Pipeline
Knowledge Is Power

OSS on the Riviera: Management World 2008
by Tim Young

So when you think about the big events in the early summer season in the South of France, what do you think of? An event in which all the beautiful people of a particular industry jet in from all over the world to present their craft, rub elbows with others in the biz, and hope against hope that their appearance at the event will lead to a big sale of the project that is the product of years of effort and sacrifice?

The Cannes Film Festival? The Gran Prix? Nope. I'm talking, of course, about the TMForum's Management World in Nice. Maybe it isn't quite the media spectacle like the events that visit the area the weekend before, or the week after, but for the OSS/BSS crowd, it's definitely a must-attend.

This year's Management World (the official line, at this point, is "Please don't call it TMW!") boasted a larger number of attendees (well over 3000, vs. some 2700 last year), and a more ornate collection of booths, exhibits, and off-site events.

The Gala:

For the second year, the TMForum used the backdrop of Management World to hold its Excellence Awards gala. The event was hosted, again, by British comedian Tony Hawks, whose unruly brand of humor proved off-putting to a few guests, but caused riotous laughter in most. The black tie-preferred event ensured that telecom's finest were dressed to impress, and the event was pleasant, overall.

Digital Fuel took home the award for Best New Management Product for its ServiceFlow solution. There were eight companies vying for the award (including Telcordia, the sponsor of the awards gala), so the award was a bit of a happy surprise for some. Other winners include Telstra (Best Practices, Service Provider), Orga Systems (Most Innovative Application of Customer Care for its Virtual Voucher solution with TIM/Brazil), and IBM (Best Practices, Supplier).

One rough spot in the evening, however, was the award for Most Innovative Integrated Marketing Campaign. Reliance and Nakina Systems were the listed finalists, and Reliance was announced as the winner. After the event, however, the Nakina team was spotted posing for pictures with the trophy, *which was printed with Nakina's name.* At the moment, both companies are listed as winners on the

TMForum website, so I suppose the best answer to a sticky situation was a joint award.

That wasn't the only hiccup in the evening. The musical cues that welcomed the newly announced winners to the stage were distracting and occasionally wholly inappropriate. I believe it was as the esteemed Jenny Huang was making her way to the stage to accept her recognition as a Distinguished Fellow that she and the rest of the crowd were greeted with Amy Winehouse's timeless words: *"They tried to make me go to rehab, I said no, no, no..."* Musical cues aren't a tough thing. Pick some jazz (or an instrumental pop song, if you want to appear hip). There's no reason a distinguished person receiving a well-deserved award should have to contend with such a soundtrack.

These kinks aren't dealbreakers, but if I had purchased the very expensive ticket to the event (rather than getting in on a media pass), I might be a touch miffed at the mistakes. I truly hope TMForum works through these problems, because it is a great event, and with a little tweaking could be a fantastic one. Far more entertaining than your average awards program.

Other Events:
The Gala certainly wasn't the only evening event at Management World. Amdocs hosted a great soirée right on the beach, and Comptel (and its newly acquired Axiom) had a really nice reception on the rooftop of the Meridien Hotel, right on the Mediterranean. Oracle bussed party attendees to Cannes for a beachfront party, while Nakina opted for a smaller event at a medieval chateau overlooking the sea. The TMForum also opted for an event just out of town, but construction issues caused the buses containing partygoers to need an hour to make a 15 minute trip. Unfortunate.

This is just a small cross-section of the evening events in Nice, and examples of why Management World is such a cool event. A trade show in Dallas or London wouldn't have quite the same wide array of interesting possibilities for networking and relaxation.

Expo Meetings:
Management World certainly isn't all champagne and moonlight. We spent a great deal of our time in Nice in meetings with individual companies. Here are few of the companies we met with (and just a small sampling, at that. Due to the number of companies with whom we met and the high quality of the meetings across the board, we couldn't fit them all into this issue.

Sigma Systems:
Sigma is doing some really interesting things in a couple of areas that are of rising importance in the communications space. First of all, they're doing some great things in the cable space to increase the viability of commercial VoIP. That's key, because it enables cablecos to chip away at the enterprise market, which telcos have a lock on, even as the telcos' residential customers realize that the time may be right to jump ship for a cable triple- or quad-play bundle. Sigma is also looking into streams of alternate monetization. Amid the clamor among SPs to not become mere bitpipes, Sigma is looking into support for advanced advertising, subscriber information services written for anonymized data, and other ways to leverage core competencies and valuable data in order to make the possible transition to bitpipe as smooth and profitable as possible.

Tribold:
Tribold continues to trumpet the value of its product catalog solutions. The company has gotten a good deal of market recognition and continues to be active on its own and through partners (like Patni, IBM). The goal of Tribold's solution, and any OSS solution, really, is to, as Tribold COO Simon Muderack puts it, "rip cost out of your business." The Tribold product catalog products seem to offer a valuable solution for doing just that, all while reducing time to market.

Amdocs:
Amdocs was in full effect at Management World. They brought their own "pavilion" to the event (a full sized show trailer that expanded into a two story meeting facility with meeting rooms, lounges, etc.) It got *our* attention. They brought multiple press releases to the show. One was a release regarding their involvement in the show. Another was on their partnership with IBM to offer a standards-based fulfillment solution. They also had releases on their partnership with Cisco and the release of Amdocs CES- Cramer OSS 7.5. That last press release was interesting because the new Amdocs rollout includes "bundled operational process packs" that allow providers to mix and match services based on need, while speeding up deployment.

Openet:
Openet is doing a lot of stuff that makes sense in the current communications market. Using their FusionWorks engine, Openet is active in the mediation, charging, and rating space, and beyond. Their balance management and policy management solutions have a great deal of possibility in the space enabling parents or bosses to set limitations on calling plans. In addition, Openet continues to offer lawful intercept solutions that are alarmingly relevant in today's world. The key word for Openet is visibility. The ability to see what's going on in the network enables everything they do. They have a solid core, and I think they'll continue to

be on the cutting edge for quite a while.

Clarity:
Clarity offers a single-vendor approach to OSS. Many would say that this is less-than-sustainable, and in developed markets, they'd probably be correct. However, in the greenfield world of developing markets, the approach is finding traction. With several large providers in places like South Asia using the Clarity approach, Clarity lays claim to over 120 million subscribers, worldwide. In addition, Clarity is finding a fit with utility companies that maintain telecom networks. Some analysts may scoff, but Clarity seems unfazed.

Nakina:
At the event, Nakina was launching Network OS, version 7(NOS 7). The solution offers a great deal of benefit for carrier ethernet. The solution allows for a logical view of the optical network, as well as the ability to discover VLANs. Also, Nakina is still finding a great deal of success working with partners like Juniper and Anda. In addition, Nakina continues its innovative marketing campaign to maintain visibility in the space.

Conceptwave:
After many years of successful partnerships, Conceptwave is moving into what VP of Marketing and Business Development Chun-Ling Woon calls Conceptwave 3.0 (1.0 was developing the solution, and 2.0 was working through partners), which involves the company moving into the market on its own two feet. The company specializes in catalog management and already has worked with a number of distinguished partners. We're interested to see what's next.

HP:
The centerpiece of HP's presence at the show, which was substantial, was the assertion that HP offers the Communication Industry's most complete OSS portfolio. The offerings carry the NGOSS badge, and span integration, fulfillment, and assurance, including BSS needs. HP posits that the solutions offer a full lifecycle approach, and that it will continue to invest in innovative OSS solutions.

Netcracker:
Netcracker had a massive presence at Management World this year. Any attendee making his or her way towards the Acropolis convention center from the southwest was greeted by a Netcracker banner covering a substantial portion of the venue's external wall. The presence was no less substantial inside. The company was rolling out its new product release (dubbed "Pasadena"). The new rollout promises richer ROI, greater functional effectiveness, and increased operational excellence (courtesy of enhanced Business Process Management (BPM) and Business Activity Monitoring (BAM).

Progress Software:
Progress seemed to be enjoying substantial booth traffic at the event. They were distributing copies of *Application Integration Using the SID* by John P. Reilly and John Wilmes. In addition, their approach to application infrastructure is of interest to many within the industry, for good reason. They provide solid thought leadership and a capable approach to the space that we always enjoy hearing more about.

Comptel/Axiom:
Fresh off of a merger, Comptel and Axiom were at the show as one, but with separate branding still in place. While the new company still seems a little busy with the merger to discuss much of what's in store, we're certainly interested in hearing more.

Other companies we met with that had great things to say included NetScout, Harris Stratex, VPI Systems, Tekelec, Intelliden, Ascom, Subex, and many, many more.

Conference programming.
As a result of a massively busy meeting schedule, we were only able to get to a limited portion of the conference programming. However, we did have some experts on the scene, and we'll have their thoughts in next month's issue of Pipeline. Stay tuned!

Final Thoughts
As the industry stands, Management World is the best and most comprehensive show out there for professionals in the OSS/BSS space. It's difficult to come up with a show that even comes close to competing with its focus and its depth and breadth of offerings for the OSS/BSS set. However, that doesn't mean that the show can

rest on its laurels and assume that they'll still be able to welcome hordes of attendees year after year.

Furthermore, a chat with Martin Creaner of the TMForum revealed that the growing focus on content and media is indicative of an intentional shift in the forum. Creaner states that the shift is not a shift in the forum, but a shift in the industry, as SPs, media companies, device companies, and others begin to all play in the same sandbox, with fewer differentiators between their market spaces. Nevertheless, the change can be disconcerting to some. We'll see, with time, if the shift is a wise one.

In the meantime, we'll continue to turn to the TMForum, and its Management World, for a solid event for the OSS professional. Between the location, the food, and the sheer concentration of those with an OSS focus, it's the best thing going.

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