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VISION ON INNOVATION

AN INSPIRING CONVERSATION WITH JURGEN DUIJSTER AND ANNE MAURITS ANDRÉ

At breakfast, just before attending the Oracle OpenWorld, Jurgen Duijster (Transfer Solutions) and Anne Maurits André (Director Sales Consulting Oracle) are having an interesting conversation. What is their vision on innovation, the cloud and the future of digital?

Jurgen Duijster -
Transfer Solutions
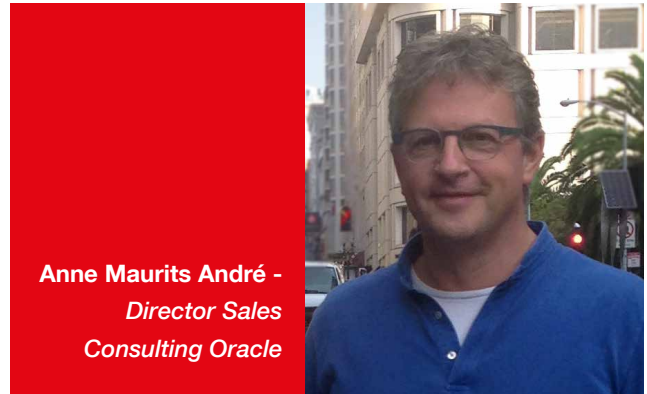
Anne Maurits André -
*Director Sales
Consulting Oracle*

Describe Oracle in one sentence

Jurgen: "The Database is the key to Oracle's power: massive databases and all other related components that are necessary to maintain the availability and integrity of the customer's critical data. And around this core competence – the database – Oracle has over the years arranged that everything you need in IT to deliver functionality to the business, can be delivered easily. Oracle can deliver the whole stack end-to-end, in specially developed engineered systems if required."

Anne Maurits: "Oracle is innovation – innovation where customers don't have to worry about their own IT environment. Customers can implement Oracle systems in their organisations right away, so that they can spend more time innovating their own business."

Jurgen: "And we can accomplish this much more rapidly than before: we are able to continuously deliver functionality to the customer at an increasingly fast pace to ensure smooth IT operations."

What is your favourite Oracle innovation and why?

Jurgen: "I really like the development of the 12c, the pluggable databases. It is really targeted at capability: what is the quickest and most flexible means to deliver functionality. The 12c provides a fabulous bridge to the near future: customers' hybrid cloud environments. Not a single customer will be running on premise any more 5 years from now. On the other hand: not a single customer will be running everything from the Public Cloud 5 years from now either. The pluggable database is a wonderful innovation that enables those hybrid combinations. But, that's just one of the many great Oracle innovations…"

Anne Maurits: "The total approach – Integration from disk to application. That is Oracle's biggest strength – the vertical integration. It really helps. Customers no longer have to worry about all the technical IT layers involved in answering the question 'how am I going to make it all work together'?"

How would you define the Cloud?

Jurgen: "Functionality without having to think about it. Available anywhere, anytime."

Anne Maurits: "I see the cloud as 'IT as a service'. It's like turning on the television to watch a show."

Jurgen: "That's exactly right: the customer doesn't have to worry about what is happening behind the scenes in the 'IT world'. It's just there, just like when you make a phone call. There used to be a word for that: 'webtone'. Just like water comes out of the tap, electricity from a socket in the wall, you will have the webtone from the air, in other words the whole service will be right there where you want to use it."

Why does an organisation need the Cloud?

Jurgen: "What you used to see in the early days of the Cloud was that everyone talked about cost savings. You could make IT less expensive. I am glad the focus is moving away from that idea. Saving money is always a great thing of course. But if you are only thinking about saving money, you are not on the right track. The great benefit of this technology now is that you can see how much quicker you can provide your business with the functionality it needs. These developments are taking place at a never-ending, rapid pace. They sometimes say

'change is the only constant'. Developments are happening so quickly that, if you're not careful, your IT department will be chasing after the functionality your company needs instead of being the driving force behind it. Cloud gives you that speed and agility again. I often refer to the Gartner 3-layer model, which includes Systems of Administration. These are heavy administrative systems with a long lifetime. These days you see a lot of Systems of Innovation. You have apps on your mobile phone that have the functionality you need at your fingertips. That means that you have to be able to deliver quickly. The Cloud is ideal for this purpose."

Does Oracle have a Cloud solution for every type of industry or customer?

Jurgen: "Yes, because we don't use a vertical market approach like many companies do. You see that you often fall back on the same industries due to the expertise you gain from certain projects. The great thing about Oracle is that there is functionality available for every business sector. The technology works well for all industries."

Anne Maurits: "What I see is that IT departments have a really difficult time keeping up with the latest developments. I think that this is a challenge for us as a vendor as well. It takes a lot of effort to keep people up-to-date with the right knowledge and skills because innovations are happening at such a rapid pace. Therefore, I can't even begin to imagine how a customer's IT organisation can succeed in providing the services required. You have to remove those worries from the equation. Oracle is in the perfect position to do so and the Cloud plays a key role.

Jurgen: "You often see that many organisations are not quite ready to take that step yet. Many customers think they are better off managing their own IT."

Anne Maurits: "I think it also has to do with how IT has acted towards its customers. It's because we often don't speak the customer's language. That is a challenge for me and my group as well. As a vendor, you then realise that you also have to be able to answer the question 'why'. If you can answer that question, it will be a much easier sale."

Jurgen: "I think it is the best question."

Anne Maurits: "I have to deal with people within my own organisation as well as with our customers. Customers really enjoy 'playing with IT' and we are taking away their toys. That is the resistance that we will face. Our customers may not realise that they need to move in this direction, but even if they do, it sometimes goes much deeper than that. Sometimes we have to take baby steps.

Jurgen: "Job security definitely plays a role."

Jurgen: what question would you like to ask Anne Maurits?

Jurgen: "How do you ensure that your internal staff also focuses on the 'why'?

Anne Maurits: "By continuously asking them to focus on that question. In the past I appointed a person to my team who had no background in IT. He received IT services because he was part of a business unit. He worked as a supervisor there and focused much more on business issues. Therefore, he spent much more time thinking about value propositions: how do you approach a customer, what do you ask, how can you make the system work. He was like a 'change agent' for the team to ensure that everyone thought about those things. And of course, with Oracle we have endless opportunities to be more successful in that business. For example, we have insights, customer surveys that ask the question "what is the best way to set up IT" and marketing programmes, etc.

Jurgen: "One of the things I find rather difficult – hence my question – is that you ultimately need advanced technical knowledge to be able to sell the best solution to the customer. There are two kinds of people in your organisation: the first person is someone who fully focuses on answering the 'why' question and who wants to help the customer resolve his problems. The second person is someone who is very knowledgeable about the Oracle 'tool box'."

Anne Maurits: "You often notice that you reach the limits of what one person can handle because you are looking for someone who knows 'everything' – well, good luck with that! I believe more in the power you can gain from collaborating with business partners. Partners provide different perspectives when it comes to resolving a particular problem. We cannot maintain that level of knowledge individually, therefore our focus is a little different. We share our knowledge and skills up to a certain point and the partner looks after the rest. This also applies to everything

that is coming to the Cloud. You have to fully consolidate, standardise, migrate and transform customers."

Jurgen: "I think we can support each other very well in this endeavour: as an Oracle partner, we know all the ins and outs of the 'toolbox', the tools it contains and the ones that are currently under development. We have to take advantage of that in the right way. We need each other. And hopefully we will also know the customer better."

Anne Maurits asks Jurgen: What improvements can Oracle make to strengthen the partnership?

Jurgen: "There is one aspect to which Oracle could pay a bit more attention. Because Oracle has over the years become an ICT supplier for the whole stack, it can provide total solutions for clients with widely varying needs. Here the appropriate sales approach would be more demand-driven than has traditionally been used. Sometimes selling is focussed too much on pushing the products. That is understandable, by the way, because it is an issue that I also encounter as the person ultimately responsible for sales: on the one hand you want to help the client with a good long-term solution, but on the other hand you do also need to generate revenue in the short term."

Jurgen asks Anne Maurits: What improvements can the Oracle partner make to strengthen the partnership?

Anne Maurits: "I think you have to add value to the Oracle portfolio and play your role. If you are good at that, it will benefit our mutual business. That means that we should not only talk about it here, we must also talk to the people who have to do the work. And we must communicate with each other: what are we doing and how can the partner help you in certain situations. People buy from other people – if you know each other and you know where each person's strength lies, you can make one plus one equal three."

What is the best advice you could give other Oracle partners?

Jurgen: "Partners must also learn to find and communicate with each other because you see that partners often

specialise in a certain area. Other partners may have a complementary portfolio that can help you give your customer the best solution. A triangular relationship adds value and knowledge."

What is your vision for the future of digital and other technology?

Jurgen: "An excellent future. There is going to be a lot more of it. We will start to see a lot more data that we can manipulate in every way imaginable. There will be so many innovative ideas involved, there are still so many possibilities. I often think that this is just the beginning. To use the telephony metaphor: we are just beginning to develop the technology for the heavy black mobile telephone."

Anne Maurits: "I fully agree with everything that Jurgen is saying. We are at the very beginning, the possibilities are endless. I think that the companies that will be successful, both vendors and partners, know how to take advantage of the possibilities without losing sight of the customer's value. If you know how to explain that value to the customer, you never again have to explain how well your system works."

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