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CIPS Connections

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Executive Director of a Leading Organization for Network Computing Professionals

Interview by Stephen Ibaraki, I.S.P.

This week, Stephen Ibaraki, I.S.P., has an exclusive interview with Steve Delahunty, Executive Director of the Network Professional Association.

Together with teaching and various executive positions, he has written for Prentice Hall. He has contributed to the Worldwide Executive CIO Council, CIO Magazine Best Practice Exchange, and the USA TODAY Tech Panel. Steve is a member of the Network Computing Magazine advisory board. He is a former member of the IDC Mobile Advisory Council.

Steve is also a member of the Society for Information Management, Institute for Network Professionals, American Management Association, Computer Security Institute, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

Discussion:

Q: Steve, you have a particularly demanding schedule. Thank you for sharing your years of experience by agreeing to this interview.

A: No problem, it is always valuable and worthwhile to spend time with organizations such as the CIPS that have such a close link to the Network Professional Association.

Q: You have such a remarkable history. Can you share some stories and lessons from your multiple careers?

A: I found early on in my career that certification was important and an essential way to link myself to a group of professionals as well as provide industry recognition. Coupled with that was continued education, training that resulted in certification and training that was just plain good for my chosen career and that was beneficial to both myself and my employer. I was lucky to have employers that supported my development. I have also found it personally enriching to spend time with volunteer organizations such as the NPA and the CIPS.

Q: As the executive director of the NPA, can you describe your organization? Who are your

members, its mission and goals two and five years into the future? What the major challenges in running the organization globally?

A: The decade-old non-profit Network Professional Association (NPA) is a leading organization for network computing professionals worldwide. To be identified as true professionals, the NPA's international membership adheres to a code-of-ethics and strives for continual growth. The impartial strength of the NPA is a result of vendor neutrality and self-regulation. The Association's focus is to support and promote the role of the network professional.

One challenge in running the organization globally is the cost of membership around the world. For instance we are looking at possible reduced fees in certain countries where our annual dues amount to a monthly salary. Otherwise, the Internet has greatly enabled our organization to remain global. We have had members in 139 countries.

Q: Can you share your views on some competing technologies today, the nature of these technologies, similarities and differences, their strengths and weaknesses, market penetration, and where you see them in the two year and five year time frame?

A: The trend I have seen is for newer technologies to have many players and products and then the industry settles and the strong survive. Look at PCs in the 1980s or Office Application suites in the 1990s or Routers in the 1990s, there were many competitors and this helped to refine the products – but only certain vendors rose to the top. Today we have similar competition in security products and server applications like e-mail and databases.

Q: What do you see on the horizon that businesses and IT professionals “must” be aware of to be competitive?

A: The closer interaction of those two groups, business and IT. Similarly the role of the IT professional in a business sense.

Q: What do you feel are hot topics of interest to both businesses and IT professionals today in the years ahead?

A: Now: Providing value to the firm, Security at multiple levels, Wireless proliferation, IP-based phone systems, Instant Messaging. Now and in the years ahead: Knowledge Management, Customer Relationship Management, Staff Development & Retention, treating IT as a Strategic Asset, Outsourcing, and Security.

Q: What would be your recommended top references for IT professionals?

A: Newton's Telecom Dictionary
The Network Troubleshooting Handbook
Designing Network Security
Project Management Book of Knowledge
The Complete Stylist and Handbook

Q: Can you comment more about the Open Source Movement—its current position, its philosophy, the major innovations, and where it's going?

A: I feel strongly that the open source movement will continue and it has its place in the business world. Right now I see a great deal of open source operating system and application use in hosting environments. I also see use within the corporate environment to provide border services. Going forward I agree with many futurists who see the open source movement as a major contributor in peer-to-peer and grid computing. The open source movement leverages what is a common situation in our profession; we share information freely with our peers. We do not shy away from collaboration or providing what might seem to be regarded as closely held intellectual property in other professions. This supports the open source movement, contributions of those interested in the endeavor.

Q: If you were doing this interview, what other questions would you ask of someone in your position and what would be your answers?

A: What was the best job you had and why? The best job I had was being a network administrator and the feeling of satisfaction of making a difference for the company and the employees, seeing projects implemented and beneficial.

A: What makes a technical team succeed? The members need to get something from the effort; they need to have a balance of work/team/individual satisfaction and progress. People have to like the work they are doing, the people they work with, and the company itself to be successful.

Q: Steve, thank you again for coming in to do this interview.

A: As I noted at the beginning of the interview, no problem. I look forward to continued work with the CIPS.