



## The Word – Spring 2010, NDB's Industry Newsletter.

Welcome to our 4<sup>th</sup> edition of 'The Word', musings from the consulting world as seen by the team at NDB. Featured in this edition:

- **The agony and ecstasy of direct feedback**
- **Election Special**
- **Onsite support the key to success**
- **Conference Season**
- **Application Integration the reality**
- **NDB changes...**

### *A 'useless introduction'*

Feedback is an increasingly important part of business and social culture. I provided some feedback to a 'rated plumber' who simply didn't turn up for our appointment and then didn't return my calls. With this pathetic show I still felt justified in awarding a 'half a star' rating. A day or so later the plumber simply reported back to the same website that he had called me a number of times and that I hadn't replied!

I had some instant feedback myself recently. At an industry event I had been asked to 'chair' the sessions throughout the day. My approach, I thought, would be like the football referees so fondly imagined by Andy Gray and Alan Hansen who are so effective that no one notices them as the game progresses. At the first coffee break I was chatting to a colleague and saw on an adjacent table that someone had already begun to fill out their feedback sheet and had written 'useless introduction' next to chairman's opening remarks, well thanks that's a bit harsh! As we returned from the coffee break I made sure saw who sat at that chair – I know who you are.

### *An underestimation of the electorate*

It would be easy, wouldn't it, for politicians to view the voting public with a dim regard, given that the most popular 'news' paper in the country is 'The Sun'. However the political classes are also expected to be able to explain themselves to Paxman and Humphries of the BBC. So it seems the secret of campaigning and getting elected is to be able to distil, sometimes complex arguments, into sound bites that can be understood by all. In other words it all boils down to marketing. We use Einstein's goal at NDB 'To simplify everything to its irreducible minimum, then no further'. Sadly, with our short attention spans....sorry, what was I saying?

### *Onsite support the key to success*

For some businesses marketing is everything, think Cilit Bang. For NDB we rely primarily on word of mouth. In our market everyone knows everyone else, is relatively knowledgeable and tend not to read The Sun (for news anyway). I think we are guilty of underestimating our clients though and that some of our marketing can afford to be a little more assertive and sophisticated. For example, at a recent meeting I was listening to a client tell me about the qualities of a great onsite support team - when motivated, continuously trained and backed up by the rest of the organisation. I fully understood what I was hearing and it was most welcome to hear that at least some clients are looking for some quality differentiators as well as a keen price.

NDB maintains that clients generally could get a lot more from onsite services if they focused less on broad coverage –Petrel, OpenWorks, Recall, Eclipse, SAP, Oracle, CPR and the Heimlich manoeuvre and more on the personal qualities, motivation and development trajectory of the individual. One key applications or data specialists can keep the whole G&G technical team moving forwards by anticipating and solving problems and providing constant 'over the shoulder' training. It is too easy to find an experienced contractor who will occupy a slot and do a good job – when the equivalent person who is recognised as a key part of the team and who will gain and grow themselves from the work can do an outstanding job.

### *The conference season*

Picking the right conference from the many on offer is very difficult – unless you are one of those serial attendees who turns up at all of them. I went to two interesting conferences earlier in the year. The first was the 'Finding Petroleum Conference' run by the energetic David Bamford, this was a two day event where David seemed to have called in a list of favours to get a series of exploration managers and other senior execs to present their views on developing their company's portfolio and strategy. There were a couple of 'out there' presentations around Geochemical signatures in West Africa and the Indian Ocean and another around the resurgence of Gravimetric techniques, each of which served to get the grey cells going. The second was the SMI data management conference which this year seem to have attracted a wider range of participation from the oil and gas companies as opposed to consultants talking to consultants. At the SMI this year there were presentations from BP, ChevTex, GDF Suez, Total, Repsol YPF and Saudi Aramco as well as the 'usual suspect' industry experts. I also felt that there was a progression in the agenda with more of a focus on implementation and learning lessons.

So a couple of good choices there ...which leaves a dilemma – do you continue to support a conference because it was good last year or do you need to find a new one in order to meet new people and hear different stories .... Don't look at me I don't know.

### *Application Interoperability – To SAIR with Love*

Since the dawn of time, or 1984 as far as technical applications are concerned, the software vendors have wanted to show workflows which mirror the way that Geoscientists and engineers interact. 'Must be Integrated' remains one of the strongest 'requirements' in software purchase. In reality there are a number of different levels of integration (see [www.openspirit.com](http://www.openspirit.com) for a refresher) and there are limited data types used within any given application to which any kind of integration is applied. If you are not familiar with this area you will be underwhelmed with the lack of integration between some of the most popular packages from the same vendor.

These limitations are largely overcome by the technical support team working for the client – but through their experience and skill, things are very rarely written down. NDB is now able to offer a service whereby the most common workflows are tested, then documented with suggested workarounds. This leads to a documented level of understanding of the best 'routes' through the most common applications and begins the process whereby client input to the vendors about their requirements can be backed up with test results which will lead to software which better fits a user's needs. We do this SAIR thing through a subscription based knowledge base. And we keep it up to date in our lab. For more information contact: Jonathan Hynes, the Project Manager [jhynes@ndbteam.com](mailto:jhynes@ndbteam.com) or visit the SAIR pages on our website [www.ndbteam.com](http://www.ndbteam.com)

### *Building the NDB team ....*

We are pleased to introduce some new people at NDB, an exciting mix of youth and experience but all finding NDB a place where they can grow and develop.

**Bob McLean** - working out of our Stavanger Office for bp  
**Jonathan Hynes** – working as SAIR project manager  
**Joseph Hippey** – working at ConocoPhillips  
**Claire Charlton** – sharing the job of Office Manager with Pauline  
**Aaron Schiavone** – working at Apache  
**Glen Burrige** – joining the BG team

### **Strengthening the NDB Team**

Andy Gregory and Richard Grant have been recognised at Partners at NDB and each been offered an ownership stake in the company firstly as a reward for unique and outstanding contributions – much valued by our clients – and as an incentive for their continued development trajectory which is pushing NDB in new directions to new clients.

Do you views of industry trends you would like to share or examine or want to discuss your own situation? We are always happy to engage in discussion. Feel free to contact:

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