



AFSUG grows from strength to strength, for 2020 and beyond

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JOHANNESBURG – July 22, 2020 – The African SAP User Group (AFSUG), a non-profit organisation providing a forum for local SAP customers to share information and experiences, as well as to influence SAP Africa and SAP AG’s local and global directions, has embraced the many challenges experienced by businesses worldwide over 2020, taking more positive steps towards forging stronger member relationships than ever before.

Reg Barry, AFSUG chairman, explains that as a non-profit organisation, AFSUG, while affiliated with SAP Africa, operates completely independently.

“AFSUG essentially represents the link between between SAP Africa, its partners, and the end user community. Not only do we enjoy a healthy working relationship with the global B2B software provider, we also work very closely with the global network of SAP user groups, SUGEN (SAP user group executive network), with regular support and interaction, at least two face-to-face meetings per year under normal circumstances, and a SUGEN representative in Germany allocated to the AFSUG board.

“The global collaboration experienced via SUGEN is invaluable, as we are able to gain knowledge from the 22 defined user groups worldwide, and benchmark ourselves against them.

“As one of the most active user groups globally, with an impressive number of local customers, we are incredibly proud of where Africa is from a user group perspective,” he states.

AFSUG takes it virtual

“Over the past two years in particular, AFSUG has put an immense amount of effort into driving up value adds for our members,” Barry continues. “This has come to the fore during the first half of 2020 in particular, where our general manager, Amanda Gibbs –

who was appointed in January 2020 – has worked closely with AFSUG’s board members and its chairman to define and deliver on our strategic drivers moving forward.”

And while the South African lock-down period could have complicated this procedure, AFSUG has used it as an opportunity to bolster ongoing interactions with its member community. “AFSUG’s core focus is networking, connecting, creating opportunities and collaborating,” explains Gibbs, who goes on to add that the organisation has taken the knowledge-sharing events, which make up a large part of this process, known as Special Interest Groups (SIGs), 100 percent digital.

“Access to knowledge is obviously an important benefit for AFSUG members, and so, instead of cancelling our traditionally face-to-face events in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban this year, we opted to host regular SIG webinars, where customers are invited to share their success stories and partners too are able to impart their knowledge.

“AFSUG member companies are then provided with full access to the relevant content, downloads and related information post webinar. In addition, we are holding virtual monthly steering committee meetings to engage with our longstanding volunteers and experts on what we need to showcase, share and prepare for our members.”

Since lock-down commenced in March this year, AFSUG has seen an upswing in attendance of the SIG events. “Our member community has really responded well to our digital webinars and events,” says Gibbs. “Thus far, we’ve hosted 28 events in 2020, drawing in a total of 1,924 attendees, with many more planned for the future.”

The AFSUG SIGs focus on topics including: Customer Experience; Digital Finance & Risk; Digital Supply Chain Management; Enterprise Information Management & Analytics; SAP’s HANA platform; Human Experience Management; Real Estate Management; Retail & CFG; S/4HANA; and Solution Manager & LifeCycle Management. (More information on these events can be found [here](#).)

“Moving forward post the COVID-19 pandemic, AFSUG plans to continue to take a hybrid approach to our events, encompassing both physical and virtual opportunities,” states Barry. “This will include Saphila, AFSUG’s flagship biennial event, traditionally held at Sun City in the North-West Province.

“The 2019 iteration of the conference and exhibition was incredibly successful, pulling in its biggest audience to date with approximately 1,000 delegates. We’re planning to build on this success for the 2021 Saphila, set to take place in July next year, which should comprise both a face-to-face element and the additional opportunity for attendees to attend streamed talks.

“We believe that this will be highly appealing for SAP users across Africa, as engagement with our members throughout the rest of the continent is a strong focus for us. Excellent content will continue to be a huge draw-card, with a strong mix of all-important customer testimonials, where local SAP end users will be able to share their own, real-life stories, and technology deep dives.”

News, updates, and an updated look for AFSUG

AFSUG’s drive to enrich membership benefits include the recent launch of its new and improved [web site](#). “Our aim here is to provide a premium platform to our trusted and valued members and business partners; one that allows them to engage and creates a user-friendly browsing experience,” says Gibbs. “The new uncluttered design is not only easier to navigate (from any device) and more user-friendly, it allows for improved knowledge sharing and access to the latest SAP news, and AFSUG events and updates.”

At the same time, AFSUG has intensified other marketing-related activities, updating its branding and unveiling a new logo earlier this year that symbolises the organisation’s vibrancy, passion and engagement, yet remains true to its core values – Connect. Create. Collaborate. Members are also encouraged to join AFSUG’s revamped social media pages on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) for regular news.

New board-level changes

In addition to Gibbs’ appointment, AFSUG has welcomed new board members over the past few months, with the appointment of two directors, namely Louise Steenekamp, head of IT: SA Commercial at Aspen Pharmacare, and Corlia van Zyl, group manager: ICT at Distell.

Says Barry: “We look forward to the value that Louise and Corlia will add, their participation in strategic initiatives, and in guiding the team and volunteers as AFSUG ambassadors.

“Another significant decision taken in July is the appointment of Duke Mathebula, head of IT business applications for Africa at sustainable habitats and high-performance materials leader, Saint-Gobain Africa, as the new AFSUG chair.

“Duke has held the position of our vice chairman for more than six months, and will now assume the role of chairman, while I will continue to serve AFSUG in the vice chair capacity. I have been extremely privileged to have worked alongside Duke at AFSUG over the last period,” Barry adds. “He is a phenomenal individual, and it is my belief that as the incoming AFSUG chairman, he will steer the organisation to even greater heights.”

ABOUT AFSUG:

The African SAP User Group (AFSUG) provides a forum for local SAP customers to share information and both business and technological experiences, as well as to influence SAP Africa and SAP AG’s local and global directions.

Through regular, focused and highly professional contact between AFSUG representatives, business partners and SAP Africa at all levels, AFSUG promotes the needs and wishes of the user community. Additionally, through this contact, it assists SAP Africa in the management of the service-related challenges presented by rapid growth.

AFSUG is the only user group in southern Africa to represent SAP, but important to note, is completely independent of SAP and a non-profit organisation governed by a board of voluntary customer CIOs and senior managers.

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