



The SolidWorks User Group Network User Group Starter Kit

Presented by: The SolidWorks User Group Network (SWUGN) Committee

User groups are a valuable resource to all members of the SolidWorks community, and provide a forum for sharing information and real-world experiences that help make us all more productive.

The SolidWorks User Group Network (SWUGN) Starter Kit has been revised and updated to provide more information to new group leaders. The “Getting Started” section will help guide you through that very important first meeting, and provides some ideas for meeting topics, marketing your group, and the steps required to get your group started on the right track. There are sections that cover SWUGN programs developed to help your group grow and thrive. We’ve also included some sample agendas, topic ideas, and some templates to help market your group to users in your area. Check out the Frequently Asked Questions for quick facts and answers to questions you might have about establishing a SolidWorks User Group.

About SWUGN

The SolidWorks National User Group Network (SWUGN) committee was formed with the express purpose of establishing more user groups, to become a central voice for local user groups, and to develop tools and materials that can be used to help get your group started and to grow. The committee is comprised of SolidWorks users from around the country who have experience leading a SolidWorks user group, and enjoys considerable support from SolidWorks Corporation. The SWUGN committee hosts the annual SWUGN meeting of user group leaders and members each year at the SolidWorks World Conference.

The committee would like to hear your ideas regarding a national body and how we can serve your needs at the local level. Please use the contact information below to introduce yourself and become acquainted with your regional representative. The SWUGN committee member for your region can help guide you through some of the difficulties of starting a user group, and will always be available to answer questions or suggest ideas. Getting to know your regional representative is a good first step as you begin forming a SolidWorks user group.

Best Regards
The SWUGN committee

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Getting Started

The following pages provide some steps you can take to get your group started, and get that first, and very important meeting scheduled. SWUGN offers many tools and programs for your group, and this information is updated regularly. Use this document as a guide to get started, and visit the SWUGN website at www.swugn.org for more information.

Getting your group started is as easy as scheduling the first meeting. First, you should select a date, time and location. If you do not have a facility to host a User Group meeting, we can help you select one. SWUGN will cover reasonable costs for meeting space, audiovisual equipment if needed, and light food and beverage for your meeting.

Next, you want to define an agenda that will be engaging to your members. This could be a specific topic of discussion, a member case study, tips & tricks or a hands-on session. SolidWorks can also provide a representative to discuss certain topics and to meet with your users. To schedule a SolidWorks representative, you should notify us at least 6 weeks in advance.

If you need assistance in sending out an invitation, SWUGN can help. Post your meeting notice on the SWUGN web pages, along with the proposed agenda. SWUGN will arrange to have an email sent to all the SolidWorks users within your area. Users interested in attending will respond directly to the user group contact so that you can keep track of all those who register. You should keep this information in order to build your own list for future mailings.

SWUGN can also provide a limited amount of giveaway items.

Remember these key items and timing to help your User Group be a successful one!

- Select a date & time (give yourself at least 6 weeks)
- Select a location – 4 weeks before the event
- Define agenda
- Secure speakers
- Post your meeting information on the SWUGN website
 - Request an emailed invitation be sent
 - Request giveaway items if needed
- Contact ALL of the SolidWorks resellers in your area (SWUGN can help with this)
- Order AV, food & beverage – 1 week before the event



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SolidWorks User Group Meeting Planning Checklist

Print this checklist as a guide to preparing for your first meeting¹. Note the specific lead times for acquiring prize giveaways and meeting notices from SWUGN.

(✓)	Lead Time	Description	Notes:
	6 weeks	Determine meeting date/time	
	4 weeks	Select meeting facility	
	4 weeks	Solicit guest speaker(s)	
	4 weeks	Create meeting agenda	
	4 weeks	Post meeting information to SolidWorks web site	
	2 weeks	Finalize agenda	
	2 weeks	Send out e-mail reminder	
	1-2 weeks	Order snacks, beverages	
	1 weeks	Confirm snacks, room reservation, etc.	
	0-1 weeks	Compile attendee list, future topic ideas, charter, agenda	
	0-1 weeks	Print-out agendas, hand-outs	
	Day of meeting	Print, post parking signs, post agenda	
	Day of meeting	Set-up computer, overhead display, chairs, tables, etc.	
	Post meeting	Send out meeting minutes	

¹ There are more templates and guides available on-line. Visit the User Group Support section of the SWUGN website at www.swugn.org



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SolidWorks User Group (sample) Agenda

Use the sample agenda as a guide to scheduling your meetings. Note that some tasks will only need to be completed at your initial meeting.

- 5:30pm – 6:00pm Registration, food, networking
- 6:00pm – 6:15pm Opening Remarks
- 6:15pm – 6:45pm Discussion:
Establishment of User Group Charter:²
Elections of officers:
Open discussion with Officers:
Direction and structure of the group
Name the User Group
- 6:45pm – 7:00pm Break
- 7:00pm – 8:00pm Presentation: - Name of presenter & company
(This should contain some background information on the speaker and their involvement with SolidWorks as a user).
- 8:00pm – 8:45pm Ask the Experts:
Open Q & A
(You may recruit resellers in your area to address this or have an open discussion amongst the users)
- 8:45pm – 9:00pm Wrap-up
Prize giveaways, topic ideas for next meeting

(Approximate date of next meeting)

Note: Many users groups host meetings in the early evening to increase attendance.

² Some groups choose to replace a charter document with a simple mission statement or principal. If you decide to file a formal charter, samples are available on the SWUGN website.



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SolidWorks User Group Meeting Topics

It's a good idea to solicit ideas from your attendees during and after your first meeting. For the initial meeting, choose topics that are of general interest to all SolidWorks users. Scheduling topics that users are interested in increases the chance that they will attend subsequent meeting. Here are some ideas to start with.

Help choose the topics for future meetings. Please rank each topic in order of preference, with 1 being most interesting to you, 4 being least.					
Topic ideas	Rank	1	2	3	4
Sheet metal					
Weldments					
Configurations					
Data exchange					
Customization (VB, Macros, etc)					
Libraries					
Molding					
Castings					
Surfacing, Shapes, Lofting					
Rapid Prototyping					
Hardware, Peripherals, Drivers, Benchmarks					
Third Party Applications					
Workarounds, Bugs, Enhancements					
Certification Test					
What's New					
Drafting Techniques					
Migration from AutoCAD					
File management, Concurrent Engineering, PDM					
Best Modeling Practices					
Parametrics, Design Tables, Equations					
Large Assemblies					
Bi-Directional AutoCAD Translation					
Other (specify)					
Other (specify)					



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Marketing Your User Group

Starting a group and having a meeting is just the first step in creating a strong, independent local user group. Even with help from SWUGN and SolidWorks Corporation, there are still some things you will have to do to make more users aware of the group. SolidWorks resellers can be great resource for reaching potential group members. Create a form like the example below and provide it to local resellers to distribute with their training materials. You'll save the reseller some work, and the message will be delivered to every SolidWorks user that gets training. Remember, you can download original forms and templates from the SWUGN website.



(User Group Name) SolidWorks Users group

Congratulations on your purchase of SolidWorks! Now that you are a SolidWorks user, take advantage of the benefits offered by joining **(User Group Name)**. Your annual membership fee of just \$XX gets you:

- **4 user meetings per year**
 - Free food/drinks
 - Informative guest speakers
 - Q&A, tips and tricks
 - Peer networking
 - Great prize giveaways
- **Web site access – member section**
 - Free model downloads
 - Favorite tips by and for our users
- **E-mail discussion forum**
 - E-mail access to all **(User Group Names)** members for help and advice regarding SolidWorks.

For more information on becoming a member of, visit our web site at **(web site address here)**, or contact:

Contact Name
Company Name
City, State
Email address

Contact Name
Company Name
City, State
Email address



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SWUGN Programs for Your Group

The SWUGN committee, in conjunction with SolidWorks Corporation, develops programs to help user group leaders provide quality meetings for attendees. The SWUGN “Content Database” and the SWUGN “Partner Participation Program” are two such programs.

The SWUGN Website

The newly redesigned SWUGN website is your headquarters for news and information, content for your meetings, and offers forums to discuss user group business and issues with fellow group leaders from around the world. The SWUGN website is updated regularly with new tools and programs for your group. Bookmark www.swugn.org and visit often.

The SWUGN Content Database

The “Content Database” is a collection of technical presentations, white papers, contest ideas, and group projects that you can use when you need meeting ideas. These presentations are developed by SolidWorks technical staff, SWUGN committee members, and SolidWorks users from around the country. You can download content from a special area of the SolidWorks website; contact your regional SWUGN representative for details.

The SWUGN Partner Participation Program

The “Partner Participation Program” connects SolidWorks partner companies with local SolidWorks user groups. These companies have provided information to help you decide which companies to invite to give product presentations to your group. The database contains contact information for participating companies, products and/or services represented, and a ratings system to help you choose the right partner companies to fit your group’s requirements. Contact your regional representative for more details.

Special Thanks

We would like to thank you for your hard work and dedication to SolidWorks users. Running a group isn’t easy, and takes much of your valuable time. The members of the SWUGN committee are dedicated to helping your group, and making sure that group leaders have the necessary tools to effectively lead a user group. Take the time to get to know your regional representative. SWUGN committee members will contact you on a regular basis to make sure we are serving you properly. The interaction between the committee and user group leaders will help to make SolidWorks user groups a valuable resource for all SolidWorks users.

Let us know what we can do for you.



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SWUGN FAQ for User Groups

1. How much of my time will leading a SolidWorks User Group take?

Running a successful user group will definitely take some of your time. The two to three weeks leading up to a scheduled meeting will likely be your busiest time. Organizing a volunteer committee to help with arranging meeting space, food, and/or presentations can take some of the burden off of the group leader.

2. What are the best topics to present at a user group meeting?

The best topics are the ones that interest your members. Poll your attendees at each meeting and plan technical content that matches their needs and wishes. There are example surveys that you can download from the SWUGN website – www.swugn.org

3. What role should resellers have in our user group?

SolidWorks resellers in your area can help in many ways. First, they are your best resource for finding new members. Ask the local resellers to add your meeting information to their newsletters, website, or other means of communication to their customers. Some resellers will also send an email blast to their customers. Second, local resellers can sometimes provide technical experts for group presentations. Make sure to ask nicely, don't favor one reseller over another, and give them plenty of time to avoid scheduling conflicts.

4. Should we allow SolidWorks Partner companies to participate in group meetings?

It's entirely up to you and your members. SolidWorks Partners have some of the very best add-on products and/or services available for SolidWorks (or else they wouldn't BE partners). Most Partner companies will present very good, technically oriented demos of their products at your meeting. SWUGN offers the Partner Participation Program specifically to help foster relationships between user groups and Partner companies. Contact your regional SWUGN rep for details.

5. How often should we meet?

Most local group chapters meet quarterly. Regularly scheduled meetings allow your members to plan accordingly, and will insure good attendance.

6. How do I get more members for my group?

Advertise, advertise, and advertise. Use public newsgroups and discussion forums, send meeting notices to on-line technical publications like Cadalyst, Solid Solutions, and Ten Links. Ask your members to spread the word at work, and make sure you develop a good relationship with local resellers. Keep a good membership database, adding any new users that attend your meetings.

Got a question? Got an answer? Send your questions, comments, and suggestions about this manual to usergroups@solidworks.com