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SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Technology  
Section

# CompAct

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## APPS, ACTUARIES AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY AT THE SEAC AND BEYOND

by Rich Junker

The June meeting of the Southeast Actuaries Conference in Naples, Fla., provided a golden opportunity to pilot a survey of actuaries' current uses of Social Media, programming languages and various technology tools. Given that I was speaking on the subject of Smartphone applications for actuaries and promoting the Technology Section to this actuarial club, a survey of what actuaries use these days was a natural.

The survey count came to around 110 completed submissions and multiple responses were common. Several interesting observations emerge:

- Nearly half of all responding still use a basic cell phone and nothing more.
- Of smartphone users, nearly half use BlackBerries (many corporate-provided), 30 percent or so iPhones (some home phones), about 20 percent use Android phones, almost no one uses Windows phones.
- MS Office 97-2003 still has 25 percent adherents, Office 2007 has a 50 percent share, Office 2010 25 percent plus.
- Among programming languages, MS Visual Basic predominates, with SQL a strong second, and all others falling in single digits, notably R, SAS, C+ and the venerable though once-venerated APL.

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- Tablet PC use is scarce for this group: 14 iPads and only one Android Tablet.
- As expected, Windows continues to predominate over the Mac/Apple OS, at eight to one or so.
- Among social media, LinkedIn leads the pack, with Facebook a strong second, while Instant Messaging remains extremely popular.
- Astonishing to me, only one respondent cited himself a Twitter user. I have a percolating notion that actuaries and senior executive types look at Twitter askance because they treasure their gravitas, and prefer to intone and declaim and propound, rather than to tweet or twitter or twerp or chirp. Something like the days when executives balked at adopting computers because they abhorred the indignity of displaying their index finger pecking skill to subordinates and superordinates.

### **Looking Beyond the SEAC**

The vision of the future for actuarial meetings is to provide presentations electronically. With the new Meeting App (check it out if you have not been to an SOA meeting lately, at [Vimeo.com/21581588](http://Vimeo.com/21581588)). Users will be able to register, annotate presentations, tweet to colleagues, find the next meeting room and more, all from their smartphones and tablet PCs. Look for it, download it to your smartphone, for the upcoming Valuation Actuary Symposium and the Annual Meeting. (You don't have to be registered for the meeting to access the app.)

The Meeting App is a wonderful advance for actuarial meetings, but it has not achieved its ripe destiny yet, by my observation at this meeting. As for SOA-hosted meetings, the speakers' presentations at the SEAC were all available online for members to print or to view electronically. Yet for every session, I saw almost no one with a laptop or tablet at hand to view the presentations and mark them up. Only a few had taken prints for note-taking, despite the convenient business center just across the hall. I think many of us miss the three-slides per page prints for note-taking, to maximize the learning from the presentations.

My fond hope is that several readers will write immediately to CompAct to unveil the heresy of my thought.



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