Routing Area Chairs' Training

Driving and Judging Consensus

Wednesday 27th August 2014

Meeting Schedule

Recorded Session
- Scope and Objectives [10 : 10/90]
- Overview and Principles (Pete Resnick) [25 : 35/90]
- Questions and Discussion [10 : 45/90]

Closed Meeting
- Further Discussion [10 : 55/90]
- Case Histories [20 : 75/90]
- Closing discussion [10 : 85/90]

Wrap-up and plans for next meeting [5 : 90/90]

Scope and Objectives

- We want to develop a shared understanding of the nuances of consensus amongst our chairs
  - Discussing your experiences and opinions is critical to this

- Driving consensus is a critical part of a chair's job
- Judging consensus is obviously important
- Consensus is not an easy concept
  - It is not well understood even by long-time IETFers
  - If this didn't need judgement we would have already written code

- We want to give you background and support
  - What is consensus?
  - How to work towards consensus?
  - How to handle difficult cases?

- Pete Resnick
  - RFC 7282 "On Consensus and Humming in the IETF"

Overview and Principles of Consensus

- What are the objectives of the IETF?
- How does the IETF make decisions?
- When do chairs need to know about consensus in their WGs?
- Why aren't there clear engineering rules for judging consensus?
  - Can't we just vote?
- What does "rough consensus" mean?
  - What percentage of opinion qualifies?

Pete Resnick

Judging Consensus

- What questions should I ask to find out if there is consensus?
  - Can I verify my understanding of consensus?
  - When and how to use hums?
    - But you can't hum in email
  - Ask for showstoppers rather than asking for agreement
  - Avoid votes
- Do all issues have to be addressed?
  - Drive issues to closure
  - What does "in the rough" mean?
  - Chairs can use their technical judgement
- How do I know it when I see it?
  - Counting people, weighing opinions, hearing concerns
  - By the time you need to ask, you should already know

Pete Resnick

Advanced Considerations

- How can I make consensus happen?
  - How and when to drive consensus
  - Who else can drive consensus?
- Active consensus versus apathy
  - Is it just the authors, or do other people care?
  - Soliciting reviews from individuals (information versus interest)
  - Failure to reach consensus is not failure
- Breaking deadlocks
  - Even splits of opinion – just pick one! (flip a coin and handle the consequences)
  - Heated disagreements might never come to consensus
  - Failure to reach consensus is not failure

Pete Resnick

Tricky Issues

- Manipulation and blocking of consensus
  - What do people try to do?
  - How can you resist?
- Asking for help?
  - When might you need help?
    - Recusal
  - Whom can you ask?
  - What can you ask them to do?

Pete Resnick

Questions and Discussion

- You are still being recorded!

Closed Meeting : Not Recorded

- Any further comments and discussions?
- Case Histories…
  - Michael and Ines (draft-thubert-6man-flowlabel-for-rpl)
    - Repeated objections
    - General apathy
    - Last-minute alternative solutions
    - How/if to judge last call consensus?
  - Andy (PWE3)
    - When a WG is winding down and energy is failing
    - Is lack of energy equal to apathy?
  - Jeff (BFD)
    - When people move on
    - When late stages of an I-D take a long, long time
    - When we wait for implementations
  - Any others?

Final Thoughts

- Your chance to share!
  - What don't you like about…
    - Consensus in the IETF
    - The way participants approach consensus
    - The way other chairs handle consensus
    - How ADs expect you to report consensus
- Any other thoughts

Organizational Details

- Was this useful?
  - Subject matter?
  - Organization?
- Next Meeting
  - Wednesday 17th September
    - Same time (11am EST)
  - Chairs chat and discussion
    - Send topics if you want to be on the agenda
    - If you don't send ideas we may pick on you
    - Possible topics...
      - How to plan meeting agendas
      - What should meeting minutes include
      - Coordinating YANG models across the Area
      - How to get support as a chair
- Next training topic will be "People management: how to say no"