

Modernization and Mobility



An Interview with PeopleSoft's Paco Aubrejuan

By Christopher Walz



Q&A Magazine was delighted to speak with Paco Aubrejuan, Senior Vice President of Development for Oracle's PeopleSoft product line, on the future of PeopleSoft and enterprise IT. Aubrejuan has spearheaded PeopleSoft's efforts to deliver intuitive, mobile solutions that are aligned with the current expectations of users, which can be adopted at a low cost without the need for upgrades.

The PeopleSoft team agrees that current challenges facing the product are not specific to PeopleSoft, but are endemic of enterprise applications as a whole. Aubrejuan ties the challenges to two major factors: the consumerization of IT, especially for younger members of the workforce, and the overall enterprise software business model. The modern employee is often required, and expects, to work on the go. Addressing mobility needs is at the top of the list for PeopleSoft developers, says Aubrejuan. In order to meet the ever-changing needs of customers, PeopleSoft has shifted their delivery model away from infrequent, major releases to one that is continuously delivering new product capabilities. "Upgrades are difficult and expensive," Aubrejuan comments, "They normally come in three of five year cycles and, if you fall behind, it's a major project just to get caught up." The traditional model of major upgrades "delivers too little too late," says Aubrejuan.

Aubrejuan and his PeopleSoft team have made significant investments to address these

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challenges. "Simple to use and mobile solutions are top development priorities," says Aubrejuan. With the latest release of PeopleTools, the application's technical foundation, interface design has embraced HTML5 and CSS3 technologies to deliver a responsive, mobile-ready user experience. The PeopleSoft team has named the new interface, PeopleSoft Fluid User Interface, highlighting the interface's flexibility. The PeopleSoft Fluid User Interface is used to deliver PeopleSoft in an intuitive, easy to use manner regardless of device – on smart phones and tablets as well as the desktop. "This is not a different product. It is the same robust PeopleSoft behind the UI," Aubrejuan notes, "PeopleSoft Fluid UI allows us to overhaul what users see."

Such a fundamental change in the UI will undoubtedly have an impact on users. "This is not an incremental change," says Aubrejuan, "it is a completely new interface." Users, however, do not need to take the changes all at once. For example, a company may choose only to utilize the PeopleSoft Fluid User Interface for users connecting via a mobile device or specific functions. As for the learning curve for end users using the PeopleSoft User Interface, it is designed in a way that is intuitive to use and requires very little training. PeopleSoft is also making significant investments in training to educate the PeopleSoft user community on the development skills required to take advantage and extend the PeopleSoft Fluid User Interface.

In order to address the constantly changing enterprise IT landscape, PeopleSoft

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has "fundamentally changed the consumption model" Aubrejuan states. With PeopleSoft Selective Adoption customers are able to choose only the updates that work best for their business; the need for costly upgrades is gone. "Once you get to PeopleSoft 9.2, you no longer have to upgrade," says Aubrejuan. The PeopleSoft team plans to deliver new content 2-3 times a year and customers can choose what they adopt, and when they adopt it via the PeopleSoft Update Manager.

"This is the biggest change to the product in 14 years, when we moved to the Internet," Aubrejuan comments. "Users should run, not walk, to PeopleSoft 9.2."

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While the PeopleSoft product line is certainly seeing the effects of a changing enterprise software market, the recent changes in the software make it clear that the team is tuned into the needs of today's customers.

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139 Wardell St, Corning, NY
www.corningdata.com
800-455-5996