

## A journey of discovery

By Phillip Cogger

Enabling members to share their experiences remains at the forefront of UK Oracle User Group's mission. "IT people are essentially creative people. What they look for is guidance and direction not hard and fast instruction," says Ronan Miles, UKOUG Chairman since 2001. "The existing model for the user group is about raising the skill level so people are equipped to handle problems for themselves."

Ronan Miles joined the user group as a volunteer almost 14 years ago. By 1998 he had become a Director, and in 2001 he was made Chairman. He recalls his introduction to UKOUG. "Carl Dudley, a UKOUG Director ambushed my boss and myself at the EOUG Conference in Amsterdam and asked that I consider taking on a volunteer role. My boss said 'yes' before I had time to support the idea."

Since then Ronan has been the key spokesperson for UKOUG which has built a reputation as a model user group. "UKOUG had chosen to embrace the challenge of accommodating disparate communities back when it formed its E-Business Suite Special Interest Group – acknowledging that Packaged Applications users were very different to the technology users of the time," recalls Miles. "However, no one had anticipated Oracle embarking on a major acquisition spree back when that policy was set. We reached out to the PeopleSoft User Group board – and found the JD Edwards board still effectively operating as well. Both groups elected to continue to operate within the UKOUG umbrella and have made the user group stronger because of it."

As UKOUG has continued to expand to include the full spectrum of the Oracle community, so has their influence with Oracle.

"Initially, UKOUG had very little influence on the Oracle eco-system," says Miles. "Over time, we have become a valued influencer and contributor to this eco-system. The sum of knowledge available from the UKOUG community is larger than from anywhere else." Miles has personally overseen the user group annual survey and feedback to Oracle since it began in 2001. "For several years we could point at changes that Oracle made as a result of our survey – now, Oracle publically acknowledges the degree of influence the survey has," says Miles. "In part this came from Oracle's own realisation that customers with user group membership are happier and gain a higher return on investment than customers who are not members."

UKOUG's success in facilitating exchange between its members has grown partly from the calibre of its events. "When I joined there was the one three day conference in Birmingham and six Special Interest Group meetings," explains Miles. "UKOUG's Conference Series events are now amongst the largest independent Oracle events globally. Working within the Oracle community is extraordinary fun. UKOUG as an organisation is hugely successful."

Despite operating in a climate of ever tightening budgets and corporate downsizing, UKOUG represents over 7,500 member contacts and delivers over 80 events across the UK and Ireland to the Oracle community. "Our events remain our most visible contact point with members and our Conference Series events are the jewels in the crown," says Miles. "Attending these tells me just how successful we are – especially as members stop me and enthuse over the value they get."

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[www.ukoug.org](http://www.ukoug.org)**



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The banner features a row of colorful spheres (purple, green, yellow, blue, red) with black silhouettes of people, set against a white background with a subtle grid pattern.