CMG Italia and UKCMG annual conferences 2012 – review by Adam Grummitt

CMG Italy and UKCMG have arranged their conferences in recent years to be within a few days of each other such that visiting speakers can present at both, and many Mullen Award winners have done just that. In addition, both UKCMG and CMG Italy (as well as ceCMG in Germany) have a tradition of encouraging speakers from CMG to give plenary sessions, workshops or invited papers.

**CMG Italia 2012 (26th annual conference)**

Florence, 10 May 2012

The Italian national chapter has been a small, single day conference in recent years. This year it was from 09:30 to 16:00 in the excellent theatre of a user site (MPS Bank in central Florence near Station Rifredi), with breaks for coffee and lunch right beside the conference suite. It feels like a US regional meeting in that it is small, friendly and very informal with good content. There was a very enjoyable CMGI dinner on the previous evening with 10 attending, with an excellent meal followed by a very pleasant evening stroll around the Ponte Vecchia.

The conference had a single stream of 9 sessions with some 30 delegates. The attendees were made up from a Committee of six, three international speakers (giving papers in English), six delegates from MPS Bank and the rest (about 15) external CMGI members. Three papers were sponsored from CMG - Adam Grummitt, Glen Anderson and Erik Ostermueller (Mullen award). Five papers were from vendors MPS (sponsor), DBS Systems (sponsor) and EPV (sponsor – 3 sessions) with one from SEC services.

CMGI is near its critical mass for survival (as it has been for some time). It takes lots of effort from Danilo Gipponi and Fabio Ottaviani of EPV with their small board of about five volunteers to encourage delegates to come, but resistance is strong (based primarily on effort and focus in difficult financial times, when it is hard to get permission and funds to leave the office even for a day). EPV has its own User Group and has worked hard and long to support CMG Italia which is much appreciated, but is finding it increasingly difficult to sustain CMGI.

**UKCMG’12 (26th annual conference)**

Belfry Hotel, near Oxford, Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 May

UKCMG feels like a half-size version of CMG in that it is a sizeable conference of two days with four tracks of six sessions with 12 exhibitors and about 120 delegates. On the second day, the afternoon sessions are specific workshops on detailed topics. The conference has been reduced to two days in recent years and is an excellent format with one very effective evening for social networking. The Belfry Hotel is just large enough to accommodate the conference and offers ‘run of the house’ with a great intimate atmosphere and everything very close by.

The exhibitors included itSMF UK which had an extra table with its publications library. The Gold Sponsors were Macro4, Capacitas and Compuware. The other exhibitors included CPT, EPV, Systemwerx, Orsyp, BMC, Agileise (Demand), Precise and Metron. The invited speakers from USA were Glen Anderson (keynote, paper and workshop), Mark Friedman (paper and workshop), Erik Ostermueller (Mullen paper), Mike Giglio (Mullen paper), David Halbig (paper) and also Adam Grummitt as President of CMG who gave a plenary and was on a workshop panel.

Malcolm Gunn has just ended his two year term as Chairman and has passed the mantle on to Herb Daly. The whole Board has worked very hard and effectively over the years to keep some momentum and recorded a profit for last year. The event itself takes over the entire hotel and is very friendly with users, vendors, academics and consultants alike. It has a very effective administration provided by pbProjects which provides essential continuity given the two-year cycle for many officers and directors. The whole board of about ten volunteers deserves applause for its commitment and doing all the hard work involved in planning and running the whole event on their own (in conjunction with pbProjects).

The address given by Adam Grummitt was similar to the one given in CMGIItaly and the abstract may be of some interest to members of CMG in any chapter.
The benefits of the virtual world of CMG networking with its regions and chapters

CMG is a not-for-profit, worldwide organization of IT specialists in Performance, Capacity and Service Management, be they user, vendor, consultant or academic. CMG has over twenty regional chapters in the USA, and eight active international chapters. Its membership is spread across in-house, out-sourced and facilities-managed users; hardware and software vendors; individual and small company consultants; and academics. For any typical event, the audience may well be split evenly between users, vendors and consultants.

There seems to be a life-cycle with significant early growth and then slow decay in numbers for a new CMG region/chapter. This is reflected in many regions/chapters. After a period of enthusiasm and excitement about a new discipline, there is a backlash of disinterest and decay, settling down to a hard core of maybe about a fifth or so of the peak attendance. This can still be a stable population, so long as the group is active, flexible, true to its cause and lives within its means. There seems to be a critical mass somewhere under a hundred for a chapter and thirty for a region where it is very difficult to survive.

CMG needs new members and more member benefits. In UKCMG and ceCMG masterclasses, workshops, seminars, local meetings and other initiatives have been successfully adopted. In the USA, the regions cover these local ideas. The US national membership is affected dominantly by those attending the annual international conference.

The old member benefits such as the conference itself, the Journal, Measure-IT, workshops and the vault of data of past papers are available to all members (with a member-only restriction on the last three years’ conference material).

It is time to make use of potential new benefits based on social media and virtual meetings, presentations etc. to improve the membership interaction. A number of initiatives are underway in the USA to take CMG closer to its regions. The intention is to capture all the presentations at CMG’12 in Las Vegas (Rio Suites Hotel, Dec 3-7, room rate $55 prior to Sept. 14) and select the best for a potential virtual conference based on a local regional campus sometime in the Spring (maybe in 2013 or possibly 2014). Some of these sorts of ideas are already underway in the international chapters and they can probably be improved by closer interaction with each other to share experience and expertise.

I hope that with the exploitation of virtual and social media, CMG will reverse the current downward trend to flourish as an international and regional group for professionals working in the field of performance, capacity and service management in IT.