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# “Understanding M Technology: The Secret Weapon”



Rita Mincavage

by Rita Mincavage

On Thursday, March 28, a panel of M experts faced an audience of Database & Client/Server World conference attendees in Boston for two hours to share their M knowledge and successes at a technology briefing entitled “Understanding M Technology: The Secret Weapon.”

John Covin, MTA Board Chairman, Corning Pharmaceuticals, acted as moderator of the panel of experts. Panel members were: Ed de Moel, MDC Chairman, SAIC; John Ferguson, IDX Corporation; Don Gall, Ph.D., MTA Board Vice-Chairman, Omega Legal Systems, Inc.; Catherine Pfeil, Ph.D., Department of Veterans Affairs; Eduardo Santos, CompScientia Informatica of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Tom Munnecke, SAIC.

MTA Conference Steering Committee members Greg Kreis and Gail Penrod had worked behind the scenes prior to March 28, identifying and inviting panel members, as well as structuring the session. Gail and Greg determined that the material presented by the panelists should support the following three objectives: 1) provide a clear understanding of what M Technology is and why it is unique; 2) discuss why a standard should be used and the standards process; 3) answer when and why to use M by relating success stories.

John Covin opened the panel discussion by asking how many in the audience of approximately 100 were not familiar with M Technology. As hoped for, the majority of attendees were not M-literate—an ideal audience to learn about the “Secret Weapon.” In order to provide an understanding of what M is and how it is unique, Ed de Moel and John Ferguson then explained the characteristics and strengths of M. Ed took the audience through a brief history of the development of the M ANSI Standard and the standards process. John spoke about the importance of M’s characteristics to the success of IDX Corporation, a health care applications company.

Three panelists related success stories with M, drawn from their own experiences. Don Gall’s company, Omega Legal Systems, is one of the top three companies in the U.S. in his particular niche business of supplying accounting software to legal firms. As one example of the cost savings possible with M Technology, Don cited the following: Because of the decrease in development and support costs that is possible when M Technology is used, as compared to the COBOL-based businesses of his competitors, Don said that his firm operates with a ratio of 10 to 12 clients per employee; whereas, his competitors operate in a range from 2 to 4 clients per employee.