

BCS Manchester Branch, Chairman's Report, 7th November 2011.

Once again I believe the Branch, through the work of its volunteer committee, has achieved a great deal (more than 40 events since the last AGM). These events have involved showing school pupils that a career in IT is both worthwhile and interesting, informing members about new technology, providing an insight into the pros and cons of existing technology and raising the profile of the IT profession.

All the Branch's activity is aimed at fulfilling the purpose of the BCS, defined by its Royal Charter, to promote the study and practice of Computing and to advance knowledge and education for the benefit of the public. From this purpose come the five strategic objectives (see the BCS's website for details of these). The performance of the Branch is therefore gauged on whether it has helped the BCS fulfil its purpose and objectives and thus delivered benefit to its stakeholders - society, the BCS and its members.

I believe the Branch, through the meetings and events it organises and supports, has been successful in delivering benefits to its stakeholders. The current programme of events for the forthcoming year will enable it to continue to deliver all this and more: some events are now being recorded; and the Branch is exploring social media as an additional means of communicating with members (Twitter and LinkedIn).

Yet, I believe there is more to be done. It is my belief that the value to society of the BCS is its membership and the value of membership is through its members. The Branch, through its numerous events, does add value into this relationship but needs to do more. This future work falls into three categories: engaging more with members; participating more in public policy; and understanding local IT requirements.

A plan! There are a number of activities being planned by the committee that fall within the above three categories but it should be noted that all this work is being undertaken by volunteers – additional help is always welcome. So what is to be done?

- Is there an IT skills shortage in Greater Manchester? There are certainly some problems in recruiting people with the right skills. The BCS must and will be encouraging debate in Greater Manchester to gain a better understanding of the nature of this problem in the hope that it can be resolved.
- There is also a requirement for the Branch to understand the IT landscape of Greater Manchester, from SMEs to local government, so that it might inform public policy on how IT can contribute to society and, since it is its main product, ensure its events are relevant, interesting and useful.
- Members can make a difference yet many do not engage with the Branch – indicating a requirement to communicate better with members. The committee are currently investigating establishing monthly meet-ups and more meetings outside of Manchester city centre. The aim is to improve communications with members, better understand what members want from the Branch and to explain the benefits of participating in Branch activities and the opportunities that exist for their involvement.
- The Branch has run a number of events aimed at senior IT professionals and it is clear there is a need for this type of event in Greater Manchester. The Branch will continue to run such events as the opportunity arises.
- Greater Manchester has a vibrant IT community. The BCS is committed to ensuring that Greater Manchester fully benefits from this community through better co-ordination and communication of its activities and is constantly working on ways for this to be improved.

Finally it would not have been possible to have had such a successful year without the following people, groups and organisations, who, on behalf of the BCS, I offer grateful thanks:

- the committee for all their time and effort they have volunteered over the year;
- MMU's School of Computing, Mathematics & Digital Technology for their tremendous support;
- Professor Nigel Linge and his team at Salford University for organising the Family Telecoms Days;
- Manchester University's School of Computer Science for another great Turing Lecture;
- the numerous BCS member groups and other institutions, including the truly inspirational MadLab, that have worked with us during the year;
- the speakers at our events who have all given their time freely to the benefit of the profession;
- and the thousands of people who have attended our events.

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