

Get Trusted Answers from SAP Community Network

An Expert View on the Value of Online Communities Sharing SAP Information

Q How did you become involved in the SAP BusinessObjects community?

For me, it started when SAP acquired BusinessObjects and the number of questions and requests for information grew. People wanted the big picture — how Business Objects and SAP software work together and how to get the technology up and running. I was already active in this space, and I really value having that long-term relationship with customers. Acting as a mentor allows me to educate customers about how to fix immediate problems, but also how to grow their whole business intelligence landscape over time.

Q So SAP mentors are subject-matter experts from SAP?

SAP mentors come from all over: the majority of mentors are partners, consultants, and customers, along with some SAP employees. SAP Community Network (SCN) includes the SAP Developer Network (SDN), the SAP BusinessObjects (BOC), and the Business Process Expert (BPX) communities. Customers generally have two interests: They want to understand specifics about a particular tool, especially with the new solutions coming out. And they also have deployment questions: How do I get up and running? What tools do I need in my landscape? SAP mentors are nominated by their fellow community members for the work they do in the community.

Currently, there are around 75 SAP mentors. Profiles of each mentor are posted in the community, so you can find a mentor in a particular category and pose a question. While these are not support people, they are knowledgeable, great resources who are absolutely happy to share their experience.

Q What do you see customers gain from these communities?

I've heard statements like, "We wouldn't have been able to solve the problem without

going to the community," or "It saved us two or three weeks on our project because we got the answer from the community."

Of course, there are always those questions that pop up over and over again. I could be explaining the same question to 10 separate customers, but with the community, you can post the same information once and the reach is immense. That's a big benefit in terms of knowledge — members are basically learning from each other.

Q To what degree are SAP customers and partners relying on the communities?

Normally, when I go into the SAP BusinessObjects integration forum, I'll see about 15 to 20 new entries per day. I always encourage customers to ask their questions in the forum, rather than via email so that everyone else can see the answer, too.

One consultant even told me that he now sees customers going into the SAP communities to verify what their consultants are telling them. I think it's great that we're reaching the level where SAP customers trust the community members that much.

Q Do you have any advice for getting started in SAP Community Network?

If you're a new member, each community has a "getting started" area that talks about the different products, what they do, where to find the software, and other easy-to-follow material. When you want to post a question, provide as much information as you can — not only the problem, but details of your overall situation and what you want to accomplish.

Remember, too, that anyone can join, and the communities encourage a lot of back-and-forth. So if you see that someone has posted a question and you know the answer, try to answer it and help your fellow members. It's not a one-way street — return the favor! Join a community today: Visit SAP Community Network online at scn.sap.com. ■



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SAP Community Network helps more than two million members gain quick and accurate insight through expert content, peer-to-peer collaboration, and best practice sharing. Spread throughout the forums of its various communities are subject matter experts called "SAP mentors."

insiderPROFILES interviewed the most prominent mentor in the SAP BusinessObjects community: Ingo Hilgefort, a member of the SAP BusinessObjects Market Insight and Field Enablement team. This Q&A reveals his insight on the value of online communities for the SAP ecosystem.

To join SAP Community Network, visit: scn.sap.com (SCN), bpx.sap.com (BPX), sdn.sap.com (SDN), and boc.sap.com (BOC).

Visit sapmentors.sap.com to learn more about the SAP Mentor initiative.

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