

Cloud-Based Business Rules Management System for SaaS Applications

Technology
Business Rules Management

Decisions on Demand
(866) 656-8527
www.decisionsondemand.com
info@decisionsondemand.com
Twitter: @decsond



Jelle van Geuns
CEO

BIO:

17+ years of enterprise software experience, 10 of which building business rules solutions at ILOG and IBM. Held senior technical leadership positions and started numerous new ventures. Specialized in strategic partner integrations and industry solutions for financial services and insurance.

About Decisions on Demand:

Decisions on Demand brings powerful business rules management to enterprise SaaS applications. We help our customers automate the decisions driving key business processes — so they can operate more efficiently, adapt more quickly to changing business conditions and save on IT costs.

Our cloud-based business rules management system (BRMS)

includes a flexible rule engine and simple tools that allow business users to manage business rules themselves — from inside the enterprise SaaS platforms they use every day.

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. van Geuns, what is the concept behind Decisions on Demand?

Mr. van Geuns: Decisions on Demand is a cloud-based business rules management system designed for use with SaaS applications like Salesforce, Intacct and NetSuite. Our goal is to help companies get more value out of their investments in these applications. We do that by helping them automate a wider range of business processes beyond the core CRM, finance and ERP processes.

CEOCFO: Are there particular areas of focus?

Mr. van Geuns: Yes, we primarily focus on industries with fairly complex, decision-intensive processes, like finance, insurance, government and health care.

CEOCFO: What is your solution and would you give us an example of something fairly common that you would be helping a company with and something that is a little bit more out of the mainstream that you are able to help with as well?

Mr. van Geuns: Financial institutions or agents acting on behalf of financial institutions need to do a pre-qualification of applicants for financial products, such as loans. To make that determination requires fairly complex decision-making based on a number of parameters including credit scores,

credit history and the amount of the loan. And if it is a loan with collateral attached to it, such as a mortgage, the amount of the collateral. We would help those companies if they have their customer and prospects data in a tool like Salesforce to be able to do that pre-qualification all within Salesforce without having to integrate with legacy applications and without having to write a great deal of custom code.

There are a couple of examples a little bit out of the mainstream. One is called Customer Service Recovery; in this case of an airline company managing their loyalty program. If customers had a negative service experience like missed flights or bookings that were canceled or downgraded, the airline would want to make it up to these customers by offering them some compensation. However, the amount of compensation would depend on a number of factors, such as their level in the loyalty program, the nature of the incident and how upset they were about it. We would allow people to automate that kind of decision-making within Salesforce. Not just automate, but also give business users the tools to make changes easily and quickly to those business policies without having to keep going back to IT for every change. Therefore, updates can be deployed a lot faster. Instead of a business having to submit a request to IT, wait for bandwidth, then clarify the requirements and go through this whole cycle, they themselves can go into our tools and make changes directly. Then, after testing the new logic, deploy it immediately to the production environment. It can be done in a matter of hours typically, as opposed to days or weeks in the more traditional cycle.

CEO CFO: What was some of the challenges in putting together your platform?

Mr. van Geuns: The challenge is that there is a wide range of potential use cases for this technology. Our goal is to enable the most common ones and not make it overly generic, because tools that are overly generic tend to be overly complicated as well. We wanted to focus on making it really simple for business people to maintain their business logic and their business rules, by themselves, for the bulk of their routine updates. Therefore, finding the right balance between openness and ease of use was one challenge. Another challenge is basically the awareness among customers of how complex, expensive and time consuming it can be to maintain custom implementations. A platform like Salesforce has a number of options to configure. There are custom applications on top of Salesforce. Sometimes customers getting into that for the first time are not aware of the long-term implications of that choice. You have to make sure you have the right resources and the right people that you can make changes quickly. It turns into a bigger and bigger headache over time. Not everybody can visualize that far ahead, so some people will have to go down the path one time to experience that for themselves. Then come back and see that there is a better way to do it.

CEO CFO: There are a fair number of companies in your space. What do you understand about the process at Decisions on Demand that makes your offering superior?

Mr. van Geuns: There are two main things. One is we are entirely focused on automating decisions within SaaS applications. We built the product from the ground up to be cloud based. We focus on the integration points into platforms like Salesforce, and built an AppExchange app which allows you to deploy into Salesforce in a matter of minutes. The ease of getting started on these enterprise platforms and of maintaining your business logic in a cloud based way is a distinctive feature. The other I mentioned earlier, which is the focus on the ease of use

and the simplicity for the business user. There are many traditional business rules applications that try to be all things to all people. Therefore, they have a great deal of possibilities, but those possibilities translate into complexity, which defeats the purpose to a large degree.

We have about 10 years of experience in this segment and it is possible to build really powerful applications using the more traditional business rules tools, but they, by and large, were not simple enough for business users to maintain.

CEO CFO: How do you ensure user friendliness?

Mr. van Geuns: For us the key is trying to get feedback from actual customers and or potential customers as early as possible; even before the product was fully mature. We put it out

“We are the first to bring powerful business rules management to enterprise SaaS applications.”

- Jelle van Geuns

there and implemented a number of pilot projects around specific use cases, which allowed us to validate that the functionality that we provided was sufficient in those use cases and that actual end users could really use the tools to maintain their business rules.

CEO CFO: When you are speaking with a potential client, do they understand the difference in what you have created right away? What is the "aha" moment?

Mr. van Geuns: It really depends. It is a wide range. There are a number of prospects and clients that we have spoken to that have prior experience in the space so they need less education about the benefits. They are more focused on comparing the features and the specifics of the implementation. Others need more visual feedback. Then once they see the application running, they have a better sense of how it works and what benefits it can provide to them. Some customers are not really in our target zone. The problems they try to solve are fairly trivial. The Salesforce platform would

provide a reasonable solution that are probably a better fit for them.

CEO CFO: How do you reach prospective customers?

Mr. van Geuns: A number of ways. One is our listing on the AppExchange. That has generated a number of leads coming in for us. We also engage a number of implementation partners that focus on SaaS applications and we reach customers through them. Right now we are just starting to ramp up our direct marketing as well.

CEO CFO: How is business these days?

Mr. van Geuns: We are still in the fairly early stage as we are rolling out our first production deployments right now. We have a number of prospects lined up for future deployment, so it is really just too early to tell really definitively. However, we do get a sense that there is a real and growing need for the capabilities that we provide in the enterprise space.

CEO CFO: Are you funded for the next steps?

Mr. van Geuns: Right now we are friends and family funded. We have enough to take us to the next level of development, at which point we intend to seek a seed round of funding to accelerate the growth.

CEO CFO: What have you learned in prior business experience that has been the most helpful as you have founded and developed this company?

Mr. van Geuns: I would say two things. One, from a software development perspective, it is the value of agile or lean development techniques. Developing only those features that you can actually show to a customer and that provide an immediate value to an end user. Focusing on rolling those out incrementally, as opposed to doing major development work that does not provide an immediate value to a user. That has allowed us with the limited development investment, to put together a fully functional product. The second, I referred to that before, is trying to find a better balance between trying to solve every possible problem and really solving a limited

sub-set of problems, but solving them much better and in a way that is much easier for customers to get started with. We really tried to focus on building a solution that is easy to get started with and does not require a lot of up front configuration to provide value.

CEOCFO: Why should the business community pay attention to Decisions on Demand?

Mr. van Geuns: We believe that enterprise software goes through

cycles. The maturity curve of enterprise SaaS adoption is coming to a point where people have done the easy stuff. They have implemented their core CRM processes and they have put ERP and financials in the cloud. Now they are trying to run more of their business on these SaaS platforms. In doing that, they are facing challenges of change management, of access control, of implementing a customized business logic that falls outside of the core scope of what these platforms

provide. They need tools that were developed in a previous enterprise software cycle, but do not exist right now in the cloud. We are trying to fill one part of that gap, the business rules management gap. We recognize there are large vendors in that space, but they are all in the previous wave of enterprise software. We are the first to bring powerful business rules management to enterprise SaaS applications.



Decisions on Demand

(866) 656-8527

www.decisionsondemand.com

info@decisionsondemand.com

Twitter: @decsond