

The Buzz is Definitely Back

By Manzoor Siddiqui

Attendees, media, and the entire IBM i community is still buzzing about the second COMMON Annual Meeting and Exposition, which took place in Nashville, Tennessee from March 30 – April 3, 2008 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. The continued success of the annual meeting of the members is driven by the many volunteers and members that continue to give back to COMMON. Here are some highlights from the Annual Meeting:

Opening Session

The attendee-packed Opening Session of the second COMMON Annual Meeting and Exposition opened with **Randy Dufault**, COMMON President, talking about how COMMON has evolved and grown in its 48-year history, and continues to grow. He further elaborated on how the new volunteer structure, which is now broken into the three pillars of COMMON—Advocacy, Education, and Community—continues to make strides on all fronts.

Advocacy's success was highlighted by a sold-out IT Executive Conference – the first time in its seven year history. The Advocacy pillar is aligned along three areas: Leadership, Advocacy, and Volunteer Excellence. Leadership continues to develop leaders within COMMON and align COMMON as a leader in the IT industry; Advocacy is charged with the requirements process and raising COMMON's stature in the industry; and Volunteer Excellence encourages, recognizes, and rewards outstanding volunteer contributions.

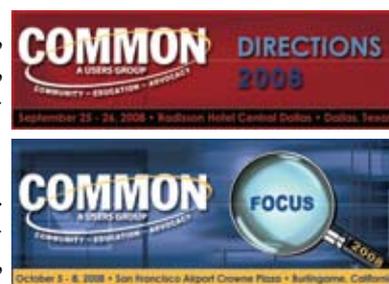
The Education pillar continues to build upon the COMMON...*Customized* education model to provide the IBM i community with a variety of options to gain the most relevant



Randy Dufault presenting the COMMON Distinguished Service Award to David Gibbs

Photos by Vaughn Dragland

education. The Annual Meeting and Exposition is the largest educational offering combining sessions, pre-conference workshops, and labs. New this year is the two-day COMMON Directions conference which will be held in Dallas, Texas. COMMON Focus, the highly successful all-day workshop conference will return this year in San Francisco, California. In addition to the conferences, one-day Seminars, Webcasts, and Webinars provide even more educational options to the community.



The Community pillar continues to: build on its mission of fostering community, provide networking opportunities, and provide a balance of education and networking. The COMMON Cares community is an example of its outreach efforts, which this year included COMMON's participation in the One Laptop per Child program. One laptop was given away through the COMMON Education Foundation, and one will be donated to a deserving school in the Nashville area.



Opening Session - Sunday March 30, 2008

The COMMON update was followed by the Speaker Excellence Awards presented by **Anne Lucas**, which recognizes the top volunteer speakers. Randy then presented the Distinguished Service Award to **David "midrange.com" Gibbs** "for many years of tireless efforts to keep the midrange community together—a perfect example of what 'community' is all about!"

Mark Shearer, Vice President, Marketing and Offerings, IBM Business Systems then joined Randy on stage for a joint presentation of the Fourth Annual COMMON/IBM i5/OS Innovation Awards. Mark then gave an update on IBM's strategy for the System i platform, providing a business update and insight for future growth. He also teased the audience about what to expect at "The New Power Equation"



Mark Shearer, Vice President, Marketing and Offerings, IBM Business Systems

announcement during IBM's Town Hall meeting on Wednesday morning of that week. Mark was followed by the Keynote Speaker, **Dr. Jurij Paraszczak**, from IBM Research who spoke about the future of innovation in Information Technology.

Opening Session set the tone for another high-energy Annual Meeting that promised attendees more of what they have come to expect from COMMON conferences and an exclusive look into the future by IBM.

Nightly iSocials

The evening iSocial events, organized by Community and Networking group, allowed the attendees to relax and have some fun after a day full of intense education and networking. Each evening was a different iSocial, providing attendees plenty of opportunities to meet peers, learn from experts, and also to honor fellow members.

The "iSocial – Ask the Experts Night" kicked off the evening iSocials on Sunday, featuring experts on 15 different topics. This well-attended roundtable event allowed attendees to get one-on-one time with subject experts in a relaxed atmosphere. Attendees enjoyed some drinks and hors d'oeuvres while perusing the latest i5/OS-related products and services at the The "iSocial – All Attendee Reception in the Expo' on Monday night.

Attendees had face time with the 92 exhibitors to learn about their offerings, and how those solutions can help them with their business problems.

Tuesday evening featured the fun-filled "iSocial – Fun and Games Night" where attendees could unwind with light refreshments and a drink, network with fellow attendees, and have fun with games that everyone loved. The "iSocial – Recognition Night" on Wednesday evening immediately followed Meeting of the Members (MOM). This evening allowed the many volunteers, that give so much to COMMON, to be publicly recognized for their contributions in front of their peers.

After a week of intensive education, the conference closed with the "iSocial – Main Event" on Thursday evening. The night featured food, drinks, great giveaways, and fun with the live, interactive comedy show "BONK." This event was very well attended, and everyone had a great time going "BONK"ers!

IT Executive Conference

Concurrent with the Annual meeting, COMMON held its 2008 IT Executive Conference, the exclusive invitation-only event for high level decision makers who want to maximize their IBM i investment. The IT Executive Conference set an all-time attendance record in Nashville. Topics included: i5/OS Directions and Strategy by IBM Executives, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, Seven Strategies for Success by **Bob Tipton**, and Domino Strategy and Directions.

Education

The educational offering at the 2008 Annual Conference did not disappoint, with over 500 educational sessions offered to attendees. Beyond the traditional sessions, attendees could choose from five all-day, pre-conference workshops, which provided in-depth education before the official start of the conference. Numerous Labs were also offered in Nashville, which allowed attendees to complete hands-on exercises at their own pace, covering nearly every technology. Each Open Lab also had an expert instructor in the respective technology area, ready to answer any questions the attendees had.

The education sessions offered at the 2008 Annual Meeting gave attendees



Bonk



Susan Gantner works one-on-one with a student at one of the popular Pre-Conference Workshops



Attendees at the IT Executive Conference

an opportunity to gain the latest skills and information to help them, and their companies, become more efficient and cost-effective. The week featured some of COMMON's well-known sessions and speakers, as well as new sessions, new speakers, case studies, and a wide variety of hands-on labs. The leading-edge topics continued to be a successful draw for all attendees, allowing them to maximize their educational investment.



IBM opened the covers on the Power System models at Expo



Alison Butterill presenting a "For the COMMON Good" pin to Debbie Saugen at the 2008 COMMON Annual Conference

Save the Date

The 2008 Annual Meeting and Exposition closed as yet another successful event, but remember to mark your calendars for future COMMON conference events. The new COMMON Directions conference, a two-day version of what you would find at the Annual Meeting will be held in Dallas, Texas from September 25 – 26, 2008. COMMON Focus, our three-day

workshop conference returns in 2008 with three days of intensive, all-day educational workshops. It will be held in San Francisco, California from October 5 – 8, 2008.

Now is also the time to mark your calendar for the 2009 Annual Meeting and Exposition, which will take place at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno, Nevada, from April 26 – 30, 2009. As before, this annual meeting of the members will offer more of what you have come to expect from COMMON—more education, more networking, more solutions, and more fun. 

About the Author

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COMMON Calendar of Upcoming Events in 2008

July 17, 2008	Webcast: Implement a WMS with Success
September 25 – 26, 2008	2008 COMMON Directions Conference – Dallas, Texas 
October 5 – 8, 2008 2008	COMMON Focus 2008 Workshop – San Francisco, CA 
April 26 – 28, 2009	2009 COMMON IT Executive Conference – Reno, NV
April 26 – 30, 2009	2009 COMMON Annual Meeting and Exposition – Reno, NV