A New Way of Thinking

An Interview with
Pam Murphy, Chief Operating Officer, Infor

EDITORS' NOTE *Pam Murphy has held her current post since October 2011. Prior to assuming that role, she served as Senior Vice President of Corporate Operations. Prior to Infor, she spent 11 years at Oracle Corporation, where she was responsible for a wide range of operational and financial functions. Before Oracle, Murphy was with Arthur Andersen. She earned her business and accounting degree from the University of Cork, Ireland and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.*

Pam Murphy

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. Infor recently opened its new corporate headquarters in New York City, becoming one of the largest firms in the city's growing technology sector.*

Why has Infor been so successful, and what makes the company an industry leader?

Infor is a leader in our industry because we take a different approach. We believe that business applications should be both functional and beautiful, and that our customers should be able to work the way they live with technology that is flexible and social, and delivers a meaningful user experience.

Infor also recognizes that the monolithic era is over. Companies want software that provides deep industry-specific functionality, and has the ability to integrate with other applications so they can run their businesses more efficiently. The one-size-fits-all mentality is a thing of the past, and Infor is leading the charge for a new way of thinking by delivering applications tailored specifically for niche micro-verticals like beverage manufacturing or metal fabrication.

Infor products are specialized by industry and engineered for speed. How has this focus been a differentiator for Infor?

Companies in different industries face unique challenges and possess different requirements for their software. Infor's focus on micro-verticals rather than larger industries allows us to deliver solutions that are built specifically for these micro-verticals, thereby reducing the need for extensive and costly customizations.

This strategy has been critical to our success because our customers know that we are working to meet their individual needs, rather than producing a generic solution. Taking this innovative approach has helped us to achieve positive results, like five consecutive quarters of double-digit license growth.

What else differentiates the brand?

The experience of using software is just as important as the nuts and bolts that drive it. In order to effectively execute on this initiative, we needed to extend beyond the traditional IT talent pool to bring in fresh, creative ideas that can revolutionize the entire user experience. So we formed Hook & Loop, an internal creative agency made up of writers, designers, developers, and filmmakers, all focused on creating interfaces for Infor products that people love to use by fixating on the entire experience, rather than just the fundamentals.

Hook & Loop represents the developing alignment between the design and technology worlds, and increasingly plays a role in how our product road maps develop. Thanks to Hook & Loop, we were able to deliver our revamped user experience, SoHo, which incorporates the latest innovations from consumer technology into our business applications to create a more collaborative, intuitive work environment.

How broad is your target market, and will much of your growth come from international operations?

Infor applications currently help 70,000 customers in more than 200 countries improve operations and drive growth. We have a total of 153 direct offices in 41 countries, with customers ranging from 16 of the 20 largest U.S. cities to 84 of the top 100 automotive suppliers.

We've added 3,000 new customers over the past 12 months, and while we are always striving for growth worldwide, we feel that there is a large potential for growth outside of North America right now. Infor is currently working to expand our local presence by increasing head count and partnerships in emerging markets where our easy-to-use and fast-to-implement purpose-built software addresses market needs. We expect to achieve double-digit growth in Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Latin America over the next three years.

How important is it to maintain a culture of innovation as the company grows in size and scale?

We frequently refer to Infor as "the world's largest start-up" because we want to sustain the ingenuity and drive that accompanies this mindset, even though we are a large established enterprise. Our New York City headquarters is designed with an open flow, without traditional offices, to enable the free exchange of ideas and information. It's this type of thinking that has led us to some of our biggest innovations.

What makes Infor an employer of choice for incoming talent?

Today's young talent has a different relationship with technology than their predecessors, and we can utilize their unique skill sets to help Infor remain at the forefront of the industry.

We recently launched the Infor Professional Development Program (PDP), an initiative designed to help our employees build their skill set and personal brand. Infor understands that investing in employees' continuing careers and personal development is critical to our overall success.

Do opportunities exist today for women at senior levels, and what advice do you give young women beginning their professional careers?

The best advice that I can give to young women is not to be discouraged and to have confidence in your abilities. I am one of the only women on our executive leadership team, so I know what it's like to make your voice heard in a room full of very intelligent, outspoken men. Infor as a company is highly supportive of our female employees, which is why we created the Women's Infor Network (WIN), a career development program with strategic emphasis on growing female talent within the company.

Do you take time to reflect on Infor's achievements or are you always looking for the next challenge?

Over the past year, Infor spent more than $350 million on research and development, and delivered more than 300 new products and 11,000 new features, which is an increase of approximately 150 and 100 percent from the previous year. We enjoy reflecting on this success, but Infor is always looking for what's next – which for us is Infor 10x. Infor 10x promotes our commitment to social business by embedding social collaboration technology in core business systems. It also speaks to the increasing demand for mobility and role-based analytics by expanding Infor's range of mobile applications, and delivering personalized dashboards powered by real-time business intelligence. Infor 10x represents the future of business technology, and the future of our company. ●