

Starting a NAISG Chapter



Thank you for your interest in starting a NAISG chapter.

This document describes some of the items that you should consider as you plan your chapter's startup. These are based on my own personal experiences from the time that I first established the New England Information Security User Group in 2002.

I hope that you find this information useful. If you have any suggestions for items that I should add to or remove from this document, please do not hesitate to send them to me.

Yours,

Bradley Dinerman, President

National Information Security Group

1. **Membership** – There are many individuals that are interested in participating in a security group such as NAISG. What we need to do together is find the best way to reach as many as possible. Here are some ways that we can do that:
 - a. Locate technical, user groups in your area, perhaps using a Google search, or perhaps just by speaking with other individuals. Find out if these groups have electronic email lists, bulletin boards or other methods of networking to which you can make an announcement about the new group and its membership drive. Or, go to some of their meetings and spread the word. Pass out flyers if possible.
 - b. Many regions have technical or other publications which may include free calendar listings. Once you've decided on your first meeting date, submit the announcement to these publications so that their readers can find out about us.
 - c. Contact your local Microsoft office if there is one. Even though we are a vendor-neutral group, the reality is that Microsoft has the largest market share and can offer us ways to announce the group. For example, they have a monthly, regional newsletter in many areas to which user groups can post their meeting announcements. Take advantage of this. Do similar for other large corporations that may have an office in your area.
2. **Meeting Location** - Some organizations hold their meetings at a different location each month, but in our experience, this can cause confusion amongst the members. Select one location that will always be available on the scheduled time, and stick with it. That way members can just show up at the proper location and not have to worry that they're in the wrong place.

Solicit a local university or corporation that has meeting space for (potentially) one-hundred attendees in a theater format...not a classroom format. The space should have excellent audio-visual facilities that can handle one or more laptops for presentation purposes.

If you approach schools or universities for the space, offer to them that their students can attend the meetings and join the group, making this an educational experience for all involved.

If you approach corporations, explain to them that this will be free publicity for them.

(Here at the New England chapter, we hold our meetings at the regional Microsoft office. We've explained to them that our group is about security, and not just about Microsoft security. We've told them that there are occasional presentations about Linux or other non-Microsoft systems, and we've promised them that we won't bash Microsoft, but we will make honest assessments of their products, even if not always favorable. They have been very gracious with us and have let us use the facility free of charge for a number of years without any problems.)

Whether you hold your meetings at a corporation or an educational institution, make every attempt to find a location that is conveniently located and easy to access. Consider where your membership lives and works and keep in mind that they may have to struggle through rush-hour traffic to get to the meeting on time, and that they will be tired after the meeting and will not want to drive for hours to return home.

3. **Time for Formation** – We should anticipate that it will take one to three months from the time that you make a commitment to start a chapter until the actual kickoff meeting. This time will be spent on attracting members and sponsors, securing and inspecting a meeting location, and building a Web site.
4. **Funding the Group** – This is always the big question. NAISG takes pride that it does not charge any dues to its membership AND even feeds its members at meetings. We are purely sponsorship-driven. On our Web site, we describe various levels of sponsorship that we offer. These include:
 - a. **Pizza Sponsorship** – This is the most popular sponsorship that we offer. We ask a company to sponsor the pizza for a given meeting. In return, we offer the company a table outside the meeting area on which it can display literature, have demos of its products or do whatever it wants...within reason. Here in New England, our typical pizza cost is \$175 per meeting, but the pizza sponsorship is actually \$250. This gives us an extra \$75 per month to use for other purposes. (The sponsor is always made aware of this. We don't try to hide the fact that we're asking for more money than the pizza actually costs.)

- b. **Presenter's Sponsorship** – We ask the presenter to donate \$150 to the group, and explain to him/her that this is how we fund the group since our members attend free of charge. We only ask this if the presenter represents a company. We never ask this of individuals, non-profit organizations or government agencies.
- c. **Door Prize Sponsorship** – Although this does not help us financially, many companies are more than willing to make copies of their software or publications available as door prizes.

NAISG has a number of companies that have provided presentations and sponsorships in its database. Many of them are willing to sponsor meetings of other chapters, even if the chapters are across the country. In addition, the companies are often willing to provide presentations and will travel to your location just for that purpose.

If you know of companies in your area that might be willing to provide sponsorships, then you should try to locate the appropriate individual at that company and introduce yourself. Companies that have products related to information security would be the logical choice for sponsors, but you might be pleasantly surprised that even Home Depot or similar companies would be willing to help out. And as the chapter grows, they will start to find you instead of the other way around! (And of course, please feel free to let other chapters know of these sponsors' interest so that we can work with them as well.)

- 5. **Finding Presenters** – As the chapter lead, you know your region the best. Therefore, you and your advisory council (see section "Local Advisory Council") should consider which companies are able to provide presentations. Remember, one of the terms of the NAISG charter is that presentations should almost always be issues-focused, rather than having a presentation from Vendor X about their Product Y. Of course, once in a while it's OK to bend this rule, as long as you notify your membership that this will be a vendor/product presentation.

NAISG also maintains an archive of past presenters. Many of these companies or individuals have expressed willingness to travel to other locations in order to give presentations because they were so pleased with the technical background and enthusiasm of the membership. Therefore, you can feel free to take advantage of this "speaker's bureau."

6. **National Advisory Council**

As the leader of your chapter, you will automatically become a member of the National Advisory Council for NAISG. This group will communicate through an email distribution list on matters that are relevant to all chapters. In addition, chapter leaders can reach out to the other leaders for advice on presentation topics, sponsorship information or

any other NAISG-related questions. In addition, NAISG will pass along information and announcements to its chapters through this channel.

7. Local Advisory Council

NAISG recommends that each chapter leader maintain an advisory council. Although it is very possible for you to maintain this group without any outside assistance, the suggestions and support of others can lead to a more effective organization. In addition, the members of your advisory council can help you to run meetings, freeing up your own time for networking purposes.

You should consider who you trust to be on your advisory council, keeping in mind their background, availability, enthusiasm and even maturity level. NAISG recommends between three and five members on your council, and you can provide the members with honorary titles such as Social Activities Coordinator or Meeting Facilitator to give them a stronger sense of involvement.

8. Your Personal Time Commitment

A well-run chapter will not require an unreasonable amount of time on a day-to-day basis. The activities that will typically require your time include soliciting sponsors and presenters, as well as moderating the monthly meetings. Depending on the composition and responsibilities of your advisory council, other tasks to consider include maintaining and updating your chapter's Web site, managing finances and periodically reviewing the NDRs from your membership newsletter so that the distribution list will always be considered up to date and provide a realistic assessment of membership size.