

2. <http://www.mendix.com/blog/how-fast-can-you-deploy-your-apps/>

This isn't a rhetorical question. This week the largest collection of Mendix customers, system integrators and developers gathered at the renovated Rotterdam cruise ship terminal to see the latest version of their app framework and hear from some of their exemplary deployments. The recurring theme was how quickly they could get their apps done.

One principal at the Dutch firm PWConsulting (no relation to PriceWaterhouseCoopers) told me: "We wrote our first Mendix app and had something to show our client within the first two weeks. Most app frameworks you can't work that fast, certainly not in Eclipse or Java." [Liberty Mutual's Chris Woodman had something to show his management team within six weeks](#), and that is counting all the time it took to initially get up to speed.

Nine thousand of the Thai National Police force is using an app developed by Dutch CapeGroep. "We have been using Mendix since the early days and it just plain fast to develop our apps," said Frank Snijders, one of the partners at CapeGroep.

John Rymer, an analyst with Forrester Research, spoke to this theme in his speech at the conference too. There are two different options he said. "One is to work faster with agile methods or app frameworks. But the best you can expect is an incremental productivity gain. But a better choice is to use new app productivity platforms. These try to step away from compiling code and are more open and cloud-based to allow simpler deployment and better scalability."

Rymer says one of the reasons that Mendix and other tools are so fast is because they avoid the test-build-deploy cycle. "You don't have to configure so many different pieces of infrastructure. These platforms make all of that go away and make it easier to create data structures and apps quickly."

But it isn't just the toolset. Business people have to be intimately involved in the development process and the total app lifecycle. "Eliminate communication barriers so that both business people and IT can figure out each other's perspective," he said. "Developers are becoming QA people, and people have to change how they think about their jobs." We'll have other examples from Mendix World posted here later this week, too.

3. <http://www.mendix.com/blog/john-rymers-favorite-mobile-apps/>


During his speech at Mendix World today, Forrester analyst John Rymer gave four examples of mobile apps (not necessarily developed by Mendix) that show how organizations are moving quickly to dominate their particular markets and come up with some clever solutions. I have seen all four and they are among my favorite ones too.

The first is from insurance/banking powerhouse USAA. If you have ever served in the US military, or have a near relative who has, this should be the insurance company of first choice. They have the best customer service, the best rates, and they are quite innovative. They were one of the first online banking folks to allow you to scan in an image of a check to deposit it from your home PC. They have [developed a mobile app to make it easier for servicemen and women to do their insurance and banking from the field](#), which you might imagine doesn't have the best Internet connectivity.



Tripit.com has changed travel management. Rymer and I both use it extensively, as a way to forward all the emails we get from the travel companies in a dossier and it is all stored up in the



cloud. They also make their app very easy to use so you can track where you are going to be traveling and who among your contacts will be nearby. I have a wide base of contacts and don't always remember where someone is actually physically located, so TripIt helps a great deal to stay in touch with people that I have met over the years.



Build your itinerary

 **TripIt Pro**
All the awesomeness of TripIt, plus a suite of powerful travel tools for road warriors.



Applications provided by others



 **Concur** 
Book travel with Concur and automatically add plans to your TripIt account.



 **Avis** 
Make an Avis reservation without having to reenter your flight or travel details.

 **Foodiebytes** 
Get personalized deals at restaurants in the cities you're traveling to.


 **GO Airport Shuttle** 
Add your airport shuttle directly to TripIt.


 **Hotwire** 
Book travel on Hotwire and automatically add it to TripIt.


 **Hudson Group** 
Software for transportation companies with "Add to TripIt" support link.

 **TaxiMagic** 
Add taxis or limos booked with TaxiMagic to TripIt automatically.



Stay organized



 **Calendar integration**
Easily add your plans to your calendar using an iCal feed or .ics files.



 **Lotus Notes Sidebar Widget**
View your TripIt itineraries in your Lotus Notes sidebar.



 **Mobile phone**
See your plans on any mobile phone with a web browser.



Applications provided by others

 **Best Western To Go** 
View and add to your trips on Best Western's mobile app.

 **TravelToolkit** 
Travel Toolkit includes 5 important travel tools in one useful package.


 **Trips** 
Trips is a powerful travel manager for the iPhone that is a pleasure to use.


 **ExpenseCloud** 
Employee expense management software designed for business travelers.


 **FlightCaster** 
Predict flight delays before the airlines, on BlackBerry or iPhone

Share your plans


 **Activity feeds**
Get an RSS feed of all your plans.


 **Add Connections**
Connect and share your plans with people that matter.


 **Blog badge**
Add your upcoming travel plans to your blog.


 **Facebook**
Automatically publish your plans to Facebook when departing and returning.

 **Triplt for Google Apps**
Helps any company share travel plans to improve employee collaboration.

 **Join a Group**
See when and where you and your group are traveling.

 **Yammer**
Automatically publish your plans to the Yammer network.

 **Salesforce Chatter**
Automatically publish your plans to Salesforce Chatter org.

 **LinkedIn**
Share your travel plans with your LinkedIn network.

What I found astonishing is how many third-party add-ons they have included in their site, as you can see with the screen shot above.

Rymer's [third app is the Nike FuelBand](#) which he uses to track his training and workouts. The sensor records things like blood pressure and heartbeats and uploads them to the cloud for future reference. A great example of how a physical object and a Web-based service can work together. Finally, there is the story of Tesco, a Korean store that uses QR codes on an electronic display board. They have become the leading grocery retailer with far fewer stores because of their use of this technology to make it easier for shoppers to pick their groceries before even entering their stores, as [this YouTube video shows](#).

4. <http://www.mendix.com/blog/mendix-world-day-1-wrapup/>

The first day at Mendix World here in Rotterdam was a lot of fun, but also a lot of apps, as befitting the context and content of the conference. This is my first real exposure to Mendix and I came away impressed.

We started off the day with a keynote from the CEO of Mendix, Derek Roos. He gave some perspective on the evolution of the app world, where now 57% of all organizations run their transactions in the cloud. He told us that “the Facebook Generation isn’t just kids with phones, but all of us who are getting used to new ways to interact and collaborate and to access systems. We have different expectations to what apps will look and feel like. This is all of us.” Quite true.



But while that may be exciting, “one thing that hasn’t changed in the last two decades is that two thirds of all software projects aren’t successful. And expectations are rising, and end users want more out of their apps,” he stated.

As most of you know, Mendix is used for a variety of enterprise app development, including migrating legacy apps from Java, SharePoint and .Net. The Mendix App store has over 170 widgets and 30,000 downloads. What is intriguing is that Mendix customers, once they get started, are finding lots of new opportunities for additional apps after they complete their first project. [This is something that Chris Woodman from Liberty Mutual mentioned in his talk, where he shared the process by which the company built their first mobile app.](#)



We heard from John Rymer of Forrester, who was gushing in his enthusiasm for being in software development at this point in his life. He mentioned [four of his favorite non-Mendix mobile apps in his speech](#) and cautioned, “We have to become better at understanding the business of our companies. IT has a bad rap but wants to be able to contribute to the business in some meaningful way.”

Rymer led a panel discussion of four different Mendix customers. Rod Willmott, the FastTrack Director of LV Insurance in the UK, spoke first about how “the entry barriers to our business are coming down so quickly because technology is much more available. We have very small margins typically, so we need very rapid developments to drive down our costs.” He warned that many IT folks should “focus on internal iPad usage and create mobile apps to make us more effective and add value. Mobile needs to be seen as a functional improvement, not just a marketing tool to make pretty apps.”

He and Adrie Kaljee, the Business Systems Manager for logistics company TNT Express agreed that the best place to find up and coming Mendix developers wasn’t within the traditional IT ranks. “Look for people who understand business processes to build your apps,” Kaljee said. He also mentioned what was one of the [biggest benefits of using Mendix: the speed of app deployment](#).

“We can make changes to our apps and have them appear in the same day that the users asked for them, it is jaw-dropping amazing. Our users tell us that ‘it is so nice to get what I asked for, rather than what IT perceived what they thought I meant.’ Mendix to us mean much more rapid delivery of our apps.”

Wout Hesen, the Associate IT director for Genzyme Europe, spoke about the quick learning curve with Mendix. “We had almost no budget when we started, and after three days our staff is able to deliver apps. The learning curve is not steep at all, and people are really proficient quickly.”

Finally, René ten Hove, the ICT Manager for Dutch auto parts stores Kwik-Fit, mentioned the darker side of using tools such as Mendix. “The larger projects can have unclear scope, you have to stick to a plan and prioritize other enhancements in your next release. Otherwise you will never finish developing your apps.” They have been working on a project for several years now for their stores and have seen the effects first-hand of feature creep.

Wrapping up the day’s activities were two app development competitions: one involving two student teams from the University of Eindhoven (Green and Red) and two from the University of Twente (Purple and Yellow). The students were given their assignment this morning and had a little over a day to produce a finish Mendix app, with some help from CapGemini (more on the contest and the results tomorrow). Also shown was a competition to develop the best mobile app from professionals around the world, won by [Sebastian Piest from the Dutch consulting firm Cape Groep](#).

We hope to see you tomorrow at the conference!

5. From Train to Scooter

Does your company have a "business prevention" department?

<http://www.mendix.com/blog/does-your-company-have-a-business-prevention-department/>

Ron Tolido, the CTO of Capgemini Europe gave a very amusing presentation about the obstacles surrounding the agile enterprise. His humor was fueled from recently being at the Oracle World show in San Francisco, where he proceeded to make fun of Oracle and the hubris of their CEO Larry Ellison. Tolido said that programming in Java "should be a criminal offense these days," partly because they first create programming problems and then attempt to use Java to solve them.

He also poked fun at Ellison's statements that Oracle invented the notion of cloud computing and predicted that in two years' time, Oracle will be laying claim to have invented enterprise mobility. His lesson is we all need to be more opportunistic, or perhaps one day Ellison might discover the advantages of humility.

During his speech, he touched on the notion of how many companies have an unrecognized "business prevention" department, or even several departments, such as the IT security group, legal and procurement. These departments are all focused on trying to keep business from being conducted. "They are very good at preventing business with their jobs, and will say things such as 'that mobile app is dangerous, we have to study it for two years.' Perhaps what we should do is to bring all your prevention activities together in a shared services center, you can be so much more effective. Could be an eye-opener."

While this was somewhat cynical, it highlighted how we have to become more agile and understand the relationship of our activities with that of our business to become more effective.

Rather than prevent business, or focus on a particular direction, IT needs to be able to build platforms that can be reused and become more flexible, just as we have different choices for the various transportation modes of trains, cars, and scooters.

You can [download Tolido's white paper](#) (registration required), where he compares these transports with the kind of lifecycle development available to IT. Here is his diagram from the paper.
(diagram)

6. Wrap up

<http://www.mendix.com/blog/mendix-world-day-2-wrap-up/>



Another content-filled day here at Mendix World. Starting things off, Mendix CTO Johan Den Haan [announced Mendix 5 today](#) at the conference and touched on five particular enhancements to the more than 20 that will be included in the next version:

- 1. Layouts** -- UX is becoming more important. Lots of beautiful layouts from their App Store that are SmartPhone ready, HTML5 based and flexible for all screen sizes, and can connect to a specific device profile and reuse particular UI patterns.
- 2. App Launchpad** -- A major new feature is a single starting place for users that can be customized and can be branded too, with a widget that can access a social activity stream and see all notifications for all your apps.
- 3. Components** -- Several enhancements focus on better integration. Apps can contain multiple components and have explicit interfaces that can share data and logic components. The emphasis here is on reusable pieces that make it easier to maintain your apps.
- 4. Multi-tenant app services** -- This is what is behind the integrated UI as part of the Launchpad and these services can be used as part of the component interface. There is also improved single sign-on and authentication via OpenID.
- 5. Enterprise admin features** -- You can view the status of all your apps and keep track of user rights and other parameters.



MINISTRY OF SILLY WALKS

Only the British can do this with a straight face. That's why they're British.

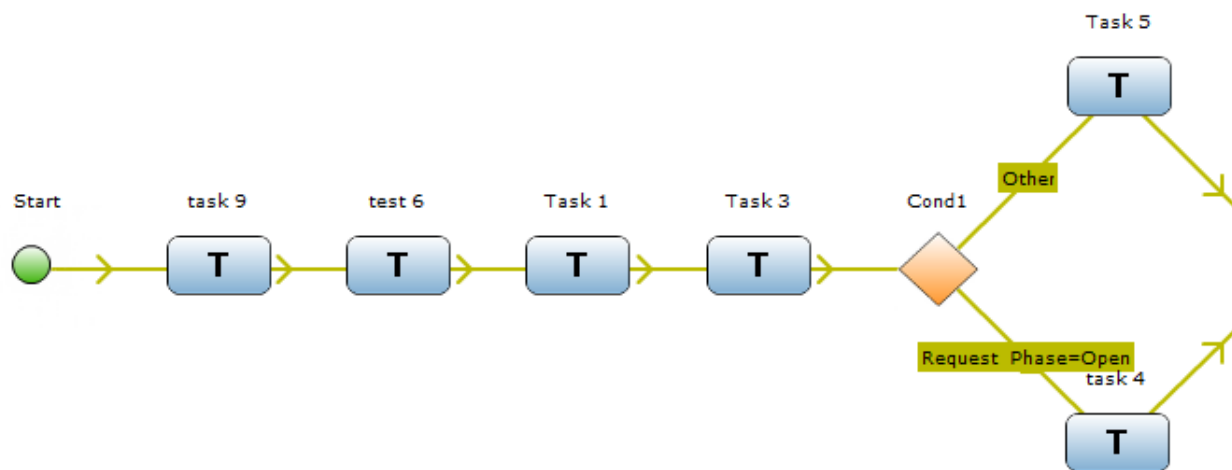
ROFLRAZZI.COM

Next up was a very funny but poignant talk by another CTO, Ron Tolido of Capgemini Europe. He started off [talking about "the business prevention department"](#) which sounds a bit like something out of a Monty Python routine (for those of you that remember that wonderful comedy troupe, as at right). His (Tolido's, not the Python guys') message was that businesses need to move from prevention to catalyst, and it is time that IT should become more agile in supporting innovation.

The conference then split into three tracks, and I went to a few of the sessions. Joe Geldenhuys, the head of projects at Plessey's South African office, described their situation. Plessey is managing long haul fiber network installations throughout Africa, some several hundred miles long involving thousands of people on the ground. Previously, they used tools such as Microsoft SharePoint and Project and scanned forms to keep track of the lines' projects. "We had to have better visibility of our time lines, and what our guys on the ground were actually doing, if they were sitting in a pub or out in the field."

Plessey worked with Mansystems, a Mendix Dutch and South African VAR, to develop a proof of concept. This was remarkable because Plessey never heard of Mendix before he started, and decided to give them a try nonetheless. The proof of concept was well received, and was based on a tool called [ExpertDesk using Mendix that Mansystems now sells to other clients](#) and is a mainstay of their business.

Chart



It took Mansystems a few days to integrate their Mendix app into SAP, Microsoft Project, SharePoint, and set up user authentications with Active Directory. It includes email notifications, electronic approvals for work orders, and lots of real time graphical reporting and it is being used by over 80 of his staff. They have been using ExpertDesk for three years and they have been very happy with it.

"Now everyone in the business knows all our workflows, where before they all had different ideas of their roles," Geldenhuys stated. They also know how much each resource is actually being used on each of their projects.

Also presenting were Dutch consultants from Nobel who have developed apps to help provide automobile damage estimates to Delta Lloyd Group after accidents are reported to various insurers. Prior to the Mendix-based apps, the claims adjusters could handle up to 15,000 claims a year. The Mendix apps boosted this to more than five-fold, increasing customer satisfaction in the process.

I also sat in on part of a talk by Jouke Waleson, Cloud Developer and Engineer for Mendix, who's premise is that developers have to create new and better environments for their apps. "You start with a single app and before you know it you are in the app jungle," he said. This jungle is characterized by having terrible management and conflicting goals, along with bureaucratic delays and clashes of cultures between sys admins and app developers.

"You typically have your apps spread over several systems, and questions arise such as who has the rights to the VPN on which system," he said. Of course we all know the solution to the app jungle...
The end of the conference came with the results of the student app contest.

7. Students

<http://www.mendix.com/?p=17094>

<http://www.mendix.com/blog/learning-from-student-mendix-newbies/>

A fun part of the Mendix World conference was a student software competition, called "App Battle," pitting two teams from the University of Eindhoven (Green and Red) and two from the University of Twente (Purple and Yellow). I am a big fan of student competitions, having been a judge this past summer at the [Microsoft Imagine Cup finals in Sydney, Australia](#). So I spent some time with the four teams, along with the Mendix and CapGemini staffers who were supervising the contest.

Ruud de Gast is one of the managers from CapGemini that was mentoring the student contest. He thought up the challenge, based on a real-world problem from one of his customers who runs a car dealership in Holland. Six years ago, they came to him to write some Java code to manage the various car loan situations that the dealership faces. As anyone who has ever bought a car knows, the dealers can mark up the cost of these loans and make a tidy profit. The Java app figured out what the different loan applications were needed for the specific auto maker's banking systems.



Notice I said Java. Turns out the real customer is now experiencing some maintenance pains and wants to revisit the app and see if CapGemini can code it up using Mendix. Are you not surprised?

de Gast gave each team the basics of the app, along with the data structures and nine different use cases that the teams would employ to test out their apps. They were set loose on Thursday morning, and told to stop work at 8 pm to give them time to enjoy the parties at the show.



The students aren't Mendix experts by any means. Each has some training in the app framework, but has to learn on site for the most part. The students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and one is even from Greece. "We wanted to see how far they would get in a limited amount of time," said de Gast.

Team Yellow immediately ran into problems because one team member had some exposure to Mendix a year ago, but the other one was relatively new. And Team Purple gave up early on to try to code the entire functional spec, leaning towards having a better-looking app that could deliver a subset of features.



According to the judges who observed the process, the biggest issue was that the students didn't have any experience with developing any security aspects of their classroom projects, and when push came to shove during the two days of the contest they weren't able to quickly incorporate the necessary security features into their apps.

All the students had to demo their app in English to the judges, too. "It was quite a lot of work," said one of the students. Each app had to develop three different user profiles and be used for the entire process for financing a typical car.

The four teams' apps weren't all that distinguishable to my eyes, with mostly vanilla forms and reports. Team Green had a nice dashboard, Team Red had put together a quotation document that could be signed by the customer to begin the loan process and created its accounts automatically. Team Yellow also had some interesting reports too and designed their app for handling multiple managers. Team Purple had the prettiest UI and reports and had some

impressive error checking to avoid common mistakes every hour. It was interesting to see how each team approached the problem set and what extras they included too.

After the team presentations, the audience was asked to vote in real time using the Mendix World mobile app. The winner was Team Green and received two tablet computers as a result. The judges felt that they had the best approach. All eight of the participants received internship positions at CapGemini, where hopefully they will improve on their Mendix app dev skills. Congrats to all of the students and their mentors for being such good sports during the competition.