

Tackling the Complexity and Efficiently Challenges of Big Data Applications, Acunu Analyzes Data as it Streams and Provides Customers Real Time Visibility and Manageability of their Environments

**Technology
Analytic Applications**

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Chris Gomersall
CEO

BIO:

Chris has held sales and sales management roles with Burroughs, Digital and Sequent Computer Systems before moving into international management positions with Tivoli, Oracle and Peregrine Systems. He set up the EMEA business for PolyServe, acquired by HP, and was later responsible for the EMEA business at ServiceNow. Chris holds a Civil Engineering degree from The University of Nottingham.

About Acunu

Acunu tackles the complexity and efficiency challenges posed by Big Data applications. Acunu was founded in

2009 and is backed by some of Europe's top VC funds. Started by a unique mix of researchers and engineers from Cambridge and Oxford Universities, Acunu has offices in London (near Old Street, London's "Silicon Roundabout") and California.

**Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine**

CEOCFO: Mr. Gomersall, what is the concept at Acunu?

Mr. Gomersall: We work in the world of big data. Whereas, many big data use cases have people accumulating data and then running reports across that data to analyze what happened and try and figure out why it happened. We work in a very different way, which is to do analysis on the data as it is streaming in. We then use that to populate "real time" dashboards to give people totally real time visibility of what is happening in their environment. It satisfies the needs of people who want to know what is happening "right now", a little bit like a dashboard in your car tells you what is happening right now; as opposed to the people who want to store data and save it to analyze later. That is an important use case, but we deal with people who want immediate visibility in real time in huge volumes of streaming data.

CEOCFO: What were some of the challenges in putting that offering together?

Mr. Gomersall: We had to decide where it was that we were going to focus. We looked at our people and what we felt that we were uniquely

capable of building. We looked at customer needs and tried to figure out where we felt the gaps were. What we found, interestingly, was that the model which I talked about, that has people storing information in batches and then running reports across that, is actually a very crowded marketplace. It has been crowded for a long time. It has been well penetrated by large organizations like IBM, HP and Oracle. It has more recently become even more crowded with a whole ecosystem of systems surrounding a storage system called Hadoop. So, we decided to stay well away from that. We initially focused on the community of people who use a storage system called Cassandra, which is much more tuned for real time and high velocity data. What we recognized is that in the world of Cassandra there are actually remarkable few tools that could help people ingest, manage and analyze data. So, that is what we focused on there. The next step was to get funding through some great UK venture capital companies who could see the vision as clearly as we could. Then, an additional challenge which many of competitors do not face is that we are based in London. The biggest market for anyone in the world of big data is in the United States both in Wall Street and the tech industries in California. So, getting any kind of recognition, visibility, credibility for our company, which is UK based and UK funded, in the United States has been an additional challenge that we are working on to overcome.

CEOCFO: Are there particular types of companies, either by industry or by size, which would be more likely to

want what you provide or should everyone really want your offering?

Mr. Gomersall: One of the difficulties what we have is that we work across many different industries. That is good in a way, because if you are an online advertiser or if you are a manufacturer of consumer electronics products or if you are an investment bank, then we have got a solution. However, what we loose in doing that is the recognition of being the dominant player in one particular sector. We have twenty customers. They are genuinely spread across at least twelve industries. We serve a very wide range of needs. Some of them are small organizations with a few dozen employees and some are very large organizations with tens of thousands of employees. So, it is cross-industry and it ranges from mid-size to large enterprise, which is the one thing that they all have in common, even in small organizations today. This is an interesting change from business twenty years ago. Twenty years ago a small organization had a small amount of information and a large organization had a much more. Today, you can be a relatively small company dealing with the amount of information traditionally associated with a huge enterprise. That is why organizations like HAILO™, the taxi booking app, which is now operating in many countries around the world, in terms of a business they are not a large enterprise; I am guessing about two hundred employees. However, the amount of data they have in their business would be as much as a medium sized retail bank, because of the nature of what they do. What is interesting today is that even a small or medium sized business can have genuine big data challenges.

CEO CFO: How do you reach potential customers?

Mr. Gomersall: We have a small sales team. We have a small tele-marketing team. We attend events and trade shows. We are at one this week in San Jose, for example. We attend as many events as possible.

We travel around with our booth and we hope to attract some interest doing that. However, most of our potential customers come and find us. That is because we do a modest amount of PR. We try to get ourselves known in the technology community. A large part of my job is to spend time with large organizations, whether it be an Oracle or IBM or people like that and just getting our name out there. Also, because we work on top of a storage system called Cassandra, which is an open source storage system, we have become well known for having a very deep expertise within the Cassandra community. In fact we have committed some very significant enhancements to Cassandra open source project. We have become well known for that. There are thousands of Cassandra users around the world. If you are a

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Cassandra user and you start to feel that you have some requirements to do real time analysis with data that is streamed into your Cassandra system, then you will come and find us. It is really as simple as that. We have customers in Australia, Finland, North America, in the UK and other parts of continental Europe. That is because people use Cassandra and they want to get some help or some expertise; they look at Wikipedia or they look at the Apache website and see us there along with a small number of organizations. It is great that people come and find us. If we have to go out and look for every potential customer then we probably would not be growing at the speed that we are today.

CEO CFO: Do you do follow up to know if your customers are making full use of what you provide, if they

actually do take action from the information?

Mr. Gomersall: Yes. We have twenty customers. We just entered our second year of commercial operations, so we picked up twenty customers our first year and they are all valuable to us. If we had two thousand customers it would be difficult keeping track of every one of them. Again, we are in the space of selling enterprise solutions and our customers spend between a few tens of thousand of dollars to many hundreds of thousands, possibly millions. When you are in that space and you have only got twenty customers you have to make sure that they are all wildly successful. That is because they will tell the story to someone else and that will help us to get more traction. We rely on the fact

that all of our customers are successful. They are great references for us. They tell all of their friends about us and it has a trickle down effect. So, yes, we very, very closely follow up. Of course, if our customers, given that they all spend tens of thousands of dollars and in some cases significantly more; if they were not getting value then they would come knocking on our

door pretty quickly.

CEO CFO: What is ahead for the company?

Mr. Gomersall: Earlier on this year we opened a US office in Palo Alto. We just completed the initial phase of populating our office with a small team of people. We are about to do the same in Wall Street. We intend to have a small office in Wall Street. We are gaining traction very quickly in the investment banking community. We intend to grow the company and become the dominant player within this space. This space is going to become very broad. The sheer volume of data that enterprises are now managing forces them to look for more scalable, more cost effective ways of doing it as an alternative to some of the legacy systems they have used in the past and the price tag associated with those. As we see

people move away from Oracle to Cassandra they might find that the richness of tooling that they have become used to is just not there. Acunu gives them back the ability to manage and visualize their data. So, we expect to take advantage of that by becoming the dominant player within our very specific niche. That specific niche is to be able to do real time analytics on fast moving streams of events. In doing that we are going to attract the attention of some of the people that we may have been in business against or taken business from. We expect to forge some strategic partnerships along the way

and since very large organizations IT providers often find it more difficult to innovate than a small startup. As well as going to market directly with our own people, we expect to build some partnerships over the next couple of years that is going to give us additional traction.

CEO CFO: There is a bright future ahead?

Mr. Gomersall: We think so! Twelve months ago we had a partially finished product, we had no customers and no revenue. Here we are today with twenty customers and product that is

rapidly gaining recognition and is well in advance of the market. Some of our competitors today are where we were twelve months ago in terms of completeness of product. So, we think so, although we are continuing to invest in engineering resource. We want to maintain that technical leadership. We are building out the engineering teams to add new features and new functions and add maturity to the product. If we can do all of those things then there is no reason why we cannot make a huge impact.



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