THE PERFECT ELEVATOR PITCH

ITSMF UK'S SOFTWARE TOOLS FORUM IS NOW ESTABLISHED IN THE CALENDAR AS A REGULAR EVENT FOR THOSE SEEKING AN OVERVIEW OF THE ITSM TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE. BUT HOW DO THE PRESENTERS PUT THEIR MESSAGE ACROSS EFFECTIVELY IN JUST 30 MINUTES? ROS SATAR INVESTIGATES.

The ITSM Software Tools Forum, as the publicity explains, "offers an unprecedented opportunity to bring together vendors, consultants and potential buyers under one roof to discuss product selection and implementation." A simple concept – if you're a buyer or existing user of a product. You sign up, and turn up, for a variety of presentations from vendors explaining why their offering is the best fit for your needs and organization.

But a 30-minute 'elevator-pitch' is one long ride – and it takes a lot more than that to try and appeal to a wide range of potential customers. Following the forum, I spoke to the sponsors' representative - Andrew Smith from BMC, Simon Kent from Cherwell, Patrick Bolger from Hornbill, Marval's Tom West-Robinson and Robert Goldsworth from TOPdesk (not to mention itSMF UK Chairman and event host Colin Rudd) to find out how you decide what to focus on and what to forget when you have just 30 minutes to make your mark.

Why is it important to be a sponsor for an event like this?

"Marval is service orientated and focused on the long-game consultative sale, rather than just punting software," said West-Robinson. "So it's a great opportunity for us to network with like-minded service management professionals to understand the challenges they face now and may face in the future."

This was a view shared by Rob Goldsworth from TOPdesk. "The itSMF UK is a brand that is recognized worldwide, and these events give us the opportunity to network with like-minded people in our industry, to share ideas, discuss trends and challenges, and to showcase our latest innovations."

BMC's Andrew Smith was part of the Numara acquisition, and has a slightly different perspective. Prior to the acquisition BMC was more traditionally rooted in the enterprise and corporate space, but itSMF offers a new direction. "Where BMC is concerned, itSMF UK probably has more relevance to us now than it had in previous years. As an industry forum the itSMF UK event does for BMC what other forums don't, which is to actually span the mid-market commercial base."

Ultimately, people are at the forum to weigh up the potential for a new solution.

"At an event like that, you're expecting to see people not happy with what they've got," said Hornbill's Pat Bolger. "What you're hoping is that you don't see any of your own customers – fortunately I didn't!"

What was the presenters' brief?

On the day, itSMK UK Chairman Colin Rudd set the scene, talking about the need for tools to help organizations achieve business value. He described one of the principle beliefs and values of the itSMF UK:

"itSMF UK is here to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge on all ITSM-related matters. We are an important channel of communication between product vendors and users, and this sort of event offers an excellent chance to highlight this relationship. In short, we provide the platform and the sponsors have a chance to convey the real value of their company and products to the user community."

Tom West-Robinson said: "It is a very rare opportunity to get this many IT professionals in one room, wanting to talk about your solution, at one time. Literally from our point-of-view we have a blank canvas. We have to assess what the audience may be interested in hearing, and the only way we can do that is by looking at the delegate list and steering our presentation accordingly."

Simon Kent added: "If your product and toolset does not address current themes and offer a vision for the future, then you're irrelevant. The key is being able to articulate that message in only thirty minutes."

How do you make your product relevant to the audience in 30 minutes?

Andrew Smith incorporated part of a live demo from the Chatter messaging channel in Remedyforce into his presentation. "You need to differentiate yourself from the other vendors," he said. "From an audience perspective, we looked at the mid-point and the topics that would be of most interest to this group. We were conscious of the fact that, at the top end, we had Remedy customers there and we did not want to alienate them."

TOPdesk's Rob Goldsworth also chose to use a live demo to help differentiate his company's message. "Through a live demonstration, it's important to give delegates a feel for the usability of the product, " he said.

Marval's Tom West Robinson adds: "It's about getting all the key points across in a short space of time, and that's not easy when you have a lot of key points to share. One guarantee we have is that the audience will be diverse, so we need to make sure we cover every angle: functionality for your frontline service desk team, reporting for the management team and, as Colin Rudd correctly highlighted in his introduction, proof that Marval can and has delivered business value."

In his pitch for Hornbill, Pat Bolger chose to look at profiling and service experience, rather than focusing on the brochure tick-lists of best practice certification. "We want to talk about the stuff they've got to tackle – where we've used our tool with customers and employed a specific approach to overcome a challenge that other users are likely to be facing too."

If there is one thing you or itSMF UK could do differently at an event like this, what would it be?

bmcsoftware

"The bottom line is that we had some really good results from the event. Check the brief, just to make sure we are doing the right thing – that would be the only thing we'd do differently."

MARVAL
ITSM Software | Consultancy | Education

"There are so many messages we need to fit into that 30 minutes to cover everybody's objectives in the room, without actually knowing what the objective are. A little longer might help"

HORNBILL

"One of the things the itSMF UK could do is to score the presentations."

CHERWELL SOFTWARE™

"Increase the presentation time to 45 minutes, so that you can ensure there is time for Q&A"
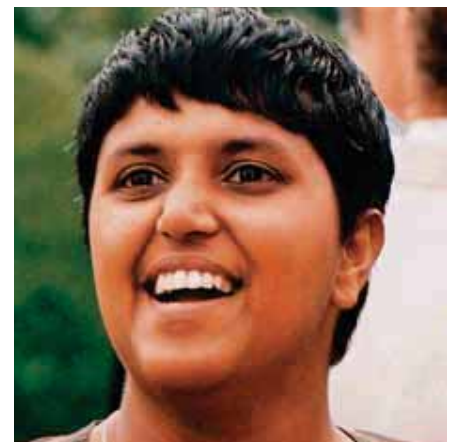
TOPdesk
Service Management Simplified

"I think the only thing TOPdesk would do differently is to attend even more itSMF events!"

For all the talk about a long elevator ride, 30 minutes can go by quite quickly for presenters; but overall attendees at the Forum received a good balanced view of the tools and technologies that are available to support their service management environment.

In addition to the presentations, there was time for attendees to directly engage the sponsors, and other vendors who manned stands, to discuss their solutions in more detail. And as part of an impromptu Q&A session at the end of the day, there was some discussion about taking the Forum to the next stage, looking in more detail at product integration and implementation.

The final words should go to Colin Rudd, who said: "From our point of view this was a really valuable event in two respects. Firstly, the vendors and users both derived a lot of value from it; and secondly, we now have some great ideas for future events that will help us to build on our unique role as an IT service management forum."

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