

JavaOne 2014 - BOF: How to make your JUG and Java more awesome

Monday, Sep 29, 9:00 PM - 9:45 PM - Moscone South - 303

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Starting and Maintaining a JUG (All)

Tips on getting going and staying going.

- Create a name for your JUG. It doesn't have to be called JUG <YourCity>.... ;)
- Join the JUG leaders mailing list¹
- Create a subproject on java.net for your JUG² and ask at the JUG leaders list, to have an Administrator make it public
- Create a landmark for the world map on java.net for your JUG³. Speakers and interested people from your city/region will have it easier to find your JUG that way.
- Register with country-wide JUG organisations
- Start your JUG within a company/the company you work at
 - you have a conference room and your co-workers join the meetings
 - But: keep a clean separation between the company and the JUG
- Let someone talented create a Logo/Brand
- Register a domain with the name of your JUG, create a website, mailinglist, calendar etc.
 - Tip: Create extra accounts at online services for the JUG so you can pass it on, rather than just using your personal account.
 - Make sure the website lists all contact info, past and current events
 - Start a blog planet/aggrity
- Build a leadership team, don't just take all the burden yourself
 - Less work in the long run
 - More stability
 - no single point of failure
- Your reward: Free conference tickets for you at most of the big Java related conferences
- Additional information can be found at the JUG wiki⁴ and on the JUG leaders mailinglist

¹ JUG Leaders mailing list: <http://java.net/projects/jugs/lists>

² Create a project on java.net: https://www.java.net/request_project.csp

³ JUG World Map: <https://java.net/projects/jugs/pages/HowToAddAJUGToTheJUGLeadersMap>

⁴ Tips on the java.net JUG wiki: <https://java.net/projects/jugs/pages/HowToStartAJUG>

Events

Part of running a successful JUG is organising a steady stream of varied events, which are not only useful in and of themselves, but also allow your members to network and socialise.

Short of ideas? No problem - we've got you covered!

- Try organising talks, ranging from 20 - 90 mins
 - Any technical (Java-related) topic goes! e.g. Java 8, JVM performance, Spring
 - Techniques, tools, methodology
 - Lessons learnt from the trenches (especially great for cool frameworks, or a discussion on architectures)
 - Invite well-known speakers from other JUGs or conferences
- Lightning Talks
 - Just like the above, but limited to 5 - 10 minutes
 - Can be a good opportunity to help mentor local speakers
- Ignite Talks
 - Similar to lightning talks, but slides advance automatically every 15 seconds
 - Great for more comedy oriented events
- Bling Ignite Talks
 - Just like ignite talks, but the presenters don't get to see the slides until the actual presentation :-) This can be very entertaining, but is for advanced speakers only!
- Technical demonstrations and workshops
 - Techniques, tools, methodology etc.
- Job interview training
 - Running a workshop, or role-playing interviews and pair-programming tests allow some of the more experienced members to share their wisdom
- Run a hackday or hackathon
 - You can either specify a topic up-front (easier to get engagement at the event), or allow attendees to suggest ideas on the day (requires less planning, but can have lower engagement)
- Run an Adopt-a-JSR or Adopt-OpenJDK hackday
 - Perhaps your JUG can even adopt a JSR?
<https://java.net/projects/adoptajsr/pages/Home>
- Organise a Barbecue (weather permitting!)

Lessons learned from the trenches

- Organisation
 - Don't expect that everybody who RSVPed will show up. Don't worry about it, and our experience shows that attendance is typically between 30 - 90%
 - Although not everyone will show up, it can be good to keep an approximate record of attendees, primarily to track what works and what doesn't
- Ice-breakers
 - Name tags can help, but they don't always work

- Arrange chairs in circle
- Emphasize that it's not just a social club - you might learn stuff as well!
- Make it clear that there won't be any product selling or high-pressure recruitment tactics
- Record your events for people that couldn't attend. This might lower the attendee numbers, and so is a trade-off...
- Expect to spend a lot of time organising your JUG.

Promotion & Attendance

Spread the word about the new JUG in town and increase your listed members and event attendance.

- Find department leads or people with Java in their tags/interests via LinkedIn and tell them about your JUG
 - Remember to write an abstract on what a JUG is about, so that its clear to people
 - Highlight that it's free and possibly the easiest way to keep developers up-to-date
- Make it easy to find your JUG on the web
 - Register groups at all widespread social networks and on Twitter
 - They don't have to be active, just point to your website
 - See if there's an event calendar for your city/region and put your events up there
- Make registration for your JUG & events easy
 - No admin acceptance in groups or special questions to join. Even if its free people might go away and not register
- Ask a newspaper or a local Java Magazine to write an article about your JUG
- Put bulletins on the walls at university/high schools (with QR Code for your website)
- Ask companies/Universities/Clubs if you can use their conference rooms for free
 - Prefer meeting rooms in the city centre, even if public transport makes it easy to get to the location the city centre location have higher attendee numbers
- Do regular meetings (e.g. same day every month)
 - People will know that there's a JUG meeting on this day and it will be easier to plan ahead and not have other meetings that day
- Keep going even if it is frustrating if you have low numbers of attendees at first
- Send a lot!! of reminders for events and motivate people to join
 - It's easy to miss one mail these days. You have to increase the chance that people know about the event by sending more mails
- Ask everyone to join you for a drink after the event to have a chat
- Use tools which help you manage your Java User Group.⁵

⁵ List of tools collection in session UGF9752 Tools for the Day-to-Day of JUG Management: bit.ly/JugTools

Speakers & Sponsoring

There's no need to rely on local talent in order to run your events, you can get help from external speakers and sponsors.

- Speakers
 - Encourage local speakers!
 - Have guidelines/train your JUG members to speak at your JUG themselves
 - Local speakers are more likely to help build out the community at your JUG
 - Local speakers give your JUG the identity of the region, so it's important to use them
 - Always be on the lookout for big names
 - They might be on a JUG tour of your country/region
 - They might be presenting at a local conference and can spend an evening presenting at your JUG
 - While on your travels, ask other conferences speakers that you had interesting conversations with to speak at your JUG
 - Be nice to your speakers!
 - Speaker gifts are really appreciated as a way of saying 'thank you', however small
 - Sometimes paying for speaker travel/hotel encourages speakers to visit, but you can also offer other things, like city sightseeing if you can't pay for a speaker
- Sponsors
 - \$\$\$ Money \$\$\$
 - If you don't need money, i.e. you charge members, don't use sponsors, as they'll want things you don't need to give them
 - If you need cash, for drinks, food, venue etc, use sponsoring by Atlassian, Oracle, Google, etc as a long term way to pay for things. Often it's worth creating yearly sponsorship offerings as well as session sponsorships, for food/drinks.
 - Keep analytics and stats in order to show to sponsors what they're getting so they're more likely to sponsor again
 - Discuss if you want to allow headhunters for sponsoring
 - Venue
 - Very often big companies or educational institutions will offer up their venue for free. This can range from private schools, universities, corporations and post academia education orgs like skills matter
 - SWAG/Licenses
 - Giving things back to your members for being part of the community is important. Check out the companies which sponsor JUGs list: <https://www.java.net/jugs/other-programs>

- Typically companies just want a mention in return for these, and a spot on your website/meetup page. In return, your members get value for being part of your community

Engagement

Engagement is getting your members to talk to each other and build up the community aspect of your JUG.

- Have an agree upon forum or mailing list.
 - Keeping touch and keeping communicating helps bind members together.
- If no one is talking on your forum or mailing list it can sometimes help to stimulate the conversation yourself.
 - Questions which get discussion/debate going such as why people use their IDE can be good for this purpose.
 - Be careful that this doesn't degenerate into trolling/arguing.
- Be sure to set a friendly and approachable tone.
 - Speak positively and politely to your members.
 - Its fine to actively ban people who are insulting or trolling.
 - Reply to emails promptly.
- Find a good medium for invitations and conversations (Meetup is ok).
 - Very important to not choose the wrong medium. E.G. JUG Bremen started with XING (like LinkedIn) and had poor attendance. Newsletters in XING were just notices that you received a newsletter, and you couldn't reply.
- Newsletters
 - Write newsletters/updates for external events/conferees and/or news from the java world.
 - Send out updates about the events that you're running yourself.
 - Partner up with other local groups and each mention other's events in the newsletter.
- Raffles
 - Conferences organizers and book shops will offer free conferences tickets/books for your JUG to do a raffle.
- If you group grows too big, grow smaller discussion forums for special topics.
- Have a hashtag, encourage people to tweet JUG news with it.