10 Steps to Starting a PASS Chapter

Interested in becoming a PASS Chapter? We recommend reading this 10 step guide to get a sense of the tasks involved in setting up a new Chapter.

1. Review the benefits of becoming a Chapter here

2. Ask yourself the following questions
- Is there already a local Chapter? Click here to locate Chapters near you
- 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. **Review and understand the Chapter Agreement**

4. Meeting venue considerations
- Inexpensive (or free!) - The lower the cost, the less fundraising you will have to do
- How easily and frequently can you utilize the space
- Internet connection availability
- Central location, ease of access
- Access to Audio/Visual equipment

5. Selecting 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:
- Contact local consulting organizations
- Reach out to vendors that sell SQL Server-related tools

9. **Get the word out**
- Social Media and web presence is essential
- Utilize PASS provided tools (event page etc.)

- Assemble your email list. Use tools such as Vertical Response or Constant Contact to monitor open and forward rates. Vertical Response provides free mailing for non-profits.
- Ask your speakers and sponsors to get the word out
- Ask similar groups to mail their members
- Capture names and emails of everyone who 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
- Set up Chapter accounts for Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook
- 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.

Please take some time to consider these 10 Steps before reaching out to PASS HQ at ce@sqlpass.org to set up a meeting time to discuss your options.