

Chapter Spotlight: Madison Wisconsin

By Roxanne Miller, CBAP, Chapter President

On June 20, 2006, the Madison Wisconsin Chapter held its kick-off meeting—we can't believe it's been three years already! We started with 15 people, enough to sign the petition to create a chapter. Today, we have 62 members, and this is growing daily now that the Wisconsin Business Analyst Development Day (WI BADD) conference registration is open.

The main issue we had in founding the chapter was getting volunteers for the Board, but we dealt with this by twisting a few arms at the kick-off meeting!

The issues we're facing today are getting people to renew their chapter membership, finding quality speakers for meetings and finding companies to host meetings. The good news is that the annual WI BADD continues to draw people to join the chapter, as our members receive a nice discount on the event admission.

We use our Annual General Meeting (AGM) to spread the word about IIBA® and invite "interested" individuals to come and check us out. The meeting is FREE, and we treat it like a mini-conference, inviting local sponsors to display a booth. For the presentation portion of the meeting, we have a panel of CIOs speak about the BA role in their organizations. This draws a really big audience—187 attended in January 2009.

The biggest lesson we have learned is that the strength of a chapter is only as good as the weakest link. 80% of the volunteer work seems to get done by 20% of the chapter members. We have also found that the greatness of a chapter is its membership. Meetings are not successful because the Board members and other volunteers do a great job preparing for the meeting (although this helps). Rather, successful meetings are measured by the number of attendees and their evaluation results (when you can get them filled out).

Even when the "turnout" for a meeting is not what the Board hopes it to be, the people who are present reap the value of networking and learning. For example, we had a very low attendance at our July "outdoor picnic" meeting. Although it was unfortunate more people didn't come out, those of us who were there enjoyed a fun and relaxing evening of networking.

Our greatest success would have to be the unity of chapters across Wisconsin. The Southeast Wisconsin (Milwaukee area) and Madison chapters started up around the same time. Recognizing the value of working together, we formed a "reciprocal" agreement. Once the Northeast Wisconsin chapter formed in late 2008, they quickly joined the agreement.

The agreement allows "members" of the Wisconsin chapters to attend meetings and events hosted by any Wisconsin chapter at the "member" admission fee. This opens up the opportunity for business analysts to network on a broader scale than just their local chapter, and in a sense triples the opportunities to learn about business analysis.

For these very reasons, the Southeast Wisconsin and Madison chapters united and launched the Wisconsin Business Analyst Development Day. See our ad in the IIBA Newsletter, August 2009 issue.

The most important advice we would give to new chapters is to start working on chapter sponsors immediately. The sponsors help supply valuable financial support. Also, ask sponsors or local companies to host meetings onsite. That way, the chapter doesn't need to spend money on renting a meeting facility.

Looking to the future, Dawn Sharp, Chapter Secretary says: "I'd like to see attendance and participation up so the chapters would practically run themselves. I would like to get to the point where speakers are offering their services, businesses are offering their meeting rooms, and people are flooding the meetings. And, I'd like a linked network so we can have more chapter reciprocity so members can be tracked easily and can attend chapter meetings in other states."

From the Virtual Desk of Kathleen

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