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Like a Well-Oiled Machine

By Aaron Halabe
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Some years ago, during a meeting among Microsoft representatives and a Chevron Corp. technical team, alarms began to sound on multiple client PDAs.

The alerts told Chevron staffers that oil production volume on a drilling platform in the North Sea had dropped suddenly. Everyone went scrambling to determine what was wrong.

A faulty pump was to blame, but the task of evaluating the data was a massive undertaking. At the time, Chevron, one of the world's largest oil companies, had many disparate systems that collected production data, but employees could not see the information in a unified way.

"Later we showed them how the data from their different systems could be integrated, how they could look at it and correlate it in a single data space, rather than looking at information across different systems and screens," said Norman Judah, Microsoft's chief technical officer for Worldwide Services and IT. "Chevron [could] more proactively manage their production."



Alan Nunns, right, Chevron GM of global technology, receives the first Beta 2 copies of Windows Vista, the 2007 Windows Microsoft Office system and Windows Server "Longhorn" from Bill Gates at the WinHEC conference in May. Photo by Ron Wurzer

Speakers at TechReady3, held late last month in Seattle, conveyed that story to more than 5,000 field technical staff from 90 countries. Attendees represented a variety of job roles in the Enterprise and Partner Group (EPG), Small and Mid-market Solutions and Partners Group (SMS&P), and the Developer Platform Evangelism (DPE) and Services and IT teams.

"It takes everybody from all the different roles to succeed," Judah continued. "Whether you're an architect, evangelist or a consultant, everybody has a role to play in this. And when everybody works together, good things happen."

Indeed, good things did happen. Subsequent meetings led Chevron to adopt and implement Seer, a Microsoft-based solution – and a Scottish reference to a tribal leader who can see the future. Seer dramatically simplified the company's data analysis. It drilled into applications, databases and other sources and – based on employee roles – fed info to individual user dashboards.

The result, Judah noted, is better decision-making and performance, and competitive advantage for Chevron. Moreover, the implementation proved that Chevron could make a "big bet" on Microsoft, he said.



“Whether you’re an architect, evangelist or a consultant, everybody has a role to play in [customer successes],” says Norman Judah, CTO for Worldwide Services and IT. Photo by Mark Swatzell

The company, which was an early adopter of Windows NT4 and Windows XP, committed to be one of the first to run its business end-to-end on Windows Vista and Office 2007.

Microsoft technologies will support 22 IT projects, including document, collaboration, information-management and messaging. Chevron’s 60,000 employees work in 186 nations and exchange about 1 million e-mails daily. Their transactional systems process about 4 million commercial transactions per day, amounting to 2 petabytes (1 quadrillion bytes) of data.

“With the new SharePoint environment (and) Office 2007 environment, we’re really looking to create sort of a standard information management infrastructure,” said Alan Nunns, Chevron’s GM of Global Technology.

“Employees love to see those kinds of customer successes,” Judah said, “because it helps them not only to understand those situations, but also to use them as references” for other customers. “TechReady is about helping to show this broader technical community what’s possible through collaboration and innovation.”

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