

About the JA OO Conferences

Adrian Kosmaczewski

2009-10-05

This week I had the opportunity to attend the JA OO Developer Conference 2009 in Århus (Denmark), invited by Trifork, the company behind this and other fine events, like QCon and RubyFoo. Despite being relatively unknown in the Swiss landscape, JA OO is an event unlike any other, and here's why you should attend next time.

Trifork started organizing JA OO conferences around 1996. At that time, Java was the hottest thing on the programming landscape, and Trifork thought (rightly so) that Java-oriented conferences could be a success. Over the years, JA OO evolved to encompass many other subjects, like Inversion of Control, Design Patterns, Architecture, Open Source, Functional Programming, and of course every possible trend the industry has enjoyed (or suffered) in the past 13 years. In some cases, like the RubyFoo event in London new events have spawned from JA OO to respond to growing new trends.

The first distinctive fact about JA OO is, then, its diversity and agnosticism. You are more likely to find a speaker about your favourite technology or programming language here than in any other conference, except perhaps lately in the StackOverflow DevDays, which share with JA OO the openness and breadth, if not the maturity. The advantage of such "mixed" conferences is the ability to contrast approaches and discuss alternatives, something usually more difficult in conferences like Apple's WWDC or Microsoft's TechDays, given the evident bias these have.

Another unique element of JA OO is the list of speakers. Take a peek on the current and past speakers who ever gave a speech in JA OO: Barry Boehm, Yukihiro Matsumoto, Martin Fowler, Charles Simonyi, and I can't name them all without blinking my eyes and swearing for not having attended JA OO before. The list is simply a "who is who" of software engineering.

There is another element that makes JA OO stand among developer conferences, and it's the commitment of trying to improve not only our minds, but also our bodies: take a look at the JA OO IT Run, a nice and original response to the (real) problem of overweight in the IT industry. And it sure is a success, even if I'm not sure I would sustain more than a kilometer without a heart transplant.

Finally, JAOO also has an interesting social commitment, trying to bridge the huge gap in the number of men and women working in this industry: at JAOO conferences, every attendee has the right to invite another person of the opposite sex! This initiative is not only great, it's a positive step to make women join the ranks of software engineers worldwide, and I think it's an idea that should be emulated elsewhere.

In any case, I was not only surprised by JAOO's quality, breadth, topics, interestingness, but also by its social and human side, trying to adopt initiatives that make us not only better engineers, but also better human beings, in a better society.

Disclaimer: I'm a speaker on the JAOO iPhone Dev Days Zürich 2009 next Thursday.