

**SPE GCS¹ Digital Energy
Houston, May 2008**



Don Paul (Chevron), Washington Salles (Petrobras), Don Moore (OXY) and Steve Fortune (BP)

The Society of Petroleum Engineering Houston Digital Oilfield conference and exhibition is an altogether lower key affair compared to its European ‘Intelligent Energy’ counterpart – reflecting its origins with the SPE’s local Gulf Coast chapter.

Previous SPE-supported events have often touted the idea that the oil industry is a technology ‘laggard.’ Not so according to Don Paul (Chevron) who cited a recent study by the US Council on Competitiveness² that found that Tier 1 US energy companies outpaced other sectors. Oil and gas has embedded IT ‘all the way to the front line of the business.’ Paul also analyzed the current supply and demand situation to conclude that demand growth is likely to continue apace – and that for the industry, ‘this is as good as it gets.’ The technology lead theme was largely supported in Donna Crawford’s (LLNL³) keynote on high performance computing.

A couple of interesting panel sessions debated the state of the art. Tony Edwards (BG) saw ‘confusion’ as to what should be standardized, outsourced and automated. Steve Fortune (BP) ventured that information management was more important than the digital oilfield. An interesting observation in so far as others, Don Paul included, considered the data management problem as more or less intractable. Fortune also noted that the digital oilfield was moving from pilots into ‘full scale, value generating deployments.’

Otherwise the papers presented showed considerable diversity around the digital oilfield theme. Topics included Shell’s Gulf of Mexico production operations management center, AspenTech’s work on optimizing production on BP’s Azeri field, Shell’s gas lift optimization on Brunei’s Champion field and rock mechanics modeling from Chevron. An interesting gathering of smaller vendors was showing software for workflow management, collaboration and visualization.

Many exhibitors were showing off Chevron deployments. We’re not sure if this means that Chevron is ahead in the digital oilfield stakes or just more communicative. Either way, Chevron’s openness is to be encouraged.

Highlights

[Keynote – Don Paul, Chevron](#)

[Global IHS data available in Google Earth](#)

[Shell’s GOM Production Operations Center](#)

[State of the art HPC – Lawrence Livermore](#)

[Schlumberger’s ‘Blue’ digital oilfield](#)

[Optimizing BP’s Azeri field](#)

[Gas lift on Shell Brunei Champion field](#)

[CIO Panel discussion](#)

¹ Gulf Coast Section.

² www.compete.org.

³ Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

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