



Special NoCOUG Training Day

Don't miss this rare opportunity!
See page 27.

The Case of the Missing Kanji

Read about the database adventures of Brian Hitchcock.
See page 13.

A Conversation with Gaja Krishna Vaidyanatha

Author of Oracle Performance Tuning 101
See page 5.

BAARF – It's Not What You Think!

The scoop on why some people are saying, "Enough is enough."
See page 10.



Your Career Takes Off with NoCOUG in 2004!

We have some fantastic things planned in 2004 that will help your career take off! With NoCOUG, you always have the opportunity to network, learn, and share information with your peers. There are great conferences filled with technical sessions and roundtable discussions. Plus, there are plenty of volunteer opportunities to get involved in: speaking, serving on the board of directors, writing for the *NoCOUG Journal*, volunteering at the conferences. Just contact us at board@nocoug.org to get involved in 2004.

Mark your calendars now!

- ▶ Winter Conference on February 19, Oracle Conference Center, Redwood Shores
 - ▶ Training Day on April 8, Dublin Library, Dublin
- ▶ Spring Conference on May 13, Lockheed Martin, Sunnyvale
- ▶ Summer Conference on August 19, Chevron/Texaco in San Ramon
 - ▶ Fall Conference: TBD

Why Should You Make a Presentation at a NoCOUG Conference? See page 24.

Why Should You Make a Presentation at a NoCOUG Conference?

by Brian Hitchcock

There are many reasons why you should consider making a presentation at NoCOUG. Being able to prepare and give a presentation is one of the most valuable job skills you can have. Whether you are in software development, database administration, production support, or any form of management, being able to make a presentation will help you with your career. I know this from personal experience. Over my many years in both the aerospace and commercial software worlds, making presentations has helped me find and get assigned to more interesting work. It also hasn't hurt what I get paid, as it results in better reviews each year at work.

Workplace Visibility

Once you have prepared and given a presentation you can present it again to different audiences. For example, the presentation that I gave at NoCOUG covering various National Language Support (NLS) issues has been presented three more times at Sun. After the initial presentation, a group in Europe heard about it and asked that I present it at a time more convenient to them. Later on I was assigned to a new project that was having NLS issues and the project team had many questions for me. I told them I had a presentation that covered many of the issues and they requested that I present to team. The effort that I put into preparing the presentation was a onetime investment. And after that investment was made, I was able to give the presentation several times to different audiences with very little additional effort.

Having a presentation already prepared made the transfer of experience and information much more efficient. If I had been asked to simply answer questions from the individual project team members, I wouldn't have been able to cover so much material in an organized manner. With a prepared presentation I didn't have to try to remember all that I had learned, and I could focus more on the unique questions and observations that come up each time I make the presentation.

Management Perspective

Management is always looking for ways to leverage the existing knowledge in their organizations. One of the ways to

do this is to encourage the employees to share the knowledge they already have. Presenting what you have learned to your peers at work (and at NoCOUG) is a great way to improve the learning of all involved. At Sun there are many groups looking internally for help answering their specific Oracle questions. These groups are always looking for someone who will prepare and present material to them within Sun. It's a great way to get better known within your company. Future employers of yours may be other managers within your current company. Making a presentation is sort of like a job interview. You are marketing yourself to future employers every time you make a presentation. Even if members of the group that are present aren't employers, they may well be your peers at some future job. As hundreds of resumes cross a manager's desk, it will help you immensely if someone within that company or group recognizes your name. People will remember who you are because you have given a presentation.



Brian Hitchcock

Your Continuing Education

Another benefit of presenting to multiple audiences is that you get a range of questions from the participants. These questions allow you to review your work and figure

out how you might do things differently (and hopefully better) in the future. Critical review of your work by your peers improves your thinking, which ultimately improves your work. The questions you will get during your presentation will be very much like the questions you will face in any job interview. Nothing prepares you for a job interview like questions during a presentation. Being able to field questions about your work will make you better prepared for your next interview.

Once you have a presentation prepared, you can use the charts of your presentation as the basis of a journal article for either NoCOUG or for other users groups, or for internal publications at work. Making a presentation also allows you to review your work, study the way you attacked the problems, and question the assumptions you made as your work progressed. This process results in a more thorough analysis of what the problems were when you started, how you solved them, and how you worked with others. You will learn more detail about the subject you are presenting by making the presentation. You may think you know quite a bit about a given subject, and you may be right, but through the process of preparing and presenting your material, you'll find there are many details that you had either forgotten or that you never fully explored. Incorporating this level of detail in your presentation makes you much more knowledgeable about the subject and makes you much more confident about dealing with this subject in the future.

Prospective Employers

Making a presentation will also improve your resume. Once you've given a presentation, you should immediately add that fact to your resume. One advantage of making a presentation at NoCOUG is that it will then be posted on the NoCOUG website. Your resume can then reflect the fact that examples of your work are available on the Internet. This is very impressive to prospective employers as it gives them something concrete to look at as an example of your competence before an interview. As employers get more and more resumes for every open position, this sort of differentiation can only help you stand out from the others. Having your work on the Internet provides a very specific answer to the question of what you've done lately, what problems you've solved, and how you solved them. All of these issues are important to employers. In an era of layoffs, downsizing, outsourcing and general malaise, you have the ability to market yourself by making a presentation. You don't need a lavish training budget, you don't need to travel anywhere—all you need to do is think about what you have done and be willing to tell it to the rest of us.

Your Current Employer

At the same time, your current employer is also a prospective employer when it comes to keeping the job you currently have. When your annual review comes around you want to have a good answer to the question, "What did you do this year to demonstrate continued competence in the position?" It doesn't hurt at all that your answer to this question includes a presentation at NoCOUG. I have found that my managers like this because they can tell their bosses

that one of their direct reports did something to further publicize the company and the group. The manager also needs to tell his/her boss what was done to develop their direct reports during the review period. They can also list this as training for the employee. Also, making a presentation makes it much easier to get approval for a day away from work to attend the NoCOUG conference.

Networking

While the networking benefits of attending NoCOUG are well known, making a presentation provides an added level of networking benefits. I'll give you an example from my personal experience. One of my presentations about using STATSPACK was also accepted as a presentation for Oracle World. Because the papers that are presented at Oracle world are published on the Oracle World website, you don't know who may be reviewing your work. After the Oracle World conference, I received email from a potential employer halfway across the country with comments on how much they liked what I presented and (no kidding) asking if I was interested in a job offer. While it is a cliché that networking will help you find work, it really is true. The more you put your work out into the public arena, the more you become known to a much wider group of people, people who will know where the jobs are when the time comes.

You Have What It Takes

People are often convinced that they don't know enough to make a presentation. You don't have to invent a topic or create something fantastic to make a presentation. Just answer this simple question: What have I done in the last three months? As you write down your answers you'll remember the problems, crises, victories, setbacks, and probably some amusing events. What you have actually done is what others want to hear about. Every time I sit down to start preparing a presentation about a specific topic, I find that I'm drawn into all sorts of related areas to help explain what I did and how I did it. Once you start, the presentation grows until you find you have to remove material to fit into the time allotted.

I know that all of you have stories to tell and they are worth telling. Before and after the presentations I have given at NoCOUG, just from talking to you, I know that you have things to say that I want to hear about. You have experiences I have not had, and if you tell me about them, that expands what I know, which saves me a lot of time in the future.

If it would help, I can get you started. I'd be happy to work with anyone in NoCOUG to get a presentation created and presented to the group. Please contact me at brhpsycho@aol.com, or brian.hitchcock@sun.com with any questions I can help with. ▲

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Brian Hitchcock has also written a technical article for this publication. Look for The Case of the Missing Kanji.