

A cool day at ICE

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Friday 22nd February saw the 6th annual Insight Client Event (ICE) taking place in the heart of London at Old Billingsgate. Increasingly popular, the show netted a record catch of 1,500 visitors and 75 exhibitors. It even reeled in the odd hack...

What with being a slave to cutting-edge industry comment and biting observation and all that, iQ doesn't get out that much, so when they said they'd be letting us loose at this year's Insight client show (under the close supervision of a crack SWAT team of course) the iQ team got so giddy and excited that we could hardly touch our breakfast. We had to get the editor to drink it for us.

Now in its sixth year, the Insight Client Event – or “ICE” as it is more, er, coolly known these days – has surprised even its organisers with speed and extent of its expansion since its inception in 2002. In fact, such is ICE's popularity and profile of late, we're told it's now officially the largest reseller event in the UK.

Even so, alighting the tube at Monument, we weren't expecting quite the response the suit in front of us got when he asked an Evening Standard vendor the quickest way to the venue at Old Billingsgate.

“Cor blimey guv'nor”, he cockneyed (really), “not you as well. You're only about the 150th perishin' person to ask me that this mornin'”. Zip dahn there, 'ang a left, go over the road, and it's on ya right 'and side. Enjoy.”

The newsman's reckoning turned out to be pretty prophetic however, as it soon became apparent from the number of people making the two hundred yard stroll, as well as the general buzz going on around reception, that this could (and would) be the most attended and well received ICE yet.

Neither was it hard to see why. We've been party to many an industry expo over the years (including the white-hot, Teutonic hell of CeBit. Oh, the very thought...). Take it from us – they really can be desperately dreary, turgid affairs. So it's refreshing when you find something rather more upbeat.

And upbeat ICE most definitely was.



Perhaps taking a lead from light, bright, high-ceilinged of the old market building, the event's 70-odd exhibitors – including the likes of Cisco, CA, IBM, HP, Microsoft, McAfee, Sony, and Symantec – all seemed to share a common air of energy and positivity.

Their chosen areas of focus had a lot in common too – with most majoring on the five key technology investment areas recently identified by Insight customers as being particularly business critical moving forward – Security, Virtualisation, Green IT, Storage, and Software.

With the opportunity to peruse the entire IT gamut from Blade Servers to thin computing, crowds were also drawn by the wide variety of solutions showcases and interactive features housed in specialist technology zones sponsored by Microsoft, HP, IBM, and Sony (whose solutions centre in the basement was especially natty).

Among the keynote addresses and breakout sessions meanwhile, were presentations on the growing popularity of virtualisation from Gartner's Phil Dawson; security and anti-virus from McAfee's Greg Day; and Green IT from ever-popular broadcaster and writer, Professor Peter Cochrane. All proved to be as informative as they were packed out.

ICE 2008 quite clearly meant business then. And it wasn't just us that thought so.

"It's been a really worthwhile, revealing day", one visitor told iQ. "But it's also been a rather unusual one. Unlike some industry shows, it hasn't been too stodgy or overblown, and yet we've managed to get around and speak to a whole load of potential partners all under one roof, without having to trek around fifteen different massive halls to find them. It's been well worth the effort. Roll on next year."

"It's been a fantastic show", said another. "Too many trade events simply don't justify the time away from the office and it's getting harder and harder to see the benefit of attending them. But for once, having got down and really talked turkey with a number of vendors, I've actually been able to take away something of genuine value from today's visit. It's been great."

We'd agree.

Who knows? They might even let us come back next year. ■



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