

Paper PSA-71

Supporting SAS in the Workplace: A Corporate SAS User Community

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ABSTRACT

Many SAS users are not aware of an abundance of resources available to them from a variety of sources. The available resources range from those internal to their own organization to SAS itself. In order for these resources to be utilized they need to be available to the users in an accessible way. This paper shows how one large company with SAS users at many locations throughout the United States has built a highly successful collaborative community for SAS support. Modeled in the style of sasCommunity.org, the online corporate SAS community includes discussion forums, surveys, interactive training, places to upload code, tips, techniques, and links to documentation and other relevant resources that help users get their jobs done more effective and efficiently.

INTRODUCTION

Anthem health plan companies deliver quality products and services that give their members access to the care they need. With nearly 71 million people served by its affiliated companies including more than 38 million enrolled in its family of health plans, Anthem is one of the nation's leading health benefits companies. The company was formed when WellPoint Health Networks Inc. and Anthem Inc. merged in 2004. The parent company originally assumed the WellPoint, Inc. name but in December 2014, WellPoint, Inc. changed its corporate name to Anthem, Inc.

Anthem's over 50,000 employees, distributed throughout the United States, include a community of over 1,000 SAS users, also widely distributed geographically. Since many Anthem employees work from home, including many SAS users, this adds another dimension to this geographic distribution. Figure 1 illustrates this distribution.

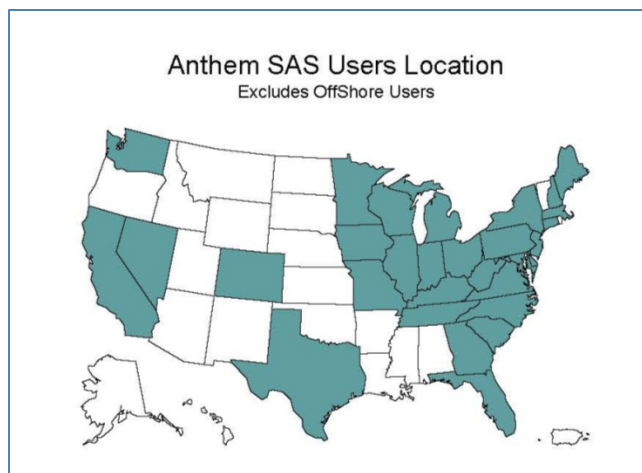


Figure 1. SAS User Geographic Distribution

Currently Anthem's SAS users run SAS in a variety of environments including PC SAS, but most users are being migrated to SAS Grid environment with SAS 9.4 and Enterprise Guide 7.1. In this grid environment, SAS jobs can be distributed across a grid of computers enabling workload balancing, accelerated processing, and job scheduling.

SAS use at Anthem includes such varied tasks as data quality analysis, member risk stratification, client reporting, corporate financial analysis, and research and development. To support this broad spectrum of users and uses, Anthem has partnered with SAS to form both a SAS In-House Users Group and a private Anthem SAS Community of Practice. These forums assist in making connections for users. SAS users can find answers, share technical knowledge and success stories, and collaborate on solutions that use SAS software within the greater context of business intelligence.

PARTNERSHIP WITH SAS

To ensure customer satisfaction, SAS maintains a partnership with their customers that extends beyond the sale and maintenance of its software offerings. For Anthem, especially valuable segments of this partnership include:

1. SAS User Groups
2. Anthem In House Users Group (with SAS Cafés)
3. Anthem Community site
4. Training

1. SAS USER GROUPS

User groups exist at all levels within the SAS community. Each has its own specific benefits but all facilitate sharing of ideas and solutions between users and have something to offer from beginners to advanced SAS users. SAS provides benefits to each level.

- **SAS Global Forum International (SGFI)** – SAS Global Forum brings together users from over 40 countries to share ideas and solutions at an annual multi-day conference, generally in the U.S. Users can compare notes and network with others in their industry to see firsthand how others are solving complex problems similar to those in their workplace, by using SAS. SAS also provides access to technical experts that can assist with custom solutions. http://www.sas.com/en_us/events/sas-global-forum/sas-global-forum-2016.html
- **Regional** – The regional user group and conference is similar to the international but is on a smaller scale and closer to home. Instead of thousands of attendees, several hundred SAS users are on hand to share ideas in smaller sessions. <http://support.sas.com/usergroups/regional-events.html>
- **Local** – Local user groups bring together SAS users in a specific geographic area to share SAS ideas. Meetings are usually single of half day. <http://support.sas.com/sasusersupport/usergroups/search?sort=LUG>
- **In-House** – SAS In-House user groups bring together users from a single organization regardless of geographic location and allow for discussion about actual data usage within that organization. **The focus of this paper is on an In-House group.**
- **Special Interest** – This group is around users with a particular interest. Examples of this include Data Management SAS Users Group, Pharmaceutical Users of SAS software or SAS retail Users Group, to name a few. <http://support.sas.com/sasusersupport/usergroups/search?sort=SUG>



Figure 2. SAS User Group Programs.

2. ANTHEM IN-HOUSE USERS GROUP (WITH SAS CAFÉS)

An in-house user group is an excellent way to increase value from shared corporate applications like the SAS System. In addition to networking with each other, users are exposed to new coding and analysis techniques while enhancing understanding of SAS software and services. User groups like the Anthem In-House SAS User Group that have registered with SAS receive many additional benefits including: speakers, book discounts, and user surveys.

At Anthem, we decided to create an In-House Users group. We did this because it's a wonderful way to honor the voice of those using SAS software. At Anthem this group allows us to foster connections and collaboration with other SAS professionals, increase our understanding of SAS products and capabilities, stay up to date on the newest offerings as well as the latest SAS techniques and enhance our leadership and presentation skills. When we engage in an In House Users Group meeting (café) we immediately know all of the other members of this group have more than one thing in common, we work for Anthem and use SAS!

Benefits of an In-House Users Group

- Excellent way to energize and educate yourself about the power of SAS and see SAS in action.
- Learn ways to optimize SAS and gain more value.
- Find out about successes achieved by your organization's SAS users.
- Share your feedback and experiences with your SAS support team.
- Network with other SAS users and IT support personnel within your organization.
- Learn about resources available to you.
- Learn about and be involved in your company's road map as it pertains to SAS.
- Enhance your career. Presentations can open doors professionally and are a solid addition to any résumé.

In-House Users Group Leadership

The Anthem IHUG (AIHUG) consists of a Steering Committee which drives the leadership and direction of the group. The Steering Committee not only includes a mix of SAS users from different parts of the company: Anthem IT, Actuarial, Data Management, Claims Processing and Client reporting, but the group consists of a variety of Anthem subsidiaries as well. This ensures a good mix of business and IT from all parts of Anthem proper. Steering Committee members' bios and contact information are posted on the Anthem SAS Community site so that users can bring ideas directly to the committee. We meet virtually once/month for an hour. These virtual meetings occur at the same time every month so the steering committee members can plan around them. During these meetings we discuss:

- Past/present and future monthly café sessions – A café session is an hour long virtual WebEx meeting where either a resource from SAS or a resource from Anthem speaks about their use of SAS, a specific technology, a SAS roadmap or any other SAS related topic. It is collaboration between SAS and Anthem. At Anthem the general rule is 50/50 meaning SAS will resource about half of the monthly sessions while Anthem resources the remaining half. (See **ANTHEM IHUG TIMELINE** below) Attendees get a lot out of the sessions when their own users speak about how or what they are doing with SAS. They are able to show actual code and they speak “the same language” as the attendees. These tend to be the café's that make the most impact on the user community. All café sessions are recorded and posted for playback to the Community site (shown below).
- Training opportunities/needs
- On-site or virtual events taking place either specifically for Anthem or SAS users in general (Hands-on events, Regional conferences, etc.)
- User survey results

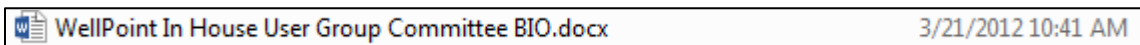
ANTHEM IHUG TIMELINE:

- **December 2011** – Inaugural In House Users Group virtual meeting. We discussed the frequency of meetings and leadership.



Figure 3. In-House User Group Kick-Off.

- **January 2012** – Continued with a monthly café and determined a recurring day/time.
- **March 2012** – In House Users Group Steering Committee was determined.



- **2012 On-going** – worked on delivering topics to the group that would be timely and meaningful. You can see from the below schedule, it was mostly SAS resourcing the café's. Anthem was still in the infancy stage of the group. The goal was to move towards a model where SAS and Anthem shared the content for the café's. This model has proven to be the most meaningful and impactful to the user community.

25-Jan-12	How to create and deliver your SAS content efficiently...Make use of your macros (SAS- Michael Walters)
15-Feb-12	Proc SQL vs. Data Step. Similarities, differences and when to use each (SAS- Ron Coleman)
21-Mar-12	In DB Processing (SAS- Ron Coleman)
18-April-12	Add-In for Microsoft Office (SAS)
16-May-12	Enterprise Guide for the SAS Programmer – Advanced (SAS)
20-Jun-12	Self-service reporting using Web Report Studio (SAS)
11-July-12	Richmond SAS Day
15-Aug-12	Introduction to the Macro Family (SAS)
26-Sept-12	What I learned in my SAS Querying & Reporting Class (Sadia-WLP)
17-Oct-12	Intro. To the Data Step Hash Object/Hash Tables and Lookups (SAS)
*14-Nov-12	Top 10 Ways to optimize your SAS Code (SAS) *Change of date due to Thanksgiving
19-Dec-12	Debugging SAS Code (SAS)
16-Jan-13	Intro to ODS (SAS)
20-Feb-13	Writing to external locations. How does EG work like Access (SAS)

- **2013 On-going** - The following was the schedule for the 2013 café's. Anthem was becoming a more sophisticated group with more SAS café experience.

20-Mar-13	<u>Proc Report</u> (Barbara <u>Okerson-WLP</u>)
17-Apr-13	Tips and Tricks to Finding SAS Information (Renee Harper – SAS)
15-May-13	<u>Proc Report</u> in WellPoint Environment (Barbara <u>Okerson-WLP</u>)
19-June-13	Introduction to SAS Enterprise Guide (Mira Shapiro)
17-July-13	What I've learned from SGF (Barbara <u>Okerson – WLP</u>) Users Groups available to WellPoint (Katie Strange –SAS)
21-Aug-13	Creating and Deploying SAS Stored Processes (Michael Walters – SAS and WellPoint)
18-Sept-13	Simple Statistical Analysis in Enterprise Guide (T. Winand – SAS)
16-Oct-13	Let Oil and Gas Talk to You: Predicting Production Performance (Keith Holdaway - SAS)
20-Nov-13	SAS In Database Capabilities (Bill MacKrell – SAS)
18-Dec-13	Best Practices for SAS EG Project management (Kate Schwartz – SAS and WellPoint)

- **2014 On-Going** - Finally, with the growth of the Anthem user community, the current café model in place is a shared model where SAS and Anthem are teaming up and delivering content together. (See highlights). We also added a Meeting kick off lead. This person is a member of the steering committee and takes a turn kicking off each monthly café.

DATE	TOPIC	MEETING KICK OFF LEAD
22-Jan-14	Enterprise Guide for the SAS Programmer – Chris Hemedinger (SAS)	Jennifer Harney
19-Feb-14	Let SAS Do the Coding for You – Robert Williams (WellPoint)	Jennifer Harney
19-Mar-14	WellPoint: Tips & Tricks to Finding SAS Information (Renee Harper/SAS)	Jennifer Harney
16-Apr-14	Put the Cart behind the Horse – Pulling SAS Content into MS Excel using AMO – Joe Urbi (WellPoint)	Joe Urbi
21-May-14	PC2 (Enhanced Personal Health Care) at WellPoint – Ryan Leonard (WellPoint)	Joe Urbi
18-June-14	Blue Precision – Andrew Patrich (WellPoint)	Ram Kapu
9-July-14* *Date change	Grid Overview – Dwight Fowler (SAS)	Jenn Harney
20-Aug-14	Time Series Mapping with SAS in the Health Insurance Industry – Barbara Okerson (WellPoint)	Barbara Okerson
17-Sept-14	CI3 project – Joe Urbi (WellPoint)	Joe Urbi
15-Oct-14	Scheduling in SAS	Monika Singhal
19-Nov-14	Survival model using SAS Enterprise Miner - Praveen Saxena (WellPoint)	Srini Ambati
17-Dec-14	SAS and Hadoop- Elena Edelstein (WellPoint)	Elena Edelstein

- **2015 and beyond** - The Anthem SAS community is now a very strong community of users. We have close to 300+ attendees in the monthly café sessions. As we on-board users to SAS, it's a seamless way for new users to instantly become part of the SAS community at Anthem. The SAS café's now include very specific topics which relate to Anthem's business issues. This forum allows us to be extremely specific and granular with our topic selections. With the new shared model we continuously get feedback like the following:
 - o Mark's code just solved a problem I've been trying to debug for months. Thanks again.
 - o Thank you for hosting the SAS café every month. I learn something new each time, and this group/website has been very helpful.
 - o It's interesting to hear all the stuff that is going on within Anthem. This forum helps me to stay in the loop.

- 0 Having SAS and Anthem present together is a great teaching method. SAS sets the stage and then Anthem presents about specifics in the Anthem environment. Very useful. Very Helpful. Thank You.

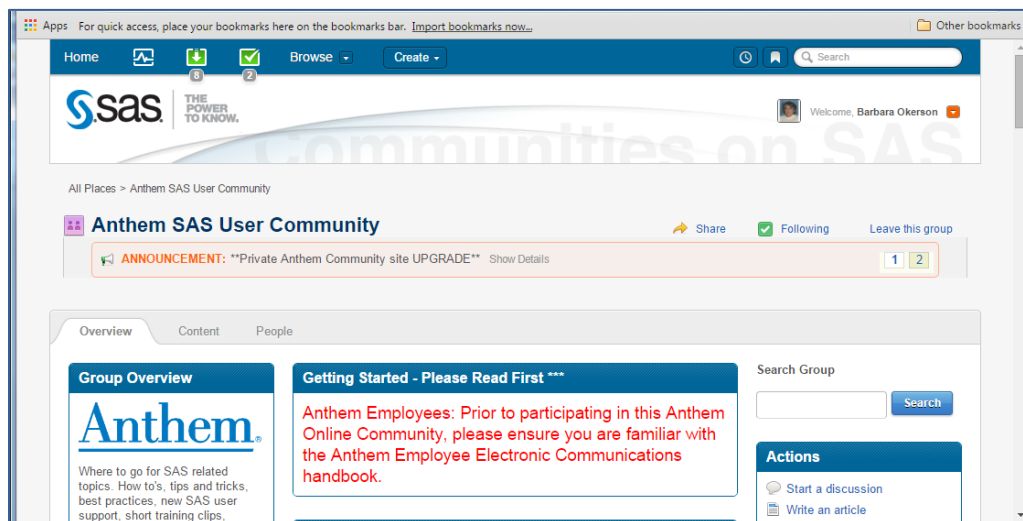
3. ANTHEM COMMUNITY SITE

The SAS Community Site at Anthem is a private site accessible only to Anthem SAS Users. The site was created with a two-fold purpose:

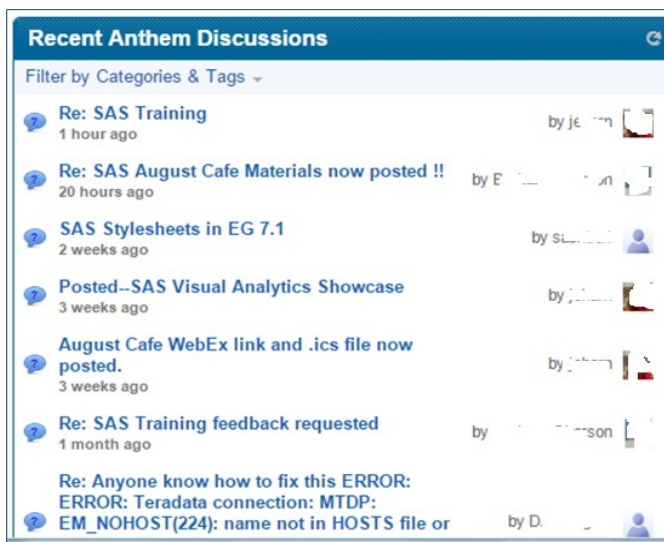
- Create a stronger sense of SAS community within Anthem
- Provide an area where Anthem users can go to find things SAS related in an effort to make them more effective and efficient.

The site includes the following:

- **Announcements**



- **Discussion board**



- **Documents**

The screenshot displays a web interface for the SAS support community. It features several sections:

- Public Discussion Forum**: Includes links to "SAS Support Communities" and "SAS Conference Dates and other Links".
- SAS Conference Dates and other Links**: Lists upcoming conferences such as "SAS Global Forum 2015", "PharmaSUG 2015", "DIA 2015", "WUSS 2015", "SESUG 2015", "MWSUG 2015", and "SAS Analytics 2015".
- GRID at Anthem**: Provides information about Grid Computing in SAS 9.4, including links to "What's new in SAS Grid Manager in 9.4", "Grid SAS Talk", "Grid Site", "White paper on writing parallel SAS code", "White Paper on the code analyzer", and "Grid Training recording".
- SAS Training**: Offers links for "Training Options", "Free Training Tutorials", "Free Customer Loyalty One to Many WebEx's", "Free 'Ask the Experts' content", and "Free ELearning instructions".
- Tech Support Tracks**: Includes a link to "View Your Tracks" to check the status of questions submitted to SAS Technical Support.
- Document Library**: Lists documents such as "One to Many's", "Presentations from SAS", and "SESUG 2014".
- Private 2015 SAS Café's for the Anthem User Community**: A section for private user community events.
- Monthly SAS Café's for the Anthem In House**: A section for monthly in-house user group meetings.

- **SAS Café recordings and materials**

The screenshot shows the "Private 2015 SAS Café's for the Anthem User Community" page. It includes the following content:

- Monthly SAS Café's for the Anthem In House Users Group**
- Learn a little more about the SAS technology at SAS Cafés for Anthem!**: A paragraph describing the purpose of the SAS Cafés, which are live web sessions held every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 2 O'clock EST, exclusive to Anthem. The objective is to provide an overview and exposure to the SAS software available to Anthem Employees as well as network and learn from other Anthem SAS users.
- Every 3rd Wednesday of Each Month at 2 O'clock pm EST.**
- Calendar of events**: A table listing the dates and topics of the SAS Cafés.

Date	Topic
15-July-15	SAS Macro: Beyond the Basics - Cynthia Johnson (SAS) / Mark H (Anthem) Cynthia's materials Mark's materials
19-Aug-15	Barbara's materials SAS to PDF: New HMO/Encounter Reporting Package for Clients (Anthem)

4. TRAINING

SAS and Anthem partner together to ensure the users receive the appropriate training and that the content is timely. By being very involved in the user community and knowing what the users are doing with SAS, it allows not only SAS but the leadership at Anthem to stay ahead of the curve in regards to training needs. Training is a vital component to overall success and having a partnership that allows SAS a view into the Anthem technology roadmap allows everyone to anticipate the training needs sooner rather than later. This partnership agreement allows the SAS Users at Anthem to take advantage of many e-learning courses available from SAS.

CONCLUSION

SAS Users at Anthem find the SAS In-House Users Group and the Anthem Community Site as valuable support tools towards maintaining a level of excellence in data analysis, client reporting and research. Through these vehicles of support, SAS users within the organization are given opportunities to participate, share and learn regardless of their level of expertise, SAS platform or physical location.

REFERENCES

Anthem Inc. <http://www.antheminc.com>.

SAS Institute Inc. <https://support.sas.com/usergroups/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the leaders of the Anthem SAS in-house user group and the leaders and members of the Anthem Client Advisory & Reporting Services division for their suggestions and support in producing this paper.

I would also like to thank Jennifer Harney from SAS for her continued support of SAS at Anthem.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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