

UKCMG/EuroCMG 2013, 14 & 15 May

CBI Conference Centre, Centre Point, London - Report from Adam Grummitt

This was UKCMG with a difference. It was held as a two-day conference in central London (at the junction of Oxford St and Tottenham Court Rd) with a four-track programme from 9:45am to 7pm on the first day and 9am to 5pm on the second. The four tracks were Capacity Management, Mainframe, Performance and Service Management. The tradition for some time had been to have 'run-of-the-house' for two days with one big evening in a small country hotel (not too distant for most delegates by car). Clearly the hope was that the central location would encourage more day visitors. This central London formula has also been used in the UK for some time with an annual one day 'Forum' in the autumn, with free delegate attendance as the Forum is wholly sponsored by vendors. UKCMG also has regional meetings in London, Manchester and elsewhere, with one coming up in the South West.

The actual impact of this change of location is hard to determine, but the numbers were about the same as last year (around 130 delegates including exhibitor booth staff). Over 20 user sites were represented and some, highly welcome, new 'gold members' sent a handful of delegates each. There were some academics and a few outsourcers as well as many vendors and consultants.

The ten exhibitor tables were arranged informally around the lunch and refreshments area. The Gold Sponsors were Capacitas and AppDynamics, with Compuware as a silver sponsor. The other exhibitors were Agileise, Cherwell, CPT Global, EPV Technologies, IBM and Metron. itSMF UK had a stand (on a reciprocal basis). All were subjected to a discourse from the CMG president about the delights of CMG in the USA and this year's Performance and Capacity 2013 conference in La Jolla in November. Some sounded reasonably keen to come. But there is an old exhibition rule of thumb that everyone enjoys the neutral territory and seems so enthusiastic on the surface that you need to reduce all estimates of likelihood by a factor of 10. Thus the most confident expression of certainty at such an event should still be rated as one chance in ten.

It was the turn this year for UK to act as host to EuroCMG. This is, in essence, the opportunity for European (and other) chapters of CMG to exchange ideas for different chapters to try and experience of their implementation. Each active chapter in Europe in turn hosts the grouping at their own annual conference. The international attendance this year included Australia, Germany, Italy (including a paper from Danilo Gipponi) and the USA (Glenn Anderson and Mark Friedman who both gave papers and workshops and a Mullen winner presentation from Nicole Arksey).

There was a well-attended lunch-time international panel with a short address from Australia, USA and Germany with Malcolm Gunn (UKCMG vice-chairman) in the chair. Giovanni Fadabini from CMG Italy also contributed.

Australia has not had a conference or even a formal meeting since 2005 but still has a little money in the bank waiting for potential rejuvenation. Tony and Gayle Allan gave a brief review of the status there.

The USA was represented by Adam and Mark. Adam gave a brief review of positive regional activity in over twenty chapters in the USA but recent national conference attendance has dropped from being up to 10 times larger than UKCMG in the past to being just two to three times the size now. CMG is gradually changing the conference profile to live more within its means, and in many ways may become more like the other international chapters.

Wolfram Greis reported that Germany is making a small profit these days, largely on the back of its focus groups. There are Special Interest Groups (SIGs) where delegates pay to attend forums/workshops on hot topics. Currently four separate working parties meet about twice a year each, on cloud, APM, and for the mainframers, z prices and hybrid cloud computing.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the end of the first day was a much smaller affair. It was attended by the board and some members with a few international observers. The reports were brief but noted a small profit with a quick vote to keep the same directors (with a couple of co-opted directors voted on to the board formally). Unlike the USA, officers are appointed from within the board and not a matter for the members. The over-riding message from the board was the need for more members to get more involved to justify the existence of UKCMG. This was the same message that the chairman, Herb Daly, had used to open the conference. He identified the benefits of the organization in terms of the quality of the material, training, networking and so on, but felt that the main essential was within the membership itself, to have a vibrant group of members exchanging their experiences and sharing their expertise.