

Symposium presentation 9 May 2019

The switch to active learning through Interest Groups.

I will take you through some background as to why Grant asked us to do this presentation. Pat will then show you some of our interest groups and how you can benefit by tapping into Nelson's comprehensive website. Then, I hope we will have enough time still to take some questions.

In 2017 SeniorNet Nelson recorded income from Learner Hours of \$2040.00. We were 17th out of all Learning Centres in NZ.

In 2018 SeniorNet Nelson recorded income from Learner hours of \$4087.00. Double the previous year.

We were **first** out of all the Learning Centres in NZ.

What changed between 2017 and 2018? How did we double our Learner Hours?

But first.....How does SeniorNet Nelson describe an Interest group? Let me give you some of the reasons people like Interest groups. This can be found on our SeniorNet Nelson website.

- Some people say they don't want to have to enrol in classes in advance. They prefer to decide on the day whether or not to attend an Interest Group.
- Then there is the relaxed style of learning - if you don't want to contribute anything there is no pressure to do so, you are welcome to sit and listen.
- You don't need any particular skills or abilities to attend an Interest Group - just come along. There is no chance of feeling foolish or uninformed - all our presenters have learned from the ground up and they cater for all levels of knowledge. They are extra good at explaining in layman's language.

- Then again, peer learning is hugely popular - where one member shows another or others something helpful - people love that. It's great to help somebody and it's lovely to have help from another member - so easy.
- Contributing to the Group is most enjoyable for many - it's fun to air your knowledge and help others succeed. But sitting there and soaking up the knowledge is absolutely fine too.
- The reasonable cost is a good reason to attend an Interest Group too. It is only \$5 for the session, almost all of which are two hours long, and the entrance charge includes a cuppa afterwards.
- Groups are an excellent place to catch up with other members, enjoy some fellowship and make new friends. Groups operate in any weather and the people are friendly and welcoming.
- Knowledge is at the centre of Group Learning. Generally there is more information available for you to read quietly later. This can be a hand-out on the day or it may be a written report emailed afterwards or wonderful links on our website for your learning pleasure. Some of them are links to helpful video tutorials which you can enjoy at your own pace. Everyone comes away feeling they have learned a lot.
- All the information delivered at Interest Groups ends up on our website and there is a goldmine of information there. Go here <https://www.seniornetnelson.org.nz/events/all-interest-groups.html> then click an Interest Group Title.
- Demand-driven content is another reason to attend a Group. Want to know something but it has not been covered? Ask the Convenor if the topic could be discussed at a future meeting....easy. Groups give people what they want.

We look forward to catching up with you soon!

Question: How many Learning Centres have Interest groups?

Question: How many have more than two?

Question: How many have more than four?

SeniorNet Nelson has EIGHT!!!

The question you are probably asking right now is “How can a Learning Centre do justice to eight Interest groups.”

Well..... Here they are.

Digital Imagery Group. We call it the DIG group. Our first Interest group, formed in 2006. That’s 13 years ago.

MAC Interest group. Formed in 2010

Technical Interest group Formed in February 2011. This group was reinvented as The Media group in 2018.

iPad Interest group. Formed in 2012

Android Interest group. Formed in 2013

Coffee and Learn together group. Formed in September 2017

And most recently. Coffee + Apple group.

And Windows 10 Interest group.

Pat will tell you more about some Interest groups soon.

It became apparent to SeniorNet Nelson some time ago that our members wanted a more relaxed environment than the formal class structure. And you can see this through the formation of the Interest groups through the years, particularly around 2010 to 2013 when four Interest groups were formed.

The first and probably most obvious reason for the increase in learner hours income was the change to the criteria to funding learner hours. That came about in December 2017.

Nelson was obviously really pleased because much of our learning was already being done this way. It simply meant that instead of only getting income of

\$5.00 from the members who attended an Interest group, we were now able to claim \$1.25 per hour for everyone who attended.

But that does not solely explain why we jumped so many places because every other Learning Centre had the same opportunity. However, Nelson was already doing a lot of learning through Interest groups, so we definitely had a head start.

Don't be under the illusion that SeniorNet is just for learning. One of the big benefits is social. Talking to people with a common interest, exploring and sharing new ideas. One of the big benefits of Interest groups is the discussion by the members. Much less formal than a class environment.

What else happened to go from 17th in Learner hours to first.

Success breeds success. We had some new people joining or stepping up. There seemed to be a new vibe in SeniorNet Nelson. An increase in what I call "esprit de corps" The sense of purpose, the pride in belonging to a successful group. Being part of a team and pulling your weight in that team.

Some of that may have been generated by being able to claim learner hours when previously we couldn't.

Another benefit was the reinvention of the Technical Interest group to the Media group.

The Technical Interest group had some good material but because of the name (Technical), few people attended and those generally were the people who were interested in pulling computers apart. Many members who would like to have attended, did not, because they felt that they would not have the knowledge to be able to understand or to be able to make a contribution.

When the name was changed to the Media group, we had over 50 attending the first meeting. It was a resounding success and has continued with very good attendances.

So what's in a name? EVERYTHING.

There has been another unintended but beneficial consequence. There is some friendly rivalry between Interest group conveners. Most don't want to be in second, third or fourth place when it comes to attendance numbers. They want to make their material interesting so they will get more attending.

The conveners put a lot of effort in to make sure their groups are interesting and inviting.

That's some background. Pat will tell you about some the interest groups and also show you how you can benefit from the information on there, if you are interested. She will also show you what is available on our very comprehensive SeniorNet Nelson website.

Both Pat and I are life members of SeniorNet Nelson. We joined over 19 years ago and have been actively involved in both administration and tutoring for much of that time. Neither of us now have any particular portfolio but continue to take a close interest and assist where we can.

SeniorNet Nelson's website: www.seniornetnelson.org.nz

Probably the easiest way to tell you about some of our Interest Groups is to go to our website. Nelson has a very comprehensive website managed by our two 'web women' Sue and Ebeth, who love doing it.

The drop-down menus from the tabs on the **Home page** contain a huge amount of information which may be of interest or help to some of you. Our main interest right now is the eight Interest Groups,(IGs). Some of them are more popular than others of course and have better attendance, but generally they get anything from 20 to 30/35 at each session. These are 2 hour sessions with a cuppa in the middle and held once a month. A reminder is sent out during the week before each session and include among other things, the subjects/theme for the session.

On every screen of the website there are **quick links** to the pages of all of the Interest Groups. On each IG page you will find information about the group including upcoming and previous meetings.

At the foot of each IG page you will find 'reports' on their monthly meetings. Some of these reports describe what happened at the previous meeting (e.g. DIG group and iPad/iPhone) and some provide all the information presented at the previous meeting. (e.g. Media Group and Coffee and Learn Together) Most reports contain very useful links to websites....a veritable goldmine of information!

Coffee & Learn Together: This group is not specific to any device or operating system. Sue (one of our webwomen) does a tremendous amount of

preparation for these sessions and her reports are full of all sorts of stuff....she tries to keep to things that are FREE as well.

I encourage you to scroll down to the reports and have a look at the list of the subjects that have been covered...Internet Basics, Social Media, About Google, Organising Xmas from Home, Brain Food Online, Understanding Apps are but a few.

One thing about IG sessions....they can and should spawn workshops on specific subjects. E.g. Several members expressed interest in something that came up during a C< session. Names were taken, a date was booked and a workshop for 7 was arranged then and there for the following week. It is the same old story though...conveners, facilitators, tutors....call them what you will. Unless you have them ready, willing and able it is not so easy. But the potential is there! Maybe two people could 'job share' and get a workshop going. Group sessions give the wider picture, but sometimes a few members would like a more detailed hands-on workshop.

Media Group: As Duncan has said, this group started off as the Technical Interest Group...a small group, mainly male...kind of 'toys for the boys'...quite techy. In September 2017 amid a full-on blaze of advertising, the new Media Interest Group was born. Over fifty members attended the first meeting (and the 2nd)....they wanted to know all about tv streaming among other things. The attendance has now settled to around the 30-35 mark and it is an excellent and popular group. They are giving the members what they want to know!

DIG Group (Digital Imagery Group): This one is of particular interest to me. The first Interest Group started in Nelson....2006...thanks largely to help from older members of Motueka SNet. DIG is a wee bit different in the way it works. There is a loose 'committee' of generally 6-9 people who meet for coffee twice a month (good enough excuse) to (1) review the last meeting, and (2) to work out what to do at the next meeting. The DIG group is very social and we have regular field trips to interesting places. We put out a report on each meeting which includes photographs taken by members. The group is at present heavily involved in producing a SeniorNet Nelson calendar for 2020. A couple of years ago this group almost folded (we have the same difficulties as everyone else!) but a burst of energy from one or two members gave us a boot in the backside and we have gone from strength to strength. We sometimes have a guest speaker and one such was at our April meeting. Ray Salisbury spoke on the art of composition and illustrated his presentation with excellent

photos. Our DIG members are now running around thinking about leading lines, the rule of thirds, the rule of odds, cropping and all that! If any of you photographers out there are interested, go online to Hot Pixels Photography.

I have not mentioned interest groups for Macs, but we do have three groups....the Mac Interest Group, Coffee+Apple and the very popular iPad/iPhone Interest Group.

In conclusion, do have a look around our website and if you find anything that interests you, that you think may be of help, feel free to go in and make use of it. We have learned so much from other SeniorNet groups.

That's what it is all about.....

Duncan & Pat Fuller

May 2019