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## Are Google Conferences on Your Enterprise's Radar?

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Google has become a leader in educating people about Google. Yet when I mention Google conferences in my lectures, I am met with puzzled looks. Google has developed a remarkable line up of conferences, yet many information technology professionals are unaware of these events.

Earlier this year at a client meeting in Boston, I mentioned the active Google education and outreach programs in the Boston area. The executives with whom I spoke repeated a comment that I have heard frequently, "What Google events?"

I want to return to this communication gap between senior management interested in Google and what Google is doing. I want to highlight three Google learning opportunities and mention a convenient short cut for those who are not able to attend the expanding conference programs that Google offers.

Let's start with Google's I/O event. The conference is the largest Google developer event of the year. The company will host this event in May 2010, and there is a mini-Web site within Google.com's main Web site with the details of the program.

Attendance in 2009 was more than 2,000 Google developers, invited guests, speakers, and partners. At the 2009 show, Google did what few conference organizers can afford in today's economic storm. Each registered attendee received a new Google mobile phone. Yep, free.

For 2010, Google anticipates more than 3,000 attendees. In addition, there will be exhibits and what Google calls "demonstrations." These are mini-seminars in which developers showcase their Google software for attendees. Google publicizes the event using Twitter.com (hashtag: #io2010).

These events are quite Googley. There were some suits (Silicon Valley jargon for traditionally attired business professionals). The majority of the attendees are dressed in casual garb, including the occasional pair of Bermuda shorts and sandals.

The event has the feel of the original Apple developer conferences. In 2009, when Sergey Brin gave his talk, there were parallels with the Steve Jobs presentations of years past. In addition to Google wizards who explain a range of technical issues related to Google Apps, Maps, and search, there are invited presentations, breakout sessions, and developer sandboxes. These range from the easily accessible comments about Google Apps, for example, to the more arcane methods used to knit together Google APIs to deliver solutions.

To a sense of what's in store for attendees, you will want to take a look at the frequently updated schedule at <http://code.google.com/events/io/2010/sessions.html>. On tap for the May 2010 event are sessions about Android (Google's operating system for everything from

mobile phones to tablets to set top boxes), App Engine (plumbing for building industrial strength solutions for consumers and the enterprise), Chrome (Google's browser and desktop container stub), Enterprise, geographic information systems, APIs, social Web, and much more. Let me give you title of one session so you get a flavor of what's on tap: "Open Source Google Wave: building Your Own Wave Provider."

The presentations at this conference are 180 degrees different from the talks that Googlers give at other vendors' trade shows. At these large non-Google conferences, the invited Googler gives a generic talk. At the Google I/O conference, Google talks specifics.

One twist in the Google I/O conference design is that sessions have college-course numbering schemes. A session with a 101 designation are for those new to Google. Sessions number 301 assume an advanced understanding of a particular Google technology such as graphical methods in Android applications or data pipelining in an enterprise application.

If you have been unable to talk with a "real Google professional"—a common problem based on what I hear—you will want to attend a "Fireside Chat". The idea is that you can speak with "real Googlers" and ask them questions. With a bit of planning you can combine a "Fireside Chat" with a "Tech Talk". The Tech Talks take place on the Google campus, but you will need to work your Google relationships to pull off this one-two punch during the I/O Conference.

The conference is not free. Students pay \$100 and others pay \$500. The registration information is at <http://code.google.com/events/io/2010/register.html>.

#### The Google Teacher Academy

Google has held an education summit. In 2010, the company is hosting the "Google Teacher Academy for Administrators." Held in San Antonio, Texas, the conference is free. The purpose of the program is, according to Google,

to help K-12 educational leaders get the most from innovative technologies. Each Academy is an intensive, one-day event where participants get hands-on experience with Google's free products and other technologies, learn about innovative instructional strategies, receive resources to share with colleagues, and learn how to apply examples from our innovative corporate environment.

Attendees at this conference become Google Certified Teachers. The idea is provide educators with information about how to use Google products and services in the classroom. The conference extends the reach of Google's teach community, a discussion group in which educators who are using Google in education can exchange ideas. You can get information about this active discussion group at <http://www.google.com/educators/community.html>.

Google offers a range of educational outreach programs. In 2009, the company experimented with programs delivered in specific school districts. I heard about a successful event held at Maine Township High School District. Now these outreach programs for educations have

been amplified with Webinars. You can sign up for a Google education Webinar by tracking announcements on <http://www.google.com/educators/index.html>.

A more specialized line up of education-oriented related activities, including faculty summits and visiting faculty programs. The line up of events can be seen at <http://research.google.com/university/>.

### Local Meetups

A third type of Google program consists of smaller, more intimate programs. The Google Campfire One events are for developers. You can learn about these on the Google Campfire OneWeb page at <http://code.google.com/campfire/>. In addition, Google participates in meetups. In Ann Arbor, Michigan, Google participated with four other companies in a meetup. A similar event was sponsored in Boston in conjunction with the angle of a national press tour. Google evangelists explained Google products and discussed advertising-related projects. Information about the event was publicized via MeetUp.com. These events are more difficult to track, but they do occur. You can read about the Boston meetup at <http://www.meetup.com/Boston-Google-Meetup-Group/calendar/9975514/>.

From large conference events to webinars to meet ups, Google is expanding its public outreach programs. But at this time, there is no master Google conference calendar. The reason is that Google is still developing certain administrative services within its sprawling infrastructure. I have found that tracking Google events is difficult, and when I search for Google events using the Google.com search engine, I can't find some of the events.

Having seen the breadth of their offerings, I suggest that you attend one or more of these Google events. I still have not exhausted the firm's line up in this column. You can locate other events by searching for "Summer of Code" and Google partner webinars at <http://www.google.com/support/forum/p/Apps+Partner/thread?tid=1d6cccf6ee4024d7&hl=en>.

I have learned that the Google Channel provides highlights of many of these Google conference and outreach programs. If you are not familiar with the YouTube.com programming organized under the Google Channel, navigate to <http://www.youtube.com/user/Google>. Some content such as Sergey Brin's keynote at the 2009 developer conference can be difficult, if not impossible, to locate. Other content such as a lecture about how to become a Google Book partner is quite easy. The query I used was "Google Book Partner Program".

How big will Google's conference business become? Quite large. How important is it for a senior manager in an enterprise to attend a Google conference. Very important.

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