

The Chuck E. Cheese Factor in Technology and Conferences

There has been quite a bit of chatter around that I've noticed in the last couple of years. As many of us in the industry find ourselves going to our 4th, 5th and more of any particular event, there seems to be a turn in the way that some view those events. The same is happening with technology in general.

There was a movie called [Indian Summer](#) which had adults returning to a camp that they had all grown up together at. There was a lot of challenge among them with the nostalgia and letting go as the camp was meant to close its doors.

One of the things I really laughed at was Kevin Pollack who kept saying "I remember it being bigger" about everything. This eventually led to him getting yelled at because he had grown up, so of course he remembered it being bigger, because he was smaller.

The Chuck E. Cheese Factor

You may have been to a Chuck E. Cheese as a kid. At the time, you would wish you could spend every waking moment in one. It is quite an experience filled with sights, sounds, games, candy, prizes, and friends. Why wouldn't you want to be there every day of your life?



Then you grew up a bit and realized that the games were no longer as fun. The prizes weren't as cool as you remembered. You had all of the stickers already, and you had friends that grew up with you who did other fun things other than Chuck E. Cheese days together.

So, does this mean that Chuck E. Cheese needed to close up shop because you had outgrown the experience? Of course not. You may have noticed even as an older kid that there were still dozens of younger kids still going to Chuck E. Cheese.

This happens in technology, and here is what I thought about it.

Software and Technology

You cut your teeth on some technology early in your career, or more importantly at a particular company. Does the introduction of Cisco ACI and VMware NSX mean that you don't need workgroup switches in the market anymore? Of course not.

Does the big media attention around things like Docker and Go mean that it invalidates traditional virtualization and other programming languages? Of course not.

I started by doing a lot of support for Excel Macros on Windows desktops for small team groups. I may be working on containers and SDN now, but it doesn't mean that Excel Macros aren't around. If anything they are going even stronger now. It just means that I have shifted my focus, as have many in the industry, towards other software and technology.

Everything is still valid. It's just that many are now working on different things.

Community

There are some who find that the vExpert community has become too large. VMware and the community team have done a great job of building, growing, and supporting this community. It has grown to a large number of participants as a result.

I use this example because three years ago when I got my first VMware vExpert designation, many were complaining that it was getting watered down. There were about 250 vExperts at that point. There are upwards of 600 now. I say that we keep it going. Everyone wins.

Does the value of being a vExpert become watered down to some individuals? Yes. As individuals, we may find that we begin working on other tools and technology, or that we move away from getting the full value out of the benefits of what comes from these communities. The software may not be as valuable anymore, but the people are and always will be.

Conferences

I've been to 3 VMworld events and I'm heading into my fourth this August. My experience will be much different this time compared to my first, second, and third experience. My focus is entirely different now.

A couple of blog posts have been done which talk about the change in the value of tech conferences [here](#) and [here](#).

What I truly enjoy about a conference is how we can bring focus to great communities and events even without being there. One of the greatest ways that we can do this is by nurturing the community while we can and then watch it grow.

It isn't a bad thing when the community outgrows its leaders, because it is done by creating new leaders from within. If anything, I feel proud that I've been involved in many communities and they appreciate my support, but don't require it.

They are Customer Conferences After All

Despite the fact that we grew up together as bloggers in the tech conference lifestyle, I like to make sure that we see that the real value for VMworld is not for the 500-1000 highly active bloggers and community advocates; it is truly built for the 20,000+ customers who attend. Even when we see the

band selection, many tend to forget that the relevance of the band is chosen by the larger audience.



If we stuck to the same bands we saw at our first VMworld conference, wouldn't it get tiring? I kind of like the variety really, and if we all listen to the same music we grew up with, we would sound like every classic rock station caller who requests Freebird.

All that I'm trying to highlight is that conferences attendees come in many flavors, and hopefully you find the experience within the conference community that you get the most out of. I do my best to contribute back so that more people can really enjoy them.

Long live community. We are doing great things in our own ways. Keep up the great work!