October 2005
Product Management Software: The State of the Art
Moderated by Brian Lawley, SVPMA President

The October 2005 SVPMA event focused on "Product Management Software: The State of the Art." Three executives from leading product management, requirements management, and product planning companies performed a show-n-tell of their solutions and then participated in a panel discussion led by SVPMA's new President, Brian Lawley. Representing the solutions were:

- James Davies, President and CEO of Accept Software, makers of Accept Planner 3
-
- Joachim Karlsson, Senior Vice President Strategic Solutions at Telelogic, provider of Telelogic Focal Point. (Joachim was the founder and former President & CEO of Focal Point , which was acquired by Telelogic.)
-
- Andre Levesque, Chief Product Officer and founder of Ryma Technology Solutions, creators of FeaturePlan.

Numbers were drawn to determine the speaking order, and James Davies of Accept Software went first. Accept Planner is a modular suite that originated from engineer's frustrations at not knowing from where various requirements were coming. Accept Planner makes it explicit which requirements are committed on contracts, which are because of the competition, etc. Further, features have a value, a cost, and a market impact that can be analyzed more rigorously than the traditional P1 – P4 rating that is usually given in requirements documents. This makes it much easier to do portfolio analysis and compare development scenarios. Once the requirements are in the system, market requirement and product requirement documents can be automatically generated. The solution can be hosted or installed locally by module and is role based.

Next up was Joachim Karlsson from Telelogic. Focal Point was first launched in 1998 in Windows. The web version came out in 2001 and has a strong presence in Northern Europe with company leaders such as Volvo, Nokia, and ABB. Focal Point was acquired by Telelogic about six months ago and is now being sold globally. Focal Point helps the user start at the market segments and manage this down to features, products, resources, and finally the release. The product has a semantic search engine to help identify duplicate features in the system. It also assists the user in prioritizing the features by displaying them side by side and letting constituents rank which is the most important relative to each other. This data can then be segmented by market, stake holder group, customer, etc. Mr.Karlsson said Focal Point helps companies "identify everything we could do, then decide what we should do." The solution can be hosted or installed locally by module and is role based.

The final speaker was Andre Levesque of Ryma Technology Solutions. FeaturePlan automates the Pragmatic Marketing framework and promises that you will spend less time on the tactical and more on the strategic activities. It was launched in 2004 and is 100% .net and sits on SQL Server. The next release will be fully web based asp/.net. FeaturePlan starts by organizing all the inbound sources of data including win/loss reports, call statements, incident reports, market research, competitive analysis, etc. From these, the user creates problem statements. Requirements are then written, and finally those requirements are grouped into releases creating the roadmap or "market release table." The solution is fully integrated and is role based. Amazingly, all three vendor demonstrations worked flawlessly and showed the strong capabilities of Product Management applications in the market place. Further, all the solutions have many more capabilities than could be demonstrated to the audience or captured here in this article.

You are probably now wondering what it all cost? Although none of the vendors would be pinned down on specific pricing, you should budget $65 - $100 per user per month depending on size of installations and modules purchased.