Pipeline
Knowledge Is Power

TMW – Sun, Sea, OSS
by Tim Young

The conference halls are dark. The booths have been taken down. The funky marketing giveaways are resting safely in carry-on bags, Nice trashcans, and the hands of the surely under whelmed offspring of telecom types around the globe. (My Dad went to Nice and all I got was this lousy provisioning solution branded slinky?) It's official: TMW-Nice 2007 is history. The good news? It was a fun one.

This year's Nice show bears noting for a few reasons. First off, it was big. There were over 3,000 attendees this year, making it a significant improvement over last year, or any year for that matter. On top of that, there were well over 100 exhibitors, numerous conference sessions, some compelling and tradition-breaking keynote addresses, and lots of successful peripheral events. Furthermore, there was discussion, and lots of it.

The entire show had a theme of really putting talking points aside and delivering quantifiable results already. This was evident in the conference programming which tended to focus on applying what we know rather than continuing the debate to little avail. It was evident in the keynote speaker selection, which included requisite service provider representatives, but also a forward-looking advertising exec and an industry visionary. For more on all of the speakers, feel free to peruse analyst Barbara Lancaster's accompanying show rundown.

It was evident in my conversations with vendors. Ken Rugg and Judy Mintz of Progress Software made mention of how previous conversations in this sector have been somewhat theoretical, and now it's all about "How do I make it real? How do I make it useful?"

Simon Murderack, CEO of Tribold, agrees. "When we were in Chicago [at Billing and OSS World, when Simon and I last spoke], we were not quite sure that the North American CSVs understood the weight of change that was about to happen to them. Or maybe they understand it, but they are insulated from it. What's been fascinating about this show is that everyone gets it. They embrace the change and are energized by it." Murderack was speaking specifically about Tribold's unified product catalog solution. Tribold made some serious waves at the event, along with their solutions partner, customer care and billing giant Convergys.

Our take? Bravo! Enough "the future is now!" lip service. Devices and capabilities that have always been considered anything from sci-fi to wishful thinking are now viable. This event seemed to be a time for some leaders in the sector to get together and decide to talk less and do more. Let's hope it sticks.

The Expo

The expo was an interesting beast this year, and a true tale of two TMWs. Some vendors were happier with booth traffic and the show in general, and these tended to be those vendors with booths on the upper floor. In an exercise in unorthodox layout, the expo area of Nice's Acropolis convention center has its entrance o the upper floor, and the only way to access the lower floor is by traveling through the upper floor. Problem is, according to several vendors, not many people were making their way downstairs. While the layout hasn't changed much year to year, unhappy vendors cited better efforts in previous years to drive traffic downstairs. The difference between the two floors, in crowds and climate, was noticeable. Bustling bazaar up top, polite and tentative trade show down below.

As with any trade show, there were veteran companies attempting to expand awareness about just who they are and what they do. Martin Group, the venerable South Dakota-based OSS, engineering, and consulting company that has been around since 1970, was at the show attempting to expand its visibility as it has grown outside of the US through partnerships with Ericcson. "This is our first direct presence in an international show," says Jeff Boozer of Martin Group. "We're not trying to make a splash. We're here to learn."

Vitria had some recent announcements as well. "Vitria has been in existence since the early '90s and went public in 1999. This year we went private again." Vitria also announced the latest release of its Business Accelerator platform. "Business Accelerator is built from the ground up for and SOA environment. Keep what you've got, but you can also move into a nonproprietary situation."

Nakina had two big announcements. First off, Nakina's staff was crowing about the recent partnership agreement with UK based reseller Magdalene. The company, though not well known in the States, represents a considerable opportunity for Nakina, as the deal goes beyond a simple resale agreement. Magdalene also agrees to provide in-region network engineering, implementation and support services to Nakina´s European customers. Also, Nakina Systems announced that it supports new LSI products targeting carrier-managed services for SMBs.

Nexagent showed the same flair and spark as we saw from them at TMW-Dallas, this time trading in juggling stilt-walkers for a magician with a coordinated vest and headscarf ensemble and flash paper to spare. We kid Nexagent, but their product lifecycle management solutions are really gaining traction as they iron out the details of how to have the conversation with potential customers. We, for one, are all ears.

CA was at the event, taking one more step toward solidifying its position as a global leader in the OSS space. The company's leadership echoed its recent devotion to encouraging real-world results and applications that involves the realities of a new breed of systems. This follows the call to arms issued by CA's Norman Rice, III at the recent Next Generation OSS Integration Summit in Boston.

Intelliden announced its latest financing round of $10 Million. Matrix Partners led the deal, supported by existing investors Granite Global Ventures, Hercules Technology Growth Capital, 3i and Westbury Partners. That extra bit never hurts.

NetCracker showcased several deals. The company released NetCracker v7.0, which claims to be faster and more flexible than any previous iteration of NetCracker's solution. In addition, NetCracker announced deals with HP, UPC, and TRE-FOR. The latter is particularly interesting to Pipeline, as it points out, yet again, that utility companies are ever-encroaching on the telecom space.

A partnership was being showcased between Visionael, Highdeal, and Ceon. "The genesis was that we found that there was a demand. Customers wanted end to end and they wanted best of breed, and they didn't want to pay high integration costs." Craig Nichols, CEO of Visionael. The combined solution represents a nice synergy for all three companies, as I gathered from speaking to representatives for all three.

Progress DataXtend was touting John Reilly's SID book, *Getting Started with the SID: A SID Modeler's Guide.* Reilly, TM Forum's Senior Technical Program Manager was signing copies of his book at Progress's booth. The book was distributed free to conference attendees at TeleManagement World and each book included a read-only version of Progress DataXtend Semantic Integrator, which contains the SID preloaded as the common model. A triumph for Reilly, Progress, and SID alike.

Upstart Zenulta proved that it knows how to launch a product by claiming a major customer win along the way. Founded in 2006, the company focuses on event correlation, and announced its deal with TurkCell, Turkey's first and biggest GSM network provider. John Tucker, Chief Executive Officer of Zenulta said: "Our company is proud to be associated with such an innovative mobile communication provider such as Turkcell. Turkcell has a strong focus on performance and customer

service and this is a goal which we share."

Digital Fuel was all about the true meaning of BSM at the event. Digital Fuel's Tom Schaefer asserted that the whole idea of BSM has left the realm of IT jargon and is being looked at as an actual process, with real applications and results, which ties back to the idea of real world applications being on the menu at this year's event. Along those lines, Carolyn Smithson, OSS Strategy Manager at O2, shared her experience and insight in successfully implementing Digital Fuel's ServiceFlow BSM software during the event through a case study.

Subex-Azure had releases on its Nikira V 6.0 and new VoIP service fulfillment solutions. Also, Subex-Azure's CTO Mark Nicholson, maintaining every bit of gravitas he possessed prior to the Syndesis acquisition, spoke at the event alongside Telus OSS Director Brian Lakey about the challenges of Triple Play service delivery. The name 'Telus' was on the lips of many an Alcatel-Lucent employee as well, as the Canadian SP went public with a deal with the company to integrate Subex's IP Broadband provisioning solution.

Other news of note:

The TeleManagement Forum announced that the Global Billing Association and Internet Protocol Detail Record (IPDR) are being folded into the TM Forum. While there is a great overlap in membership between the organizations, which limits the impact of this decision, it is a potential double-edged sword. TMF bigwigs Martin Creaner and Keith Willetts, speaking at the press conference announcing the incorporation on the other groups into the TMF umbrella, stressed the synergy of the organizations, and underscored the fact that the extensive overlap (in terms of representative companies, anyway) was a large part of why this decision makes so much sense. Furthermore, they conceded that they may need to find a new venue for TMW, though the membership seems to be happy with Nice in spite of the fact that so Pipeline sincerely hopes that the decision does not mark a trend of sacrificing depth for the sake of breadth. Conversely, if the impact is not as large, it threatens to be a non-issue. Hence the double-edged sword.

The catalyst projects were a subject of much attention, and cast a special spotlight on Axiom, as it spearheaded the PSA initiative, supported by British Telecom, Cable & Wireless, TeliaSonera, QinetiQ and others. "We are delighted to receive this prestigious award from the TeleManagement Forum as it is testament to both the time and hard work dedicated to the project by the member companies and the relevancy of the project to the industry", said Brian Naughton, Team Leader of the PSA and VP Strategy and Architecture at Axiom.

For the winners of all the awards, which were issued in style at a black-tie event, visit the TM Forum's homepage at www.tmforum.org. There you will find additional details about the show, which will certainly be remembered as a strong one.

If you have news you'd like to share with Pipeline, contact us at editor@pipelinepub.com.