

“Be Different” – The ACE 2012 International Conference

CIMdata Commentary

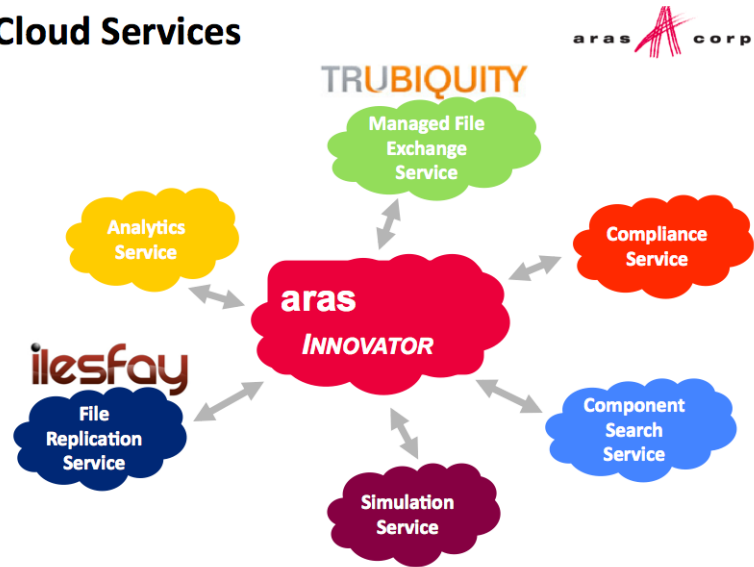
Aras recently held its ACE 2012 International Conference in Troy, Michigan. This was the second year in a row that the conference was held in the greater Detroit area. The conference grew from 200+ attendees last year to over 300 this year, with attendees coming from more than twenty different countries. It is a user-focused event supported by Aras and a number of its partners; including both solution implementers as well as independent software providers who are leveraging Aras’ enterprise open source PLM platform.

Mr. Peter Schroer, Aras’ Founder and CEO, gave the opening presentation, the theme of which was “Be Different.” This highlighted the fact that Aras’ technology approach is different and Aras’ business model is different from most of its competitors throughout the PLM landscape. While Aras is still a relatively small company, it has had four years of double-digit growth since changing to an enterprise open source based business model where the software is free to download and use in production. Aras claims that there are more than 800 product installations per month. Also, according Mr. Schroer, the fourth quarter of 2011 produced an all time record revenue from subscriptions and they now have over 300 paying customers. Additionally, Mr. Schroer commented that Aras’ staff is growing, its product management team has increased from one to four, and the company has doubled the size of the development team since ACE 2011. The presentations from Aras on newly released products as well as products under development show that the new staff members have been busy. New products including a cloud version, new CAD connector technology, and a requirements management module will help Aras compete with the mainstream PLM solution providers.

The biggest announcement from Aras on the corporate front was the opening of the Aras Japan headquarters, to be led by Mr. Masahiko Hisatsugu; a well-known Japanese PLM expert. Aras customers in Japan currently include Epson, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Honda, and Toshiba, among others. Mr. Hisatsugu will primarily focus on coordinating the efforts of Aras’ ten Japanese partners. Aras’s multi-language support has generated a lot of international interest and a growing non-English speaking customer base.

While there were several significant product related announcements, the most significant was Aras Spectrum, a Microsoft Azure cloud-based version of Aras Innovator. As a part of the development partnership with Microsoft, Aras Spectrum will be load tested to 50,000 to one million simulated users. This cloud implementation seems to be focused on large companies looking to avoid infrastructure investments and appears to be another component of the Connected Cloud strategy (see Figure 1) that Aras announced at ACE 2011. The connected cloud strategy has two partners, Trubiquity and recently announced Ilesay, that provide solutions that support large complex implementations which should help support Aras’ target customers.

Cloud Services



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Figure 1—Existing and Planned Cloud Services for Aras Innovator

In other news, Aras announced an OEM agreement with Nuage, a social business collaboration startup based in California. In addition, Integware, a long-time implementer of PLM solutions became a partner and will lead a Life Sciences Special Interest Group. Finally, it was announced that Aras joined the 3D PDF Consortium as a founding member, and joined the Codex of PLM Openness sponsored by ProSTEP iViP and the German Automotive OEMs. Aras appears to have grown to the point where they can focus on broader industry initiatives rather than just their own short-term business needs.

The conference included presentations from a number of Aras' customers. User presentations from Lear, Insitu (Boeing Company), Getrag, Ceradyne, Maxis Wheels, and Carestream Healthcare described how Aras Innovator solved a wide variety of complex business problems. Lear described how they managed complex wire harness configurations. Insitu described how they launched Aras Innovator in less than 60 days after failing with a PLM solution from another solution provider. The Carestream presentation was especially interesting as it provided an update on their project migrating from multiple legacy systems to a global Aras Innovator deployment.

Finally, the Solution Showcase segment of the event was very interesting. In this segment, Users and Solution Providers had a five-minute slot to demonstrate their project or product live within Aras Innovator, with no PowerPoint allowed. Jeff Long from IBM demonstrated a non-traditional use of Aras Innovator at General Motors. GM felt they needed a full-blown PLM approach to properly manage their IT infrastructure configurations, so they had IBM implement it in Aras Innovator. The system tracks IT configurations from requirements through implementation and into operations with proper change and configuration management processes.

Overall, ACE 2012 International Conference was well attended and very informative about Aras' products and business.

About CIMdata

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