SAP adds new dimension to summitIT 07

By SHARMILLA GANAPATHY

DEBUNKING the perception that conferences and summits are purely vendor-driven events, this year’s SAP summit IT 07 was the platform for interesting panel discussions on burning issues of the enterprise solution provider’s customers.

One such panel discussion was ‘Enabling Better Government Service Delivery’, a panel session comprising SAP customers from the Malaysian, UK, Australian and Pakistani public sectors.

The session saw the four panelists sharing their problems and successes with IT implementations in delivering government services.

Mohd Radzi Hussein, deputy IT director of Jabatan Akatun Negera Malaysia, for instance, pointed out that Malaysia has invested a lot of money in IT systems and educating the public on technology.

But when it comes to acceptability, my personal experience is that people are reluctant to use the [online] systems.

“So in this case, should we simplify the system?” he asked at some of the constraints faced by the public sector.

While productivity gains was a concern of the Malaysian side, the Pakistani government, meanwhile, was more focused on improving efficiency, something that they achieved from its SAP enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementations.

Dr Khairun Farnooq, director FABS, Project for Improvement of Financial Reporting & Auditing, Auditor General of Pakistan, shared that one of the benefits the Auditor General derived from the implementation was an automated payroll for civil servants.

“One more than 1.5 million government employees are getting their salaries on time now, compared to before. Income tax returns have also been automated.

“We used to have too many legacy systems where it took as long as six months to get the new tax rules,” he explained, adding that they now have a centralised system that update them on new income tax rules soon after their release.

Dave Wimble, Head of Assets (Corporate) IMS Corporate & Knowledge Services Portfolio at the UK’s HM Revenue & Customs UK, who was also a panellist at the session, advised a proactive and flexible approach in carrying out IT implementations.

“You need to resist the temptation to say ‘we’re not going to do it that way’. You need to bit the bullet and take the opportunity, look at your business processes and do re-engineering where necessary,” he emphasised.

Martin Schwede, deputy commissioner, Tax and Client Management, Office of State Revenue, Queensland, Australia, pointed out that since most government departments have to focus on their core business, namely government services, they need to look at buying packages that do what they need.

THE MSC Malaysia APITCA Awards can help companies in their positioning and branding, says Malaysia past winners of the awards organised annually by the the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC).

Ambersoft Sdn Bhd, a major local player at the forefront of document imaging and management, is one of them after winning the MSC-APITCA 2004 for best of general applications.

“It certainly gives you recognition. During our presentation, we emphasise to our listeners about our award. It gives us that extra mileage,” said Ambersoft managing director Sukhdien Singh.

AmberSoft’s winning product was its FingerTips Document Management System, an easy-to-use and affordable electronic document management system for enterprise business applications and high-end information management, which it launched in 2003.

Camtech Asia, winner of the MSC APITCA Prime Minister “Best of the Best Award 2005 and MSC APITCA Financial Application Award 2005, said the awards had assisted them in positioning the company in terms of marketing and business opportunities.

“The recognition for the award gave us additional mileage for potential opportunities and marketing efforts. It gave us an additional boost as a home-grown Malaysian product already endorsed by the relevant parties in the local business and financial industry,” said its general manager for development, Azman Abdul Rahman.

In 2008, Camtech Asia was considered to participate in the Bank Negara Malaysia-endorsed Financial Process Exchange (FPX) project with Malaysian Electronic Payment Systems (MEPS) for provision of direct debit payment for the business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) markets via the Internet on a national level.

Our product, Universal Commerce Engine branded as ‘CAYZ’ software, was the base solution for the FPX initiative. It was officially launched by the Governor of Bank Negara and went ‘live’ in October 2004,” said Azman.

On its part, MDeC said it will continue to give Malaysian ICT companies a platform to exhibit their products and also highlight Malaysian creativity and their achievements on an international stage.

On how MDeC assists the winners, MDeC’s head of Enterprise Global Development/ APITCA, Nancy Choy said there were programmes in place to assist winners to promote their products not only domestically but on the international stage as well.

“We have programmes under the technopreneur development programme which we encourage winners to join. Here, we get a consultant to advise them on business plan,” she said.

On top of that, MDeC also has programmes on SEL-CMM certification where MSC status companies are assessed, said Nancy. But however over and above this subsidy, winners a further subsidy. Launched in 2002, the awards is now in its sixth year and is welcoming entries for 15 categories, among them Best of Education and Training, Best of Security, Best Of Communications Application, Top ICT Best of the Year and Development and Best of Start-Up Companies.

Winners of this year’s MSC APITCA will be announced later this year and then go on to represent Malaysia at the Asia Pacific ICT Awards (APICTA) in December.