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„Ein Ökosystem managen“

Patrice Barbedette über seine
Vision des Unternehmens
der Zukunft, Softwaretrends
und Nutzerfreundlichkeit

Mitarbeiter sind Mitgestalter des Wandels

Themenschwerpunkt

Flexible Belegschaften



DGFP

„EIN ÖKOSYSTEM MANAGEN“

PATRICE BARBEDETTE ÜBER SEINE VISION DES UNTERNEHMENS



Für Patrice Barbedette, Vice President Human Capital Management Applications South Europe, Switzerland & Germany und Country Application Leader France bei Oracle, liegt der größte Zukunftstrend in der Förderung des Mitarbeiterengagements. Dieses sei der zentrale Erfolgstreiber für Unternehmen, nur damit lasse sich eine positive Erfahrung für die Kunden erreichen. Die Vision des charismatischen Managers für die Zukunft ist ein (Nicht-)Unternehmen, ein Ökosystem, zu

DER ZUKUNFT, SOFTWARETRENDS UND NUTZERFREUNDLICHKEIT



dem neben den aktuellen Mitarbeitern auch Ehemalige, Berater und Dienstleister zählen. Die Rolle von HR sieht Barbedette darin, ein positives Mitarbeitererlebnis zwischen Kultur und Compliance sicherzustellen und darauf zu achten, dass Unternehmen ihren eigenen Ziel-Images gerecht werden. Das auf Englisch geführte Interview drucken wir im Nachfolgenden im Original ab.



Das Interview führte Katharina Heuer Anfang April in Paris.

What kind of trends do you currently see in business?

PATRICE BARBEDETTE The trend I see all over Europe is the fact that companies are looking for stronger employee engagement because this is the foundation of today's knowledge economy. For example, we talk a lot about getting closer to the customer – how can you capture and know exactly what the customer wants to buy and how can you be there right in time to offer a better customer service? Organizations realize today that to be able to do so, the first point of interaction is the employee. A strong employee engagement is required to be able to achieve a good customer experience – this is the main trend.

We see big differences between theory and practice. For instance: A lot of money is spent by organizations to attract new employees – they talk about their employer brand, they

PATRICE BARBEDETTE is Vice President Human Capital Management Applications South Europe, Switzerland & Germany and Country Application Leader France at Oracle. He studied at the ICN Business School in Nancy and at the WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management in Vallendar. As a visionary entrepreneur, he was the founder and CEO of Jobpartners in 1998. When Jobpartners was acquired by Taleo in 2011, Barbedette became their Vice President EMEA, Strategic Accounts and Alliances. Only one year later, Taleo was acquired by Oracle.

talk about how great it is to work there. However, when you as an employee arrive they tell you about all the different processes you have to follow. If you're a junior, your role will be to follow and not to act. So you have been promising employees, young employees, millennials, Generation Y, that you are looking for their creativity, their agility to win them over. But as soon as they arrive you don't treat them that way. Basically, you go back to your old habits in people management which leads to an employee experience which is not as good as the candidate experience. This bias will create a long term negative effect on employee engagement – one of your key success drivers. That's where organizations should look inside and say: I know how to communicate with the market, I know who I want to attract and I need to make sure I live up to my promises.

When you provide your people with HR solutions, you need to be sure that they work with the same level of simplicity as online shopping and that it can be done with three clicks. We promise our customers that we enable them to have the same experience for their employees and for their managers as they would have as a customer. To summarize it in simple terms: If you want to treat your customer in a perfect way, you have to treat your employees, your candidates, your ecosystem in a very similar way. It is possible – give yourself the means to do it. And there are vendors – Oracle is one of them – that are specifically working in this direction.

What are your guiding principles in the development of new technology?

BARBEDETTE At Oracle, we constantly ask ourselves the following question: How will the user consume the solution? And we try to make it simple. Personally, I'm never at my desk. I barely use a laptop. I don't sit in my office because I don't have an office. So everything I do, including HR transactions, I do from an application on my smart phone. I don't need to go to the system, the transaction comes to me. It is the same when I give a feedback on an employee or another manager. Quick feedback, sent, done! Let's say I've been in a meeting with somebody and he or she has given a great presentation with a strong vision and has really caught the attention of the crowd. And when this person will have his or her appraisal nine months later, I would probably have forgotten about this moment. But because it's captured with the application, it is still there. We will have a complete review not only from one person using his or her assessments of the last six weeks but everything around this employee from the last 12 months. It's more objective, it's complete, it's simple. If you want to trigger stronger user adoption, it's by making sure that each of the HR transactions is coming to the different players, directly on their usual devices, still ensuring that all aspects of compliance and professionalism are covered.

OBVIOUS, INTUITIVE AND NATURAL

Mobile computing and semi-intelligent systems are the key words here. A third of our investment in development is driven by how the user will consume the service. In our labs we test the user's eye movements to ensure that we put the right information in the right place, so that it's obvious, intuitive and natural. As a software vendor, we want to guarantee a strong user adoption by displaying complex information in the simplest way. That is the

DNA of Oracle. We don't want to force our users to be obliged to go through the system because he or she needs to follow a certain process; instead we want to create systems which give value to the user when using them. I see the willingness, I see the ambition in HR to step up the plate, but I also see them often thinking, "we're not yet mature enough to do so". Why? It can be done with systems like ours. We need to reduce the step between ambition and the "just doing it" through evangelization.

Does HR really have the vision that the employee is their customer?

BARBEDETTE When you talk to them they either agree or they even say it before you mention it. I have been in this market for the last 15 years. 15 years ago, HR people mostly thought: I have to take care that my processes are well executed. Now, they are talking much more about employee engagement, about adoption and quality aspects. The maturity is definitely higher than before. Of course, there are always early adopters, followers and late adopters. 15 years ago, my customers in Germany like Henkel, Adidas or Degussa were exceptions. They already used HR solutions from the Cloud. Today, there is much more openness to this. But still, there is sometimes hesitation about whether an organization can absorb a move to the Cloud. But again, it's a learning process. People have to observe, to digest. That's why we make our customers talk instead of talking ourselves. They are much more credible. *(Smiles)*

Are there differences between the national economies in terms of maturity?

BARBEDETTE In Europe, France, UK and the Netherlands have started a bit earlier to use HR solutions from the Cloud. Germany, quite interestingly, has been moving on the candidate side, not so much on the employee side. I know that German organizations are facing a bit more resistance, e.g. in terms of the new possibilities of team overviews, so it takes longer. Due to the works councils – and don't get me wrong: I don't consider them as something negative – extra questions may have to be answered. These extra questioning steps might be the reason why the German market has been maturing in a slower way than others in Europe in the past. But basically, the Germans, the French or the Spaniards are culturally very similar. They consume in the same way and they have very similar expectations as employees. This is why I am confident that all countries in Europe will reach the same level of maturity towards the Cloud.

At Oracle, our job as an innovation leader is to guess what is going to happen in the next five years and to go for it. For example: We see more and more employees who are driven by their

well being. One of the processes in our solutions is to create an internal competition to do some sports or have some activities. It triggers employees through gamification. Much better than having a catalogue of rarely used people development measures, don't you think?

And how about differences around the globe?

BARBEDETTE In terms of trends, there is no difference between Europe and the United States. Europe has an extra layer of complexity. In the US it's hire and – if you don't match – fire. There is much more elasticity on the job market. In Europe we focus more on employee development and learning. I'm not an expert on Asia, but I personally think there is not such a big difference. Maybe organizations culturally don't see the relationship between the company and the employee the same way we see it. But trust me: This will change, because people are pretty much the same everywhere. They have similar aspirations. The way people consume in China is getting more and more the same way as we consume here or in the US. So they will expect the same from their organizations. From customers working in China I often hear that they want to offer even more services because the job market is so fluid. People are signing three or four contracts at the same time. And within the first hours they decide in which organization they want to stay. Having said so, I very much appreciate our European people development focus in HR work. I do believe in people to make the difference, as does our entire organization.

What kind of services would employees like to have?

BARBEDETTE Most importantly, people want to be part of something they buy into. A project, a vision. And they want to get acknowledged for this. In other words, they want a fulfilling task and they want to make a career. Typically, employees would like to do the admin side of things, e.g. book their holidays through an application. They would like to keep their profile up to date. They want to be able to give feedbacks on their experience with HR. They want to assess their progress towards their objectives. They want to recommend friends and associates. There are plenty of things, also from an HR perspective: objective setting, appraisals, talent review. Who are my good and my not so good performers, where are they ranked and positioned, is my organization well balanced or are there bulk risks? And with some side processes as mentioned before we give companies a tool to take care of their employees and to see them not only as contributors to the revenues. Again, people are the most precious asset. If they are given more possibilities of self-learning, self-career-initiating, innovation and cooperation, they will make wise use of this to the benefit of the company, of all. At least this is our experience.

DEPENDENT ON IT

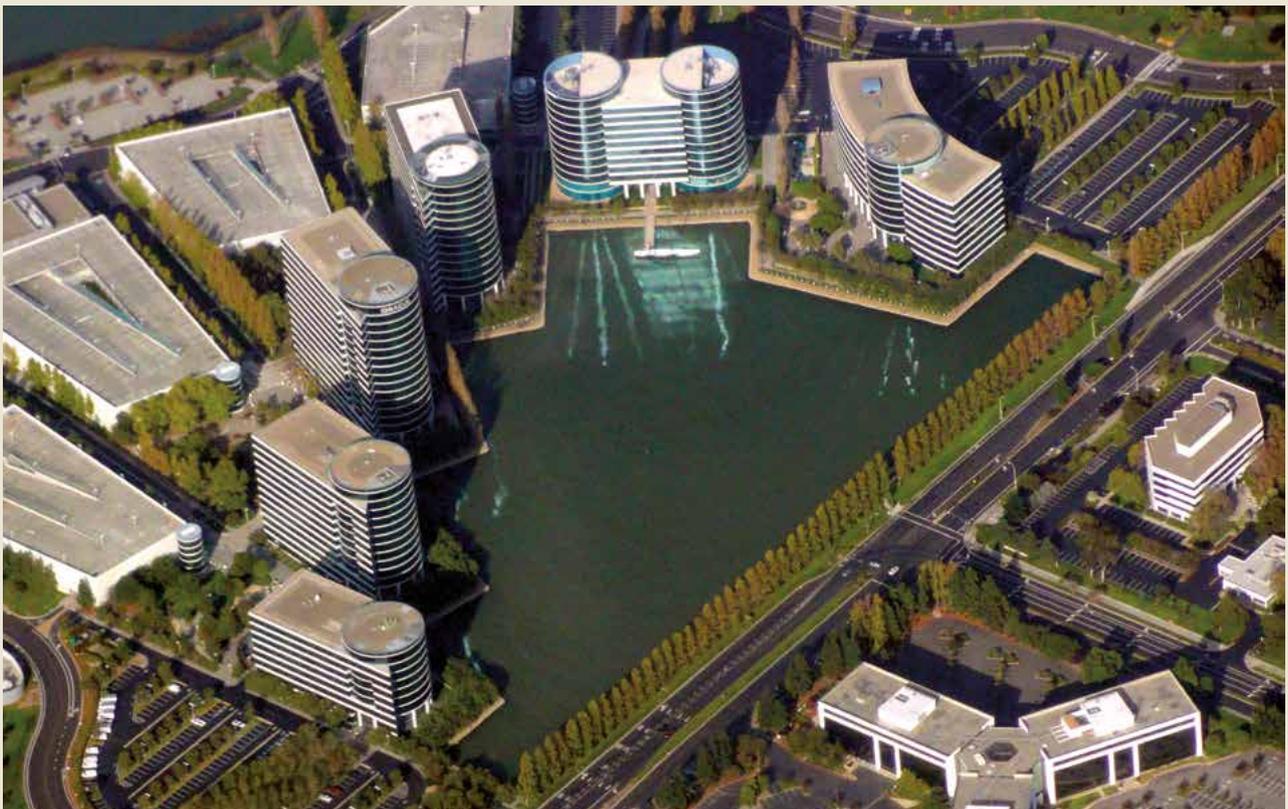
Let's talk a bit more about Germany. You said earlier that German organizations are more active on the candidate side than on the employee side. What would be your recommendation to German HR departments?

BARBEDETTE In Germany HR is still a bit too dependent on IT. The Cloud has enabled most of the trends of the last 15 years. Software as a service gives HR the freedom to have a solution that can

ment. HR software needs to be used by HR professionals and employees to unfold its engagement building power. In brief, I would recommend to open up and honestly assess what is out there today to not miss the fundamental change we are all living in.

Some Germans are afraid that their employers could collect too much data about them...

BARBEDETTE We guarantee our customers that they will be compliant with the law. We enable them to capture data that is



Oracle is an American multinational computer technology corporation, headquartered in Redwood City, California. The company primarily specializes in developing and marketing database software and technology, cloud engineered systems and enterprise software products – particularly its own brands of database management systems. In 2011

Oracle was the second largest software maker by revenue, after Microsoft. The company also develops and builds tools for database development and systems of middle-tier software, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, customer relationship management (CRM) software and supply chain management (SCM) software.

be deployed more or less without the IT department and without servers. You don't have to code, to customize or to change it. It can easily be deployed. To configure it to your needs you need to have HR process knowledge, not technical knowledge. Sure, you have a few points of integration. But far less than you had in the past. It has enabled HR to be a bit more "master of its destiny". Modern HR systems in the Cloud have to have unique look and feels, for each of their divisions. Data has to be displayed in an intuitive way to enable HR to give well founded recommendations to manage-

mandatory and authorized to do so in their country. When recruiting in the US, you need to capture data such as gender, religion or ethnic origin. You don't ask these questions in Europe. With a single solution you can ask different questions depending on where people do apply. And it's not the customer's problem any longer. We need to ensure that the system is completely compliant with the law of the respective country. We are obliged to provide and evolve our solution depending on how the laws about data protection evolve.

Is that a regular discussion with your customers?

BARBEDETTE Most of the discussions with the customers are about where the data is hosted and how the data privacy legislation will be respected. At Oracle, we have data centers in Germany, for example. Data from Germany will be hosted there and will stay there. So it's a safe environment for German organizations. Our data there is much more secure than Angela Merkel's mobile phone.

What is your vision for the next 10 years?

BARBEDETTE We work for a certain organization because we are paid, yes, but more importantly because we want to belong to an ecosystem. More and more, we all will bring skills for a specific moment and a specific mission. My dream is that organizations will not only manage their employees but their contributors and ecosystems. Think about consultants who spend much more time with their client than with their employer. Or think about former employees who potentially might come back one day. So we should think about managing an ecosystem of skills, competencies and aspirations. We need to capture all this and nurture it. The reason why you keep buying from the same brand is that you had a good experience. So as an organization, we have to entertain, keep and nurture attachment in order to make our network stronger. In our partner event one of the participants said: "We are great in inviting people, we spend a lot of money to attract them. We are quite poor in treating them well once they are employees and whenever they leave, they are evil." But in 2, 3 or 10 years they may come back. In my 15 years working in HR, I have built a huge network of people I've been working with. Today, they may be working for the competition or for a partner. I know that they're good and I have the hope that one day they may come back and work with me.

The perception of the role of employees has changed. And if you don't understand as an organization that the game has changed, you risk losing it.

BARBEDETTE When I was a student you had to start your career at companies like L'Oréal, Procter & Gamble, Nestlé. You had to – these were the places to be. Today, the employer of choice, the best ranked company is Google. Why? Because of the employee experience. They are very persuasive, they pick you up from home and just make sure you spend a maximum of time at, with and for Google. If you enter one of the traditional industries, you'll be a junior first, then a senior. Then you will be a junior manager, then a senior manager. In the new world it is: What do you want to do, join our community, work on this project, contribute. My vision for the future is a non-company. A culture free of constraints and full of skills, ambitions, aspirations. But because you're reaching out to so many people, you need to

have a system. It needs to be self managed, managed by the people themselves.

Personally, I am an employee too – I do not want to be a number. Do you? And I know nobody who wants to. Yes, in today's world the expectations of people have changed: they way we communicate, make decisions, work together. If HR, or more precisely organizations, do not adapt to these new aspects, they put their people at risk to leave them. This must not happen, and a lot more can be done today to avoid that than ever before. Which I think is great. For both sides.

What is the role of HR in your vision?

BARBEDETTE HR processes are defined by different things with two extremes. One is compliance, mandatory, the respect of the individual, the law et cetera. The other is culture – what kind of image do you want to convey? The role of HR in my vision is to ensure that the employee experience is within these borders and that the company lives up to the image it wants to have. The role of HR will be to define these processes, making sure that they are well accepted, well executed and that the company is constantly nurturing its ecosystem. Making revenues, making margin can leverage all these contributions and contributors to create more value for the organization. HR is not only the "holy crowd of the nice people" who take care of other people. They also work to create value for shareholders and customers. That's the role of HR. Making sure that all these aspects are working together, within compliance of the law and inspired by the culture of the company.

What is your advice to HR managers on how to get there?

BARBEDETTE My advice to HR managers is to regularly bring innovation in. Don't put everything on the table at once, go step by step. This way, it's easier to succeed. But bring innovation and be an active business participant. HR is too often badly perceived or badly treated. I am a big fan of HR access to the board and not just one level below. HR people should be the trusted advisors of the CEO. Therefore, bring innovation like new insights or quantifying the effects of HR measures is needed, on a regular basis. I always ask my customers: What is your flight trajectory? And I advise against a big bang. I prefer a well balanced, well cadenced trajectory with an ambition behind it... Every six months something new: that's feasible. And that's a guarantee for success, for personal success too.

Thank you very much for the interview! ●