

“Innovation in Life” Comes to Life: Dassault Systèmes 2011 Customer Conference

What does “innovation in life” mean? How about virtual worlds with a lifelike experience? These were the themes of the Dassault Systèmes Customer Conference (DSCC) in November 2011. The point of these terms became clear during the course of the conference, and another way to say it is: This is not your 20th Century product development software company.

Innovation in Life brings a consumer feel to the marketing themes for this giant product lifecycle management (PLM) and computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) and simulation software provider. With a wide array of acquisitions in the past few years including search, software simulation, social innovation, and virtual experience, Dassault now offers much more depth and breadth in their products to help create lifelike experiences someone will want in a virtual world.

Is there more to it than marketing hype? I now think that Dassault’s CEO, Bernard Charlès is a passionate visionary and, truly believes his company is changing how companies deliver value – and how people experience things they can’t experience in person. Basically, Dassault is focused on creating virtual worlds with a lifelike experience to improve the real world.

The plenary sessions and organization of a software company’s user conference often tell a story about priorities and focus, and DSCC’s first day was focused on industries. This is an important breakthrough for a company with very strong divisions that each carry one main brand and many other brands as well. While Dassault’s brands clearly cross industry boundaries, companies buy solutions to their problems, and those tend to be different by industry segment. So this raising of industry importance is a welcome move and one we believe will pay off for Dassault.

Al Bunschaft, Managing Director DS Americas, opened the conference with the message that we are on the cusp of radical change in how we work, how we learn, and how we interact with each other. President and CEO Bernard Charlès took it further, focusing on how a lifelike virtual experience can improve the real world and how the re-architected products that now connect to a common platform enable those innovations to occur. The EVP Industries, Monica Menghini focused on a holistic view of value creation – that is how the Dassault customers in the room can create value for their ultimate customers. Her example was a virtual retail shopping experience to point out the high correlation between real and virtual at the point of sale.

Microsoft’s Çağlayan Arkan discussed how new technologies play roles as outlined in their industry reference architectures DIRA, SERA, MURA, and ChemRA. Innovation breakthrough consultant Stephen Shapiro discussed why best practices are stupid and how to create breakthrough innovation by using other disciplines to view the issue. Another take-away: create some context to generate better ideas.

The first day customer keynote was on a PLM-first information transformation at Bell Helicopter. Benny Peek told a story of true business transformation with a new baseline of performance. The main take-away: be sure you are prepared prior to embarking on a major change; the planning pays off in project momentum, risk mitigation and success. A group of Dassault customers from Blue

Homes , KLA Tencor, Georgia Tech, and Benetton talked about their experiences with Dassault products for their innovation and transformation initiatives in varied industries from home building to special production equipment for semiconductors, to education to apparel.

Speaking of industries, Cambashi's Julie Fraser spoke at the Life Sciences industry track, which offered a diversity of speakers and lively discussion. The Dassault Life Sciences Team kicked it off by delivering a foundation view of what is possible. Chris Kay, CEO of Integware, Dassault's life sciences industry key development and services partner discussed their new program to accelerate PLM implementation locally and globally. Dassault's Jean Colombel, Life Sciences VP, and Damien Plisson, the Life Sciences Solution Leader, talked about breakthroughs in their approach for delivering patient-centric development solutions in not only medical device, but also pharmaceutical and biotechnology. These range from simulating product behavior and process behavior to delivering work instructions, and an as-built traceability record.

Bausch & Lomb's Rob Stuppelbeen, a design engineer, talked about using simulation to design ever-thinner contact lenses. The simulation is not just of the product, but of the product on the eye surface, simulating blinking and entire clinical trials. Bayer HealthCare's Steve Matolcsy is a senior consultant in IT who discussed new momentum in the PLM program as a result of an upgrade. This project delivered improved communications and compliance across sites, as well as with suppliers and design houses.

Day 2's keynote was another life sciences customer, Steve McCarthy, VP Quality Systems for J&J Medical Device and Diagnostics. This truly inspirational speaker made clear ties between PLM and Patient health. More astonishing, this company decommissioned eight legacy PLM systems and integrated Enovia with eight ERP systems between 2007 and 2013. This was essential to keep up with change, growth, and stay focused on what really matters: safe and effective products.

The CEOs of each major brand pitched their vision, and general sessions as well as breakouts helped explain what is available. Perhaps most interesting for many in the audience, they demonstrated the 3DSYM social innovation and crowdsourcing platform. We got a tour through frozen polar regions as well as the pyramids in Egypt as originally excavated with 3DVIA for the lifelike and immersive virtual experience. Exalead for searching structured and unstructured, internal and external data was also on display.

The exhibit area had space for all of that plus an array of partners providing hardware, complementary software and services. Some of the immersive, interactive, and non-manufacturing applications were highly entertaining. So Dassault did manage to bring innovation to life in some visceral and fun ways.