

Pipeline

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A Preview of Management World 2009

By Alana Grelyak

As most of you know, TM Forum's Management World 2009 is happening once again in the beautiful city of Nice. This year's dates, from May 4 -8, are slightly earlier than previous years, and the dates aren't all that have changed. We at Pipeline wanted to get more of a scoop on the event and find information that isn't readily available on the show website. We wanted to find out specifically for our readers why the TM Forum feels that traveling all the way to Nice is worth your time and effort.

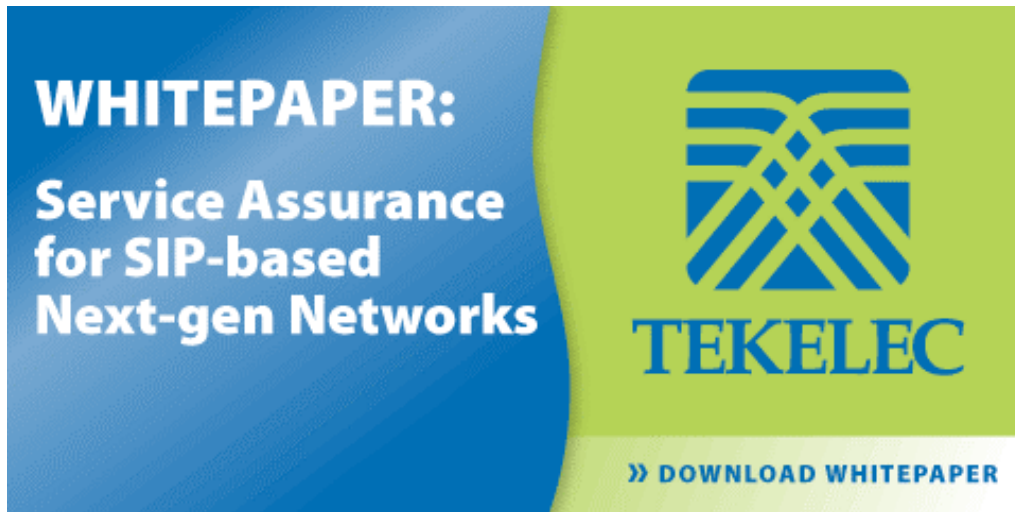
The Importance of Quality

Many companies are cutting travel/event budgets this year and so far we've seen other communications shows report lower attendance in 2009 compared to last year. What is the TM Forum doing to keep attendance up for Management World 2009 and how realistic is the projected attendance of 3,500 for this year's event? "The current economic climate places additional pressures on all businesses, and of course conferences are considered a discretionary expense," said Martin Creaner, President and COO of TM Forum. "However, the combination of business networking, education, and information exchange on offer at Management World 2009, as well as unique features such as Forumville, represent an excellent investment both in terms of time and finances compared to other conferences." He added, "Our focus in the current economic climate is to retain a high quality mix of attendees, including a significant number of senior executives from service provider companies, to complement an already strong speaker line-up. So it's all about quality."

And quality, in this economy, is definitely key. The theme of the event, "Strategies and Tactics for Tough Times," is definitely apt for today's climate. But, beyond the title of the show, what has the TM Forum done to alter its programming for Management World 2009 to accommodate the current state of the economy? Creaner said that Management World 2009 is focusing "on the need for CSPs to adapt to improve profitability by reducing OpEx and customer churn, and tackle revenue management issues such as revenue leakage and fraud. These issues are

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more important than ever to maintain profitability in the current climate." So what, specifically, did the TM Forum team put together to address the maintenance of profitability? "This year's conference features our best-ever line-up of expert speakers from service providers across the industry, with a focus on practical advice, case-studies, and implementation," said Creaner. "Combined with TM Forum training and Forumville, the conference offers a toolkit for service providers and their suppliers to adapt to current market conditions and emerge from the economic downturn stronger than ever." A worthy cause, no doubt.



Content Providers vs CSPs?

Since the TM Forum has shown an increasing interest in content over the past few years, we were curious to find out what the Forum is doing to deal with the fact that content providers are chipping away at CSP income for value-added services. "It's not a simple battle between content providers and CSPs," said Creaner. "These groups are both cooperating and competing at the same time. It all comes down to good business sense. The Content providers will only deliver their services via a CSP value chain if the CSPs are offering some real value add. Otherwise, they will go over the top and deliver straight to the consumer." Therefore, the TM Forum is trying to "help CSPs define and expose that value-add that keeps them in the value chain. The Service Delivery Framework program is one TM Forum program that is focused on this problem, as is the Content Encounter program, which has been identifying how both content providers and CSPs can jointly deliver efficient, profitable services."

Agendas

Along similar lines, a look at the show website summit agendas shows that the Digital Media Value Chain summit, for example, has a much longer list of speakers than the Technology Transformation summit. Could something like this represent a

shift in focus for the Forum or is it, instead, a shift in what Management World attendees are demanding? "Business effectiveness and transformation remain a key focus for the Forum and our attendees at Management World," said Creaner. "The technology and business transformation summits feature more than 75 speakers across two 3-day conference tracks. In comparison, the Digital Media Value Chain summit includes just over 30 speakers across a single track. Digital media, content, and advertising all represent new areas of interest and opportunity for our existing audience and are also attracting new players from across the value chain. This summit reflects our expanded remit, started in 2007, to fully support our members in to a world of expanded value chains and new business opportunities, which has been well received by our members and conference attendees where it has been featured over the past 18 months."



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CSP, Meet Vendor

At last year's event, CSPs accounted for just over a quarter (27%) of total attendees (according to numbers from the show's website.) Since service providers are necessary for the vendors' sales success, how is the TM Forum aiding the vendors in this regard? "Our focus remains to bring together an audience of quality decision makers, which is clearly in the interests of our supplier members attending, exhibiting, and sponsoring Management World," said Creaner. "This year's event will have somewhere between 25% and 30% Service Provider audience." And how is the TM Forum facilitating meetings between the vendors and service providers? "We have seen increased interest from suppliers this year in our Executive Appointment Service program, which sets up highly targeted and qualified meetings between suppliers and their prospective SP customers. This program has proven very successful in the past, which is why we're expanding it for 2009," said Creaner. "We are also working closely with supplier members to ensure they gain maximum

value from their investment at the show, this year offering a new Marketing Partner Program to all suppliers, providing sponsors and exhibitors with VIP passes for their clients and prospects, and working closely with them to ensure that they make the most of their investment." And again, it's obvious that making the most out of one's investments is of key importance in today's economic climate.

Speaking of the soft economy, it seems that transformation is still a part of the Forum's rallying cry, and that transformation is being pushed as a cost-saver and profit-maximizer. However, transformation projects can require a good deal of initial cost. How are CSPs responding to the idea of transformation in this era of gloomy economic forecasts? "Case studies and entries for the 2009 Excellence Awards clearly show that even in the face of the current economic climate, CSPs are continuing to focus on transformation projects as key initiatives in retaining profitability," said Creaner. "We're continuing to see significant interest both in the Management World conference series...and also TM Forum collaboration programs, training...and use of TM Forum best practices and standards, which focus on transformation topics." Creaner feels that today, the Forum's work is more relevant than it has ever been. "Our frameworks provide the toolkit for service providers to reduce the costs and risks associated with transformation projects, and enable suppliers to offer new products and services faster, for less," Creaner said. He also added that "it's important to note that transformation programs often grow organically, being proven in one business unit before they are applied to the rest of the business."



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Additions and Subtractions

Any veteran attendees of the Management World event should be familiar with the black tie gala that is usually the wrapping on the Excellence Awards ceremony. However, it looks like this year's Excellence Awards will be presented during the first

keynote session, rather than at an evening gala. Why the shift from black-tie awards ceremony to an auditorium presentation? Was it a budget cutback or a maneuver to appease the suggestion-box? Creaner says it was more of the latter. "Following 2008's gala dinner, feedback from attendees and the awards nominees included a strong preference to give the awards more visibility in the conference itself. As a result, we've given the 2009 awards a prime-time slot in the Perspectives keynote sessions, in front of a much larger audience," said Creaner. And the result? "We've already received great feedback from entrants as well as our strongest set of submissions to date, and we're looking forward to a tight contest for this year's two Best Practices award categories."

A unique feature of Management World events are the live demonstrations that occur in Forumville each year, most of which are usually well-received by attendees and participants. This year, attendees can expect a TM Forum Knowledge Zone, which includes information, case studies, and presentations covering use of TM Forum best practices and standards and opportunities to meet experts in these areas. Also included are the Technology Catalyst Live Demonstrations, which are eight unique demos, including sixteen service provider champions. The Content Encounter Phase 4 will offer "a series of end-to-end demos specifically geared towards helping service providers make the right investment decisions regarding new services in these challenging times," according to Creaner. And for those of you who are unfamiliar, the Content Encounter is "an innovative environment focused on developing win-win business models and solutions to problems that span the value chain including Content Lifecycle Management, Personalized Advertising Business Models, Service Creation and Delivery, Service Profitability.

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Keynotes Galore

A quick review of the event website will show that there are a number of promising keynote speakers and summits lined up at the event. How is it possible to know which ones you should attend if you simply can't attend them all? We asked Martin

Creaner to identify three sessions with the most potential for excellence, which, in his opinion, are not to be missed. "It's like asking a father which of his children he likes the best – not exactly fair. (smile) However, if I have to choose three that I'm going to make sure I attend...The Keynote sessions on the Wednesday morning are not to be missed. It's probably the most interesting line-up of speakers we have had at an event. I'd also recommend the three Advertising sessions in the Digital Media summit. It has a really interesting cross-over between companies like Telefonica & France Telecom with companies like Blyk & Google. I'm also going to ensure I attend the sessions on migrating to next generation networks, as the focus of this is practical experience rather than theory."

But What About the Technical Aspects?

And now, onto something a bit more technical. Standards such as the eTOM, SID, and OSS/J have been heavily promoted in the past. We wanted to know what standards are big for 2009 and if we will be able to see them in action within the Catalyst Technology Showcase in Nice. Creaner commented that the TM Forum's Solution Frameworks (NGOSS) standards are widely adopted, and that they've also seen a growing interest in their Prosspero interfaces, including OSS/J and MTNM. He also noted that the TM Forum is seeing growing interest in their work in the Revenue Management area, such as the Revenue Assurance Guidebook and maturity model. Catalysts in Forumville will include focus on the Solution Frameworks, OSS/J Trouble Ticket Interface, Product Lifecycle Management, and Operator User Management.

Conclusion

There is definitely a lot to see at the Management World 2009 event in Nice, France. Will it be worth your time and money to make the trip? We at Pipeline did our best to give you the info that will help you to make that decision, but ultimately, the final choice remains in your hands.