

CONTACT 2003 in Estonia

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The traditional information fair CONTACT 2003 took place in the second week of April in Tallinn, organized by the Association of Information and Telecommunications Companies.

This year subjects at the event, which was held at the Sakala Center and at the IT College, included safe computer networks, mobility and open source software. Safety and mobility were particularly important issues. The information fair was divided up into three categories – strategic development of organizations, information structure and applications, and communications and network solutions. Significant numbers of IT managers and executives were on hand at the fair, which was addressed both to business managers and to specialists. If the event were targeted at a very broad audience, then not everyone's interests would be satisfied. Many Estonian IT managers are former "computer guys" with little or no knowledge about management or strategy development, so many subjects that were covered in workshops and seminars during the fair were new and interesting for them. The technical side of many subjects, at the same time, seemed boring, conventional or unnecessary to a number of attendees. Some managers at the fair complained that presentations were too complicated and too full of unknown acronyms. It seems that some of the managers were at the wrong place at the wrong time, and perhaps next year's CONTACT fair will be more appropriate for their needs. The ideal solution would be two different fairs – one for IT managers who stand somewhere above regular IT staff, the other for regular CEOs.

THE AWARDS

Each year during the CONTACT fair, awards are presented for the idea of the year, the person of the year and the action of the year. Last year the Idea of the Year title was awarded to the launch of Estonian

ID cards, the Action of the Year award went to the Look@World project, and the Person of the Year prize was received by Uno Vallner, an IT visionary and developer. This year the awards, which were presented at the "Bonnie & Clyde" nightclub, went to the following people and programs:

- The Action of the Year prize went to the Curonia Research company for its successful launch of the doc@HOME project. It was recognized for impressive international cooperation and for the receipt of financing for the project from the EU.

- The Person of the Year was Marek Tiits from the State Chancellery. During the course of 2002, he established contacts in Europe, activated future monitoring in the field of IT and wrote the report "Future Perspectives of the Competitive Edge of the Estonian Economy".

- No Idea of the Year award was given this year, as the jury didn't find



Linnar Viik, a visionary from Estonian ITT, lectured on the subject "Sovereignty, safety, trust, Internet – is one of these superfluous?"

any of the ideas from last year to be worthy of the title.

- The Ustus Agur scholarship was also awarded. IT went to Marion Lepasaar, who is a doctoral student at the Tallinn Technical University's Computer Technology Institute. Lepasaar was presented with 30,000 crowns so that she could write her doctoral thesis, "The Validity of Standard Actions of Process Patterns of Software Development in Real



Discussion café on the topic 'Recommended prices of ITT services and general conditions of contracts – risk of cartel formation or prerequisite for fair competition?' is being conducted by Urmas Kõlli (member of the ITL board).

Software Development Projects”. A total of 11 IT&T doctoral students applied for the scholarship this year.

FREE SOFTWARE

It was nice to see that the subject of free and open source software was discussed at CONTACT this year. Only major companies such as Microsoft and Oracle have been considered newsworthy in the past, but CONTACT 2003 was different. Aarne Vasarik from Datel, Inc., talked about the use of freeware in the information systems of companies. This was so intriguing a subject that the audience couldn't fit in the hall that had been assigned. The presentation itself wasn't all that remarkable, but it did launch a discussion of freeware.

Other presentations focused mostly on new Microsoft products. Henn Sarv spoke about the new software versions of MS, while Anneli Heinsoo spoke about Microsoft's license school. There were also Oracle demonstrations – Riho Kurg talked about Oracle Collaboration, while Kaur Kiisler handled the subject of the E-Business Suite Special Edition.

In discussion cafes, the issue of what kinds of professionals are needed in the Estonian IT&T industry and the training of those professionals were discussed. The idea of locating the European Network and Information security Agency in Tallinn was also discussed, as were the prices and contracts related to IT&T services.

A pleasant factor in many presentations was the use of case studies to help in making subjects more clear and understandable. This way audiences could draw closer parallels to their own business activities.

CONCLUSION

There were, sadly enough, no revolutionary ideas at this year's fair, but the greater focus on free and open source software and a greater amount of debates about that subject – these were positive factors. The next major traditional event in this area, “From Vision to Solutions”, will be held in mid-September in the Estonian city of Pärnu. □