



## *The Interview*

*Alan Hartwell, Vice President Technology Solutions and Partners, Oracle UK, Ireland and Israel. Alan's team, led by David Rajan, Director Emerging Business, is spearheading Oracle's highly regarded initiative to assist SMEs in the UK by helping them to exploit their potential using Oracle products and services*

Oracle is taking a major lead in the UK in working with SMEs with high growth potential, not by handing over cash, but by working with them to help them use Oracle products, services and business contacts to commercialise their business opportunity.

**Q. The first question must be - why is Oracle doing this?**

A. 2007 is an important year for Oracle as it marks our 30th anniversary. Today we are the world's largest enterprise software company, but since introducing the first commercial database many years ago, one thing has remained constant to our business. Innovation. This has been integral to the way we run our business, especially understanding how to turn it into commercial reality. As a result it has enabled us to retain a leadership position in the technology industry, one of the fastest moving and most competitive sectors in the world.

Looking around at the burgeoning market for emerging companies in the UK it appears there are many others who understand the value of innovation. However, the one thing that experience has taught us, and the one area where we have seen some young companies stumbling, is in turning ideas into revenue. This programme has been created to help British companies overcome this challenge.

**Q. What does Oracle hope to gain by this initiative?**

A. Oracle wishes to create value for its customers. We've done this through 30 years of product innovation. Our thousands of partners provide innovation. Our employees are innovative. Working with Emerging Companies is yet another mechanism to deliver the very best of innovation in Enterprise technology to the benefits of our customers.

**Q. What does Oracle actually offer to its SME clients working on this programme?**

A. Our Emerging Business Partner Programme was launched to offer young companies the opportunity to benefit from Oracle's business acumen, partner network, technical expertise and industry contacts, helping them to build their products, enhance their business propositions and ultimately turn their ideas into successful businesses.

**Q. Can you give us a couple of examples where you have built a successful relationship with a UK based SME?**

A. There are numerous examples including Zogix, Trampoline, Indico BI and Toumaz. The programme has supported them and others in moving forwards through different stages. We often describe this as from idea to revenue and growth. In other words we have a flexible approach to working with emerging companies who have a range of needs from help with developing product, to providing credibility for their IT infrastructure and access to the Oracle Partner Network, go to market support and ongoing sales and demand generation activity as their businesses expands. We currently have partner managers working with all of these companies to execute joint plans focused on commercialisation of their technology.

**Q. Oracle appears to be remarkably un-bureaucratic. What do you put this down to?**

A. We use our own technology to simplify our operational systems. This reduces the complexity of our business significantly and empowers employees to do what they do best - facilitating customers to achieve their goals.

**Q. What are the underlying benefits for an SME working with a global corporate rather than with other SMEs?**

A. There is no right or wrong way. Each company has to identify the right strategy for them. Should that lead them to work with Oracle one of the key benefits we bring is differentiation. By that I mean differentiation in terms of:

- the quality and variety of our products to meet customer requirements
- business and industry expertise that can bring credibility to a proposition
- an absolute focus on commercial success, which ensures ideas are turned into cash

**Q. Your sales strategy is without parallel. Are there any tips you can give an ambitious SME?**

A. Have clarity about what you are doing, who it delivers value for or why anyone should buy and how you are going to deliver this by effectively going to market. Once you are clear about those things execute with "focus". Target and win in a specific area before going to tackling wider market opportunities.

**Q. Do you think IT is still a sector in its own right?**

A. Yes; IT is definitely a sector in its own right. IT is ubiquitous, but what IT you use and how you choose to deploy it differentiates creating opportunities in a way that a commodity doesn't.

**Q. What lessons do you think Oracle could learn from AngelNews companies and their investors?**

A. The one golden rule of the technology industry is that it is always changing. The pace at which it changes becomes more rapid with each new generation of technology. Combined with the fact - thanks to technology - that Oracle and our customers operate in a global economy that constantly presents new threats from different angles, the need for innovation is integral to our business. If the Oracle Emerging Partner Programme or a meeting with an

AngelNews company presents a fresh take on how to use technology, it is incredibly exciting, because it offers new ways to go back to our customers with solutions that can support their business.

**Q. What is the best way to sell to a global corporate generally and what are the lead times?**

A. As with selling to any company understand what pain you solve, why anyone should care i.e. is it important or valuable to them. Identify and target the individuals who feel and are accountable for that pain.

**Q. What does an SME need to do to put itself into the mindset of a global corporate?**

A. It depends on the type of relationship they wish. If trying to develop a partnership try to understand the needs of the corporate and its own focus areas for going to market with its customers. Demonstrate how you help that corporate achieve its goals and objectives and it will be simpler for that organisation to see how a stronger relationship could be developed.

**Q. How long do you think social networking will be the buzz opportunity and what, if anything, might over take it?**

A. As with all new technologies what is important is how the technology solves problems and pains or opens new opportunities. Whether it is the creation of the Internet, social networking or some other future technology what is interesting is being open to consider the possibilities they create.

**Q. How do you keep your flexibility as you grow a business or team?**

A. It is very difficult as the culture changes as an organisation grows. One thing that Oracle learned a long time ago is to keep the IT systems that support the business as simple as possible. Keeping information and processes simple builds in agility, flexibility and competitive advantage into any business, whether big or small. Enable the backbone of your business to be flexible freeing your people to work flexibly. This will impact the culture of your business and ultimately how it is then able to interact and takes advantage of opportunities in the market.

**Q. What are the most common IT issues entrepreneurs come to your firm for help in addressing?**

A. One of the main challenges that emerging companies face is demonstrating the robustness and scalability of their infrastructure. IT plays a key role in that in areas such as supply-chain, order management and customer relationship management. Oracle earned its stripes building such IT systems for the majority of the world's largest enterprises, so for an entrepreneur working with us can be very attractive. The reassurance and credibility of building on Oracle provides emerging companies with an enormous asset to convince investors, partners and customers of the sustainability of their business model.

**Q. What about India and China? Are they a threat to enterprise in the West or do they represent an opportunity?**

A. That depends on perceptions. Naturally, they can be seen as an enormous threat. Having said that, creating value through innovation and entrepreneurship with customers is more important than price and location. It is about understanding what is needed and delivering it in the best way. It is about providing a level of service to customers enabling them to reduce costs, increase margins and open up new market opportunities. Delivering this is key. Whoever does that will do well; regardless of location. And in fact I would flip the conversation around to say that India and China should be treated as more of an opportunity than a threat. Given that technology has levelled the global playing field these markets present huge opportunities for UK entrepreneurs. If you get your business model you should be looking at the opportunity rather than worrying about the 'threat.'

**Q. Should young entrepreneurs look to the US or to India and China (or indeed the rest of the EU) for their first stage of expansion?**

A. This is another focus question. It is about the ability to identify a focused market you can execute in. Then you need to consider how you're going to do that. That will dictate where you should go. Naturally, don't under-estimate cultural issues or distance.

**Q. What are the different IT issues you face as you grow your business outside your domestic market?**

A. Today Oracle is a global company selling all over the world. Many years ago before we consolidated our databases, applications and IT infrastructure we faced a great deal of cost and complexity in maintaining many different local data centres and systems. Consolidating onto single systems driven over the internet from a single location reduced our costs by over \$1billion dollars. However, the knock on benefit of the agility and flexibility this provided to our business is probably incalculable. This is where Oracle scalability, reliability and security really differentiate.

**Q. Can you define the perfect SME that Oracle would like to work with?**

A. Naturally we work with many different SMEs. Specifically, the Emerging Partner Programme is focused on finding new, innovative, entrepreneurial companies who are tackling problems and markets that have huge potential. We are looking for potential both in terms of revenues, but also disrupting the norm or challenging the status quo.

**Q. How do you run an IT optimised business, but also keep your costs under control?**

A. Keep it simple. Focus on open standards and then leverage more from as few vendors as possible. Many companies today are no longer points solutions, just look at Oracle. This allows you to simplify your purchase, implementation, integration, support and maintenance costs. Buy a bit from everywhere and you'll have a lot of overlap, a lot of architecting and integration to do. Not to mention lots of license, support, maintenance and consulting to pay for.

**Q. What tips would you offer an entrepreneur wanting to sell products or services to your industry?**

A. Solve a customer needed issues or problem well; Make sure you are able to clearly articulate this in a couple of minutes and then focus on getting this

message clearly delivered to those who would understand how this delivers value for them.

**Q. Do you find yourself working weekends and bank holidays?**

**A. Being effective at your job is about how you work. Not how long you work!**