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DEMO woman scopes New Zealand tech

DEMO director picks Security-Assessment.com as one stand-out company

BY ROB O'NEILL AND EPHRAIM SCHWARTZ | AUCKLAND | WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY, 2007

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Last month Chris Shipley quietly spent 15 days touring Australia and New Zealand, scoping out the state of IT development in the region, and ended up picking out a Kiwi company she likes the look of.

Shipley may not exactly be a household name in New Zealand, but she is something of a phenomenon back in the United States. As executive director of the DEMO conference, which brings technology innovators and investors together, Shipley has a lot of clout.

In her DEMO letter blog she notes real differences between the Australasian approach to development and that found in her native US — principally that Down Under we focus on business technology and not the kind of Web 2.0 mash-ups that are inspiring many US start-ups.

She reports that of the 50-plus companies she visited during her tour only two were explicitly targeting the consumer market.

"Instead of mash-ups and consumer-generated content and social networking businesses, the Aussie and Kiwi entrepreneurs have their sights squarely set on the enterprise, or on technologies or services that enable businesses to better serve their customers," she says in her DEMO letter online.

Shipley does not present this as a criticism, however, saying it's a product of "simple math" as there isn't a meaningful consumer market in the region compared with those found around northern hemisphere technology hot-spots.

In her report, Shipley picks Security-Assessment.com, founded by Peter Benson in Auckland and now operating internationally, as one stand-out company. The company specialises in providing advisory, assessment and assurance services. Shipley describes it as one of the best in the world, and "the one [that] companies such as Microsoft call on for consultation".

The DEMO 07 conference, the annual gathering of the haves and the have-nots — venture capitalists with millions of dollars to invest and start-ups hungering for first, second, and third round infusions of cash — got off to a big start last week, with 16 companies presenting in the first morning session.



Shipley, fresh back from Down Under, opened the show with a talk about the power shift now taking place in business and personal computing. Although she didn't use the term "power to the people", that is what she implied the shift is all about.

"We are breaking away from putting technology at the centre and we are putting people at the centre who have the authority to influence technology," Shipley said.

Nevertheless, it will be technology that powers that shift. And, at this year's conference, new products and technology were proof of that.

For example, 6th Sense Analytics has created a toolset which is

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designed to address the challenge of distributed networks and distributed projects — 6th Sense Analytics' technology helps project managers maintain visibility into the progress of any project.

Not all the companies on stage were start-ups, however. Adobe was also on hand, showing off its solution for those who worry that too much of Web 2.0 — which is also known as RIAs (Rich Internet Applications) — is not a good thing. Another older company, Wyse Technology, was there, showing its new concept in thin-client architecture.

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