VMUG Leader Summit 2019

I had the privilege of attending the 2019 VMUG Leader Summit this year in Palo Alto at the VMware campus, and what an awesome experience it was. I have been a leader for over 5 years and regret not taking advantage of this opportunity before. I was overwhelmed with amount of leaders from all over the world and the hospitality, friendliness, and overall interaction. Nothing else to say other than what a great organization VMUG is and what a great group of leaders involved. There was so much passion for what everyone does from the VMUG staff, the VMUG Board, the VMUG Leaders, and the VMware speakers. Another shout out to the VMUG staff for putting this together!

To start things off, we attended a great reception on the opening night and it was immediately followed up by an impromptu after party at the hotel bar with a large majority of the leaders hanging out and having great conversations. During the reception I met a lot of great people. I had the chance to talk to VMUG board members, met a leader from Iceland, Japan, and other chapters. To step back a few hours, on my flight into San Fran I met the Providence VMUG leaders and had already made new friends before the plane was on the ground. During the reception and after party, we were treated to sake straight from Japan, we played Mario Kart together during the reception, and all made new friends and colleagues which may not have been possible without the Leader Summit.

While we all have the ability to reach out to other VMUGs, a lot of us do not do that even though we may follow them on Twitter or other social media outlets. Getting us all together in one place for two days opens doors and communication we may have never explored. Speaking from my own experience, I now have a friends in Japan (Kaz), Iceland (Lars), and various parts of the US (way too many to name). I will be speaking at the Denver UserCon in April and was able to meet a Denver leader, Tony. I look forward to seeing all these folks again, whether at a leader summit, VMworld, or one of their UserCons.

Some great presentations were given during our time there by both VMware and VMUG and it started with Pat Gelsinger and his 5 Ls. What a great way to kick off the event! Pat was very inspirational and motivating. He hit on a lot of key topics such as how to be better, what to expect from your boss, do good today and prepare for tomorrow, and be good to work with. His discussion of the 5 Ls (Listen, Learn, Lift, Link, Love) was very spot on when it comes to being a leader or a manager. Pat also did a great job talking about both personal and professional experiences and incorporating it into his speech to a group of leaders, very inspirational. I could (and might) do another blog about the other presenters, but will give a quick shout out to Michael Roy and the “VRI to SRE” presentation and how relevant that is in most workplaces today. Also Brian Graf’s talk on “Accelerate the Journey to the Cloud”, what great presenter and awesome presentation. However, my favorite was Chris McCain’s Public Speaking presentation. I found this to be my favorite as I spoke at my first UserCon in December and doing it again in April. Chris has spoken at a Pittsburgh UserCon before but this was different, not his normal technical related presentation. As I am pretty new to the public speaking, his presentation inspired me in many was and I was able to relate. Listening to what he talked about, I feel it will make me a better speaker at the next event and hopefully more after that.

There were some pretty great announcements by the VMUG team and one being the new Regional Champion program. Congratulations to the Regional Champions, it is well deserved! My friend Matt (@gsxesx) from the Central PA VMUG was selected to represent the US East Region, and we’ve already discussed a multi VMUG meetup between Pittsburgh VMUG, Cleveland VMUG, and Buffalo VMUG this year in Erie and were able to discuss in person, which makes a huge difference. Richard from the Buffalo VMUG had a Twitter group set up immediately for us to discuss this multi group meetup. I’m not saying this happened because of the Leader Summit, but it sure helped. About the other VMUG updates, I can say they are moving in the right direction and taking care of the leaders and members. Many offerings for the leaders to improve their local groups and opportunities for the members.

In closing, which might not be short, I can say that the Leader Summit was a total success and worth every minute there (but not nearly enough time to get to know everyone). I can’t name all the great people I met because it will take too long, but rest assured I will meet them all again. A definite highlight was the VMware Campus tour led by Jeff Goodall, what an awesome, outgoing, and caring person! The opening of our tour included #Turtles4Jack which Al Rasheed from the @dcvmug was a part of. Great story about VMUG and the vCommunity helping a kid. The story may have brought tear to my eye, and that’s ok! This community doesn’t just do great things with technology, they do great things for people as well. Ok, back to the tour… the campus was incredible and so was the tour guide. The things that VMware does to improve the campus for its workers and the environment is amazing. From having events to building gyms, to going green, the list goes on. I am truly grateful to be part of such a great community and having the chance to meet such great people. Over 130 attendees, 30+ countries, and countless friendships made. The Leader Summit was, without a doubt, one of the better experiences I’ve had. Thank You VMUG HQ, VMUG Board, & VMware!