

Elevate 2017

Summary

Given that this is the first conference that Appeon had hosted, I thought it went extremely well. There were a few areas for improvement, which I'll address at the end of this article. Attendance was good and diverse. It seemed like there were a significant number of people attending from outside of the United States. (Appeon later indicated that 24% of the attendees were from outside North America, 4% from Asia, and 10% each from Europe and Latin America). There was a lot of energy and excitement on the attendees' part, and the sessions overall appeared to have been high quality and well attended. The facilities were great, if a bit small, and the services provided by Appeon to facilitate travel between the downtown hotels and the conference location were a great touch. If you didn't attend this year I would highly recommend it next year, particularly given we should have some exciting new 2018 features to see next year.

Facility

The conference was held Sept 25th through 27th at the [Harris Conference Center](#) in Charlotte, NC. The facility is located on the campus of the Central Piedmont Community College, just a few miles from the Charlotte Douglas International airport. Most of the attendees stayed at the Holiday Inn in downtown Charlotte or other downtown hotels. Appeon provide shuttle busses that ran every 30 minutes between the Holiday Inn and the conference center at the beginning and end of each day of the conference.

The keynote, lunches and some sessions were held in the Full Conference Hall. Other sessions were run simultaneously in the Ash, Birch, Cypress and Maple conference rooms.



Registration

I'm used to conferences that allow registration the day before the conference begins. Such was not the case here. Instead registration opened at 8:00 the first day of the conference and the keynote didn't begin until 9:30, but the registration went smoothly.

Breakfasts

During registration and each morning the next two days breakfast was offered. It was the standard carbs and fruit offering typical for such events. Doesn't quite fit my diet so I made other arrangements, but most other attendees seemed content.



Keynote



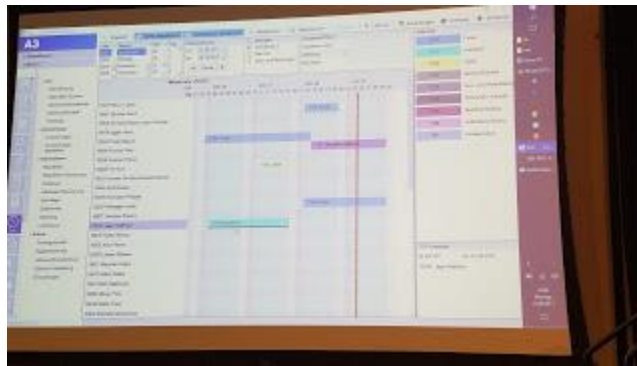
Armeen Mazda started the opening keynote. He discussed "what we have accomplished".



- PowerBuilder 2017 delivered, which offers
 - Core features
 - Easy migration
 - More stable
- Appeon-U
- Free training

- Can be completed in 1 week
- Based on the old fast track to PowerBuilder Course
- Community delivered
- Appeon MVP
- Real tech Q&A
- How to videos and articles
- CodeXchange
- Elevate 2017
- 60 hours of tech sessions
- Special product previews for
- PowerBuilder 2017 R2
- PowerBuilder 2018
- Impressive attendees

Georg Brodbeck spoke next, a customer success story.

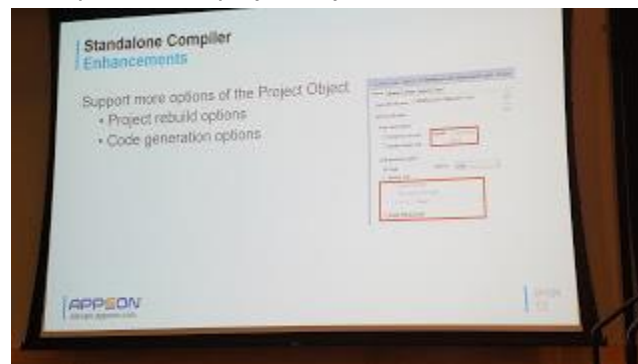


- Company has 80 employees, 45 of which are PB developers
- Their main product is an ERP system
- Bigger teams require different development processes
- Continuously integrated
- What they need to see from future versions of PowerBuilder
- Address old fashioned IDE and few new features
- Support for new operating systems

Chris Pollach spoke next.

- Release plan and schedule
- Revision approach
- R2 12/31
- R3. 6/2018
- Restful app
- Source control integration with TFS
- 2018. 12/2018

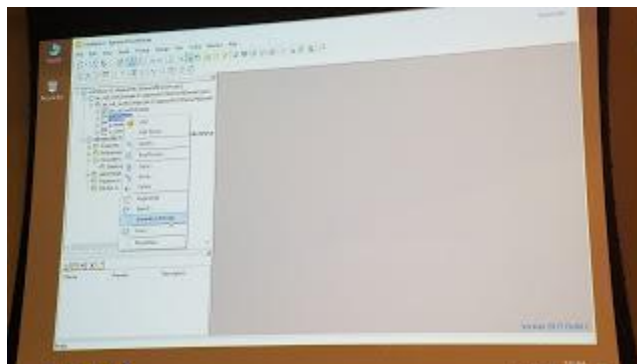
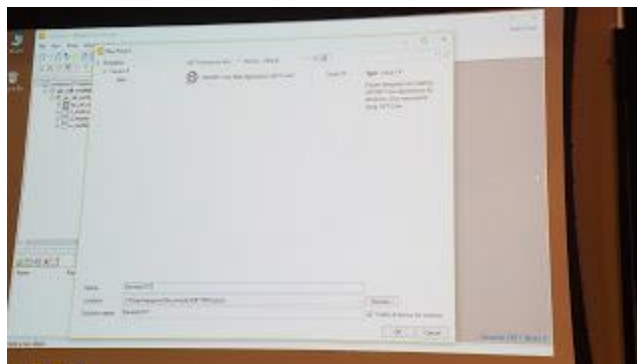
- C# development
- C# web API
- 64-bit application enhancements, UI modernization
- Support mechanism
 - Community
 - Standard
 - Paid
- EBF vs MR vs Revisions
 - MRs once a quarter
 - MR1 09/2017
 - LTS support
 - Supported for 3 to 5 years
 - 1 year notice before dropping support
 - 2017 R2 will be first LTS version
- R2 highlights
 - TLS 1.2
 - Consumption of REST/JSON
 - Git and SVN
 - No longer need separate directory for each PBL
 - Native PDFs enhancements
 - PDF A1 and A3
 - Improve font and graphics rendering
 - More page sizes
 - PostgreSQL support
 - Improve standalone compiler
 - More options from project object



- PB 2018
- REST web APIs and NVO.NET (uses Roslyn within the PB IDE)

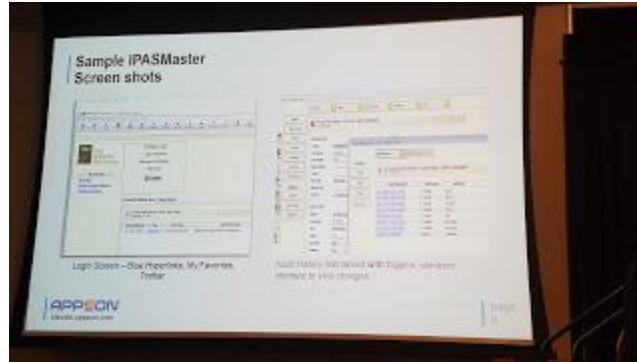


Chris then demoed some of the C# development capabilities they were planning for 2018.



Mike Croyle of CBIZ spoke next, another customer success story.

- Mid 90's Client/Server
- 2003 PB/EAServer
- 2009 PB WebForms
- 2012 Appeon Web



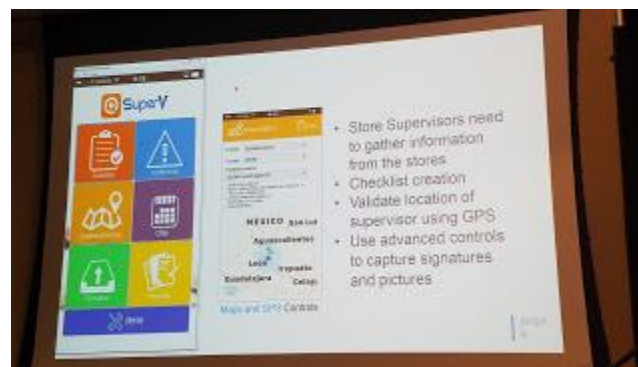
Armeen then spoke again on Appeon 2018 and beyond.

- .NET stack
- Deploy anywhere
- N-tier (cloud)
- Leverage existing investments
- 2018-2019 focus
 - .NET desktop cloud apps
 - R3
 - JSON DataWindow
 - TFS integration
 - 2018
 - C# server projects
 - PB native IDE enhancements
 - 2019
 - Desktop cloud target
 - UI framework
- Cloud app benefits
 - Simplified deployment
 - Code reuse and extensible (more code to server)
 - Integration ready (web APIs)
 - .NET interoperability
 - BUT your app has to be fully partitioned
- Rapidly evolving existing apps
 - PowerServer Web add-on
 - ~80% automated conversion
- Hybrid n-tier
 - JSON DW

- C# web APIs
- Optimize UI
- Optimize existing
- Rebuild UI layer

Filiberto Sosa of Sizes and Colors then spoke, another customer success story.

- 21 Years ago POS system
- Grew to full ERP system
- Now handles 30% of Mexico's shoe sales
- Web and mobile clients
- 6 Apeon Web servers handling 5,000 concurrent users
- 4 PB developers



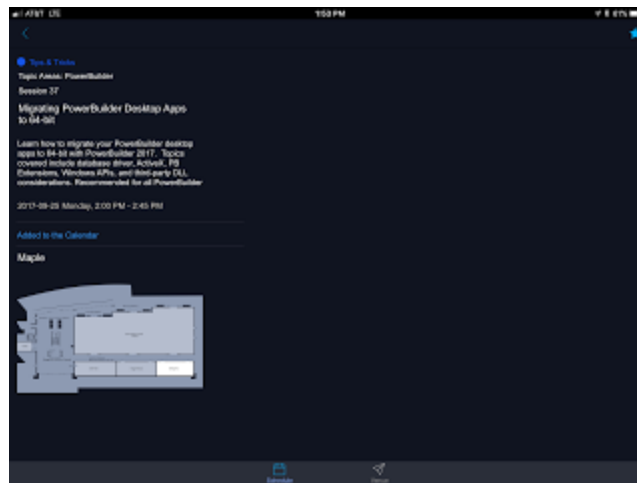
Keynote Takeaways

- **Release schedule** - I think most attendees were quite pleased to see an even higher-paced release schedule (multiple minor releases per year with incremental new features). It means new features end up in our hands sooner rather than waiting for next major release.
- **C# development** - Here I think most of the attendees left somewhat undecided about this particular feature. It appears the purpose of the enhancement has many purposes:
 - Allow developers who are not familiar with PowerBuilder but know C# to use PowerBuilder
 - Assist in the migration of PowerBuilder apps to n-tier
- **Consumption of REST/JSON** - I think many attendees were pleased with this feature. PowerBuilder has fallen far behind the curve in web services support. Personally, I'd like to see improvements in SOAP as well, but REST seems to be where the most growth and demand is in web services support.
- **Git and SVN** - I know some customers are excited to see this coming, particularly me. My company moved to SVN some time ago. However, the vendor that provided the bridge product that we use to get PowerBuilder to talk to SVN apparently ceased development about 5 years ago. In addition, the open source PowerBuilder projects I support have moved to GitHub, making Git integration important. I'm currently using another bridge product, but it has a number of limitations.
- **PostgreSQL support** - Another enhancement I'm particularly interested in. The developer edition of SQL Anywhere is no longer provided with the product. Support for PostgreSQL provides a low (no) cost for initial development work. In addition, unlike SQL Anywhere, support for PostgreSQL allows for low (no) cost production deployment.

- **Improved standalone compiler** - Yet another one I'm particularly interested in. I normally compile my applications as a small executable (basically just the application object) from the first PBL and PBDs for the remaining PBLs. That method of compilation isn't supported by the current standalone compiler.
- **New UI framework** - Many of the attendees were excited about this enhancement, but a few expressed some concern about the timing of its introduction. That is, some attendees were more interested in seeing this feature introduced sooner rather than some of the other proposed features. Others thought that existing methods of improving the UI of PowerBuilder applications were adequate for the immediate future and were willing to wait for that and have the other features first.

Conference App

During the keynote they announced the availability of a mobile application (based of course on PowerBuilder/Apeon) for accessing the conference schedule.



The app showed the time and duration of the sessions, where they were located, and gave a synopsis of them. There were also printed session lists posted throughout the conference area. The rooms weren't very far apart and there was an electronic notice outside each room with the session name so it was relatively easy to find them.

Lunch

The lunches had a local flair to them, as a result of which I ate more macaroni and cheese in the three days of the conference than I have in the last three years!



Sessions

I had three sessions I presented on Monday afternoon:

- Migrating to PowerBuilder 2017
- Migrating to 64-bit
- Calling advanced web services from PowerBuilder using a COM Callable Wrapper (CCW) client

Quite a number of the sessions became standing room only, such as this presentation by Ronnie Po on Tuesday:



Breaks

Snacks and soft drinks and water were provided in mid-mornings and mid-afternoons.

Special Event

The special event was held Monday evening at the [NASCAR Hall of Fame](#). It's normally only open from 10 AM to 6 PM, so we had it for a private event.



Food (hamburgers or bratwurst with sauerkraut) were provided as well as an open bar.



The main attractions were simulators for pit crews and races. Many of the attendees seemed to having great deal of fun squaring off against their fellow attendees.

Tuesday

I had four sessions I was presenting on Tuesday:

- Preparing applications for the Windows App Store
- Accessing any data from PowerBuilder through OData
- Using .NET Visual controls from PowerBuilder
- Continuous Integration with PowerBuilder

Because of my own schedule I wasn't able to attend any other sessions.

Wednesday

I had two sessions I was presenting on Wednesday:

- Using .NET non-visual assemblies from PowerBuilder
- Calling advanced web services from PowerBuilder using a proxy web service

That allowed me to attend the only session by another presenter I was able to get to the entire conference. On Wednesday afternoon John Hnat of Foundation Software did an "ISV Discussion on PowerBuilder's Roadmap".



His discussion points were:

- Are you staying client/server or moving to the web
- Are you doing any new development
- Where are you finding / training new developers
- What features do you want to see in PowerBuilder
- Are you satisfied with the proposed direction of PB
- Open mic

Thoughts for next year

- Location
 - A different location. With the NCPBUG meetings in Charlotte in 2014 and 2015 and Elevate in Charlotte in 2017 we've seen a lot of Charlotte. I'm ready for a change, as long as it's not Las Vegas.
- Sessions
 - Do some pre-planning to ensure that sessions aren't overcrowded. I'd suggest allowing for session selection during online registration so they can get some feel for the size of room needed for each session and which perhaps should be repeated.
 - Schedule specific break times and provide coffee as well as the soda and snacks during the breaks.

- Build in a bit of overlap between sessions in the same room (e.g., 15 minutes) so that the incoming presenter has time to set up.
- Modify the conference app for next year so that it includes the name of the speaker for each session.
- If printed session lists are going to be posted, make sure they include the room number.
- Workshops
 - For hands-on workshops, consider charging a small fee and using that money to offset the cost of doing the workshop via [Amazon Workspaces](#) or something similar. The problem with hands-on workshops where virtual machines are provided on USB sticks is that you can end up spending most of the workshop trying to get the environment set up correctly. With Amazon Workspaces the instructor can get the student machines all configured in advance. The students then use remote desktop to access the machines during the class and off hours. I participated in a hands-on workshop like that back in the SAP TechEd days and it allowed us to get pretty much straight to the training with only a small time needed for setting up the environment.