Meeting Notes: 05-13-2020 Boston DITA UG panel on DITA user groups

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Panelists:

DITA User Group leads:

- Portland/PDX: Marya Devoto
- Silicon Valley: Scott Prentice
- Los Angeles: Mark Giffin
- Central Texas: Joe Storbeck
- Germany: Magda Caloian
- Boston: Bob Johnson

Documentation Leads roundtable:

- Colorado (Oberon): Scott Youngblom

How are things going with your UG?

1. Finding a meeting place can be a challenge. LA is a BIG area, so there is no convenient location that would satisfy everyone's needs.

2. Evening meetings can be a challenge. In-person meetings in the evening tend to draw from people located in the immediate proximity of the meeting place.

3. In larger towns, high-tech offices may not be located near the center of town. In the LA area, for example, there is more high-tech concentrated toward the south

   -- Orange County.

4. As DITA matures and becomes part of a company's overall content strategy, it become less relevant as a technology in and of itself.

   - It becomes more of an underlying transport mechanism.

   - It becomes more relevant to IAs and toolsmiths trying to work all the integration issues with other components in the company infrastructure.

   - This is a good sign. It is maturing beyond cult status.

5. There is a perception that DITA is still cool?

   - Yes and no -- certainly not as cool as Markdown.

6. We see DITA less frequently as the ONLY way a company develops and publishes its content. More often DITA is a major, but not exclusive, component in a suite of architectures and tools.

7. The DITA Facebook group is a good way to reach out to existing and new DITA users.

8. A higher percentage of the DITA community now knows the basics, so the opportunities to offer "compelling" user group presentations on those basics are fewer.

9. What's missing is the mid-tier content:

- ○ We have lots of DITA 101 resources.
- ○ We have lots of Ph.D. resources (mostly via presentations at conferences).
- ○ Not a lot of content about best practices AFTER a group has implemented DITA out of the box.
    - How do we strategize about what content goes best in which map level?
    - Should all docs be in one repo or separated by product line?
    - How do I use DITA to solve problem-1, problem-2, or problem-3.

10. There had been a tacit assumption that DITA could solve any content development problem , but we now know that to not true. What we're missing is a collective sense of the problems DITA solves and the ones at which it fails. User groups focusing exclusively on DITA and not DITA interoperability with other solutions are pushing a partial solution for most companies.

11. Getting back to understanding which business problems DITA solves handily would be important.
    - ○ Reducing localization costs.
    - ○ Automating workflows.
    - ○ Automating reviews.
    - ○ Scaling content development and publication.

12. We need to tie these business problems solved by DITA back to "big picture" business goals:
    - ○ Productivity
    - ○ Revenue streams
    - ○ Customer experience / satisfaction

13. Over several years, we see a maturation in the types of topics and activities that work for some user groups:
    - ○ Year-1: Topics of interest to people learning DITA
        - Pain points.
    - ○ Year-2+: Shared experiences in working with DITA.
        - Build a demo project in GitHub
        - Use sample content to illustrate common problems and solutions
        - Draw participation from managers, writers, and XML developers.
        - Having some DITA code to kick around is great.
            - • https://github.com/dita-users/demo-project
            - • https://wiki.oasis-open.org/dita-adoption/ditaSourceSets

14. The DITA Adoption TC is ALWAYS looking to partner up with groups to develop and promote best practices.
    - ○ The Adoption TC is currently developing a user guide to help people in their migration and adoption.
    - ○ Feedback and participation from the user community is always needed.

- dita-adoption@lists.oasis-open.org

15. The Boston group does quite a bit of multi-channel outreach:
    - Web site (BostonDITA.org)
    - Emails (members@BostonDITA.org, admin@BostonDITA.org)
    - LinkedIn (Boston DITA User's Group, https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8689266/)
    - Twitter (@BostonDITA)

16. Having a focus on developing local communities is important:
    - Support for job seekers
    - Support for hiring managers
    - Mentoring / expertise sharing

17. Does any one regional user group have sufficient resources and members to sustain active participation?
    - Probably not.

18. Would some collaboration of regional and national/international user groups provide resources and momentum for everyone involved?
    - Yes. Broad support.

Next steps:

1. Circulate notes from the panel discussion.
2. Boston DITA (Bob) to organize a follow-up meeting to continue the discussion about a matrixed regional and national/international user group.