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## [Interview] Part 10: Teresa Hennig, International MS Access Authority

This is the next blog in the [continuing series](#) of interviews with leading professionals. In this series of blogs, I have an exclusive interview with Teresa Hennig. Teresa is an international authority on MS Access, a top user group leader, a best selling author and a recognized and profiled MVP.

Enjoy!

Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS](#), [I.S.P.](#), [MVP](#)

### How User Group Challenges Parallel Challenges in Business



Stephen: In your current role with the user groups, what are the biggest challenges, and their solutions? How does this relate to business?

Teresa:

Challenge one: Motivating people to do presentations and share their expertise.

Solution: First, I create a safe environment with a supportive audience so that presenters can focus on their material. I also offer mentoring and coaching. We can shorten the time or do team presentations. The goal is to make it easy for people to share their knowledge and experience.

These skills are critical to effective communications in the work place. Sharing ideas is a key element of process improvement and change. It is by building on each others' experience and expertise that we learn to think beyond our boundaries and create better solutions.

Challenge two: Setting Priorities

Solution: We all want to do more than we have time for. So, we have to pick what we'll do, when, and how well. We have to make these trade-offs in every part of our professional and personal lives, including at work and at user group meetings.

You need to be adept at quickly evaluating priorities, cost/benefits and timing. Basically the options are: go for it with all the resources available, eliminate, reduce the time, reduce the quality, delegate, or defer. The thing to remember is that most decisions are not final. If you set out priorities and plans one day, be flexible enough to adjust them when circumstances change.

Challenge three: Managing Time

Solution: Monitor your priorities and see if you are spending your time in consonance with the top priorities. We all know about urgency and how easy it is to be pulled off schedule by helping out or even being distracted. But, someone else's crisis does not necessarily become your urgent priority.

Besides, have you ever looked back at what seemed like a catastrophe and realized that it was relatively easy to resolve. Often, it is our natural emotional reaction that prompts us to rush to battle with all our resources, when all it really needed was a calm evaluation and a strategically placed solution.

Of a more routine nature, it is very helpful to use schedules and agendas for both personal and business events. As mentioned earlier, I'm a strong proponent of agendas. They help participants prepare for the meeting, let everyone know when and where they need to be, what decisions will be made, and what they will take home. A properly scheduled and managed meeting can be a powerful tool, a poorly run meeting can be a sinkhole and cost thousands of dollars in lost productivity.

Challenge four: Keeping up with email that includes newsletters, et al.

Solution: This is a huge impact for businesses, employees and in personal life. I recently read that up to 40% of the average worker's time is consumed by email. So, as convenient as this can be for both communicating and providing documentation, we need to manage it more effectively. This affects the management of the groups because I might receive a dozen or more emails and newsletters in one day from members, sponsors, vendors, presenters, and our host. I have to filter through, respond to inquiries and maintain strong relationships. It is like managing a small business. The thing is, to effectively manage email, requires cooperation from everyone.

Here are some good guidelines.

1. First, have business communication brief and to the point. Don't let the message get lost in the clutter.



John Osley Director Community Evangelism  
MoroSoft Canada



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- First, keep business communications brief and to the point. Don't let the message get lost in the pleasantries.
- Use relevant subject lines and maintain them for the entire thread.
- Speaking of threads, leave the earlier content in the body of the email. Why search through 10 messages when it could easily be in one. Then you can delete past messages, because the final is the compilation for that thread.
- Don't change topics in a thread. That is an obvious complement to leaving the thread intact. Start a new thread if you are changing topics.

Those are some initial thoughts to creating more effective email. Then, you need a good policy for flagging them, putting them into folders and even for searching through archives. Outlook has great tools for most of that. Windows desktop search will do an excellent job of finding any document that you have indexed. Use the tools.

I'm not sure that those are truly the biggest challenges, but they are definitely significant.

Look for more with Teresa in the next blog.

I also encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at [sibaraki@cips.ca](mailto:sibaraki@cips.ca).

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Posted: Monday, May 28, 2007 8:00 AM by [odnitmgr](#)

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