

5 OBSERVATIONS FROM EVM EUROPE SYMPOSIUM 2013

By Mark Phillips

EVM Europe 2013 took place in Ghent, Belgium on December 3rd and 4th. It was attended by 60 people from across Europe and the United States. Here are five observations from the event. These are my personal, subjective, observations and not an official communication from CPM.

1. EVM Europe is living up to its reputation of being a place where practitioners and researchers meet. Practitioners share expertise while learning about leading-edge research in the field of project controls. Researchers share their leading-edge research while learning from the expertise and experience of the practitioners who come. Practitioners leave with new ideas. Researchers leave with new problems to solve and new data to explore.
2. The 1.3 million Euro (roughly \$1.7 million) research project is bearing fruit. There was a group of over 20 young students presenting their ideas, initial research findings and next steps in their research. These are Ph.D. and Masters students exploring a diverse range of approaches and challenges to project control including: Schedule Risk Analysis, Work Package Management and Complicated Scheduling Under the Constraint of Simultaneous and Exclusive Needs.

The approaches are being tested against various data sets, benchmarked against current EVM approaches. EVM is the baseline and point of departure from which the next generation of integrated project control approaches are evolving. The student presentations were elegant, clear and given in flawless English. Judging from the work so far, the research project should lead to a slew of papers in top management journals breaking new territory in the field and contributing to practice, over time.

3. Several factors are enabling the new research:
 - Funding, namely the 1.3 million Euro research grant (roughly \$1.7 million)
 - High Performance Computing, the researchers have access to the biggest super computer in Belgium, which is ranked 118th in the world
 - Modern software facilitating simulations, Monte Carlo experiments and analysis
 - Use of applied mathematics such as Allen's Interval Algebra and machine learning
 - The analytical foundation of schedule measured in terms of time as a quantity, distinct from cost measurements and
 - The leadership of Professor Dr. Mario Vanhoucke.
4. Practitioners expressed the desire for the addition of management skills as a subject for the conference. Obtaining and using the right data is fundamental. However, the science of a practitioner's job is in how the data is used to improve project management. Project outcomes are a result of people, not numbers.
5. Ghent is a beautiful city. The people are friendly. Almost everyone speaks English. It is easy to get to. And the hosts of EVM Europe took great care of everyone.

EVM Europe 2014 is scheduled for December 2nd and 3rd in Ghent, once again. It promises to be a worthwhile event.