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NZ developers push hard at OpenWorld

Kiwi ISVs claim multinational clients such as 7-Eleven, Electrolux and Kelloggs

By Rob O'Neill, Auckland | Thursday, 29 October, 2009

The New Zealand-based independent software vendors attending Oracle's OpenWorld conference, held in San Francisco earlier this month, report good opportunities coming out of their conference investment.

At least two had stands at the event, with Hamilton-based More4Apps being on the main exhibition floor, while JD Edwards specialist Ndevr, an award winner at the event, claimed a spot in the front row of the Green Marketplace to exhibit its carbon reporting software.

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Meanwhile, the CEO and technical director of Auckland-based Avisit Solutions, Arjen Visser, was at OpenWorld as a speaker, having submitted two papers on disaster recovery. Avisit develops the Dbvisit Oracle disaster recovery product.

If these companies are not exactly familiar names, perhaps they should be. All three can claim heavyweight global and regional customers.

On its website, Avisit claims Kelloggs and Alcatel-Lucent as customers, among a host of other international firms, as well as electricity marketplace M-Co and Southern Cross Hospitals as local clients.

More4Apps, which offers a range of Microsoft Excel-based products that help users load data into Oracle Applications and ensure the right data is available for people that need it, has an impressive customer list too, with retailer 7-Eleven, Barnes & Noble, McDonald's and Starbucks jumping out. Local users include The Warehouse.

Ndevr was effectively launching its carbon reporting applications at San Francisco's Moscone Centre, but already boasts a slew of customers, including Electrolux, for its Ndevr Integration Suite, a service oriented architecture system for real-time JD Edwards integration.

Ndevr's Greenhouse Emissions Reporting product received a good push in being among the winners of Oracle's "Enable the Eco Enterprise Award" alongside heavyweights such as Cap Gemini and Deloitte.

CEO Maureen Clifford says Ndevr is 11 years old and originally specialised in the engineering, construction and property management segment. The Australian Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act, 2007, requiring the reporting of emissions and credits, spurred Ndevr to develop its latest product.

Australian engineering company Abigroup is one early user of the software.

Gradually, more and smaller companies will be covered by the reporting requirements as the legislated emissions threshold falls through to 2011, Clifford says. The software was built to comply with international as well as Australian standards.

"There was no easy way to do it," Clifford says. "People were using spreadsheets."

The software was developed by a team of five in JD Edwards, E-Business Suite and .Net, recognising that many customers ran multiple technology platforms.

While US\$12,000 for the stand and the cost of three staff to travel was a stretch, the 2009 event has seen a lot of interest from both end users and potential distributors.

"We felt it was the right time," Clifford says. "Canada's legislation takes effect next year. There's a lot of interest here."

For Avisit's Visser OpenWorld was about presenting, networking and lifting the visibility of the company's product. One concrete result is that he has been invited to present at the International Oracle User Group meeting in Las Vegas.



Visser's papers were on how to create a technical plan to build and deploy standby servers and what replication methods to use with them. Standby servers are servers that will act as a failover in case of an outage on the main server.

Visser says Avisit has identified a business need with its product and developed a solution, so customers tend to find the the company. Dbvisit is aimed at people using Oracle's database on a Standard Edition or Standard Edition One licence, he says.

Dbvisit is also sold through reseller channels and bundled as part of other products.

Visser says Dbvisit has a price advantage against competitors, but is also easier to use and deploy.

"Customers tell us it's very easy to use," he says. "It can be set up in 30 minutes."

Another advantage is that the product uses a secure shell transportation layer so data is secure and encrypted.

Visser encourages Kiwi companies to go to OpenWorld, saying the networking side is amazing.

"You meet all sorts of interesting people," he says. For Avisit this includes potential customers and resellers.

More4Apps is a regular exhibitor at OpenWorld. Manufacturing applications specialist David Wright says the conference and international Oracle user group events, which the company also attends, are very worthwhile. In all, More4Apps takes its product to the US three or four times a year, he says.

More4Apps is targeting users of Oracle applications rather than resellers, but a couple of interesting reseller contacts were also made from Africa and South America.

This year, More4Apps was offering a larger suite of software at the show, Wright says.

More people from the accounting side of user organisations appeared to be attending OpenWorld this year, he says. Supply chain was a big issue, perhaps reflecting the need for further efficiency gains and cost savings.

Wright says More4Apps has been in contact with Oracle about Fusion Applications, the converged replacement for Oracle's existing applications suites which emerged in demonstration for the first time this year, and that is definitely where it will end up.

However, given support for legacy applications such as JD Edwards, PeopleSoft and E-Business Suite is guaranteed under the "Applications Unlimited" programme, there is no rush to Fusion.

That was a sentiment even Oracle CEO Larry Ellison echoed in an analyst briefing at the event, saying it would take a while for people to move to Fusion after its launch, now scheduled for next year.

- *O'Neill travelled to OpenWorld as a guest of Oracle*

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