

# Aras ACE 2025: Connected Intelligence Fuels a PLM Milestone

## 25 Years of Innovation and a Future-Ready Digital Thread

### Key Takeaways

Aras celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, at the Aras Community Event (ACE) in Boston, March 31-April 3, 2025, with nearly 500 attendees from over 150 organizations.

Aras is focused on helping customers create digital threads and the event showcased Aras' technology, plans, and how their clients are implementing and leveraging the platform to create their digital threads.

Everyone is interested in AI and Aras did not disappoint, their keynotes described their vision of how AI will enable a future-ready digital thread and how AI is being used in the product today taking advantage of Microsoft's Azure AI services.

Major product additions include the Aras Marketplace that launched with over eighty solutions, and InnovatorEdge, a low-code integration framework that simplifies the creation of digital threads.

### Introduction

Today's product development landscape is fraught with complexity. Companies often find themselves using multiple computer-aided design (CAD) systems, numerous desktop applications and enterprise systems, and a host of data repositories face persistent hurdles including incompatible data models, escalating licensing costs, and fragmented workflows that stifle collaboration and scalability. These challenges intensify as industries demand rapid innovation, sustainable designs, and resilient supply chains in an AI-driven era. Aras, one of CIMdata's 2025 product lifecycle management (PLM) "mindshare leaders," confronted these issues head-on at its Aras Community Event (ACE) 2025, held March 31 – April 3, 2025, at the Hilton Boston Park Plaza in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

ACE 2025 drew over 500 attendees from 300+ organizations under the theme Connected Intelligence: AI, PLM, and a Future-Ready Digital Thread. Hosted by Mr. Leon Lauritsen, Senior Vice President global Sales & General Manager EMEA, and Mr. Josh Epstein, Chief Marketing Officer, the four-day event blended a Tech Summit and training (March 31), keynotes and breakouts (April 1-2), and strategy sessions and more training (April 3). The event was also used to celebrate Aras's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. ACE 2025 showcased Aras

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this paper was partially funded by Aras.

Innovator as an open, scalable platform enhanced by AI and able to construct and manage a robust digital thread. CIMdata attended and, as with past ACE events, found a wealth of content—only a fraction of which this commentary captures—highlighting Aras’ evolution and future vision. The event’s structure followed past ACEs: a partner-driven Tech Summit, keynotes, and technical tracks with customer, partner, and Aras presentations. Growth metrics showed 1.6 million users in 2024 and a 70% SaaS adoption among new customers, building on 2023’s 61% subscriber surge. The keynote presentations can be viewed [here](#).<sup>2</sup>

## ACE 2025: A 25th Anniversary Milestone

Celebrating 25 years, ACE 2025 reflected Aras’ journey from a Y2K-era startup to a PLM leader. Mr. Roque Martin, CEO since 2021, opened with a keynote describing technological parallels—from AOL’s Instant Messenger in 2001 to the iPhone’s 2007 debut to generative AI’s 2022 rise—mirroring Aras’ milestones: the Aras Innovator platform (2002), Aras Community Event (2007), Web Services & Upgrades (2009), Digital Thread Adoption (2013), Visual Collaboration (2014), Low-Code Advancements (2019), and the XPLM acquisition (2022). He noted that AI is an imperative for everyone and Aras is focused on taking advantage of it within the Aras Innovator solution emphasizing connected value chains in an age of disruption. “Future-proofing PLM requires a heterogeneous ecosystem—open, adaptable, and scalable,” Mr. Martin asserted, echoing 2015’s “Rethink PLM” call to action.

## Key Highlights & Innovations

### InnovatorEdge: Next-Level Connected Intelligence

Mr. Igal Kapsan, Senior Vice President Product Management, unveiled Aras InnovatorEdge, an evolution of 2024’s Configurable Web Services, as a drag-and-drop enabled low-code suite that has been designed to revolutionize the process of creating PLM integrations. Supporting connections (e.g., Office 365, Google, AI/analytics, portals, and apps), it emphasizes data governance—unrestricted data is open for indexing, sensitive data uses Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), and confidential data is excluded. A demo showcased task-based apps (e.g., email-to-problem-report workflows), hosted on Aras’ SaaS or on-premises platform. CIMdata views this as a leap beyond 2023’s XPLM integrations, offering flexibility traditional approaches have struggled to match.

### AI Across the Digital Thread

Mr. Rob McAveney, CTO, framed AI’s roadmap: Discover (natural language search, content synthesis, text to SQL), Enrich (entity recognition, contextual reasoning, topic modeling, and deep learning), and Amplify (agentic AI, generative engineering, surrogate modeling, reinforcement learning). Use cases included BOM-to-CTO model analysis and tariff disruption simulations. One of the interesting points discussed was the ability to connect Azure AI services into the Aras Innovator Adaptive Markup Language (AML) enabling the extension of the Digital Thread within Aras Innovator without having to wholesale export the Digital thread to a LLM database. We look forward to learning more about this approach. During a panel discussion facilitated by Mr. McAveney, Mr. Julian Ostrow, Senior Director, Customer & Partner Engineering at Microsoft Cloud for Industry noted, “Digital transformation starts with data collection and ends with autonomy,” echoing NVIDIA’s Mr. Jensen Huang: “AI won’t take your job; someone using AI will.” CIMdata sees this building on Aras’ 2024 AI vision, promising efficiency gains and impactful digital transformation.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://aras.com/en/lp/ace-2025>

## OEM Deals & Marketplace Expansion

Mr. John Sperling, VP Ecosystem Solution Development, spotlighted the “Build with Aras” program, launching a Marketplace with 80+ apps on March 31, 2025. OEM partners, such as Ansys, Aveva, SAIC, SteepGraph, and Sandvik, have products based on the Aras platform. Mr. T.J. Boberek, Principal Software Architect at Sandvik’s Mastercam unit detailed his strategy for uniting digital-physical workflows to tackle supply risks leveraging their Aras OEM partnership. Process industry support is expanded by Fulvisol, a Finnish developer of an Aras based solution that supports the food & beverage industry. CIMdata notes the growth in OEM partnerships is driven by companies doing a make or buy analysis and deciding that the quality, performance, and flexibility of the Aras platform can help them get a high quality product to market faster.

## CERN: Legacy Meets Modern PLM

Mr. David Widegren, CERN’s Head of Engineering Information Management, shared their transition from SmarTeam to Aras Innovator, which is now managing 100 million components accumulated over 50 years with out-of-the-box (OOTB) features and extensions. CERN supports a multi-CAD environment (e.g., CATIA, Inventor, BricsCAD, Revit, and AutoCAD), extended the user interface (UI) and integrated game engine visualization to support “Street View” navigation of the world’s largest machine—the Hadron Collider. Development projects include engineering copilots and a Digital Twin beta to ensure traceability.

## Office 365 & Google Integrations

Ms. Aihua Borowicz, Product Manager SaaS, AI, Document Management at Aras, delivered a presentation and demonstration showing how Aras Innovator SaaS integrates with Cloud-based office suites from Microsoft and Google. The Office 365 integration uses InnovatorEdge to create secure relationships to data within Office 365. She notes that support for Microsoft Visio and Outlook are planned. Microsoft SharePoint support is already available. Similar unreleased capabilities were shown for the Google Workspace Suite (Docs, Sheets, and Slides) and Gmail is in progress supporting cloud and on-premises use. CIMdata views linking data across cloud infrastructures while respecting security and configuration management requirements as critical for companies that want to evolve to a cloud-first digital thread strategy.

## Next-Gen Public Roadmap with Jira

Mr. Kapsan gave a preview of how Aras will use Jira Product Discovery to publish and prioritize the product roadmap. Aras has publicly published their roadmap since 2014, and it has been a great tool for companies to plan their future and influence Aras priorities.

## Aras Community Edition

The Enterprise Open-Source release, the innovation that in many ways put Aras on the PLM map, is still available, and for free download and use in production. A big change is it is now limited to 50 users but can still be used in full production. CIMdata has followed this innovation for years, and Aras notes that many users of the free release are becoming subscribers, in some cases these companies had several thousand users.

## Aras in Action

### Seaspan’s Digital Thread Journey

Seaspan, a Canadian shipbuilder, presented its 14-year digital thread evolution under the National Shipbuilding Strategy, spanning commercial, defense, and research vessels across three yards. Initially reliant on a legacy CAD product for design and partial EBOMs, Seaspan faced legacy system

fragmentation—numerous modules, incomplete EBOMs, library management, and IFS integration limited multi-site collaboration. An overhaul of the enterprise solutions including Oracle Fusion Cloud (replacing IFS), Primavera for project scheduling, and a custom Completions Management Solution, as well as a shift to Aras Innovator SaaS has enabled Seaspan to unify the ecosystem, to achieve a single source of truth, integrated change management, and cost avoidance across domains, including Integrated Logistics Support (ILS). CIMdata sees this as a testament to Aras' adaptability in how it supports complex shipbuilding processes and technology.

### **Honda's Unified Approach**

Honda reviewed their deployment based on a distributed architecture set up to support authors and consumers and improve adoption and utilization. Their 10,000+ users leverage a "Share House" portal, that focuses on simplification of the data model and streamlined access control to improve performance. recent changes included hardware upgrades decreasing performance lags by 35%. More importantly the PLM support team worked on trust-building through face-to-face support. CIMdata sees these results reinforcing the idea that organizational change management (OCM) is critical to ensuring adoption and return-on-investment to meet company expectations.

### **DENSO's Connectivity**

Mr. Chris McDermott, Engineering Manager, from DENSO International America delivered a presentation entitled "Digital Thread Deployment: Connecting Design, Manufacturing, and Beyond." DENSO, one of Aras' larger customers with approximately 40,000 users, aims to enhance collaboration, quality, compliance, and time-to-market. The biggest challenge was managing technical debt and the Aras integration capability enabled Denso to connect older technologies with their digital thread improving data consistency and accuracy. User adoption and OCM were also identified as critical elements of their PLM program. Focusing on user adoption is critical to getting a strong return on investment with a PLM implementation, and the way to do that is with a robust OCM program.

## **Conclusion**

ACE 2025 celebrated 25 years of Aras and introduced connected intelligence as PLM's future. InnovatorEdge, Office 365 and Google Workspace integrations, AI-driven digital threads (discover, enrich, amplify) leveraging Microsoft Azure AI services, and an 80+ app Marketplace expand Aras Innovator's reach and ability to connect data and processes. OEM deals with Sandvik, SteepGraph, and others, alongside CERN, Seaspan, DENSO, and Honda's journeys highlight the platform's adaptability and value; further multiplied by one of the PLM industry's best upgradeability track record ensuring clients can quickly and cost effectively take advantage of new technology and process improvements while maintaining their highly configured solutions. The pace at which Aras is bringing to market an ecosystem of solutions from various partners (i.e., software providers, OEM partners, and systems integrators) further validates the wisdom and capability of their "Build with Aras" strategy. CIMdata views this rapidly growing Aras ecosystem as a big win for their global customers, one that liberates them from single vendor only enhancements. The latest iteration of the public roadmap gives customers and prospects confidence that Aras will meet their needs now and into the future.

Industrial companies looking for a modern and flexible platform to enable their digital threads, and Independent Software Vendors (ISV) looking for an OEM partner to provide PLM capabilities should reach out to Aras. CIMdata continues to be impressed with Aras' commitment and ability to support partners and customers and is especially looking forward to seeing how their AI vision gets put into practice at ACE 2026.

## About CIMdata

CIMdata, a global strategic management consulting firm, provides services designed to maximize an enterprise's ability to design, deliver, and support innovative products and services. For more than forty years, CIMdata has provided industrial organizations, providers of <sup>3</sup>digital technologies and services, and investment firms with world-class insight, expertise, and best-practice methods on a broad set of product lifecycle management (PLM) topics and the digital transformation they enable. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through certificate programs and international conferences. To learn more, visit [www.CIMdata.com](http://www.CIMdata.com) or email [info@CIMdata.com](mailto:info@CIMdata.com).