

The logo for ARFTG (Association of Real Estate Financial Technology Groups) is a large, light blue oval with a metallic silver border. Inside the oval, the letters "ARFTG" are written in a large, white, 3D-style font. Behind the letters is a golden-yellow circular emblem with a stylized, multi-lobed design.

Observations on a Users' Forum

Based on experiences from the NVNA Users' Forum

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What is the Mission of a Users' Forum

- From the invitation to the NVNA Users' Forum:
 - “For those of you who are new to us, we are an informal discussion group devoted to sharing information and issues related to ...”
- The users' forum is first and foremost a discussion group.
- Keep it informal.
- Encourage participation from all corners of the user community.

What is the Content of a Users' Forum?

- Discussion topics
 - The key to a users' forum is open discussion.
 - Get the audience involved.
- Research updates
 - These are good as a means to prompt discussion.
 - Some controversy is good.
 - Avoid straight presentations! Users' Forum updates are not meant to be papers.
- Student updates
 - It is important to engage students.
 - Invite them to bring their problems to the experts.
- Demonstrations
 - This is a unique opportunity for a users' forum.
- Panel discussions
 - Can be good if you have individuals with differing views on a topic.

Who is the Audience of a Users' Forum?

- Researchers
 - Experts
 - Scientist & engineers in field
- Students
 - This is a major group that you want to touch.
- Vendors
 - The Users' Forum provides a bridge between the “academic” presentations of a conference and the “advertising” of an exhibit.
- The Curious
 - Users' forums are ideal avenues to introduce the field to new people.

How is a Users' Forum Organized?

- There should be a dedicated core to organize and run each meeting.
 - The NVNA Users' Forum has 3-4 co-organizers who take turns with meetings.
 - The organizers often have to do some arm twisting.
- Affiliate meetings with a conference
 - The NVNA Users' Forum has 3 meetings per year: fall ARFTG, spring ARFTG/IMS, Europe (European Microwave or InMMIC)
- Gather an attendees list
 - Announcements will be sent to these people.
- Send announcements 2-4 weeks prior to the meeting
 - Provide known topics and invite more.