Recommendations

Election Review Committee's Recommendations

The purpose of this document is to describe the findings and recommendations of the Professional Association for SQL Server's (PASS's) Election Review Committee's (ERC).

May 5, 2011

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Summary

Since its establishment in 1999, the Professional Association for SQL Server (PASS) has provided valuable benefits to its membership worldwide. These benefits have come in many forms including conferences, local user group support, virtual chapters, and SQLSaturdays.

Recently, the PASS Board of Directors created a committee to study the way PASS conducts its elections. The Election Review Committee (ERC) was charged with analyzing the current way that PASS identifies potential candidates for its elections and to make recommendations for improving that process.

This document provides those recommendations to the PASS Board of Directors.

The PASS ERC Composition

The Board of Directors reached out to Joe Webb, a member of PASS since its inception, to Chair the ERC. Joe previously served for six years on the Board of Directors, culminating his tenure as the Executive Vice President of the organization in 2007.

The ERC is composed of six committee members. Two members currently serve on the Board of Directors; four members are from the PASS community and have demonstrated a passion for the organization

Member	Position
Joe Webb	Committee Chair
Lori Edwards	Community Representative
Brian Kelley	Community Representative
Bill Graziano	Board of Directors
Wendy Pastrick	Community Representative
Andy Warren	Board of Directors
Allen White	Community Representative

An Open Invitation to Participate

The PASS ERC began its work at the PASS Community Summit 2010 in Seattle, Washington. The committee held an open meeting and invited all attendees of the Summit to participate. Although the meeting was sparsely attended, save for the ERC, some key contributors were present and offered good insight into the existing process and recent elections.

The committee also identified and interviewed knowledgeable individuals who were familiar with the existing process or who could offer specific knowledge of how other organizations conduct elections. Some individual were interviewed at the Summit in 2010. Others were interviewed by telephone afterward.

Other means were also used to elicit feedback from the community, including a forum on the PASS web site, an email distribution list for the ERC members, and via blogs throughout the ERC's lifecycle.

The Analysis

The ERC regularly met through telephone calls and email over a six month period to discuss aspects of the current process and to consider how new policies could be implemented to improve the existing process.

Consideration was given to the nature and mission of the organization, its global membership, and the need of the constituents and stakeholders.

The Recommendations

After careful analysis and consideration, the seven-member ERC has identified some key process changes that would improve the way that elections are held for the PASS Board of Directors.

The Nominating Committee (NomCom)

After considerable discussion and debate, the ERC found that a body should exist whose purpose is to qualify each applicant. The mandate of this body, called the Nominating Committee is to ensure that each applicant possesses the characteristics and attributes that are considered necessary to give the applicant a reasonable chance of success if elected to the Board of Directors.

Composition

The NomCom will be composed of five members, including the NomCom Chairperson. Typically the Immediate Past President, IPP, will lead the NomCom. A second active member from the Board of Directors will be selected by the PASS President to serve on the NomCom.

The PASS community, through an election, will select the final three members on the NomCom. To be eligible for service on the NomCom, a volunteer must have demonstrable track record of volunteerism within PASS. This includes members who have served as Chapter Leaders, Speakers (Summit, Rally, SQLSaturday, 24HoP), Regional Mentors, Virtual Chapter Leaders, Program Committee members, or in other capacities that led to a complementary registration to the most recent Summit.

No one who is seeking election or re-election may server on the NomCom.

The Executive Director may not participate in the NomCom, either as a direct member or as an organizer. This measure is to protect the Executive Director and the PASS Board of Directors from any perception of a conflict of interest and improprieties.

Selection

An announcement will be made via normal channels and applications for the NomCom will be accepted and vetted by the PASS Board of Directors. Vetting involves checking each NomCom applicant's qualifications and ensuring that he meets the eligibility requirements.

An election will be held; all active members of PASS may participate in the election. The three NomCom candidates who receive the most votes will be invited to serve on the NomCom. A minimum of 10 votes is required by each candidate to prevent a run-off election. Ties will be settled using the date of the original application; the choice of the IPP is the final tiebreaker.

If for any reason, the NomCom cannot be filled using an election. The IPP is empowered to select members of the committee. This is a failsafe measure to prevent an unstaffed committee.

The Board of Directors must approve the final NomCom composition.

Vacancies

Any vacancies on the NomCom prior to Board of Directors interviews will be filled by the IPP by special appointment. Any vacancies after the interview process has begun will remain unfilled.

Operations

To help facilitate the operations of the NomCom, a non-voting, non-participatory organizer may be used. This person will help with scheduling, documentation, and administration during the NomCom's existence. The person may be a volunteer from the community or a member of the paid staff.

Written Applications

A Call for Applications for the Board of Directors will be announced to the PASS Community. Those interested in running for the Board of Directors may submit a written application for consideration by the NomCom.

The application will consist of a number of questions designed to help provide the NomCom with enough information to evaluate the candidate's likelihood for success as a member of the Board of Directors.

The questions should be designed to reveal the attributes considered necessary by the ERC.

Desirable Attributes of a Candidate

The following attributes are considered necessary by the ERC.

- **Experience with PASS.** Direct volunteer experience is a mandatory requirement. Experience can be in the form of service on a committee, service as a Regional Mentor or Chapter Leader, leading a SQLSaturday, or in another volunteer capacity. Speaking at a conference alone is not sufficient volunteer service to qualify as a volunteer.
- **Non-PASS SQL Volunteer Experience.** Community activities that are not a part of PASS are considered helpful to the candidate, but not a requirement. These activities would include such efforts as moderating MSDN or other forums, being honored as an MVP, or organizing other non-PASS related functions.
- **Other Board Experience.** Experience serving on other boards, such as home owner associations, church boards, college advisory committees, and the like, is considered a highly desired attribute.
- **Current Involvement with SQL Server.** Each candidate must work with SQL Server to some degree to be considered eligible for the Board of Directors. Expertise is not required.
- **Writing Ability.** Candidate should have a demonstrable ability to communicate effectively in writing. An active blog, published articles or books, or other forms of proven writing experience is considered highly desirable by the ERC.
- **Leadership/Management Experience.** A proven track record of leadership in a professional or volunteer role is desirable.
- **Financial/Budgetary Experience.** A candidate with experience understanding the budgeting process is desirable, but not required.
- **Time and Travel Obligations.** All candidates should be fully aware of and agree to the time and travel commitments required to serve on the PASS Board of Directors.
- **References.** Each candidate should supply a minimum of 3 references that have reviewed his application and agrees to publicly support the candidate. Additionally, the names of at least 3 people with whom the candidate has served in a volunteer capacity must be supplied by the candidate.

Ranking the Applications

The NomCom will evaluate each application. Any application that does not meet the minimum requirements will be discarded. The remainder of the applications will be ranked according to the measureable attributes and indicators for predicting success as a member of the Board of Directors.

The best application will be given a 1, the second best application will be given a 2, etc, by each member of the NomCom. The NomCom members' scores for each application will be averaged to create a final ranking for the applications. The application with the lowest score is the best candidate.

The highest ranked candidates will be invited to interview for the position. It's recommended by the ERC that a minimum of 12 candidates be invited to interview.

Candidate Interviews

Interviews will be scheduled for the top dozen or so applicants. All candidate interviews should be completed in a relatively short amount of time. It's encouraged and advised that all NomCom members participate in each interview. Since that may not be possible, a minimum of three NomCom members are required to conduct an interview.

Conducting the Interview

Each interview should take approximately 50 minutes. All interviews will be recorded for the benefit of any NomCom member that cannot be present at the time of the interview. No other persons may listen to the interview. It will not be made available to the public, nor to the Board of Directors.

Questions should be asked by the NomCom members to solicit and glean information from the candidate to provide insight into their management style and relevant experience for serving on the Board of Directors.

Scoring the Interview

After each call, the NomCom members will discuss the interview amongst themselves. Insights and concerns may be shared among the members. At the conclusion of the discussion, each NomCom member should rank the applicant in the areas deemed relevant.

Ranking the Applicants

At the conclusion of all interviews, each NomCom member will rank the applicants. NomCom members must rank each candidate that they interviewed or listened to the recorded interview. NomCom members may not rank the applicants that they have not interviewed or listened to the recorded interview.

If a NomCom member participated or listened to 7 of the 12 interviewed, he must rank the applicants in order from 1 to 7. If another NomCom member participated in all 12 interviews, he ranks the applicants from 1 to 12.

To come up with a final ranking from the interview portion of the process, the rankings for each applicant will be averaged. A minimum of 3 rankings must be in considered in the average. If an applicant has less than 3, a member of the NomCom must listen to the recorded interview and rank the applicant.

The applicants with the lowest average scores will be considered the best applicants.

Creating the Final Slate

After the application and interview portions of the interview process, the NomCom will calculate a final ranking for the applicants.

Consolidating the Rankings

The applicant's ranking from the written portion will be added to the applicant's ranking from the interview portion. For example, if a candidate was ranked 2nd in the written application and 5th in the interview portion, his total would be 7.

The applicants with the lowest cumulative score will be recommended to the as a Board of Directors as the current year's slate. It's recommended that the normal number of candidates be 3 times the number of open slots on the Board of Directors.

Publishing the Rankings

The applications and the overall final rankings of each candidate will be published for the PASS Community to examine and consider when voting.

No information from individual NomCom members will be published.

Conducting the Election

Once the PASS Board of Directors approves the slate, the election will be conducted in an online fashion similar to past years.

No Write-In Candidates

The ERC has considered the possibility of allowing a write-in candidate. In that scenario, an applicant that did not make the final cut could wage a write-in campaign. Only those names that had submitted an application and met the minimum qualification would be accepted.

The ERC considered the Write-In option unnecessary. It is the hope and expectation of the ERC that the changes recommended in this document, if implemented, would provide a solid foundation for the election process and provide the PASS Community a voice with which to be heard.

A Write-In option may be considered again in the future.

NomCom Protocols

During the election process, the NomCom may receive questions or comments from the PASS Community regarding specific choices or actions taken during the candidate selection process. The ERC recommends that there be one voice to answer those questions and to provide perspective and insight into the rationale of the NomCom. That one voice should be that of the NomCom Chair, typically the IPP. Other member should not feel the responsibility of responding to the community.

Final Thoughts

The PASS ERC carefully analyzed the process by which the Board of Directors candidates are identified and elected. Every aspect was evaluated; no facet was considered off-limits.

The ERC found that much of the existing process to be a solid foundation on which to build. The primary two areas where the processes could be improved are:

- a change to the way the Nominating Committee is selected
- a move to consider the application and interview portions of the process as a whole rather than a two-stepped process.

Additional, relatively minor tweaks are also recommended in the document.

In should be noted that these changes are not presented to the PASS Board of Directors for a la carte consideration; they designed to present one holistic and comprehensive set of changes to the election procedures. The integrity of these changes have interdependencies that make picking and choosing certain recommendations for implementation difficult.

It is the hope and expectation of the ERC, that should the PASS Board of Directors decide to implement the changes, that future elections would be much more transparent and incontrovertible.