also shown through the tone you portray in business discussions and the commitments you follow through with your customers or employees.

Diane has her own mentors who she looks to not only for career prospects but also to strike a balance as the key to success is having a balance in life. As a SAP Mentor, I hope we can work more with the SAP women executives like the great Diane Fanelli.

**Tammy Powlas**

# How is it to host a TechEd session

## First hand experience from Las Vegas by Michelle Crapo

### Continuation from page 1

This year my session ended up on Tuesday. Yes, Tuesday!!!! It was right after Innovation weekend. I was worried about the timing. I didn't know how much time I would have to prepare prior to the session. And of course, I had the last minute jitters. I thought, "BUT no one will come". However, my next thought was "well if no one comes, I get a free pass to TechEd!". There would be no harm in that.

So Tuesday came along. I watched the key note, and enjoyed a session. Then it was my turn. I presented. It was about my favorite subject ABAP! I love ABAP. I also got to present about how to dig for information, and think about the future! I got to talk with people who were interested in learning! YES! I loved it. And more importantly, I found the TechEd audience to be very receptive. That made it easy to get up and talk. It became even easier as the presentation progressed. People would nod at different times. So I knew people were listening, and responding to what I had to say.

This is the first year, that I had a large crowd after the session. We talked about many different things. The big question for many people is how and when to learn ABAP Objects. My answers, you ask? Start Now. There are many different way. An SAP training class is always a great way to start. SCN offers free – yes free! – e-learning. Start using SAP provided classes first. Start

slowly programming by developing your own classes and methods. Move on to interfaces and start to work on understanding polymorphism. That was / is my sage advice.

Back to presenting at TechEd. I got so much benefit for presenting that one hour session. The biggest benefit for me was that I

after the session. Some people called it the expert networking session. Me - I called it a meeting of the minds. After my formal presentation I hosted an expert networking session with tips and tricks. I learned even MORE tips and tricks. Boy was that cool. The people who came had some great ideas.

via SCN. It made sense to share them.

I did get SCN points. That made me feel even better. The SCN points were a validation that presenting was helpful to the community at large.

So now you know the benefits. How did I get to speak at TechEd? Every year there is a "call for sub-



**Presenting at TechEd brings one pretty much fun. Be it a formal session, the Expert lounge conversation or an informal talk in the evening.**

was allowed to go to TechEd. I received a free TechEd lecture only admission. Speaking gave me even more networking opportunities than just attending TechEd. It was a great ice breaker. I don't usually approach people. It was great to have people stop and talk with me. They usually started with – I think I was in your session. Or you look like that nut who... Yes, that was me. So - I got more business cards!

Another benefit is that there was a mind dump

My own goals or one of the things on "my bucket" list has always been presenting at TechEd. So that was a large part of why I presented two years ago. I had a great time. So this year, I decided to try submitting some more sessions. I had fun that first time, I thought, maybe I will again. And I did. Have fun that is.

As a side benefit I liked the idea of giving back to the community. A lot, OK most of the things, that I presented were learned

missions". I usually submit to both ASUG and SCN. Both are advertised in SCN when they are open. I was turned down consistently for a couple of years. I still kept submitting things. I think I eventually wore them down. This year, all but one of my submitted sessions were turned down. I think luck has a bit to do with who was selected.

I was very lucky this year! Presenting was fun, and more than what I was hoping it would be.

**Michelle Crapo**

# Innovation without Disruption

Continuation of the lead article from page 1

IT budgets have been low lately and as such a lot of corporations are still years behind.

SAP has been promoting the business process platform and its continuous service enablement through Enhancement Packages as "Innovation without disruption." While I certainly understand where this is coming from I really have been struggling with the theme. Aren't the best innovations those who are disrupting an entire business or market? A colleague of mine (thanks Puru for passing the ball back!) argued that the iPod was a great invention. I have to admit that the iPod does not really score high on my list of mind-blowing innovations. It's just a mobile music player – the Walkman deserves most of the credit! However, the iStore eventually was one of the innovations that really disrupted the music business resulting in the fact, that we can now conveniently download our favorite music online – even without DRM.

Well, arguably the conclusion is that, within an enterprise (and consequently for enterprise software vendors) there are areas to be innovative and others where a more conservative pace may be the better choice. Having the business process platform as a stable core and applying moderate innovation cycles through EhPs makes perfect sense here. Especially since there still are a fair number of customers working on much older releases – they rely on solid upgrade paths to catch up and protect their invest-



Vishal Sikka telling the audience about the future of SAP at TechEd

ments! I guess it is safe to say that the installed base of the SAP Business Suite demands that the introduction of new features and functionality may NOT disrupt the core processes – in the onPremise space stability and reliability are the core assets.

## The Composition Pattern

By that rationale, major innovation needs to happen outside of the core platform. Throughout the last years SAP has been pushing Composites (short for Composite Applications) as the tool of choice for developing highly dynamic and innovative solutions based on the existing systems and the services provided in the target landscape. This side-car concept aims to shift innovation out of the platform to break free from the long-tail considerations. As such Composites leverage exi-

sting assets to orchestrate service calls and compose new functionality. Of course, this new breed of software induces requirements to their surroundings. They rely on service provisioning, as without services – there would be nothing to build on. Consequently, Composites go hand-in-hand with a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), which requires some time (and governance) to build up and reveal its full potential.

The good thing about SOA though is that the rational applies of "think big, start small!" or "Think globally, act locally!" It makes perfect sense to start with a pilot project, later-on extending it to an entire LoB and so on. The more systems gets service-enabled, the more systems one can connect to each other in order to rapidly develop new business processes on top. However, Composites are really a new kind of appli-

cations, and that's not just marketing, but referring to the mindset required to design and develop such applications. Current IT landscapes are rapidly changing and evolving due to a variety of reasons such as outsourcing, acquisitions, mergers, consolidation and new deployment options (e.g. cloud computing, SaaS, etc.) As such, Composite Applications are best advised to cater to this aspect by avoiding tight coupling to specific backend systems. To achieve this loose-coupling an abstraction layer is required, that decouples the business logic of a Composite from both a domain model and technical communication perspective. But let's face it... this abstraction comes with the price tag of added complexity. Moreover, creating business processes that span across systems (or even landscapes) and combine/chain multiple service calls

in a distributed transaction requires proper design. [1]

## Timeless Software

But hey, go ahead and build applications without proper design and it may do the trick – for a while! Yet, yesterday's innovation is tomorrow's commodity and as such inflexible and tightly-coupled applications will result in ... reduced momentum (just to avoid that over-used 3 letter abbreviation.)

So, yes... it may require a steeper learning-curve and a good fundamental understanding of all required concepts to develop such loosely-coupled applications. Yes, it may require properly trained developers to understand and handle the added complexity. Yet, having done so for a couple of years I can tell you that developing timeless software is no rocket science either. You simply need to apply a few well-known paradigms such as:

- Abstracting the backend communication and type system from your business logic,
- Properly defined service interfaces, implemented as black-boxes with extension points, which allow to constantly increase the amount of services that comprise the complete API of your SOA landscape,
- Adding a distinct set of service facades on top of the business logic to ease the consumption and/or tailor it to specific scenarios or devices.

## Weaving it all together

This year, SAP has been focusing on the three pillars of in-memory, cloud and mobility. Almost all of the new and innovative products that SAP has released or demoed at SAP TechEd this year are outside the core platform. With NewDB and HANA (High-performance ANalytic Appliance) we reinvent the concept of data storage from the ground off [2]. The amount of number crunching happening within a second or two will allow us to be even more agile and pro-active as it provides us with real-time analytical data on what is happening right now. Composite Applications with a distinct backend abstraction layer should be fairly easy to adjust in such a way that they leverage these new data sources and to integrate them into new business processes.

With SAP Business ByDesign & the corresponding development kit SAP Business ByDesign Studio, River and SAP StreamWork SAP has been setting course for the cloud. As more and more applications and business processes move outside of the corporate firewalls it again pays off to have proper abstraction layers that address the challenges that come with ever-changing IT landscapes.

Last, but not least – mobility. It certainly is a hot topic these days [3]. Driven from the consumer industry, smart phones have become mainstream and people expect the same level of convenience and ease of use in enterprise apps [4]. With Sybase as the latest addition to the SAP Family the near future looks promising indeed. On the user experience side we see the raise of HTML5 as the new standard and project Phoenix certainly seems to be right at the pulse of time [5]. These UI frameworks will simplify the development of applications targeting a broad set of devices and with the last missing center piece – aka project Gateway – a foundation will be set for a fast growing amount of simple consumption apps [6].

It may get tiring by now, but for the sake of the argument I need to point out one last time, that only those applications, which have been built based on the timeless software principles will be able to quickly embrace these new technologies [7]. I'd rather avoid

using the s-word here, but this is really what it comes down to: in regards to enterprise software and innovation, loose-coupling and componentization do not add any complexity, they address it – from a long-time perspective.

## Outro

All of this may sound way too positive and biased for your taste, but I cannot help it then. In all those years I have worked for SAP I have never been more enthusiastic about the future and it's going to be frickin' amazing to see all these innovations being applied in real life applications. I could not agree more to what Vishal Sikka said at SAP TechEd Innovation Weekend:

"Interesting times to live in as a developer!"

PS: One last remark about HANA... isn't it even a little scary to think about this new real real-time computing - how much will our own through-put increase with the availability of this insight we gain with instant analytics?

**Matthias Steiner**

## References/ Recommended Reading

- [1] Sustainable Architectures for SOA – SAP TechEd live interview by Volker Stiehl and Matthias Steiner
- [2] SAP HANA Blogseries Part 1: What is SAP HANA and what is the „value“ of SAP HANA? by Ingo Hilgefert
- [3] SAP's Mobile Strategy: Really? by John Appleby
- [4] Podcast: SAP Enterprise Mobility - Where Do We Go From Here? by Jon Reed
- [5] SAP TechEd 2010 Lecture: Rich Internet Applications at SAP
- [6] SAP Network Blog: Mapping one corner of the world - Two Patterns: Consumption vs. Integration by Richard Hirsch
- [7] Presentation: Developing Timeless Software



## Mentors Quarterly

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