Onboarding the RFC Production Center (RPC) and the RFC Publisher Case Study

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In 2008, after a long, deliberative search for a new management team, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), considered the premier Internet standards body which develops open standards through open processes, formally engaged Association Management Solutions (AMS). Based in Silicon Valley, AMS had built a sterling reputation for developing legacy organizations like the ADSL Forum (now the Broadband Forum) and successfully launching and managing new technology development associations across a range of technologies. From the outset, AMS understood IETF's challenges and embraced the unique culture of its community. In turn, the IETF was pleased with AMS's adaptability and ability to develop and implement solutions to meet IETF's challenges. This was demonstrated early on when AMS combined the skills of seasoned in-house staff with existing IETF staff which resulted in a dynamic collaboration that led to a new level of engagement with the IETF community. The transition and the partnership that developed between the IETF and AMS was, by all measures, a wild success.

Just two years after the IETF partnered with AMS, the IETF sought a new editorial and publication group to continue publishing RFCs (Request for Comments), and implement the redefined RFC Editor structure described in RFC 5620. Since the IETF's inception, it has relied on the RFC Editor to manage their editorial and publication services. As part of the newly defined structure, the RFC Production Center (RPC) and the RFC Publisher were born. The primary focus of the RPC and Publisher is formatting, editing, and publishing the RFCs, as well as maintaining and improving website access and availability.

Although AMS had no previous experience as a publisher, they were a valued and trusted IETF partner and therefore top of mind when mind when the RPC and Publisher functions were seeking a new home. There were three key components that factored into IETF's evaluation and decision making to hire AMS to manage the RPC and Publisher. First, AMS understood the historic significance of the RFC Series and the vital roles the RPC and Publisher played for organizations like the IETF that rely on the RFCs. Secondly, AMS had the infrastructure and proven expertise to provide a stable environment in which the RPC, and therefore the RFC Series, could flourish. Last and most importantly, AMS assured the IETF leadership that the highly respected and dedicated RPC staff would remain engaged to draw on their deep institutional knowledge and to ensure continuity.

In 2009, the IETF formally selected AMS as the management company for the RPC and Publisher functions. During the 6-month transition period, the AMS IT team and the RPC staff worked tirelessly to ensure that more than 40 years of documentation, procedures, and RFCs were safely transferred with minimal disruption to RPC's day-to-day operations. Key RPC staff moved under the AMS umbrella, with AMS providing additional support to augment those staff roles. Now, more than 10 years later, the RPC and Publisher functions, and those same key RPC personnel, happily remain with AMS.

"After securing key staff, AMS provided an improved, more robust infrastructure for the RFC Production Center. Once the transition was accomplished, AMS fostered a collaborative work environment that led to re-energized staff members and prompt document publication. We all appreciate the efforts by AMS for their role in making the Internet work better." - **Russ Housley, Chair, IETF 2007-2013**

Over the last decade, AMS has developed software and tools that have resulted in meaningful advancements in the way that the RPC manages editorial collaboration and internal documentation and procedures. Additional systems and procedures developed by AMS have enabled increased capacity, and facilitated more effective communication processes with IETF. Additionally, AMS generated entirely new procedures and trained staff to successfully adopt the new document format, which transitions the RFC Series from ASCII-only text to producing RFCs that allow UTF-8 and features such as enhanced graphs and figures, and publishing them in HTML, TXT, and PDF with the XML format as the canonical RFC. Each measure implemented by AMS has been achieved in the spirit of innovation and cooperation which has led to greater efficiency, enhanced capabilities, and increased document accessibility (e.g., viewing across devices) while also maintaining long-term document preservation.

"The RPC's transition to AMS was immense. While the initial focus was on continued publication of RFCs in a timely manner, then, and since, AMS has made it possible to publish RFCs while also making progress on other fronts -- for example, more formally adopting the then newly defined RFC Editor structure, ensuring cross-training and introducing new staffing models to enable stability and flexibility, updating and supporting new and existing systems, and overall tackling anything needed to keep the RPC successfully meeting the needs of the various communities it serves. I am continually impressed with how AMS responds to challenges by thinking outside the box and their ability to navigate and perform in a matrix environment."

– Sandy Ginoza, RFC Production Center Director

AMS is proud to be the home of the RPC and Publisher. The role that AMS has played in the RPC's growth and development reflects their guiding principle of continuous improvement and innovation. Whether it's launching a new Alliance or supporting a legacy organization like the RPC, as a company and a team AMS welcomes new challenges and seeks always to deliver the highest level of service to meet the needs of their clients.