

Toronto VMUG - May 7th Event Recap

☒ Today was not just another day in the world of me and DiscoPosse. I was lucky enough to be invited to speak at this morning's [Toronto VMUG](#) session at the Toronto Convention Center. We had a great room of participants as always, and thanks to [Angelo Luciani](#) and the VMUG crew for putting together a great event.

The session opened with a Veeam presentation titled Five Ways Smart vSphere Backups May Surprise You. For those who are not ☒ already familiar with the Veeam product lineup, this was a great way to introduce them. The virtualization environment adds complexity and lots of potential bottlenecks into your operational, and particularly your backup environment.

Today's presentation of their backup, snap and lab mode restore capability was really cool. I highly recommend that you look at the Veeam tools and get in touch with some folks there about how it may come into play with your environment. Take a look at <http://www.veeam.com> for more information. You can also visit [Mike Preston's](#) blog at <http://www.mwpreston.net> for some really great articles on configuring and managing Veeam products. ☒

Our second session today is from [Arista Networks](#) and VMware - Delivering Bandwidth and Data Centre Scaling Requirements Associated with Virtualization. This was my first exposure to Arista Networks so it was exciting to see what they have to offer.

With the drive to 10GBE and upcoming 40GBE this looks like a potentially great fit into the core of storage networking, and particularly VMware virtualized environments. They have a wide variety of products available to match your specific needs. It was more of an overview today so I would have to dive a little deeper to know how well I can fit the Arista product line into the data center now or in future. Interesting hardware, and I like that they subscribe to open standards and steer away from "black box" configuration. The Linux folks in the room were quite pleased to see that the EOS platform is built on a standard RedHat kernel.

☒ Then came the final session of the day which was my presentation about Scripting for VM Admins. This was my first presentation to the VMUG community, so I was in an interesting spot for choosing the detail level to come at this with. I chose to do a broad and moderate depth presentation with the focus on methods and techniques rather than a deep dive into actual code. It is always an adventure to present to your peers who have deep technical skills. Especially when talking about coding and scripting as most of the attendees have their own particular styles and level of exposure.

I hope that everyone enjoyed the presentation and that it touched on some good details. I plan to have a specific deep dive session as a follow up at another event, or potentially through Ustream if there are no time slots available. I find that the coding sessions work best with lab examples and I particularly like the interactivity which helps to steer the content as needed.

Please feel free to add your comments on the session and I look forward to making future appearances.

Toronto VMUG Event - Thoughts and review

✘ Two word review: Well done!

For those who know, the VMware User Group (VMUG) community is a great resource. For anyone who is keen to get to view great presentations, network with peers and to gain access to targeted vendors and other community members, they will find it to be a great bunch of people with some great ideas and great technology. Whether you are a seasoned administrator, a dabbler, or even viewing it from a business perspective, there is a lot of value to be gotten from these events and groups.

The all-day event on February 7th met and exceeded my expectations of what a “local” VMUG event can be. Typically I’ve been to these events which are 1/2 day sessions with 3 vendors and are primarily presentations with one keynote technical presenter who really creates the buzz for the event. So when Angelo Luciani (<http://twitter.com/AngeloLuciani>) who heads up the Toronto VMUG brought the event to my attention I was pretty excited.

The event was held at the Hyatt hotel in Toronto. Great location to get to by transit as a city resident, and hopefully equally accessible for anyone who came in from other locations. While the layout created challenges because the vendor booths were surrounding the main seating area in the great hall, I still believe that it worked out overall. However, in future for such a large event (upwards of 450 attendees from what I have heard!) it may be better suited to a location with more separation between keynote session rooms and the vendor showcase.

Two presentations opened up the session, one from VMware followed by one from Symantec. I found both to be great presentations, although as mentioned with the venue layout, the ambient noise in the room began to overpower the presentation and took away from the impact slightly. I felt that these were great openers though and it was a good lead in to the breakout sessions which began mid-morning.

Breakout sessions were available in 4 different rooms, with a combination of VMware sponsored tracks as well as vendor sponsored presentations. While I generally steer clear of purely vendorized presentations (aka sales pitches), the presenters were technical and it allowed for a more of a deep-dive approach to the information. That being said, it is still designed with some spin towards the superiority of their particular product which is of course why they are there. Again I have to say that for the vendor presentations that I attended, I found them to be technical, and more importantly not boring which is another issue we see with some presentations.

So this brings us to the main event of the day which was the presentation by the dynamic and affable Mike Laverick (http://twitter.com/mike_laverick). Mike is a leading blogger and author on virtualization technologies (<http://www.rtfm-ed.co.uk>), so for those in the community it was great to put together the real voice and face to the man behind such great books as [Administering VMware Site Recovery Manager 5.0](#) from VMware Press and multiple titles available via his website [here](#).

The presentation, named **Cloud Journey - Bumps in the Road** was an honest, and informative view of the challenges of introducing cloud technologies to the business environment and what the real-life pitfalls and benefits can be. Mike’s conversational style came out in his presentation and provided a great view of what it takes as a technological team to be able to bring a business into a

cloud environment. This was neither a sales pitch, nor a scare tactic, but more a no holds barred depiction of what has become a buzzword driven push to migrate towards “the cloud”.

The afternoon sessions had the unfortunate timing with people winding down from a great mid-day presentation and digesting a well put together meal from the catering team at the Hyatt. As anyone knows, the sessions that follow the main act tend to be more subdued, and unfortunately more lightly attended as some customers opt for the early train home or simply to stay in vendor alley and talk tech with the array of technical sales teams who were present at the event. Luckily the 5:00 draws hold the crowd and although I didn't manage to take home an iPad, I was lucky enough to win a \$50 gift certificate from Best Buy presented by Vision Solutions, the team who recently acquired the creators of Double-Take Software.

As the 4:00 hour came I took some time out to chat with Mike Preston (<http://mwpreston.net>) about his journey towards VCP 5 upgrade certification and some general tech talk. Mike is a great guy and I highly recommend you look to his blog as it is a great resource for virtualization. Mike also did a presentation at the event which I mistakenly missed as I was moving between sessions and arrived after he had completed but from what I heard it was well done.

I was also lucky enough to be able to attend a dinner event with Angelo Luciani and Mike Laverick after the event which was particular treat. I can say that as a presenter, a technical resource and personally that I was pleased to have had the opportunity to meet Mike and I look forward to future opportunities to do so if they arise. We took the opportunity to chat about lots of technology and share some great stories on music and guitar as Mike is also an accomplished guitarist.

I'll close by saying as they do in France, chapeau! In other words, hats off to Angelo as well as all the presenters and attendees to the event. I look forward to the next one and I hope to up my own participation in future events. Presentations from the event are available here: <http://tovmug.com/?p=578> so I recommend that you take a look and I hope to see you there next time!

[Using the chicken to measure IT?](#)



Using the chicken to measure IT

So you are probably wondering what the deal is with the title. It's simple. Thanks to the late, great Frank Zappa and his movie/soundtrack Uncle Meat I've had this saying stuck in my mind for years. Try to think of it as a similar phrase as “yak shaving”

“We're involved in sort of a low key war against apathy. Most of what we do is designed to annoy people to the point where they might just for a second question enough of their environment to do something about it. As long as they don't feel their environment, they worry about it — they're not gonna do anything to change it. Something's gotta be done before America scarfs up the world and shits on it.” -Frank Zappa

What does this mean to IT? For me, this is about the fact that we are constantly trying to apply measurability and tangibility to processes and customer experience. Don't even get me started in ITIL! As IT workers we are being asked to apply rigor and process to agile, dynamic infrastructure and application environments. This is inherently failed due to the very volatility of these environments.

I have often said that this is the plight of the skilled IT staffer. We are asked to be able to react to any situation and adapt to dynamic, moving environments, but at the same time we are also being asked to "put on your management hat" to apply process and rigidity to what it is that we do. Please don't get me wrong in that I understand every reason why we need to do both.

As a Systems Architect (I'm not title dropping, that is just what they call me), I have to bridge the gap between development, systems and infrastructure management, systems administration and also corporate management. On one side of the fence I have a plethora of people I work with directly and indirectly who view corporate IT processes as "evil". On the other side of the fence there are the corporate management teams who have been tasked with creating Service Level Agreements and support contracts with the same people who disagree with the entire process.

I could go on and on, and I'm sure most of you who read this article share this challenge. To close this one out I will offer that you share my new phrase. When you are asked how to apply measurability and tangibility to a process that is on the web, or in the cloud or somewhere in the world that isn't understood by the corporate management, simply say that "I am using the chicken to measure IT".

The store is open!

Time to add some merchandise to the lineup! I've started up my cafepress store at <http://www.cafepress.com/discoposse> and as I get designs up and rolling I'll be flogging my wares there.



Merch!