GERMANY

Cloud computing gaining ground at Intergraph community

DARMSTADT, early March [ov]. Georg Bartel, chairman of Cegug e.V., the independent association of German-speaking users of Intergraph solutions, proudly entered the stage to open the 46th Cegug User Meeting. Mr Bartel had good reason to be proud, after all he was able to welcome more than 280 attendees and refer to 43 papers on the established high level.

Following a short opening speech, Mr Bartel, acting as maître de plaisir, cleared the stage for the exhibitors, who were able to present their companies, each in a sort of 60-second pitch: BKR Ingenieurbüro, CAXperts, Intergraph Deutschland, MPSS, ÖbV Petersen and Trimble. They took this opportunity to invite the attendees to their stands.

Then an absolute expert in presentation took the stage: Gerhard Sallinger, CEO at Intergraph PPM (Huntsville, US state of Alabama). Mr Sallinger took the time to analyse the macroeconomic environment of large plant engineering and outline his standpoint on how Intergraph had fared compared to the competition over the last business year.

The CEO emphasised that planning depth today was much greater than before and the complexity to be handled in the projects also much more challenging. For this reason, far-reaching integration of the tool infrastructure was very important to overcome the challenges.

No question, Intergraph PPM is the leading system provider for plant design solutions.
with a market share of 45 percent, followed by Aveva with 35 percent. These figures come from a survey conducted by the ARC Advisory Group from last year. The market value of his company was estimated by Mr. Sallinger as three to four billion US dollars. Admittedly this can only be an estimate as the system provider was taken over in 2010 for the sum of 2.1 billion US dollars by Hexagon and is no longer a listed company. Mr. Sallinger spoke on stability, growth and a "winning team": the system provider employs around 2,300 people today.

During a press talk, Mr. Sallinger also went into the subject of cloud computing. For this purpose, an Irish cloud operator was acquired last year. At Intergraph PPM around 100 employees are working on this development and around 5 percent of sales are generated with it. In three to four years, it could rise to 15 and 20 percent, says the CEO, but this wasn’t a sure thing. At present, he continued, the company was trying to find an external cloud provider who can offer appropriate services all over the world.

He was followed by Ulrich Grothaus, Application Manager at Intergraph responsible for the DACH region, along with colleagues, who presented the impressive number of 51 (2D and 3D) applications in rapid succession. This was intended to demonstrate that the system provider can cover practically the entire lifecycle of a plant with its data-centric solutions. Incidentally, a simulator is currently being developed, called Smart Plant Process Engineering, so that customers no longer have to resort to other solutions, like those from AspenTech.

The human lie detector
Marco Loew, an interrogation expert in the German criminal investigation department who has been awarded several distinctions, took the auditorium away from engineering IT to the world of negotiation techniques and dialogue. Mr. Loew is regarded as the German expert in forensic dialogue techniques for informed checking of the credibility of discussion partners and establishing facts. "When someone's telling the truth, he has pictures in his head. When that someone's telling a lie, there are no pictures. It takes longer to construct the lie, that is to come up with an answer," Mr. Loew explained. With a counter-question, however, it was possible to win time, which he also demonstrated in practice. Mr. Loew's recommendation: "Start a conversation with small talk to relax the atmosphere. If, later on, any nervousness becomes apparent, then this is the reaction to a specific question and not the overall situation."

Shell to take the lead
One highlight in the afternoon of the first day of the event was Egbert Suit's presentation on the cloud project at Shell on the basis of Intergraph solutions. This project belongs to 'Data Move', a Shell initiative focused on improving business processes such as design, logistics, material management, construction, commissioning, and handover to operations. It provides an environment supporting these processes in a decentralised IT environment that enables a collaborative way of working between contractors and owner/operator teams. The programme drives standardisation of data and document management tools, processes, workflows, and practices throughout the lifecycle of capital projects. It shall ensure that all critical project information is accurate, consistent, complete, accessible, reliable and relevant at all times and transferable at critical handover points.

Within the Data Move project a number of solutions under the name 'Integrated Engineering Environment' (design tools, vendor catalogue, construction workface planning, commissioning and track & trace) has been developed. Substantial cost savings and schedule reliability are expected among others by providing templates ('single version of the truth'), catalogues and library with standard design building blocks enabling replication, and standardised handover to operations. As Mr. Suit pointed out Data Move is intended to act as a game changer in the Oil & Gas industry, both internally and externally because they want to avoid a starting from scratch when it comes to the project setup. The programme relies on external vendors, business partners, and many different internal stakeholders. "Effective teamwork is key," as Mr. Suit said. At the moment first solutions are implemented to demonstrate that the expected benefits can be delivered as planned.

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