



Saudi Aramco's Dhahran's 3-D Visualization Center¹.

Is 'Intelligent Energy' (IE) the same as 'Digital Energy,' the 'Digital Oilfield,' the 'Field of the Future,' the 'i-Field' and or any other branded or unbranded buzzwords that different majors, vendors and conference organizers have dreamed up? The answer to that question is yes. They are all the same. But that leaves us with the question of what do they collectively mean! This can be a hard question to answer if you are, as CERA did early in the 21st Century, trying to estimate the 'added value' that the digital oilfield will bring to the industry. Or indeed if you work in the division of a major or NOC and are trying to persuade management that investment in 'digital' is better than, say, buying barrels in the ground. On the other hand, as the excellent Society of Petroleum Engineers' Intelligent Energy conference showed, the digital oilfield is a broad church where just about anything goes. It is variously, life of field seismics, fish hook wells, the 'advanced collaboration environment,' just in time maintenance, monitoring and water flood management. As one astute observer put it to us, 'Intelligent energy is really about doing the blindingly obvious!' Or, as BP's Bernard Looney puts it, 'Over time it is harder to explain – it has become the way we do business.'

For some, notably BP, the focus of IE is the collaboration room – variously BP's Advanced Collaboration Environment, Shell's Surveillance Center, Statoil's Collaboration Facility, Saudi Aramco's OSPAS and others. These high tech environments with big screens show what is happening offshore. Initially these were used to bring scarce resources – such as domain specialists – together during mission critical functions such as geosteering, and fracking. But for some, these facilities are evolving into more everyday work environments, supporting a migration of jobs from offshore to onshore. Perhaps the most interesting facet of the onshore 'collaboration facility' is the overlap with the traditional control room. Indeed, BP's Valhall ACE already has a control room built-in. Saudi Aramco takes a more extreme view with its OSPAS² Command and Control Center blending collaboration, control and automation.

Another route to the field of the future is the problem focused initiative targeting a specific problem. IE heard from Pemex on its Burgos artificial lift advisory system (ALAS), from Shell on its Gulf of Mexico 'Bridge' for exception-based surveillance, Petrobras GeDiG, Aramco's AFK i-field, Statoil Aasgard operations, Total's data validation and reconciliation, Wintershall's North Sea Integrated Production Management System and Pioneer's Oooguruk, Alaska HySys-based integrated production management system.

In the Health safety and the environment (HSE) Maersk Oil's Peter Kapteijn presented a seminal paper on combining enhanced oil recovery with CO₂ sequestration right from the start of a field's development. Ron Cramer (Shell Global Solutions) argued for a 'virtual person,' constantly monitoring operations – automating fire and gas detection and emergency shutdown systems. Social networking and 'Web 2.0' is making an entry into the upstream as described in presentations from BG and Woodside. Looking to the future, Aramco is 'betting on electro magnetics (EM), gigacell simulation, 'resbots' and borehole gravity to improve mapping of the inter-well space. Chevron envisages more application of the digital oilfield in

¹ Image courtesy Saudi Aramco.

² Oil Supply Planning and Scheduling Center – see for instance http://www.barco.com/projection_systems/downloads/BCD_apl_aramco_1.pdf.

brownfields, fields with longer and more complex collection system, more smart wells and also smart equipment.

To return to the question of how much value is created by IE, BP is the most bullish – allocating a billion barrels of reserves to its Field of the Future technology flagship. Petrobras cited a percentage or two increase in operational efficiency due to GeDIg. Others are more circumspect. Schlumberger’s Satish Pai noted that ‘You cannot split out the digital component – it has to be how you do business.’ ExxonMobil’s Russ Spahr concurred that, ‘It is hard to divvy-up the value across technology, mindset and digital. But we do perform evaluation at the project level.’ Whatever the value, all agree that for IE to succeed, people have to change the way they work, otherwise the collaborative work environment is ‘just a very expensive telephone.’

Highlights

[Plenary Session ‘Value across the cycle’](#)

[The Khurais ‘mega’ i-field](#)

[Business Leaders Session](#)

[Shell’s exception-based surveillance](#)

[CCS/EOR – the ultimate test of E&P ‘intelligence’](#)

[Perdido Smart Field](#)

[Saudi Aramco – OSPAS control center](#)

[Total’s data validation and reconciliation](#)

[Wintershall/TNO’s Matlab-based asset model](#)

[Monitoring with a ‘virtual person’](#)

Table of Contents

1005_1	Keynote, 10 years of Intelligent Energy – David Latin, BP	4
1005_2	Keynote, Field of the Future – Doug Suttles, BP	4
1005_3	Plenary Session – ‘Value across the cycle’ – Moderator John Rigby, USB Research	5
1005_3.1	<i>The Digital Asset – Tim Probert, Halliburton</i>	5
1005_3.2	<i>The OSPAS control center – Mohamed Al Qahtani, Saudi Aramco</i>	5
1005_3.3	<i>The i-Field – Melody Meyer, Chevron</i>	6
1005_3.4	<i>Smart Fields – Mathius Bichsel, Shell</i>	6
1005_3.5	<i>Operations centers – Satish Pai, Schlumberger</i>	6
1005_3.6	<i>Q&A</i>	7
1005_4	The Khurais ‘mega’ i-field – Waleed Al-Mulhim, Saudi Aramco (SPE 128837)	8
1005_5	Staged expansion of a digital oilfield, – Pedro Benoni, Petrobras (SPE 128766)	8
1005_6	Production processes integration in Burgos – Fabio Corbellini, Schlumberger (for Pemex – SPE 128731) ..	9
1005_7	What’s next for the digital oilfield – Jim Crompton (Chevron) and Helen Gilman (SAIC – SPE 127715) ..	9
1005_8	Master of Petroleum Business Engineering – Peter Currie, TU Delft (SPE 127911)	9
1005_9	A roadmap for ‘global intelligence’ – Russ Spahr, ExxonMobil (SPE 128764)	10
1005_10	Business Leaders Session – Moderators Mike Hauser (Chevron), Judson Jacobs (CERA)	10
1005_10.1	<i>Valhall ACE – Trevor Garlick, BP</i>	10
1005_10.2	<i>Operations at Asgard – Helga Jorgenvag, Statoil</i>	10
1005_10.3	<i>GeDIg – Christina Pinho, Petrobras</i>	11
1005_10.4	<i>Q&A</i>	11
1005_11	‘The next level’ Plenary Session – Chair Peter Kapteijn, Maersk	12
1005_11.1	<i>Smarter Planet – John Brantley – IBM</i>	12
1005_11.2	<i>Integrated Operations – Trond Lilleng, Statoil (on behalf of Margareth Ovrum - SPE 128576)</i> 12	
1005_11.3	<i>End to end integration – Ashok Belani, Schlumberger</i>	12
1005_11.4	<i>EM, borehole gravity, gigacell simulator – Samer AlAshgar, Saudi Aramco</i>	12
1005_11.5	<i>A field full of pressure data – Derek Mathieson, Baker Hughes</i>	12
1005_11.6	<i>General Q&A</i>	13
1005_12	1005_1 Exception Based Surveillance, Tom Moroney, Shell (SPE 127860)	13
1005_13	Energy and the environment - the ultimate test of E&P ‘intelligence’ – Peter Kapteijn, Maersk	14
1005_14	1005_1 Social Media/Web 2.0 – Jennifer Morrison, BG (SPE 128421)	14
1005_15	Web 2.0 for innovation capture – Andy Watt, Woodside (SPE 128527)	14

1005_16	Khursaniyah I-Field data delivery – Soliman Almadi, Saudi Aramco (SPE 128659)	15
1005_17	Guided workflows for oil field management – Robin Getty, PDS (with Shell PDO – SPE 128551).....	15
1005_18	Monitoring and data validation/reconciliation – Jean-Paul Couput, Total (with Belsim SA – SPE 128717)	16
1005_19	The semantic web for well surveillance – Amol Bakshi, Chevron (SPE 128708)	16
1005_20	The Perdido Smart Field – Robert Perrons, Shell (SPE 127858)	16
1005_21	Plenary, ‘Making Intelligent Energy happen,’ chair – Judson Jacob, CERA	17
1005_21.1	<i>Schiehallion optimization – Bernard Looney, BP.....</i>	17
1005_21.2	<i>Khurais i-Field Center – Waleed Al-Mulhim, Saudi Aramco.....</i>	17
1005_21.3	<i>Rationalizing the fleet – Rick Kennedy, Chevron</i>	17
1005_21.4	<i>Champion West – Gebert Schoonman, Shell</i>	18
1005_22	Project failures and ‘Anti-patterns’ – David Feineman, BP (SPE-128596).....	18
1005_23	Modeling Pioneer Resources’ Oooguruk field – Wim van Wassenhove, AspenTech (SPE 128133)	18
1005_24	Real-Time monitoring of a North Sea asset – Hans Reijn, Wintershall (SPE 128300)	18
1005_25	Business Leaders’ & Asset Managers’ Open Discussion Session	19
1005_25.1	<i>Note real time but right time! – Birlie Bourgeois, Chevron</i>	19
1005_25.2	<i>Cultural change and the collaboration center – Klaus Mueller, Shell.....</i>	19
1005_26	Production facilities monitoring with a ‘virtual person’ – Ron Cramer, Shell Global Solutions (SPE	19
127513)		
1005_27	BP Technology Tour	20
1005_28	Exhibitors	20
1005_28.1	<i>ASSAI – engineering document control.....</i>	20
1005_28.2	<i>BB Visual - low cost collaboration environment.....</i>	20
1005_28.3	<i>Comos – information management for engineering design.....</i>	21
1005_28.4	<i>Eclipse – PetroAtlas mentoring/knowledge management system.....</i>	21
1005_28.5	<i>EPSIS, Team Box for collaboration center.....</i>	21
1005_28.6	<i>IDS – SiteNet drill site information management.....</i>	21
1005_28.7	<i>IO Hub – RHEA Components.....</i>	22
1005_28.8	<i>Petrotechnical Data Systems - Production Enterprise</i>	22
1005_28.9	<i>PointCross – Smart Oilfield (SOF).....</i>	23
1005_28.10	<i>Tampnet – communications service provider</i>	23
1005_28.11	<i>Verande, DrillEdge – drilling optimization.....</i>	23
1005_29	The Data Room – Technology Watch	24

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