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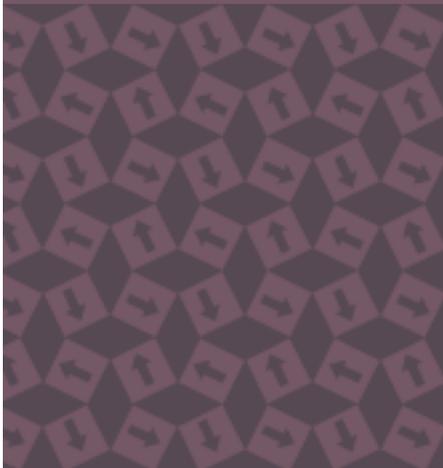
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USENIX & SAGE

The Advanced Computing Systems Association &
The System Administrators Guild

Report on the SAGE Certification Committee

by Lois Bennett

Member, SAGE Certification Committee

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This could be really dry stuff. Details, details, details, and we are just at the beginning. But it wasn't a dry meeting, and the latest session of the SAGE Certification Policy Committee made significant strides toward establishing a plan to institute a certification program. (Special thanks to Gale Berkowitz who not only took over the convening of our meeting when a last-minute family crisis prevented J. K. Chapman from attending – she also took excellent minutes.) Lois Bennett, Gale Berkowitz, Stephen Berry, Barb Dijker, Bradley Donison, Tim Gassaway, Mark Langston, Phil Scarr, Mark Stingley, John Stoffel, and Leeland G. Artra were at the meeting in San Diego, October 21, the day before the WIESS and OSDI conferences. Our goals were to review the business plan, review the leadership, and establish a plan for implementation. Some important decisions were reached and people made commitments to take the various tasks in hand. The business plan was developed by Michael Hamm & Associates based on information from the August meeting of the committee. It is a 20-page document that touches on marketing and financial plans, governance and management decisions, and key first year developmental activities, among other things.

SUBCOMMITTEES

Obviously the question of what needs to be done in the first year to get this whole scheme off the ground is crucial, so that was the main focus of our discussion. The critical first steps include things like

writing test questions, developing policies and procedures, coming up with a logo, and many more. We reorganized the business plan in order to establish subcommittees and assign tasks. We formed six new subcommittees and added some tasks to the existing Test Development Subcommittee.

THE SUBCOMMITTEES

Marketing/Branding/Promotion/Public Relations

Lois Bennett, co-chair
Bradley Donison, co-chair

Test Development

John Stoffel, co-chair
Lois Bennett, co-chair
Tim Gassaway
Leeland G. Artra, liaison

Certification Architecture

Mark Langston, co-chair
Stephen Berry, co-chair
Tim Gassaway

Ethics and Discipline

Phil Scarr
Mark Langston
Stephen Berry

Certification Administration and Procedure

John Stoffel, co-chair
Bradley Donison, co-chair
Lois Bennett
Phil Scarr

Funding/Patronage

Leeland G. Artra, co-chair
Mark Stingley, co-chair
Lois Bennett
Mark Langston

Leadership, Governance, and Management

Barbara Dijker
Tim Gassaway
J. K. Chapman

Accreditation and Education

Phil Scarr
Leeland G. Artra

Some of the subcommittees' tasks are clear by the titles; others need some

explanation. The Certification Architecture Subcommittee will be addressing issues like exam prerequisites, eligibility requirements, examination format, and continuing certification requirements. The Certification Administration and Procedure Subcommittee will focus on applications, appeals of scores and eligibility, reinstatement of lapsed certificants, legal compliance (e.g., ADA provisions for testing accommodations), examination delivery (i.e., scoring, schedules, test sites, vendors), and certification acknowledgment and operations maintenance. The Accreditation and Education Subcommittee will address education sources, accreditation of educators, education partners, identification of training vendors, syllabus development, and occupational analysis.

TEST DEVELOPMENT

The Test Writing Subcommittee announced the successful enlistment of a team to write questions for the beta test. Twelve SAGE members along with three members of the Policy Committee gathered December 9th and 10th to receive training in writing test questions and test answers. After the workshop all will go off and write lots of questions, then gather again to review and critique what has been written. In all we will be coming up with at least 450 questions, enough for two tests and some extra questions as well.

NAMING

Then there was the question of what we should call the certification itself. Because the first level of certification in the SAGE job description booklet is Level II, we decided that numbered levels would be confusing: would our levels run parallel, starting with Level II, or would we start with Level I, more intuitive, but a divergence from SAGE practice? So we decided the first degree of certification would simply be called Certified System Administrator, or CSA. The plan is eventually to offer more levels of certification,

and several options for the higher-level designations were discussed but no decision reached. The naming will be determined as the advanced certification standards are developed. The program itself is called the SAGE Certification Program, or SAGECertPro. The umbrella term for the whole effort – the Policy Committee (for which this is a report), the question writers, and any others who may become involved – is the

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BUDGET AND PATRONAGE

Budget and patronage took up a large portion of our discussions. There were several suggested changes for the budget figures we had received from Hamm, mostly raising the figures for reality's sake. The bulk of discussion was around patronage policy and benefits: how do we get people to fund this wonderful program and which sources of funding should we pursue? (Leeland G. Artra has revised and updated the Web page describing the SAGE Certification Patronage Program to reflect the decisions we made at the meeting: <http://www.usenix.org/sage/cert/patrons.html>.)

SAGE hosted a hospitality suite for vendors to promote the patron program at the LISA conference. All of the vendors at LISA were invited. Leeland and other committee members made a presentation and answered questions about the certification program and our future plans. Everyone on the committee has been asked to talk with people they know about patronage and develop contacts that the Patronage Subcommittee can approach. Founding patrons will receive special benefits; all patrons who make contributions before May 2001 will be considered founding patrons.

Startup funds for this project are especially important since the business plan shows the program, as conceived, will not be self-supporting until its third year.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

In the discussions on leadership it was decided that there should be a governing board, with a representa-

tion of the SAGE Executive Committee serving as a liaison. The governing board needs to be representative of the population we are targeting: sysadmins, SAGE members, employers/HR departments, academia and professional trainers, vendors and government. We are comfortable maintaining governance of the program as a policy committee for the time being, at least until an executive director is hired and a corporate entity is established.

In the long term it may be desirable for the certification authority to become a



Jon "maddog" Hall presenting a check to, Leeland G. Artra, John Stoffel, and Gale Berkowitz from the SAGE Certification Team. Hall became the first individual Patron for the SAGE Certification project.

SAGE, the System Administrators Guild, is a Special Technical Group within USENIX. It is organized to advance the status of computer system administration as a profession, establish standards of professional excellence and recognize those who attain them, develop guidelines for improving the technical and managerial capabilities of members of the profession, and promote activities that advance the state of the art or the community.

All system administrators benefit from the advancement and growing credibility of the profession. Joining SAGE allows individuals and organizations to contribute to the community of system administrators and the profession as a whole.

SAGE membership includes USENIX membership. SAGE members receive all USENIX member benefits plus others exclusive to SAGE.

SAGE members save when registering for USENIX conferences and conferences co-sponsored by SAGE.

SAGE publishes a series of practical booklets. SAGE members receive a free copy of each booklet published during their membership term.

SAGE sponsors an annual survey of sysadmin salaries collated with job responsibilities. Results are available to members online.

The SAGE Web site offers a members-only Jobs-Offered and Positions-Sought Job Center.

SAGE MEMBERSHIP

office@sage.org

SAGE ONLINE SERVICES

list server: majordomo@sage.org

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legally independent body. But although some on the committee feel strongly enough about the need for certification of this type that they would want to go ahead with or without SAGE, the consensus was that this needs to be a SAGE project and should always maintain close ties to SAGE. A future organizational chart may look like this:

SAGE
SAGE Executive Committee
Certification Governing Board
Certification Committees
Certification Executive Director
Certification Staff

We got a lot done at this meeting. There is a lot of work still to do. We will be meeting again at LISA. We encourage members of USENIX to discuss certification of system administrators with their colleagues and let us know what those discussions turn up. We'd be glad to have your input.

International SAGE Code of Ethics

by **Barbara Dijker**

President, SAGE STG Executive Committee

<barb@sage.org>

Since 1998 SAGE has been working on a new Code of Ethics that could be adopted by all the existing SAGE groups across the globe. This would create one common international SAGE Code of Ethics. The ethics committee has been working diligently on this effort and proposed a Code as published here. In addition to the proposed Code, the ethics committee recommended a procedure for reviewing and adopting the code internationally.

At its meeting in December, the SAGE executive committee accepted the recommendations of the ethics committee. As a result, the following procedure will be used for international review and potential adoption:

- An international ethics committee will be established. It will consist of two voting representatives from each of the four existing regional SAGE organizations and non-voting representatives from countries or regions

in the process of forming SAGE organizations. The SAGE exec appointed Lee Damon as one of the two US representatives. The second US representative will be appointed by the newly elected SAGE executive committee in February 2001. Each of the regional SAGE organizations will appoint their own representatives.

- The international ethics committee will review the Code item by item and coordinate revisions as necessary to meet internationalization needs.
- The committee will then recommend the resulting revised Code for adoption individually by each regional SAGE organization.
- Each regional SAGE organization will then establish and follow a procedure for formal member review and adoption as they see fit. SAGE (US) will publish and publicize the Code as proposed by the international committee and then conduct formal open member comment and response periods. After the conclusion of the comment and response periods, the SAGE (US) executive committee will vote on whether to adopt the Code. That vote must pass by 2/3rds for the Code to be accepted and adopted by SAGE (US).

SAGE STG Executive Committee
President:
Barb Dijker <barb@sage.org>
Vice-President:
Xev Gittler <xev@sage.org>
Secretary:
David Parter <parter@sage.org>
Treasurer:
Peg Schafer <peg@sage.org>
Members:
Geoff Halprin <geoff@sage.org>
Hal Miller <hal@sage.org>
Bruce Alan Wynn <wynn@sage.org>

SAGE SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Certainty Solutions
Collective Technologies
Electric Lightwave, Inc.
ESM Services, Inc.
Mentor Graphics Corp.
Microsoft Research
Motorola Australia Software Centre
New Riders Press

O'Reilly & Associates Inc.
Raytheon Company
Remedy Corporation
RIPE NCC
SAMS Publishing
SysAdmin Magazine
Taos: The Sys Admin Company
Unix Guru Universe

SAGE CODE OF ETHICS (INTERNATIONAL DRAFT AS OF 8/24/00)

As a member of the international community of systems administrators, I will be guided by the following principles:

1. Fair Treatment – I will treat everyone fairly. I will not discriminate against anyone on grounds such as age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, national origin, or any other non-business related issue.

2. Privacy – I will only access private information on computer systems when it is necessary in the course of my duties. I will maintain and protect the confidentiality of any information to which I may have access, regardless of the method by which I came into knowledge of it. I acknowledge and will follow all relevant laws governing information privacy.

3. Communication – I will keep users informed about computing matters that may affect them – such as conditions of acceptable use, sharing of common resources, maintenance of security, occurrence of system monitoring, and any relevant legal obligations.

4. System Integrity – I will strive to ensure the integrity of the systems for which I have responsibility, using all appropriate means – such as regularly maintaining software and hardware; analyzing levels of system performance and activity; and, as far as possible, preventing unauthorized use or access.

5. Cooperation – I will cooperate with and support my fellow computing professionals. I acknowledge the community responsibility that is fundamental to the integrity of local, national, and international network and computing resources.

6. Honesty – I will be honest about my competence and will seek help when necessary. When my professional advice is sought, I will be impartial. I will avoid conflicts of interest; if they do arise I will

declare them and recuse myself if necessary.

7. Education – I will continue to update and enhance my technical knowledge and other work-related skills through training, study, and the sharing of information and experiences with my fellow professionals. I will help others improve their skills and understanding where my skills and experience allow me to do so.

8. Social Responsibility – I will continue to enlarge my understanding of the social and legal issues relating to computing environments. When appropriate, I will communicate that understanding to others and encourage the writing and adoption of policies and laws about computer systems consistent with these ethical principles.

9. Quality – I will be honest about the occurrence and impact of mistakes, and where possible and appropriate I will attempt to correct them.

I will strive to achieve and maintain a safe, healthy, and productive workplace.

10. Ethical Responsibility – I will lead by example, maintaining a consistently high ethical standard and degree of professionalism in the performance of all my duties.

2000 SAGE Outstanding Achievement Award

The 2000 SAGE Outstanding Achievement Award was presented to Celeste Stokely at this year's LISA in New Orleans. This annual award goes to someone whose professional contributions to the system administration community over a number of years merit special recognition.

Celeste Stokely was selected for her pioneering achievements in distributing sys-

tems management information. Once the world migrated to include the WWW, she was one of the first collectors and providers of Systems Administration help pages, long before those of Freshmeat and even UGU. Many have benefited from the resources that Celeste has shared.

She has learned from the usual school of on-the-job experience, and continues to share and teach ways to have good project management, planning, and other requirements of being a professional in the Systems Administration arena.

Congratulations, Celeste!



Celeste Stokely