IT Education Conference & Expo

Recap of COMMON's successful Conference & Expo in Orlando

By Greg Brown

COMMON's Fall 2003 IT Education Conference & Expo, held in Orlando, Florida, from September 7-11, 2004, was a major success for over 2,000 people. COMMON offered excellent education, many networking opportunities and hands-on training. Some 200 professionals went on a unique behind-the-scenes tour of Universal Orlando's IT environment, and iSeries executives attended the 2nd annual IT Executive Conference.

Off to an early start with Opening Session
The conference began earlier than usual, with Opening Session at noon on Sunday, September 7. COMMON President Bob Boyson welcomed attendees and reviewed highlights of the coming week. Then, keynote speaker Tom Bittman, a top iSeries researcher from Gartner, Inc., delivered an independent analysis of the iSeries. Bittman addressed the iSeries' new abilities, areas of usage, competitive position and ever-changing role in IT departments.

IBM and attendees spoke up at iSeries Nation Town Hall Meeting
Later on Sunday, IBM hosted their Town Hall Meeting. Al Zollar, General Manager of IBM eServer iSeries, revealed new IBM offerings, and several IBM customers discussed their success with the iSeries. During the second half of the session, a panel of IBM executives answered questions and took comments from the audience.

Special focus on IT Security
The conference included a special educational focus on IT security. On Monday, September 8, keynote speaker Bob Breeden, Special Agent Supervisor for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Computer Crime Center, told a capacity audience about cyber-crime in Florida.

The Security Focus included numerous sessions and labs covering such subjects as "Building and Using Virtual Private Networks" and "Single Sign-On." Also, many security vendors in the Expo provided special information to the attendees with an extra interest in security.

IT Executive Conference drew rave reviews
COMMON's second IT Executive Conference took place during the first three days of the general conference. Attended by high-level IT decision makers, this conference within a conference included special executive-level sessions and meetings with IBM leaders. Comments from attendees were outstanding.

COMMON Expo offered hundreds of solutions
The first three days of the conference included the world's largest iSeries Expo—a showcase of more than 100 exhibit booths featuring solutions for the IT industry. Attendees flocked to the exhibit hall Sunday night for a Welcome Reception with the exhibitors, and many returned on Monday and Tuesday for a free lunch in the Expo.

A look behind the scenes at Universal Orlando
Approximately 200 conference attendees boarded charter buses and saw the AS/400 technology that helps run Universal Orlando. Their tour included an inside view of two popular attractions: the Amazing Adventures of Spider Man and the Incredible Hulk Roller Coaster.

Going out in fun style — with a Closing Event at Universal Orlando
The Orlando conference and expo ended with a true Closing Extravaganza. Attendees and their registered guests arrived at the Marvel Super Hero Island at Universal Orlando for a farewell party. The Island was closed to the general public, and attendees were treated to complimentary dinner buffets and unlimited free rides on state-of-the-art attractions.

Looking ahead to Spring 2004: San Antonio and a Linux Focus
The next COMMON Conference & Expo will be in San Antonio, Texas, May 2-6, 2004. To learn more, go to http://www.common.org/conferences/conf.html. There will be a special educational focus on cross-platform Linux, and it will include a wide range of sessions and labs on emerging Linux issues. For more details on the Linux Focus, go to http://www.common.org/linux.html

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