

Community Talk with: Frank Jaeger

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In this Community Talk column, Frank Jaeger, Head of Project Management in R&D at BCE (Broadcasting Center Europe), a major European technical services provider in the fields of TV, radio, tele-communications and IT located in Luxembourg, gives his views on being an ITEA community member. His road to IT is an interesting one, having begun with agricultural economics and moving into the realm of marketing and economics before settling on IT at the beginning of the 1990s. “With all the IT hype at the time,” Frank says, “I figured it would make sense to get into that area. I started working at SAP – developers of enterprise software information systems – as a system architect and arrived in Luxembourg 20 years to the day at the company I now work for, BCE, the technical division of the RTL Group, where the focus of my work then was on IT and IT security.”

All this was happening at the turn of the century amid fears of the ‘millennium bug’ and the potentially disastrous consequences this could have had. It was at this time that Frank Jaeger

was appointed head of IT security. But, as we all know, the fears had been unfounded and the disaster the world had feared did not take place. A restructuring at the company led to Frank being asked to create a research and development department, which he did, and this is where he has been since 2005.

“And it was more or less at this time that my first contacts with ITEA formed. It happened when the research institute now known as LIST, the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology, was looking for partners to work on an ITEA project whose focus was content packaging and personalisation in order to comply with the cultural and linguistic needs of the EU countries. The core slogan of this project was ‘any content, any platform, anywhere and anytime’. There were ten or so companies involved and I vividly recall that Philips was one of the partners because it was the period when Blu-ray discs were starting to become the dominant media for high-definition optical content storage.” Frank continued his involvement with ITEA projects,



the last being ICARE (*see project showcase article in this issue – ed.*), which finished in February this year. “This project was also concerned with content delivery but then in a very cost-effective way through the Cloud. Our part in this project focused on managing content by asset management, or MAM, for the Cloud, and our company is already using this on a commercial basis. So that’s also a nice spin-off from being part of a project that has real, tangible goals.”

Looking back over his decade of involvement in the ITEA community, Frank remarks on the growing transparency and professionalism he has noticed over the years. “For example, you have newer and better websites, information is distributed in a very transparent way, there is

the magazine, of course, so every time there is something new in ITEA, we get easy access to this information. Also the process of getting an ITEA project off the ground has become more structured and a lot easier than I perceived it in 2005. A lot of the bureaucracy – both on the side of ITEA and the public authorities – has gone and things have become much faster and more efficient. In any case, that’s my personal view.”

Frank’s role in the ITEA projects has not changed much over the past ten years – he still manages and coordinates – although he tends to have a lot more responsibility these days. “I now coordinate with ITEA, the public authorities and the internal project members and our R&D teams. This has become quite a challenging

task because we are involved not only in ITEA projects but many other projects that are pan-European. Also in the beginning I was more involved in the technical aspects and now it’s the administration that tends to take up the chunks of my time.”

Frank is keen to underline the need for EUREKA/ITEA projects since they help create and develop new technologies. In the last few years these have been the very important Cloud technologies that are important not only for BCE but also for the media industry in general. “These projects help us get the development done that otherwise would not be done, or only to a very limited extent. And it is also easier now, through ITEA, to contact our government and to get the relevant funding. But while this funding may only cover, say, up to 40% of costs, it does provide that extra to help us make our products competitive in the market. What’s more, these projects help us network within our industry and develop working relationships with other companies and research institutes. In this way we gain a cutting edge over our competitors. In ITEA-speak, we can seize the high ground. Or, in my own words, put the icing on the cake!”

“As for happiness, it’s an emotion, of course, that has to be triggered. We are a technology company and technology is a key driver for our wealth and prosperity – something that makes us happy – but it also has potential to benefit others, be it in health for instance or, in our case, entertainment. So happiness is something where everybody benefits from the ideas and technology we develop in projects and this in return has a positive impact in terms of jobs and, as a result, the general well-being of society. We may still be far from technology being the answer to happiness but every little bit helps, even if it’s just something you get delivered on your smartphone that makes you smile. In a personal sense too, being involved in the ITEA community has given me happiness. I still have a job that I like a lot(!) and I have built up many contacts with other people that are often really quite amazing personalities – it certainly gives me a happy feeling to be part of such a community.”