Inside Citrix chapter twenty six – The one about the Citrix community

The community surrounding Citrix is a powerful one: some of the brightest minds in the IT industry are involved. During the last three years or so I have been privileged to have met quite a few, though far from all of course, while visiting and presenting at various venues around the world. Although I am still fairly new to the scene, it already feels like I have been a part of the 'family' for at least ten years. I guess that is what happens when you mingle with the right kinds of people.

Besides the wealth of knowledge these guys and gals bring to the table (as you wouldn't believe), which is truly inspiring and educational at the same time, you are guaranteed to have a great time if you hang and go out with the Citrix posse, since having fun is their number one rule. Now when I mention the 'Citrix community' I am not talking about 5, 10 or 25 individuals in particular: no way. I am talking about you and thousands of other tech enthusiasts all over the world. And you can like VMware and Microsoft as well if you want, that's ok – with most, anyway.

Everybody I have met up until now has been very kind and most of all helpful. But I guess it's our genes; we all like to share what we know and/or have learned from others, right? Me included. I already have made some great new friends along the way and hopefully many more will follow in the years to come!

myCUGC

Last year Citrix launched their latest community initiative, and with great success, I might add. They named it myCUGC a.k.a. the Citrix User Group Community. Their website www.mycugc.org is their main hub and from there you will be able to connect with all who share the same love for the Citrix portfolio as you do.

There are over 8000 registered members already (since May 2015) and I'm guessing that by the time you are reading this book they will have neared or surpassed the 10,000 mark. The main forum is active all through the week: CTP, Citrix Technology Professionals share their thoughts from time to time, as well as other community members in the form of the community roundtable, blog posts, a SIG (Special Interest Group) or by hosting a webinar (which are plentiful as well) and so on: lots to see and hear.

It is also the place where new CUGs are formed and started. It is as simple as starting a new forum thread (there is a separate 'Group starting' forum section for this, by the way) and ask who is interested in starting and organising a new Citrix User Group.

And I can tell you, in most cases it took just a few weeks to get from a forum post / request to an official first, in-person, meeting with in most cases at least 20 to 25 folks showing up. At the time of writing around 45 new groups have been successfully formed already. They also have a central agenda hosting all upcoming myCUGC events.

And of course there is (a lot) more to it than the above, but I guess you will have to find out for yourself. Go over to myCUGC.com register and learn, help others, state your opinion and have some fun! See you there. To round things up, here are some quotes from the myCUGC team:

We are the new Citrix User Group Community

For users, by users, we are dedicated to helping our members excel. Our members are technology professionals interested in maximising the value of Citrix and partner products. Together we aim to be a source of high-value content and knowledge sharing, an online and in-person hub for professional connections, and a voice of influence with Citrix.

Mission

The Citrix User Group Community (CUGC) is a community of technology professionals. We strive to be the voice of Citrix technology users and managers. We are dedicated to helping our members and their businesses excel through education, knowledge sharing, networking and influence.

Benefits of Membership

We are just getting started, but as CUGC grows we will focus on providing a global network of users and experts who share solutions and insights. We are creating online communities and local groups so you can connect with technology professionals tackling the same challenges you face. We will offer exclusive content, such as recordings of Citrix Synergy Geek Speak sessions, as well as discounts on education and events.

Citrix

Our partnership with Citrix empowers CUGC. It provides us with access to Citrix content and executives. Citrix has provided invaluable support to get us started, and we will work closely with Citrix to plan events and collaborate on technical education and insights.

E2EVC

It stands for Experts-2-Experts Virtualization Conference, and I can tell you it is a special one. To give you an idea of what to expect when attending, as a presenter or in the audience, I'll share a section of one of my reviews that I wrote after attending E2EVC in Barcelona back in 2014.

What to expect

So you registered. First of all you just saved yourself a ton of money: just compare the prices with some of the other IT conferences, it's at least 3 to 400 euros cheaper. And if you are a so-called early bird, they will throw in some extra discounts as well, and believe me, it all adds up! What about the venues? Awesome: During 2014 I have been to both European events, one in Brussels and just recently in Barcelona. Every year they strike down in one, or multiple of Europe's major cities.

As a bonus, and if possible, they also organise a sight-seeing bus tour on Saturday, free of charge of course. And if you're smart you'll book one or two extra nights and go out to see the city on your own, there's always lots to do and see.

Throughout the day you'll be able to get free coffee, sandwiches at lunchtime, and of course sponsored free beers and pizza during Geek Speak near the end of the event. Then there are the sponsors: they always come up with something extra as well, free drinks, food, a good party, never a dull moment, because, as we all know, it's not just about the technology. That's what makes it special as well, it is really community-driven, and it will be hard, near to impossible even, to find a former attendee who isn't taken by the E2E virus. Once it's done: they all keep coming back for more.

The presenters

What about them? It could be you onstage. I'm serious: just pick a subject and let Alex or one of the other E2EVC team members know that you might be interested in a presentation slot and they'll get back to you before you know it. That's the nice thing about E2E, the presenters as well as the content are very diverse, and the audience is also very forgiving and thoughtful. Just taking on the podium is an accomplishment in itself and everybody appreciates that, so there is no need to be intimidated by whoever might be in the audience. You need help, just ask! Altogether, the presentations are of a high standard no matter how you look at it.

During the rest of the day

All sessions get recorded and will be made accessible a few weeks or months after the event has taken place. On the first day all attendees will gather in one big conference room, which will stay that way for the first three to four sessions after Alex has done his introduction. After lunch, and for the following two days as well, the big room will be split up into two smaller rooms, so that there will be two sessions to choose from at any given time. After each session there will be a ten-minute break and during lunchtime, when applicable, Alex will make his announcements like he did in Barcelona regarding the agenda for next year. The day usually starts at 9:30 and will last until around six o'clock. Although with Alex you never know: he tends to be very flexible when it comes to the daily schedules :-) From there you are on your own, but normally groups go out for dinner and drinks and everybody is free to join: good times.

The team and some history

Here's a quote from their website: "The E2EVC Virtualization Conference is a non-commercial, virtualization community Event. Our main goal is to bring the best virtualization experts together to exchange knowledge and to establish new connections. E2EVC is a weekend crammed with presentations, Master Classes and discussions delivered by both virtualization vendors product teams and independent experts. Started in 2003 with just 4 people and after 23 very successful events grown to a well-recognised event with over 130 attendees. Our conference has taken place in cities such as Munich, London, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin, Frankfurt, Dublin, Paris, Los Angeles, Nice, Lisbon, Rome, Hamburg and Vienna."

Alex Juschin @E2EVC is the event organiser, however, a great deal of the work is done by the Cooper sisters, Clare @Clarecoops9 and Orla @Orlacoops. Without the sisters the event wouldn't be what it is today, according to Alex himself.

Grandfathers

This needs some clarification; E2EVC has done over 30 events in total already, meaning that there are some E2E veterans among the audience. People who have attended at least ten or more events in total are known as the grandfathers of E2EVC. The active grandfathers – there are passive ones as well – act as tour guides for new attendees: you can task them anything you want to know about the event and they'll tell you. During Alex's introduction he will ask them to raise their hands or stand up so you know who you can walk up to if you have any questions. A great idea, if you ask me.

The networking game

Alex is very big on networking, he believes, and I think most will agree that meeting new people and making friends, while having a drink and sharing thoughts, for example, is one of the most important things an event like E2EVC should be about. That's one of the main reasons why he came up with the networking game. Once he's done talking about why meeting new people, sharing and exchanging knowledge, helping each other etc. is so important, he'll step aside and give the audience five minutes to meet up with as many people as possible. Just walk up to somebody you don't know, shake hands and introduce yourself, that's basically it. Once the five minutes are over everybody sits down and Alex steps up again: who knows ten names? he will ask. Ok, nine? Eight? Seven? Until somebody says, yes, I know seven names. He or she will list the names of the people they just met and that's the first prize gone, which usually is a free ticket to the next event, including transportation. The people who were named all receive 50% off registration for next event. It's really good fun!

Some fact and figures

Since the event is already in its eleventh year there are some cool facts and figures I collected, with the help of Alex of course: I used these for one of my own presentations earlier this year. This also gives you a good idea of the knowledge present at any given E2EVC event: it's the place to absorb information and meet some amazing people at the same time, having a drink while you're at it.

As mentioned, it's an extremely social event. The presentations are of a high quality. At any given E2EVC event you'll probably find around 25 to 30 MVPs, vExperts and CTPs: pretty impressive, right? It takes place from Friday till Sunday, so it won't take you too much trouble to get that one day off work. It's non-commercial, meaning cheap! You'll get to visit some amazing cities. There will be (free) beer and sponsored events throughout the conference. Max 150 attendees per event to guarantee quality and to keep networking easy. You'll meet people from around the world, 15 to 20 different countries per event. The combined E2EVC audience has about 65,000 Twitter followers, which take care of around 700,000 customers worldwide, can you say experience? Sight-seeing bus tours. Free shuttle service from the airport. Their own YouTube channel with over 40,000 views already. Loved by all community members! The

opportunity to learn about new and existing technologies, meet new people, make friends and grow your professional network. Present a session of your own, and much, much more!

Conclusion

So if you are an IT enthusiast and want to spend some of your time learning, meeting up with some of the IT rock stars, having a good time, drinking a beer, enjoying the city, or maybe your ambition is to present yourself? Then book your ticket to one of the next E2EVC events now: I promise you won't regret it. And did I mention that Alex is an awesome guy? Thanks again, Alex!

The Citrix Technology Professionals

An elite group of technology professionals annually elected by Citrix. This group consists of 50 people max. Again, it's special. Most, if not all, of the CTPs are real community tigers and as such have shared tons of valuable information throughout the years: their level of knowledge, especially as a group is almost endless. Needless to say, I am very proud to be (or have been) part of this amazing group of people as of February 2016. If you would like to know more about the CTP programme in general, how to apply for the programme, or perhaps have a look at the list of current awardees, go here:

https://www.citrix.com/blogs/2016/02/04/welcome-ctp-class-of-2016/

It includes all the proper links.

The Citrix Technology Advocates

A group similar to the Technology Professionals, though more focused on spreading the word and less on interacting with the internal Citrix product teams. I say less, because you will still be able to get your opinion heard. I was a member of the founding group from where the program started. During the beginning we met twice a months (online) to go over ideas and thoughts on how to shape the program. We brain stormed about what the main focus should be, member benefits, how to become a CTA, what is expected of potential candidates, how to rank applicants, share information, and much more.

Of course, when we started out, the program needed a name, which is also something we came up with as part of these sessions. I'm (kind of) proud to be able to mention that I came up with the CTA abbreviation, which ended up getting the most votes from the entire team, hence the name Citrix Technology Professional.

On a more personal note, After being a CTP for three years I've decided it's time to move on and make room for others. I voluntarily gave up my CTP seat and internally applied to become a CTA instead. By the time you read this it will be clear if my request succeeded.

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Community references

Presenters (and presentations), bloggers and book authors, forums and webcasts, podcasts, webinars and videos etc. the Citrix community has it all. And while the Citrix community consists of thousands of IT enthusiasts: there is always a group that will lead the pack when it comes to sharing information. Here I would like to share a list of publicly available resources that I have come to learn and love over the years: hopefully you guys will benefit from it in the same way as I have done in the past and present. Please forgive me if I have left one or two out.

Podcasts

Ask Eric: Eric (www.xenappblog.com/askeric) gets a lot of questions by email, which can be hard to cope with, especially since a lot of the questions are the same. Here he came up with the concept where people can verbally record a question, which will then be answered by Eric himself or another field expert on the matter. Eric also offers a whole bunch of CBT training videos (free and paid services) on his website www.xenappblog.com.

Login TechCast (https://soundcloud.com/logintechcast) Hosted by Sander Noordijk and Eric van Klaveren. These guys came out of nothing to becoming a big hit in the Netherlands. Most of their episodes are in Dutch, though they do some shows in English depending on their guest (s). At the time of writing I've been a guest on their show twice, which was really enjoyable. I've also come to know them both a bit better in the past couple of months, and I'm glad that I did. They combine a good sense of humor with knowledge of the industry.

FronlineChatter: Frontline Chatter (www.frontlinechatter.com) is a community podcast focusing on the End User Computing (EUC) market and it's community. Every fortnight, Frontline chatter will bring you the latest news in EUC and interviews with the interesting and (at times) crazy individuals in the EUC community.

EUC podcast: The End User Computing Podcast (www.eucpodcast.com) is a community-driven podcast for IT professionals. The content covered on the EUC Podcast is primarily geared toward community support and enablement for application, desktop, and server virtualisation technologies. Comments and community interactions are strongly encouraged to keep the authors honest and non-biased toward the vendors and technologies being covered.

Bloggers: In my book I made a collection of well-known community bloggers of which I thought they would be worth sharing. However, I'm working on a new list. The community, especially around Citrix has grown significantly and I want to try and come up with a killer list of community participants. So stay tuned, I will publish the list shortly, first things first.

Team RGE

TeamRGE (Remote Graphics Experts) is a community group of industry experts. It consists of Shawn Bass, Ruben Spruijt and Benny Tritsch with focus on remoting graphics for virtual desktops and applications. The goal of this group is to share unbiased and independent knowledge via blog posts, white papers, videos and presentations at local and international

events. Visit their website over at www.teamrge.com and download their whitepaper: trust me, you will not regret it.

NetScaler E-Book

Go over to the website of Marius Sandbu (he is a true blogging machine) and make sure to subscribe to his NetScaler E-Book project. Here is what he has to say about it: For a couple of years now I have been writing for Packt Publishing and authored some books on NetScaler which has been fun and a good learning experience. The problem with that is…

These projects take a lot of time! And the problem these days is that the releases are becoming more and more frequent and the same goes for other underlying infrastructures, which makes it cumbersome to have up-to date content available.

This is the first step in an attempt to create a full (free) NetScaler e-Book, for this moment in time I decided to focus on Optimizing NetScaler traffic features. Hopefully other people will tag along as well, since there are so many bright minds in this community! You'll find him on: www.msandbu.wordpress.com.

The Remote Display Analyzer

I already highlighted this one earlier. Go over to www.rdanalyzer.com and try out their free version. It will make you want to user their sponsored version. Use the Remote Display Analyzer to easily analyze the result of your configuration and change settings on the fly to assess the best possible end-user experience for every user, on every device, on every location.

The end

Wow, here I will assume that you have made it all the way through my book: I'm impressed. Hopefully you have found what I had to share of some value and you can use it to your advantage. This is what I know and found out regarding the FMA and related technologies. I know that there is (much) more to tell, but I thought this would make a more then appropriate introduction.

To finalize, I would like to thank you very much for your interest, purchase and reading my book. It took me quite some effort to put together: a special experience, for sure. If you have any questions, suggestions and/or other remarks you would like to share, please do not hesitate and let me know by dropping me a line on basvankaam.com.

Thank you,

Bas.