

HP – New Model for Systems Integrator?

A report on HP's message at BuilConn Europe 2005

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One of the critical changes occurring around the convergence of building and IT is the role of the Integrator. So why, you say, are we talking about HP, a company well known for printers, test instruments and consumer cameras?

The answer is a statement made at the Keynote presentation at BuilConn in Amsterdam. A “little” known area of business for HP is consulting; in fact, some 60,000 people work for HP in this practice. This is the world of IT System Integration consulting. There are many large firms working in this space, such as EDS, Accenture, IBM Consulting, Capgemini, Logica and Microsoft to name a few. In fact, most of the firms have given Keynotes or other presentations at BuilConn/M2M, so their interest in buildings is growing for sure.

John Geaney, EMEA Business Development Manager for HP's Intelligent Building Solutions made a Keynote presentation at BuilConn Europe in Amsterdam (HP was also a Platinum Sponsor of the event). So what were the highlights of John's presentation?

HP's message at BuilConn

First of all, IP is the enabler for HP's interest in buildings; without IP-centric solutions, buildings would not be part of the enterprise picture, not part of the integrated corporate network. IT Systems Integrators thrive on IP and the data standards revolving around it. To sum this up, John's comment is, “The future is IP everywhere”.

If you've been around IT consultants at all you know that they are driven by ROI, it is ROI that they use to justify their services, and in buildings this is no different. In what is probably the most valuable slide, John presented the ROI proposition that HP together with their partner Cisco have evolved in delivering ROI to building owners.



While optimization and reduction of costs is part of this ROI picture, the most valuable is the top left, the ability of intelligence in buildings to generate incremental revenue for the building owner. This became one of the key discussion points throughout BuilConn in Amsterdam. How can we shift the focus from saving costs (with its finite scope) to generating new and increased value, which is not limited? Other ROI areas include hard issues such as health and safety--something we all know about--to the softer (but nonetheless important) area of ‘the wow factor’ - providing the best in class environment for the building occupants.

Challenges (a.k.a. opportunities) abound

John also communicated that there are significant challenges in delivering the promise of building-IT convergence, with the main challenges falling in two areas. First, the supply and contracting

chain for the delivery of intelligent buildings is out of date. This is a significant issue since in many instances it is inhibiting the delivery of currently available technology and solutions.

The second challenge is that the industry itself has not stepped up with products, solutions and skills to deliver these solutions with many vendors still promoting and behaving the same as they did in the 90's. HP feels that a new breed of smaller and more nimble players will step up; in this regard HP has a partnership program with companies such as Plexus who can provide both the building industry knowledge and the new classes of applications needed for successful deployments of these converged solutions.

John Geaney concluded his presentation with the following

- Start with business issues, not technology
- Ensure the network is factored into the buying cycle early
- Engage with partners early in the design stage
- IT Partners need to be part of the solution
- Look for a solution that delivers reduction in complexity, 'future-ready' infrastructure and fastest possible ROI
- Intelligent Buildings can be delivered today!

As an observation, at BuilConn we see more and more integrators and consultants saying the same things as HP. These messages are also resonating strongly with the building owners we come across. It is also clear that some of the traditional integrators are stepping up and becoming more like IT Systems Integrators, and they will in our opinion be very successful.

What does this all mean?

It is clear by observing the attendees and speakers at BuilConn that IT Systems Integrators are starting to become interested in buildings. Many of these organizations have strong brands, good relationships with IT groups and credibility with the top-level executives. IP-based technologies will fuel the fire of these companies' activities in the interaction of buildings and enterprise systems (where they are very comfortable).

The major opportunity for BuilConn attendees, especially those from the traditional building automation trades, is that neither HP nor any of their peers understand building systems, and it is clear from talking to them they have no interest in becoming experts either. They do, however, know that these skills are required and are eagerly establishing partnerships with domain experts in the building space.

BuilConn has been a strong platform to evolve these relationships.

This trend will no doubt continue in 2006 with BuilConn Americas, to be held at the Palm Springs Convention Center, May 16-18. Expect more IT Systems Integrators to be in attendance looking to understand how they can get a slice of building-IT convergence.