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ORACLE

In The Office
EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW

Head IN THE Cloud

One of the largest software companies in the world, Oracle is investing in the future of computing and new models of software access for customers.

Images courtesy of Oracle

Founded in 1977, Oracle has been in the software game a while. Originally specialising in database management systems, the company evolved over the years to also develop computer hardware and enterprise software. *The CEO Magazine* spoke to David Callaghan, Senior Vice President Alliances and Channels for Oracle's Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) operation, about how Oracle has been working with partners and new technology like the cloud to improve its offering. David has been with Oracle for more than 10 years, and in the IT industry for more than 30. Since coming to his current role, David has focused on unification to promote growth, particularly in the emerging field of cloud.

"I went into [my current] role just over three years ago," David says. "I saw the opportunity to unify our alliance and channels teams, which had been somewhat fragmented before. They were aligned by either particular product groups or country groups, and I wanted to bring that together and unify it into a single critical mass. It has certainly been successful in terms of our numbers and although I can't go into those in great detail, what I can share and you can see from the earning statements over the last three years, is that the EMEA region is being consistently highlighted, notwithstanding the economic challenges, as a region of clear growth.

"Even in the last earnings report, with the emphasis on cloud, the EMEA market was called out as a

key growth driver for cloud, and again that is something we are very keen to put focus on within the alliance and channels group. We are seeing massive growth coming in all aspects of cloud. I think a lot has come from the organisational changes we made around unification. The other thing that I saw was an opportunity to be more relevant: more relevant to our partners, more relevant to their customers, more relevant to the lines of business within Oracle with whom I collaborate. And we have put a lot of emphasis on that, through the solutions we promote and the specialisation we enable in our partners."

David's focus on these areas, he says, is due in a large part to the potential for growth in cloud. The >

"We are seeing massive growth coming in all aspects of cloud."

- David Callaghan



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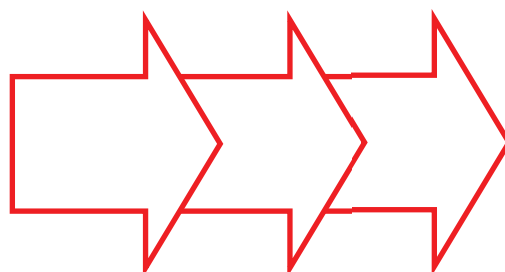
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new technology allows Oracle to target medium-sized markets that were previously less accessible, and to differentiate itself from competitors by offering cloud services others can't. David explains, "In terms of the technologies cloud offers, it's a new alternative way to consume technology, be it infrastructure and platform technology, or applications.

"I think where Oracle has a unique aspect on this is our strength within the public cloud, combined with a very strong proposition with private cloud, which is effectively on premise with the customer. But actually what interests many customers is hybrid cloud, which has elements of both. And our partners bring an awful lot to that because they have the proximity and intimacy with customers to understand where they are, where they have come from and where they're going.

"Within my area we are now going through another transformation to build further specialisation into my sales force to support the cloud growth of our partners.

"But an equally strong area of growth we're finding is in hardware and infrastructure. Oracle has a leading position in something called integrated systems or converged systems, with a category of product called engineered systems where effectively we put everything in one box. We vertically integrate hardware and software to reduce the risk for the customer, to improve the time to benefit for the customer, and create an easier operating environment for the customer. And again we are seeing exceptionally strong growth there and exceptionally strong growth with our partners because they see this as the ideal platform to showcase and exploit their applications, technologies and then move into areas like big data, social, mobility, and so on. So those are two big themes—engineered systems and cloud."

These developments in cloud have allowed Oracle to market its



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products to new customers and increase revenue. "The fact is now we are able to offer, through the cloud, an enterprise-class product to midsize customers," David explains. "I think in terms of a one-stop shop, it is unique in having that capability. Digital transformation is a challenge and I think cloud is part of the answer to that challenge. Let me give you an example. Previously, we used to provide technology, let's say to an automotive company, to build cars. That is what they did with technology. Increasingly, what they are doing now is actually putting a technology platform within their car. What that means is companies are thinking about how they use technology to differentiate their product to their market, and the trick here is not just having the differentiated product to your customer but you actually have to integrate your enterprise, with technology, skills, and improved process to leverage the opportunity.

"Cloud can underpin much of this and Oracle has a complete cloud platform to facilitate digital

transformation. Cloud brings the flexibility, scalability and elasticity to address diverse and changing needs. When organisations seek to invest, they look at who has the most comprehensive platform available and that has security, availability, scalability; a platform that doesn't actually have to remain within the enterprise but is extensible beyond the enterprise into the suppliers and partners. That is an incredibly powerful message and, frankly, as we establish that platform I think it will be a fantastic vehicle for growth for our partners."

Another focus David has had in his role as senior vice president is on excellence. He believes that by ensuring that all solutions retain their reputation for excellence in conjunction with investing and making the capabilities available in the cloud, Oracle can continue the strong growth it has seen. "I am the president of the British Quality Foundation, so I am big believer in excellence and a big believer in individuals and organisations being the best they can possibly be. We've built a very strong >



engine for growth over the last three years and it's making gains right across that rich portfolio of products and with each of those partner ecosystems integrators, ISVs, resellers, distributors. We need to continue to develop the opportunity and the potential that engine has established. But alongside that, I need to embrace the hyper-growth areas, particularly in cloud and also in engineered systems, where we can really accelerate the impact, not just for our business and the business of our partners, but I do genuinely believe for the customers that we serve."

This will be continually important as more of Oracle's customers look at the digital transformation of their business. Increasingly, David says, technology is becoming so important as a differentiator that CEOs themselves are making decisions about purchasing and options. "Many of our customers are facing the challenge of digital transformation and digital disruption—a fairly grand term—which means they will need to respond to how they exploit

technology in a materially different way and they will have to do it very quickly. I have to develop an organisation that has the pace and purpose to work effectively through our partners to that customer community that makes the Oracle offer—both the Oracle component and the partner component—particularly compelling for the challenges that the CEO faces. Because now we are more in the orbit of the CEO and the whole board than maybe five or six years ago when the primary point of contact was with the CIO. As an industry, we are very much at the CEO top table and the partners are a key element of that."

One of the main challenges Oracle, and the industry in general, is facing is the diversity in the markets which it addresses. With such a range of customers in different markets and with different needs, targeting messages and products is a tricky and often time-consuming business. The solution Oracle has to tackle this challenge is to utilise its partner network to help with

communication. "I think the biggest challenge is the diversity of our region," David says. "The EMEA region is incredibly diverse in so many ways, not least culturally and economically, but also in terms of some of the technical and legacy environments. One must be able to articulate in a consistent way but also appropriately to reflect that diversity. We have a rich portfolio of profits and services; equally, we have a comprehensive spectrum of partners across EMEA—around 14,000.

"They fall into different categories: there are the big integration and consulting firms, the ISVs who effectively are creating an application, resellers, distributors, service providers, digital agencies. We have to refine the message to resonate with each of those individual communities, and then with the customers that they serve. So I think that is the challenge—diversity. Communication is always a two-way thing and although we push out a communication, I am really fortunate in the partner community, in that they pull an

"To really develop and build and sustain partnerships you really need to focus on that mutuality of interest."
- David Callaghan

awful lot from us. They are actually hungry for these messages. It is not as if I am having to shout particularly loudly. We have a number of mechanisms for engaging with them and therefore I think we can be very effective in getting over our aspiration, where we see the opportunity for them and then how they can make that relevant to their business and then relevant to their customers' business."

Communication with its partners is a key value that Oracle has. David is passionate about working closely with the company's partners and ensuring that everyone is on the same page. Oracle has a number of initiatives to make this happen, including developing specialised partner advisory boards, which enable partners to have a say in the future of the company's products and engagement. "Within EMEA we established the partner advisory boards three years ago," David explains. "There is one in each major cluster and there is also one that consists of the leaders of those individual partner advisory boards who come together as an EMEA partner advisory board. I meet with them quarterly and we share with those partners what our intentions and investments are, and they feed back their view as to where they would like to see us do more and those programs they like or where they feel we need to evolve.

"We do have a mutual way of addressing things, and one phrase that I use quite a lot with the team is mutuality of interest. We spend a lot of time making sure that what we do is in the interests of all the parties concerned, not just in Oracle's interest. To really develop and build and sustain partnerships you really need to focus on that mutuality of interest. So we use a partner advisory board for that. We then build out the commercial models that make sense around discounts and rebates and so on, but also around how specialisation can bring value to their business and their customers. And this is one of the particular focus areas of



Oracle: we invest a lot, and our partners invest a lot, in becoming specialised in our products or services, such that when they represent us and their capability to their customers they do so from a position of understanding and strength. So we put a lot of emphasis on enablement, a lot of emphasis on specialisation, and that certainly does pay dividends for us as well.

"A specific example is one of our major partners, Accenture. We have

been working with them for many years in many client situations and have been working in the cloud with them for a couple of years. But what we have done is put together a joint offering to be more relevant to Accenture's client base and parts of our client base. We have combined our platform skills, our technology skills, and our cloud skills, with Accenture's process understanding and industry understanding. We have taken to market something called Accenture Oracle Business Group, >





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"Our partners really do understand our customers. They have worked with them for many years, they also understand what Oracle does, where we are investing, where we are developing, and are very capable of exploiting that to their customers' benefit."

- David Callaghan

which was launched two months ago. It puts out there a very clear commitment to take the best that both organisations have to offer.

"It means we can go then, shoulder to shoulder, in front of our client base and say to the CEO, 'Right, this is how you may transition to cloud,' and to the board, 'This is the journey that you can take. Because it is a journey; it's not switching on a tap. It will require process modification but these are the benefits that you will get from this. Not just for the operation of your business but how you may then differentiate your offering to your competitor's offering because you are exploiting what technology has to bring'.

"We can do some very generic program-based activity and we can do some very specific client-based, industry-based, geography-based market activity, and again I think it needs to be a balance of those in

order to really get the coverage that the market demands."

In the end, David believes that a number of factors are setting Oracle apart from its competition and allowing the company to continue to grow strongly. The investment in cloud technology and Oracle pushing the boundaries are differentiating factors, and the company ensures all its products are available in the cloud. Oracle's relationships with its partners also puts it ahead, as does its focus on customer need and benefit. These factors are allowing Oracle to reach out to new customers while still retaining its current base; and, in turn, to increase profits and growth.

"I think we have a unique product offering in terms of its richness and comprehensive nature," David states. "I talked about public cloud. I talked about private cloud. Oracle has a unique position in being able to offer the most comprehensive set of applications and the most comprehensive and broad and deep platform, so you get all elements of the solution.



"Gone are the days when customers and partners have the time, and also, frankly, the budget, to integrate technology that was never intended to work together. What we have done over the past seven to 10 years is re-engineered all our products to make them available in the cloud, and that gives incredible benefit in terms of flexibility, agility, and time to benefit for our customers.

"I would also say that I think the partner ecosystem has a richness, it has diversity, and it has proximity and intimacy. Our partners really do understand our customers. They have worked with them for many years, they also understand what Oracle does, where we are investing, where we are developing, and are very capable of exploiting that to their customers' benefit. One final thing to add is that Oracle at this time really does offer something different. Cloud scales in a different way but also it can take us to new markets.

"Oracle has traditionally been seen as an enterprise-class product for the larger companies. What cloud does is make enterprise-class product available for midsize and small customers. Because you buy it on a consumption basis, whether you are big or small, you buy what you consume. So suddenly, the whole market of customers who may not have felt that they could access the premium product now absolutely can. And again in terms of reaching those customers, the partners are an essential channel because it will be a totally new market and totally new opportunity, not just for us but dare I say for those customers as well to really exploit the best that technology has to offer." •

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