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Analysis

Xplor 2010 Global Document Conference and Vendor Forum Review

Authors

Matt Swain
Bryan Yeager

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Abstract

This analysis reviews the Xplor International 2010 Global Document Conference and Vendor Forum, which took place March 16-19 in Tampa Bay, Florida.

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www.infotrends.com

Headquarters:
97 Libbey Industrial Parkway
Suite 300
Weymouth, MA 02189
United States
+1 781 616 2100
info@infotrends.com

Europe:
3rd Floor, Sceptre House
7-9 Castle Street
Luton, Bedfordshire
United Kingdom, LU1 3AJ
+44 1582 400120
euro.info@infotrends.com

Asia:
Hiroo Office Building
1-3-18 Hiroo, Shibuya-ku
Tokyo 150-0012
Japan
+81 3 5475 2663
info@infotrends.co.jp

Introduction

Xplor International, the electronic document systems association, recently held its 2010 Global Document Conference and Vendor Forum at the TradeWinds Island Grand Hotel and Conference Center in Tampa Bay, Florida from March 16 to 19. Celebrating its 30th year, Xplor had over 250 document professionals and vendors from around the world visit to engage in three days of education, exhibition, and networking. Discussion topics ranged from conceptual to technical to practical, and many vendors exhibited their solutions that cover all areas of the document lifecycle. Through many of the session topics, new announcements, and topics of conversation, it is clear that the Xplor community is geared toward moving the document into the future by providing a greater level of value to customer communications with various applications.

Sponsors and Exhibitors

The event was sponsored by key players in the electronic document space, including Platinum sponsors DocuLynx, GMC Software Technologies, and Kodak; Gold sponsors Elixir and Graph Expo; and Silver sponsors HP Exstream, InfoPrint Solutions Company, Océ, Pitney Bowes, and Solimar Systems.

Exhibitors included:

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| AbitibiBowater | InfoPrint Solutions Company | NearStar |
| Aia Software | Inspectron | NEPS |
| Anchor Software | Ironsides Technology | Pageflex |
| Barr Systems | ISIS Papyrus | Pitney Bowes |
| Consorzio Pimes | Johnson & Quin, Inc. | Prinova |
| Continuum Worldwide | Kern | RISO, Inc. |
| Crawford Technologies | Kodak | RSA |
| DocuLynx | Lake Image Systems | SCICOM |
| Elixir | Lasemax Roll Systems | Source4 |
| GMC Software Technologies | Levi, Ray & Shoup Inc. | Solimar Systems |
| Graph Expo | Lytrod Software | SunPrint Management |
| HP | MPI Tech | Tremware |
| Hg197 Inc. | Napersoft CCM | |

Announcements and Awards

During Wednesday night's conference opening, Skip Henk, President and CEO of Xplor International, announced current and future developments related to the conference and the group, in general. After thanking various sponsors for their continued support, Henk announced that Xplor would be running its own conference track at Graph Expo 2010. Similarly, Xplor will continue its "XDU on the Road" series of educational events, which tries to spread education on electronic documents and awareness about the organization. The 2010 road show will start in June with targeted cities including Atlanta, Cincinnati, Dallas, Omaha, Tampa, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Toronto. Lastly, Henk announced an expanded partnership between Xplor and InfoTrends, which will provide discounted access to InfoTrends' e-learning and Ultimate Guide Online products for Xplor members.

For over two decades, Xplor has been known for its accredited Electronic Document Professional (EDP) certification. People trying to achieve EDP certification need at least five years of related industry experience before embarking on the process. This year, Xplor announced that it will expand the certification program to include two new levels: Electronic Document Associate (EDA), and Master Electronic Document Professional (M-EDP). The EDA certification was created to enable industry professionals with between two and five years of experience to work toward an EDP certification sooner, while providing a new achievement level, as well. The M-EDP certification is reserved for existing professionals “with significant business and life experience as an EDP,” according to Xplor.org. Ultimately, Henk positioned Xplor as a healthy organization that is actively working to forge ahead with new events, partnerships, and expanded programs for 2010 and beyond.

Awards were also handed out to a variety of deserving individuals, from educational achievement and honorary perspectives. The first class of EDA- and M-EDP-certified Xplor members were given their official certificates and the sole EDP certification was given to Brian Ray, Director of New Media at Northwest Mailing Services. The Brian Platte Lifetime Achievement Award is given to individuals whose efforts and contributions have significantly changed the course and development of the digital document industry. This year’s recipient was our own Charlie Pesko, founder of CAP Ventures (now InfoTrends), and current Executive Vice President at Questex Media. The Xplor President’s award was presented to Pat McGrew, EDP Data Center & Transaction Segment Evangelist at Kodak. and two “Xplorer of the Year” awards were handed out to Xplor members who have worked internally to make Xplor more valuable to its members, as well as spread awareness of the organization. This year’s recipients included Kemal Carr, President and Principal Analyst of Madison Advisors, and Don Scrima, M-EDP.

Two key awards were presented related to technology applications. The Innovator of the Year award was presented to GMC Software Technology for its PortalBuilder product, which enables end-users to launch Web-enabled storefronts that utilize variable data documents and multi-channel marketing. An honorable mention award for Innovator of the Year was also presented to Xenos for its document storage reduction solution for Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems. GMC’s PrintNet solution was also the backbone of Xplor’s Technology Application Award, which was presented to Brazilian firm ABNote for its fast deployment of TransPromo applications to its banking customers. Anyone who attended the 2009 TransPromo Summit may remember that ABNote and its customer Bradesco Bank presented their impressive TransPromo implementation story at the event. Prinova Technologies took an honorable mention in this category for its messagepoint product, which enables advanced marketing message creation, management, and deployment.

Educational Sessions

One of the biggest draws for the Xplor Global Document Conference has consistently been its Xplor Document University educational session tracks. Over the span of the conference, tracks on applications, compliance, composition, design, management, production & distribution, retention, and even social media strategy allowed attendees to take in a wide breadth of information and interact with presenters. Additionally, conference sponsors participated in a variety of vendor panels each day, where speakers discussed the products and solutions they provide to the document industry as well as important topics ranging from multi-channel communication strategies to workflow optimization and compliance.

This year, conference organizers cut down the number of tracks to increase head-count in each session. The plan worked well; the sessions appeared to be well-attended and they generated excellent dialogue. Attendee feedback from the previous year showed that they were eager to learn about emerging trends, new technologies, and strategies for improving their documents to better-communicate with customers. Throughout the conference, there were several multi-part sessions that focused on a particular topic. Topics included an eight-part session covering the technical details behind the Advanced Function Presentation (AFP) print stream, as well as the six-part social media strategy workshop delivered by Peter Muir, President of Bizucate, Inc. Other sessions of note included an overview of e-mail use in multi-channel communications by David Skarjune of Word &Image LLC, an in-depth perspective on white space management in document composition by HP Exstream's Scott Draeger, a view into banks and insurance companies' adoption of TransPromo in Germany by Michael Bucka of GMC Software International, and a great case study of Canadian direct marketing company Bassett Direct, delivered by company president Rich Bassett.

InfoTrends was also well-represented at Xplor Document University, particularly providing insight into interactive print, TransPromo applications, and emerging trends in hardware & software solutions. Barb Pellow, a Group Director in our Production Services team, presented on the top ten reasons why document professionals need to be seriously considering developing and launching TransPromo applications on their customer communications. Matt Swain, Senior Consultant for our Document Outsourcing and TransPromo Consulting Services, provided a detailed comparison of the results from recent multi-client studies that cover trends in TransPromo for North America and Western Europe. He also provided examples of interactive print applications in a vendor panel session covering the value of interactive print applications like augmented reality and two-dimensional barcodes. Bryan Yeager, Consultant for InfoTrends' Production Workflow and Customized Communications Consulting Service, delivered an overview of cloud computing concepts and how the cloud is being utilized to enable TransPromo applications. Additionally, Swain and Yeager conducted a joint session that provided an overview of emerging hardware and software technology trends related to high-volume transactional output and TransPromo applications.

Conference organizers did a great job bringing in relevant speakers and content. With over 70 sessions, there was ample content for attendees with various backgrounds and interests to choose from.

Conclusion

The 2010 Global Document Conference and Vendor Forum attracted a diverse crowd and provided valuable educational content that created excellent dialogue. Using the resort setting, attendees enjoyed a greater sense of community and were able to develop stronger relationships as a result. We look forward to seeing "XDU on the Road" this year and expect to participate in the conference again next year.

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