

Debut in Hong Kong - HxGN Live 2015



Hexagon's first conference in Hong Kong was a lively showcase for the company's many technologies reports Gordon Andreassend.

Under the banner of Great Stories Start Here the first HxGN LIVE conference to be held in the Asia Pacific region ran for three days last November. As a venue, Hexagon chose AsiaWorld Expo, the largest conference facility in Hong Kong, which often hosts musical performances and lavish stage shows. The conference occupied all the space of this 70,000 sq m venue, but also required overflow meeting halls in two nearby hotels.

Keynote Addresses

The major keynote presentation was given on day one by Ola Rollén, president and CEO of Hexagon, followed by a shorter presentation in Mandarin (Putonghua), by Li Hongquan, vice president of Hexagon, and president of Hexagon, China. Ola gave a most enthusiastic address in which he produced facts and figures to highlight Hexagon's involvement in many major development projects around the world. Li's presentation followed the same pattern, but concentrated on Hexagon's activities in China. As with all presentations held in meeting rooms, simultaneous translation from English to Chinese (and vice versa) was provided.

Everything shown on the large video screens in the largest hall - an area that could seat up to 4,000 people - was shown in both languages. Ola is certainly a good speaker, and it is easy to see why he has been listed amongst the world's best CEOs. The keynotes focused on the success stories of many companies and practitioners working within the Hexagon technological group.

Some inspirational and motivational quotations shown in English and Chinese prior to the presentations, made interesting reading.

Also on day one, at 5pm, all track keynote speakers gave their presentations. There were five tracks covering five different disciplines.

The 'Tracks' were:

- PP & M - Process Power & Marine, keynote: Expanding innovation on a global scale.
- Synergy, keynote: Smart cities. smarter nations.
- Metrology/Manufacturing, keynote: Change!
- Geosystems, keynote: Digital realities.
- Geospatial, keynote: The M.App of the future is now.

Delegates registered by their 'Track', and in my case I went for Geosystems. From my entry into the amazing world of land surveying, some 60 years ago, I guess I was always in the 'Geosystem' world. My start with Abney level, compass and pacing and high-tech stuff such as plane tabling in the army - then sun shots and six-figure tables with calculations on a Curta, were a far cry from the high-tech development we see today, with most modern technology leaving me way behind.

I went to the Geosystem Keynote presented by Juergen Dold, the president of Hexagon Geosystems. He spoke of the role geospatial technology plays in managing rapid change. He detailed the amazing advances in the digital world that have been assisted by many geosystem sciences working towards the same goal.

My observation is that we can contemplate the time-consuming use of the slide rule, followed by lengthy calculations which were required fifty years ago, compared with the almost instantaneous and more accurate results obtainable today, through the use of digital technology.

Two other Geosystem speakers also spoke of advances in the digital world. The first was Du Bin, president of Hexagon Geosystems China, and the second, Matthew Smith, president of Hexagon Geosystems Asia-Pacific.

Technical Presentations

Days two and three saw presentations by professionals, researchers and academics in geosystem development and technology. There were a total of 45 papers presented in this track - the other four tracks had 30 to 40 presentations each, giving a total of about 180 papers. As with the keynotes, every individual presentation had English/Chinese simultaneous translation. An extremely busy time for the presenters, and the translators. In addition, there were about 100 or more short presentations in the exhibition hall, organised by the participating engineering and manufacturing companies, where translation services were not provided.

Delegates - Where did they come from?

Around 3,500 delegates attended with the largest contingent of participants coming from the Peoples Republic of China. My estimate would be that about 80% would have come from the PRC and Hong Kong. The remaining 20% would have been mainly from the US, Europe plus the Pacific rim countries including Australia, and New Zealand. Some other smaller countries were also represented.

This may have been a first for Hexagon in Hong Kong, but I would venture to say, not the last. It was a well-organised conference, and I believe all those participating were more than satisfied with the event and the services provided by the venue. The catering was of a very high standard and I doubt if any of the 3,500 delegates went away hungry. I consider that Hexagon will certainly plan to stage another event in Hong Kong in four to five years' time. However, I hope that at their next Hong Kong conference they will have improved on their day-one registration process at the venue. One hour in a line waiting to pick up the conference tag, etc. is far too long. Possibly a fault with that specific area of the Expo venue, or just not enough check-in staff. Rather ironical to find this at a gathering extolling the use of smart modern internet technology.

Exhibition Scene

I started attending survey conferences more than 50 years ago, but they were small affairs of about 200 to 300 participants, and invariably organised by a professional institute. Later I attended larger international FIG and ISPRS events, and in Hong Kong was involved in the staging of two regional congresses. In every case these conferences were highly dependent on the surveying industry for financial support, and it is a fact that without that support, those conferences could not be staged. HxGN LIVE had the largest exhibition of surveying and related equipment ever seen in Hong Kong. It must have placed a hefty demand on the finances of the companies concerned. It made me wonder how the smaller regional institutes will be able to expect the support they have had in the past from these surveying firms in staging their events. Perhaps the day of the small local conference is over. Time will tell.

This article was published in Geomatics World January/February 2016

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