

Ten things I noticed at the 2005 PDC

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Supplementing [Sara Ford's PDC trip report](#): Some of my own stories and observations from the PDC.

1. Tip: If you're designing a hotel, don't put big noisy fountains right next to the check-in desk. Turns out that if you do that, conversation between a guest and the desk staff becomes rather difficult. Eventually, guests get tired of asking the staff to repeat everything they say and just nod politely.
2. Tip: Go ahead, walk from the hotel to the convention center in the morning. It's good exercise, and goodness knows you need some exercise after all that food you've been eating. And who knows, you might run into a Dane named Mads [fix misspelling, 10am] and end up comparing the Swedish, Danish, and German languages for fifteen minutes, and be reassured by said Dane that Danish pronunciation isn't as difficult it sounds. Hey, it could happen.
3. Observation: At the hip revolving cocktail lounge at the top of the hotel, there are two types of people. There are the cool people. And there are the nerds who are in town for a technology conference. You, my friend, are one of the nerds. (And you also would have computed that the lounge performs one turn in approximately 75 minutes.)
4. Tip: When you're waiting for the elevator to arrive, don't peek through the crack in the doors if the elevator is external. You will see the sky and get all creeped out.
5. Tip: If there is a police officer on a motorcycle waiting at a stoplight, don't jaywalk right in front of him. It turns out he'll notice and write you a ticket. (Actually, he might just let you off with a warning, but why chance it? Drivers in Los Angeles are crazy. He's stopping you for your own safety. Fortunately, I did not have to learn this lesson first-hand.)
6. Observation: I'm sorry, I don't care how yummy it is. A fountain of chocolate is just plain wrong.

7. Observation: They say the camera adds ten pounds. What they didn't say is that it also makes your left hand look all withered and deformed. In speaker training, they teach you to keep your hands up, closer to your face. That's why in all the pictures of Bill Gates giving a speech, his hands are at chest level or higher. I tried to keep my hands up, but my left hand tends to droop and turn into one of those claw things.
8. Observation: Talking with customers for over eleven hours straight really wipes you out. It also gives you a sore throat (and I'm afraid I may have caught something but I'm doing a pretty good job of fighting it off so far).
9. Bonus typo: At Ask the Experts, one of the sections was titled "Communcation".
10. Tip: If you're going to go from the PDC straight to the airport, stuff an extra shirt in your day pack so you can change out of your PDC staff shirt and not wear it all the way back to Redmond. Because it turns out that if you wear a staff shirt outside the convention hall, you just look like a nerd. (See item 3.)

I met up with Sara at closing time Friday since we coincidentally had the same flight out. Since the flight wasn't for a few hours, it was nice to have someone to chat with to pass the time. (And yet nobody took her up on her lunch date offer. What, were you scared of her? Really, she's a very nice person.)

Boarding for our flight was announced and we waited our turn on the Jetway®. After a few minutes, an agent wormed her way through the line and headed for the plane. It was then that we realized, "Hey, this line hasn't moved for a long time. I wonder what's going on."

Another few minutes later, a police officer walked down the hall and onto the plane.

Everybody moved to the walls, clearing a path down the center. Because when a police officer gets on the plane, you know he's coming back off one way or another, and it's not going to be pretty. (It's not like the flight crew ask for a police officer because they would like him to sing a song.)

Some time later, a second police officer got on the plane. And then two more airport employees. Everybody waiting in line was trying to guess what was going on.

Eventually, a middle-aged gentleman walked calmly off the plane, followed by the two police officers and the airport employees. As the last of the airport employees went past, someone in the line asked, "What happened?"

The airport employee didn't break stride and just said, "Idiot."

As we got on board, everybody was trying to figure out what happened. I was seated next to two gentlemen who didn't know either; the disruption was at the back of the plane. Sara did a pretty good job of fact-finding and the story (fourth-hand by now) was that the gentleman

had a ticket for a later flight but tried to muscle his way into a seat and became rather unpleasant when the flight crew asked him to leave. When the police showed up, he immediately backed down, realizing that the jig was up, and went quietly.

There were, of course, no seats available on any earlier flights. Los Angeles to Seattle the afternoon after the Microsoft PDC, tickets are going to be scarce. Probably half the people on the flight were Microsoft staff returning home. This gentleman's effort to get home two hours earlier made an entire plane full of people late by ten minutes. And I suspect he's going to have a hard time buying a ticket from that airline for a while...

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