

Infor's Innovation

An Interview with
Charles Phillips, Chief Executive Officer, Infor

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to Infor, Charles Phillips was President of Oracle Corporation and a member of its board of directors. Earlier, he was a managing director at Morgan Stanley in the Technology Group. Before his 18-year career on Wall Street, Phillips was a Captain in the U.S. Marine Corps in the 2nd Battalion, 10th Marines. He holds a B.S. in Computer Science from the U.S. Air Force Academy, a J.D. from New York Law School, and an M.B.A. from Hampton University. He is a member of the Georgia State Bar Association. Phillips serves on the boards of Viacom Corporation, the American Museum of Natural History, the United States Air Force Academy Endowment Fund, and Phillips Charitable Organizations. Phillips also served on the Obama Administration's Economic Recovery Advisory Board.



Charles Phillips

COMPANY BRIEF As the world's third-largest supplier of enterprise applications and services, Infor (www.infor.com) is helping more than 70,000 large and mid-size companies improve operations and drive growth across numerous industry sectors. This month, Infor will officially open its new corporate headquarters in New York City, becoming one of the largest firms in the city's growing technology sector.

What is the secret to Infor's success?

With deep experience in an array of industries, Infor is able to examine and automate intricate processes that most people don't understand to help our customers generate greater productivity, profitability, and competitiveness.

If you do that well, you become invaluable to your customers because they tend to stick with you year after year.

How broad is your target market?

We have 70,000 customers in 164 countries including global enterprises like Boeing, Ferrari, and BAE Systems. We also have a lot of small manufacturers, some with as few as 100 employees. We also count many public and governmental organizations as customers, including New York's Departments of Environmental Protection, Parks & Recreation, Corrections, Fire, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority.

Infor is focused on 12 industries: aerospace and defense, automotive, chemicals and life sciences, distribution, equipment, fashion, food and beverage, health care, high tech, hospitality,

industrial manufacturing, and the public sector. Our staff includes experts in those specific industries so we go deep in building our applications; we understand what makes those businesses work and we help them work smarter and faster.

Are you focused internationally for the growth of the business or do you still see strong growth opportunities within the U.S. market?

Half of our business is in the U.S., though we have a large presence in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. We

are averaging double-digit quarterly growth and this is not only attributed to emerging markets but to strong growth in the U.S.

As long as global GDP and manufacturing in particular are increasing, we tend to do well. We follow our customers to where they do business and we are pleased to see the U.S. manufacturing sector investing in our software to help them remain competitive with the rest of the world – it's a strong indicator that the sector is rebounding.

How do you differentiate Infor among your competitors?

Our customers help us differentiate ourselves. Once we win customers in a particular sector, we look to them to give us feedback and ideas. Customers have a vested interest in our success and that creates a strong partnership between us and them. That said, our business is unique in that once we have 10 or so customers in a particular vertical, or even sub-vertical, we have learned so much about that industry that it's hard for others to catch up. We are innovative, flexible, and laser-focused on speed to enable us to evolve our applications quickly. A deep understanding of the complicated processes of an individual industry is a barrier to entry for our competitors; it takes years to learn and perfect the approach that we've already taken.

How does this brand continue to lead in innovation?

Innovation is the lifeblood of the company and what drives us forward.

We spend a lot of time looking at products and what is different, disruptive, and unique. The best way to be an innovator is to empower people to make decisions and try new things. We invest a lot in research and development; over the past 12 months, we have hired 600 new engineers and plan to hire 400 more in the next 12 months, many of them in the U.S. and in New York, specifically.

One of the strengths of New York is the city's abundance of talented professionals in design. We recruited talent from around the city and formed our own design agency – a company within our company – because we recognize that business software has to look like consumer software going forward; we call this the “consumerization” of enterprise software. People can work faster and smarter when what they do at work is intuitive because it mirrors the technology they've become accustomed to in their personal lives.

How much of a focus is corporate responsibility within the organization and does that focus align with the business?

We see it as a way of defining our culture and bringing us together as a team. Our largest endeavor is a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, one of our major customers. Infor will contribute half a million dollars a year to the cause. We will also give all of our employees a week off each year to work on a Habitat build. It's tangible so our employees can see the results and it's a team-building opportunity that strengthens collaboration for employees. We like to take customers along with us as well. It's part of our corporate culture for our employees to feel like a part of the Infor community but also like they are giving back to their communities at home and around the world.

Is top talent still coming into the engineering field and can more be done to encourage that interest?

There are not enough engineers – we can find them more easily outside the U.S., which is a concern. It will benefit our country's long-term competitiveness if we are able to encourage young people to examine engineering as a field of study that's both productive and fun. The age of the generalist is over – we need specialization and engineering is one form of that.

Infor works with many nonprofit organizations that are encouraging young people to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Are you surprised at how close-knit the business community is in New York when it comes to benefitting the city?

Yes. More than most cities, the business leaders here love the city they're in and they want to keep it tops for business. We moved our headquarters to New York because it's the business capital of the world and being here enables us to attract top talent and get more face-time with our customers who routinely visit the city for other reasons. ●