

Ten Steps Toward Realizing Your SAS® Software Wish List (How To Present Your Technical Needs In A Business Framework)

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ABSTRACT

Have you ever come from a SAS® user group conference with a wish list of products that you wanted and/or needed, only to hear your employer say ‘NO’? Too often this occurs, not because the employer is unreasonable, but because of communication problems. The mindsets of managers and software technicians are different; managers are primarily concerned with business goals - programmers and system developers are primarily concerned with code and logic. Thus, the two parties tend to talk past each other and new application development opportunities are lost.

This presentation provides SAS users with a ten-step approach toward achieving a solid ‘hit rate’ on their product wish lists. Using basic management concepts, you will learn how to couch your SAS software requests within a business-compliant framework. A worksheet detailing the ten steps will also be provided.

INTRODUCTION

Has this ever happened to you: You come back from a SAS conference with proceedings, business cards, buttons, mugs, baseball caps, tote bags, pens, clip boards, badges and a lot of exciting ideas that you want to implement, only to have your hopes dashed by your supervisor? Why does this happen? Is it because your boss is mean, selfish or out of touch? Not necessarily! Think

about it – if your company did not support the idea of SAS development projects, you would not have been sent to the conference, much less even hired by the company. More than likely, you did not present your “wish list” in a managerially palatable manner.

For the sake of your professional success, you must keep in mind that managers and programmers have different mindsets. Managers are concerned with planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. Their goal is to meet business objectives. Programmers are concerned with code, logic, sort keys, merging, subsetting, screen development, macros, etc. Thus, your enthusiasm is not likely to persuade your superiors into developing new applications or buying new products unless they can see how it will help them or the company.

The purpose of this paper is to provide you with a ten-step approach toward realizing your SAS wish list. By walking through this exercise, you will be better prepared to make requests to your manager, in terms that will support your cause.

Step 1.

Know and be prepared to demonstrate your knowledge of the company’s business goals. What does your company do? What products and services does it provide?

Step 2.

Understand and be prepared to explain how what you do contributes to the company meeting its goals. Do you know where you fit in? Do you know how you fit in?

Step 3.

Know your company's politics. Who are the SAS supporters in the company? Who are the anti-SAS people? Whose ring must be kissed and whose blessing must you receive in order to get what you want?

Step 4.

Know the financial health of your company. Do profits, grants, annual budget allocations or donations support your company? Is there money for SAS resources and projects this year? Can someone "find" some money for SAS resources and projects?

Step 5.

Know how much money have you and others already requested this calendar/fiscal year on SAS software. How much have you received thus far? Beside your wish list, how many other wish lists have crossed your manager's desk?

Step 6.

Be prepared to give a Return On Investment (ROI) estimate. How does your superior benefit from granting your request? How will the company benefit from granting your request?

Step 7.

Be prepared to explain the costs and benefits of using another technical approach that will achieve the same functional results. Have you examined

anything else (either cheaper or already available in-house) that will perform just as well?

Step 8.

Be able to refer to someone who was successful in doing what you want to do. Is there someone, whose work and results demonstrate that what you want to achieve is doable and worthwhile?

Step 9.

Be able to provide technical resource estimates. What types of hardware and software are needed? What are the memory and storage requirements? Will it require dedicated or shared resources? What are the network requirements?

Step 10.

Be able to provide non-technical resource estimates. How much time will it take to develop, implement and maintain the application? How many people, what type of people (i.e., full time employees, part-timers or consultants) and what skill and experience levels are needed for the project? How long will they be needed? How much money is needed for this request? How long will funding be needed and how soon will it be needed? Is this a one-time request for funding?

CONCLUSION

These ten items are tough and thought provoking. However, if you want to improve the likelihood that you will get your SAS wish list, it is suggested that you address these items to prevent your disappointment and embarrassment. In Appendix A., you

will find a worksheet that you may copy and use.

It is hoped that these tips will be of benefit to you. At the very least, you will be sensitized to the communication dynamics between management and technical staffers.

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Appendix A. – Your SAS Wish List Worksheet

Instructions: Please think about and answer the items below before approaching your superiors with a SAS product/project request:

1. What does your company do? What products and services does it provide?
2. Does what you do contribute to the company meeting its goals? Do you know where you fit in? Do you know how you fit in?
3. Who are the SAS supporters in the company? Who are the anti-SAS people? Whose ring must be kissed and whose blessing must you receive in order to get what you want?
4. What is the financial health of your company? Do profits, grants, annual budget allocations or donations support your company? Is there money for SAS resources and projects this year? Can someone “find” some money for SAS resources and projects?
5. How much money have you and others already requested this calendar/fiscal year for SAS software? How much did you receive thus far? Beside your wish list, how many other wish lists have crossed your manager’s desk?
6. Be prepared to give a Return On Investment (ROI) estimate. How does your superior benefit from granting your request? How will the company benefit from granting your request?
7. Be prepared to explain the costs and benefits of using another technical approach that will achieve the same functional results. Have you examined anything else (either cheaper or already available in-house) that will perform just as well?
8. Be able to refer to someone who was successful in doing what you want to do. Is there someone, whose work and results demonstrate that what you want to achieve is doable and worthwhile?
9. Do you know what technical resource estimates you will need? What types of hardware and software are needed? What are the memory and storage requirements? Will it require dedicated or shared resources? What are the network requirements?
10. Do you know what non-technical resources you will need? How much time will it take to develop, implement and maintain the application? How many people, what type of people (i.e., full time employees, part-timers or consultants) and what skill and experience levels are needed for the project? How long will they be needed? How much money is needed for this request? How long will funding be needed and how soon will it be needed? Is this a one-time request for funding?