

Fusion – Marketing Hype for tomorrow or Reality for Today?

Debra Lilley

UKOUG / Fujitsu Services

Debra Lilley is a Principal Business Consultant with Fujitsu Services. She is both an Oracle Certified Professional (Applications) and Oracle Master (IT Professional). She is also an Oracle ACE, one of the first recognised for Applications.

Debra has been a director of the UKOUG since 2004 and is currently Deputy Chairman. She is also responsible for the Product Development Committees at both EMEA and International Oracle User Communities.

What does Fusion mean to users / organisations? YOU need to understand and who better to explain than usergroups.

Oracle's 400+ usergroups come together under the IOUC. Their Product Development Committee works with Oracle to ensure your input. Our unrivalled access to Jesper Andersen means we do understand Fusion, but it would be wrong if we kept that to ourselves.

This presentation will explain without marketing, what Fusion really means. Does Lifetime Support or Apps Unlimited mean Fusion is less important or will we all have to go to Fusion anyway?

Oracle has traditionally been a technology company but now derives most of its revenue from applications. In 2005, in order to increase market share, they announced "Project Fusion" – a new generation of applications. The strategy included acquiring some major application players such as PeopleSoft, JD Edwards, and more recently Siebel. The Fusion application will bring together the best of all these products including Oracle's original E-Business Suite.

Did you know that UKOUG is unique? The UKOUG is the only Usergroup in the world that covers all technical and application areas in its geographical area. This unique position gives us an unparalleled insight into how the Fusion journey touches each organisation. The UKOUG white papers on what people wanted in Fusion have been given as a standard by Jesper Andersen SVP Fusion Strategy. Project Fusion initially seemed to be focussed on applications, leaving technology people feeling disgruntled, but they were not the only ones. Organisations had invested in their chosen ERP system because it suited them at the time, and probably still does.

Oracle had to listen to these users who had concerns about Fusion; the potential loss of their customer base to competitors would have been devastating. *Oracle chose a User Group event in early 2006 to announce 'Lifetime Support'*, allowing users of recent versions of current software to upgrade at their own pace. Of course, the hidden issue was that stand-alone database upgrades would invalidate the applications support – an easy trap to fall into.

For those who did not want Fusion, this seemed to be a problem-free solution, but after the initial excitement faded users realised that not only did they want to remain on their product, but that they wanted this project to continue to develop

in line with legislation, innovation and enhancements. To address this came 'Applications Unlimited', where instead of all applications simply merging into Fusion, they are now continuing on their own roadmaps but with jumping points to Fusion at every stage.

Once the first Fusion Application is available, your next business case is not simply about an upgrade, but about the choices. And if you are looking at choices do you stop at those from Oracle? To reinforce this choice, Oracle has appointed a General Manager and head of strategy for each product line, tasked with ensuring their product line continues to meet the needs of their existing customer base whilst also ensuring Fusion is attractive.

In January of 2007 the latest releases of all the products were unveiled; Oracle had kept its original promise at acquisition that these planned releases would be honoured. There was also a new release of JD Edwards World, the first new release for nine years. However, Fusion is not as simple as the merging of these existing applications – it will require a complete rewrite in the latest Oracle technology, taking advantage of acquisitions such as iflex and portal. Some of this technology is already available to customers.

I think the message that the Fusion Application will use the new Fusion Technology is getting through to IT Directors, but do we appreciate that this technology is available NOW for our inhouse IT? Oracle Business Intelligence Enterprise Edition (the acquired Siebel Analytics) is leading edge technology and soon OBIEE Plus with Hyperion (a more recent acquisition). Similarly there are prebuilt links between their applications with Applications Integration Architecture or AIA. These and other Fusion Middleware technologies should be embraced now, you may have heard of Oracle Fusion Middleware and its Service Orientated Architecture but are you making the most of it and its Open Standards now? DO you have the training plans in place? Gartner estimate that over 20% of IT budgets in 2007 will be spent on SOA, Web Services and Web 2.0 technologies. If this is exciting CIOs worldwide it should be grabbing your attention too...

The International Oracle User Council has a quarterly call with Jesper Andersen. In June, we talked about education and documentation for Fusion, and delivery of this. This demonstrates where Oracle is in the process, and they have recently given responsibility for this area to Cliff Goodwin, leaving Jesper to focus on the content.

Steve Miranda talked to usergroups in January about Fusion Applications. He talked about this first release having a broad footprint covering Financials, Procurement, Project Costing, HR and Payroll. They have done extensive research as to what was needed first and customer feedback has helped determine this. There will be a new technical stack, no forms or Peopletools, it will be all Java and XML, all flows will be governed by BPEL there will be no traditional workflow. The first release will be tightly controlled and monitored by Oracle using customers who have a track record of early adoption.

At Open World Oracle announced the first Fusion Modules being Social CRM and we heard that some mobile applications may be announced at Collaborate in April. These 'edge' modules will come with predefined AIA integration to your existing CRM and ERP

So the Oracle Fusion Strategy is about choice, what to upgrade to and when to upgrade. User groups can help you understand the choices.

