

Community Talk with: Medur Sridharan

The community talk series continues in this issue with Medur Sridharan, a Master of Mathematics (Chennai) and Post Graduate Research Degree in Information Technology (Paris). His working career to date has been spent at Bull, an ATOS company, beginning as a software developer. He then became responsible for a software development team and also became involved in a number of European Framework Programme projects geared to topics such as technology for intelligent information selection and delivery, including a multimedia dialogue management and technology for business distance learning. He then became Certification programme manager within Bull software group that specialises in the security domain before taking on his current role leading the coordination of R&D cooperation projects at national and international level.

“My first contact with ITEA came in 2003 when I was asked to become part of the ITEA Steering Group at the time as the Bull representative, and so I have been part of the ITEA make-up, you could say, for a dozen years or so. As a member of the Steering Group I do play an active role in many of the phases of a project, like preparation and screening before the submission of a full project proposal. While my company, Bull, has been very active in a number of ITEA and EUREKA projects, helping to create ecosystems of business partners and being at the heart of the community, I have never been a direct member in any of these projects myself as such. However, as an observer I do monitor all the projects, looking in from the outside as it were, and occasionally mentor if this is required by the project partners during the very important preparation phase.

“I must say that since 2003 I have witnessed quite a few changes, especially in the organisation of the ITEA programme, which is now much more professional than it was twelve years ago. We have had many discussions about how the projects can best be organised

and monitored so that the project goals can be better targeted and achieved. One of the keys to this is simplification, which certainly cuts down the amount of bureaucracy that projects have to deal with and, in turn, accelerates the whole process from start to finish. Of course, I have witnessed considerable growth and expansion. There are now more projects than ever before, breaking new ground and exploring different areas but also this expansion is evident geographically. Companies and organisations from countries like Canada, Israel and South Korea are now becoming increasingly more involved in ITEA projects. This is a very good development not just for ITEA but it creates benefits all round, in terms of knowledge and expertise as well as in respect of business contacts and markets. Also the number of SMEs that are now active and becoming more and more key players within projects represents a pronounced increase compared to twelve years ago.

“Regarding my role, I would not say that this has changed to any significant degree since 2003 but I would say that it has improved. I have had



the opportunity to participate in various quality discussion groups and meet people from many different companies and organisations, often bringing new perspectives, insights and cultures to the table. All this has enriched me in my role. I have also seen three chairmen at the helm, and I'm still here! I seem to be a bit of a permanent fixture. And in this permanent state, I have seen how important the bottom-up approach is in the success of ITEA, with companies – the market and the users of the technology – actually driving demand and project targets. After all, there has to be a market for innovation. It's this that ensures the projects maintain a clear focus on results.

“And I see the concept of seizing the high ground related to this last point. It is the innovation that is developed in projects that enables companies to gain more market share and in that way also stand out above the others ... on the high ground. The ITEA impact in this sense is clearly evident in a number of areas, such as setting standards that will be crucial to the next generation. As for the

next decade, I think ITEA will continue to be important in a number of ways : (i) addressing developments in mobility (wherever and whenever), extreme computing (allow industry and academia to develop world class products and inventions), smart software (run and manage servers, networks, storage), wearables (health monitoring devices), growing digital natives (both younger and older generation) and safety and security (protecting sensitive data), (ii) updating the technological roadmap and supporting the implementation of the roadmap and (iii) facilitating coordination between the ecosystem and public authorities.

“Happiness? Well, I am certainly very happy when I am in the ITEA community. It's always like meeting your extended family again every time we get together. And being in ITEA has brought me a lot of contacts. I get to meet many very different and interesting people, which is very fulfilling and makes me very happy. But for the projects I think the happiness can be found in the results getting to the actual users of the work produced – children, the elderly, anyone

who benefits from the results, whether that is a very safe car or a medical monitoring device. And, of course, it makes me happy to see all the SMEs that take part in ITEA projects getting a real competitive advantage through their participation.

“So, with my final task to choose someone to pick up the story for the next Community Talk, a number of people spring to mind. One of these is Erik Abenius from Efield, a company developing and selling a comprehensive suite of simulation software for large scale Computational Electromagnetics with a focus on high-frequency electromagnetic wave propagation. He is involved in the ITEA projects H4H and COLOC and might have some interesting things to say from within the project experience as an ‘insider’. So, Erik, I hope you accept my invitation and give us the benefit of your insight.”