  Observations on the experience and nature of Large Interim Meetings
              draft-jaeggli-interim-observations-04

Abstract

   Planning, particpipation and conclusions from the experience of
   participating in the IETF LIM activity on september 29th 2012.

Status of this Memo

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1. Introduction

   The genesis of this draft was the experience of planning and
   participating in the so called IETF Large Interim Meeting (LIM) held
   adjacent to the fall RIPE meeting on the 29th of September 2012.
   Three working groups met, OPSEC, V6OPS and SIDR. It is intended that
   the draft cover planning, the operation of the meeting, and an
   attempt at some conclusions based on the experience.

   The fact that the draft represents the vantage point of a limited
   number of persons and a singular event at this time necessarily
   limits the utility and aplicability of the draft and undoubtedly as
   result, some key elements of the planning and motivation will be
   missed. The Large Interim Meeting is the product of efforts over a
   number of years by multiple parties including the ISOC Board, IETF
   management (Chair, IESG, IAB, IAOC, IAD) working group chairs and
   probably others. To the extent that this draft can be made better
   through the input of others, The authors would invite contribution,
   criticism and future dialog on how we meet outside the scheduled IETF
   meetings.

   The Sept 29th LIM was the most recent attempt that we are aware of an
   interim meeting scheduled by IETF management for the purposes of
   accumulating interim meetings in a common location. The IETF's
   traditional model for interim meetings has been that virtual or
   physical interim meetins are scheduled by working-group participants
   in conjunction with chairs and coordinating ADs [IESGinterim]. It is
   not the first attempt at such meeting. It's status therefore an
   experiment is worth bearing mind in understanding the rest of the
   text.

1.1. date and location

   The LIM was scheduled to coincide with the end of RIPE 65 and
   Occurred on Saturday Sept 29th 2012. Ripe 65 was held at the Hotel
   Okura Amseterdam from September 24th-28th. It is our understanding
   that coordination with the RIPE program committee occured only After
   IETF 84 (an IAB member member also happens to serve on the RIPE
   program committee)

2. Planning

   It is, our understanding that discussion of the possibility of a LIM
   style meeting within this time window occurred in early 2011 if not
   before. The v6ops chairs were asked at various times to consider
   particpation in such a meeting in other potential locations. The
   discussion related to this interim meeting commenced in June. The

stated rational for targeting v6ops involvement in a large interim
was the volume of work that we process during and between meetings.
For reasons that we will try and explore the expectation of a volume
of work to be processed was not borne out by the agenda and meeting
itself.

A previous proposal for a LIM style meeting to have met in Malta in
2009 attracted a sponsor (Google) but was ultimatetly cancled on the
basis of expected participation (60 particpants) and remaining time
constraints. The Malta LIM was to have included the RAI area plus
SOFTWIRE and BEHAVE.

2.1. Discussion leading up to LIM

Some questions existed in the planning phase as to the nature of the
logisitical support provided by the secretatit for the meeting as
well as, remote participation, and the actual timinng of the meeting.
Unlike a traditional interim the responsibility for satisfying these
details was for better or worse in the hands of the secretariat,
which meant a reduced workload for the chairs but it also left some
details undecided until they could be announced, a hotel contract for
the meeting rooms wasn't completed until after the 4 week window
required for announcing and interim meeting had passed

2.2. Plannning for meeting and announcement

A show of hands, as well as subsequent mailing list followup were
done to gauge v6ops interest in participation in an interim meeting.
Roughly 50 participants, mostly active ones indicated significant
interest in an interim collocated with RIPE 65 which we deemed
sufficient to proceed. Superficially, only a fraction of the v6ops
attendees are represented by the segment of the group indicating
interest. When the numbers are mapped against active participants
and draft authors, interested participants in the interim likely
represent a bigger proportion of that group.

Two of the three scheduled meetings were given 4 hour windows, the
third SIDR (which routinely has interim meetings) had effectivetly
the entire day.

2.3. Draft Deadlines

Immediately after IETF 84, the working group chairs of v6ops proposed
an interim draft deadline 2 weeks out from the interim meeting (
Saturday the 15th of Sept). This was to be the basis for the
acceptance of revised or new drafts onto the agenda. The goal of the
deadline was to be able to identify drafts which had changed and
which had issues to be addressed prior to any additional action.

3. Meeting

   Two OPS area working groups met, OPSEC and V6OPS, Effectively one
   after the other albiet seperated by lunch. The SIDR working group
   met in parallel.

3.1. Running

   Both OPS-area meetings came in substantially below their allotted
   time. V6OPS was allocated four hours and completed in two. SIDR
   broke for lunch, returned, and finished early, however it used a
   substantially higher percentage of the allocated time. Possibly
   because it was a Saturday remote participation was limited but not
   non-existant

   The observation of one participant in v6ops (Jari Arkko) was that
   they came prepared to discuss topics, for which the document authors
   were not present. Looking at what we were able to schedule for the
   agenda, appart from the discussion of the state of drafts in various
   states of processing and the attention that they required, the
   scheduled presentations (3) were associated with drafts for which the
   authors were requesting feedback.

3.2. Remote Participation

   >Remote participation was supported by volunteers from meetecho using
   their own application. Hotel okura wired network was provided for
   the slide-sharing computer and wireless infrastrucuture was used to
   support the meeting and in-room participation in the meetecho chat.
   An outage of the hotel wireless network was observed during the OPSEC
   meeting with the result that local participation in the meetecho
   session would have been interupted for about 10 minutes, had there
   been any to speak of. Philip Mathews reports having attended the
   v6ops meeting remotely.

3.3. Participants

   Interim Meeting registration ended up being about 40 participants, 2
   days prior to the meeting that number was 23, provisions had been
   made for around 100 attendees.

4. Observations and Conclusions

   Despite misgivings with V6OPS as patient zero for the large interim
   meeting concept, once committed we endeavored to make the meeting
   work for the participants that took the time out of their weekend to
   attend, or as was my case, traveled specifically for the Interim

meeting. As an experiment we think a lot of things are worth doing
once and hope that some lessons can be derived from the experience
that have value for future interims.

4.1. Incentives for participation

An observation that we would make about the V6OPS interim submission
deadline (and what we believe to be relative failure) is that it
appears that authors who are not planning to attend a meeting, are
less inclined to revise a document in support of a meeting they are
not attending. The corollary, is that authors planning on a
attending a meeting will rev their documents, or possibly that a
revised document is justification to attend (This applies to IETF
meetings in general).

While this may be a tautology, Interim meetings probably are more
successful when they appear necessary. SIDR clearly is a close knit
group of people (even when they disagree) working hard on a design
problem. The required time is due to the necessity of going over
every issue to be addressed within a constrained temporal space.
While the SIDR interim(s) may not be valid as the measurement of
consensus they promote a common understanding of the problems and
solution space among the key participants that ultimately will be the
basis of any broader consensus.

4.2. Organization in conjunction with other events

The particular conjunction of the LIM and RIPE was proposed several
months prior to coordination with the RIPE program committee. Given
that the RIPE meeting traditionally ends on Friday with Lunch it is
possible that tighter coordination with the RIPE organization could
have coupled the event more directly (e.g. to friday afternoon).
There is an implicit assumption on the part of the authors that
tighter coordination with an operator meeting means ceding control
over the program to a certain extent to fit within that framework.

The RIPE meeting is a week long like an IETF meeting, and if the goal
of a conjoint interim is evangelism, cross pollination or outreach,
(is it?) then fitting more directly into the program would probably
be salubrious for both groups. As it stands, the bulk of the
attendees in OPSEC and V6OPS were present to attend RIPE as well, or
attended RIPE and stayed for the interim.

A specific suggestion provided by several RIPE participants was to
leverage the post-RIPE friday afternoon as opposed to the following
day in order to reduce the commitment required by RIPE participants
who would otherwise have to remain an extra day and therefore travel
on saturday. A common experience with many *NOG meetings and indeed

with the IETF is ancillary meetings packing in either before or after
a core meeting thereby increasing the overall cost
(time,money,commitment) associated with the overall activity.

[4.3](#). Implications for working groups/design teams of varying sizes

V6ops attendance at an IETF meeting is typically in excess of 200
attendees. An interim meeting that attracts 25 of those and limited
remote participation is necessarily exclusionary by default if not
deliberately. If useful work that advances drafts, gets done, is
that exclusion a bad thing? The resulting meeting input would not be
useful for measuring meaningful consensus. V6OPS got a new draft out
of discussion that occurred during the interim meeting.

The history of interim meetings has illustrative examples of working
groups or design teams, with numerus interim meetings (IP storage/
NFSv4, Lemonade, 6lowpan, Behave SIDR etc) that demonstrate the
utility of frequent physical or virtual interims. It is possible
that there are properties (demands on immediacy, collaboration with
other SDOs etc) that make some working groups or design teams more
effective at utilizing interims than others.

[4.4](#). Mobilizing ADs

Area Director's and IAB members were rather well represented at the
LIM, While the attendance of both of the Ops and Mangement Directors
was appreciated we are not sure that it's a good use of their time.
In particular if the frequency of these events were fixed as some
rate in the future, this represents an additional workload for which
huge benefits do not appear likely to ensue. In the case of of
colocation with a RIPE meeting, some of these participants were
attending already. Jari Arkko observed, "I would probably not have
made the trip just for RIPE this time (although I usually do travel
to them), nor would I have attended just for the LIM itself."

[4.5](#). Outreach

Some entities related to the IETF clearly have outreach and advocacy
as part of the mission, Internet Society, IETF chair, Liaisons, edu-
team and so forth. It is not clear to us, that beyond the scope of
chartered working group documents that end up as part of the RFC
series, that working group activities including meetings are well
suited for use as an outreach mechanism. The IETF meeting as a
whole, which is certainly an opportunity for advancing the work of
the respective working groups is also an opportunity for cross
pollination, for the collegial building of consensus that advances
joint efforts, and to the extent that mini-IETF's do not appear to
support those opportunities relative to the three times annually

meeting, the utility of LIMs as outreach tools lacks some degree of
legitimacy.

[4.6](#). Conclusions

It's not easy to draw strong conclusions from a single experiment.
Perhaps we have and extensive control group in the form of working
groups that did not avail themselves of the virtual interim. Some
thoughts follow.

Mobilizing IETF secretariat and meeting support resources in support
of interim meetings that ultimately are lightly attended does not, on
the face of it seem like it works on a cost recovery basis. Smaller
single working-group interims have experienced substantial
difficulties arranging technology support and remote participation
for interim meetings in some locations so in that respect some
central planning and coordination does pay off.

The requirements for an interim meeting are typically modest,
aggregating them makes them less so.

Expectations for the level of availability that an IETF network
provides are expensive to deliver in the case of a smaller more
ephemeral meeting.

In cases where interim meetings leverage resources that have higher
availability/performance expectations such as the corporate offices
of some of the participants, the results may be substantially better
than what we can expect to be delivered by a hotel network
contractor.

Interim meetings are typically organized around short term goals, the
longer term planning needs associated with participants budgeting for
travel and making time commitments are incompatible with the short
term nature of current interim planning. Immediacy appears to trump
other considerations for working groups and desgin teams that meet in
signular interims.

The experience of OPSEC and V6OPS was not I think a huge success, it
is likely that some of the rational discussed in the "incentives for
participation" section plays a role in the ability of OPS working
groups to invite work to be revised on the basis of interim
deadlines. By all accounts the SIDR working group had a successful
productive meeting. It is also likely in our understanding that SIDR
would have met in the absence of the LIM with similar results.

5. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Ron Bonica, Fred Baker, Randy Bush, Spencer Dawkins Philip Matthews and Simon Pietro Romano for offering constructive input or feedback on this draft.

6. IANA Considerations

This memo Makes no request of IANA.

7. Security Considerations

No security consequences are envisioned as a proeduct of this draft.

8. Informative References

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