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# Next Generation Data Federation Platform for Analytic Data Services

**Analytics**

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**Mark Theissen**
**CEO**

**BIO:**
Mark is a respected analytics and data warehousing expert having spent more than 22 years in the industry in a variety of key roles. Prior to Cirro Mark was the worldwide data warehousing technical lead at Microsoft for two and half years following the acquisition of DATAllegro. At DATAllegro Mark was the COO and a member of the board of directors. Prior to joining DATAllegro, Mark was Vice President and Research Lead at META Group (Gartner Group) for Enterprise Analytics Strategies, covering data warehousing, business intelligence and data integration markets. Before META, Mark was VP of Professional Services at Accruent where he was responsible for domestic and over-seas services and operations. Other prior companies include Brio Technology (Oracle), where he ran the professional and education services groups and Prism Solutions (IBM), where he was a data warehouse practice director. Mark has a BS in Computer Information Systems from Chapman University and a MBA from the University of California, Irvine.

**About Cirro:**
Seamless access for data analysis across heterogeneous data ecosystems represents an untapped opportunity to ask unresolved data questions that lead to new business insights and value creation. Designed for Big Data processing and performance at scale, Cirro is a revolutionary approach to bridging corporate analytic data silos. Hadoop, the most popular environment for Big Data processing, and NoSQL data sources are rapidly becoming a mainstream requirement and it's essential to integrate within today's corporate analytic ecosystems.

First generation market attempts to perform Big Data analytics require that all data be placed in one single location and then be accessed by a proprietary tool. Cirro delivers the *Next Generation Data Federation* platform for analytic data services enabling the access of heterogeneous data platforms and types using standard SQL. The result is an easy-to-implement, highly scalable platform that helps organizations overcome a major hurdle to Big Data analysis; on-the-fly self-service data exploration and analysis across the entire enterprise data ecosystem.

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

**CEOCFO:** Mr. Theissen, what is the concept at Cirro?
**Mr. Theissen:** Cirro is really all about helping people bring together the world of traditional relational data in the data center with the new world of cloud computing, SaaS, Hadoop and NoSQL data sources. We are focused on allowing people to use their existing BI and visualization tools and products on their desktops to access and perform analytics across all their sources of data in the cloud, a private cloud or the data center. With Cirro you can now can ask questions of your data you couldn't ask before.

**CEOCFO:** How does your offering differ from some of the others that are available?
**Mr. Theissen:** Cirro is a next generation solution for data federation providing true peer-to-peer query federation without processing bottlenecks or the need of labor intensive semantic layers. Previous attempts at data federation have always fallen short in that they do not really do federated processing. They always perform final aggregates or final joins back on a server that is separate from where the data resides. Cirro provides a true federated solution that pushes all of the processing down as close to the data sources as possible. Our belief is the world of data going forward is really distributed and the way to achieve performance at scale in this distributed world of data is by taking the processing to the data as opposed to trying to bring all of the data to the processing.

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We are often quickly compared to virtualization technologies. However, we are very different. With virtualization approaches you have to create a semantic layer and model everything in order to begin asking questions of your data. This can be a time consuming and cumbersome exercise. Virtualization also doesn't elegantly support Cloud data sources or unstructured data. Simply stated, Cirro does not require you to know all of the questions you want to ask of your data before you can get started regardless of the data type, platform or environment.

**CEOCFO:** For those of us who are less technical, would you explain the data federation concept?

**Mr. Theissen:** The idea of data federation is if I have a query – a question I want to ask of my data – and that question involves data from multiple sources, how will I go about resolving that question? My question may require some web analytics data from Google Analytics which is a SaaS application. I may also have additional data in the Amazon cloud, and other data like customer and sales data in a database in my data center. Historically, the IT staff had to bring all the data that they need to answer that question into one place. Only then could you ask your data question.

The problem with that approach is that it takes a tremendous amount of time, effort and labor to consolidate data into a single platform. Typically, once you answer that question you generally end up having more probing questions and guess what? You end up having to repeat the data aggregation and consolidation process in order to ask your next series of questions. Cirro's data federation allows you to ask questions (and others iteratively) across multiple sources by leaving the data in place. Our solution determines how to ask the question across all data sources and is able to return the results to the end-user application the customer happens to be using.

**CEOCFO:** What were some of the difficulties in putting your offering together?

**Mr. Theissen:** Fundamentally, we're asking firms to think differently about their business intelligence architectures. In our prior company, we focused on creating query optimizers for what is known as massive parallel processing or MPP processing. As we looked into the market for our next venture it was clear to us, especially with the explosion of Big Data, that it would be difficult to continue to move data around in the traditional manner for analytics. Essentially, we saw the untapped opportunity to revolutionize query optimization that could go across multiple sources and platforms. This is a huge data management challenge because there are some complex issues you have to account for across multiple disparate data sources. Cirro's understanding of those challenges

> **"With Cirro you can now ask questions of your data you couldn't ask before."**
> **– Mark Theissen**

and creating the IP to solve data federation and query optimization at scale remains our market differentiation.

**CEOCFO:** Seems like a no-brainer?

**Mr. Theissen:** Well, it seems straightforward enough but it's not easy! We've had some people say to us 'if you can do this – then you have a solved a massive data access computing challenge.'

When a new technology like Cirro emerges into the market, the products evolve through maturation phases within that market. I believe we are moving quickly out of an 'innovator category' into an 'early adopter' phase. In the next year or so the market will continue to evolve into the 'early majority' phase where we will see significant customer uptake. Fortunately for us data access and analytics is a cross-industry challenge. As a result Cirro's technology is applicable across multiple industries. We've had traction in 'data-driven' industries such as media and

entertainment, retail, consumer packaged goods, utilities and financial services. These companies tend to be larger Global 2000 or Fortune 500 companies. They typically have more data sources than you can imagine and they tend to be more aggressive in their adoption of emerging technologies such as Hadoop and other NoSQL technologies.

**CEOCFO:** When you or one of your staff are speaking with a prospective customer, is there a typical aha moment?

**Mr. Theissen:** You bet. And there is typically more than one aha moment! The initial aha moment happens when the customer really grasps how Cirro's approach to data federation is different from what they have done in the past. They quickly understand that not only does Cirro solve the analytic challenges of today but also those in the future for distributed data ecosystems. The next aha moment happens when we do a proof-of-concept with the customer on their data. Their expectations, based on prior experiences, are these projects will take weeks to complete due of the complexity of data movements and consolidation. With Cirro, including the time to install and test a specific use case can be done in a matter of days. That is also a big aha moment for them as they get to experience how easy it is to install, maintain, administer and see results with their data.

**CEOCFO:** When you are implementing the system for a client, what is involved?

**Mr. Theissen:** Cirro can be installed in the cloud, a private cloud or in a data center. The first step is to register your various data sources and then we're ready to go. Installation and configuration is usually in three or four hours. So it's really quite easy compared to other enterprise product installations. I think one of the things that people really like about our solution is that we leverage investments they have already made. Customers can use the BI tools on their desktops, Excel or a command line interface. This really accelerates customer adoption. Cus-

tomers also like that Cirro can be administered and managed much like a database, which means their DBAs and administrative staff really like the technology because they can use existing tools and processes they already know for administering and managing databases. We've not only developed a revolutionary approach to data federation but also focused on making sure our solutions can elegantly dovetail existing organizations and architectures to ease adoption.

**CEOCFO:** How will the funds from your recent funding be utilized and how far will take you in your plans?
**Mr. Theissen:** We raised a Series A round of a little over $8 million. Toba Capital led the round with Frost Venture Partners along with participation from Miramar Ventures. We are using the funding to build out and scale up the company in all areas including engineering, QA, sales, marketing and customer support.

**CEOCFO:** What is your partner's program?
**Mr. Theissen:** Our approach to partners has been to focus on a few strategic partners where we feel we deliver a synergistic value to the customer. We have a number of partners that we currently work with including Hortonworks, Tableau Software, IBM, Tibco, and Accenture.

**CEOCFO:** You personally have been involved with analytics and data warehousing for many years. What have you learned in previous ventures that has been most helpful as you have developed the company?
**Mr. Theissen:** There have been many lessons learned from all my prior ventures. One thing I'm very focused on is our growth trajectory. Before we scale our personnel resources, I want to ensure we have ample customer evidence our solution works as prescribed and the product has been though a rigorous beta process. I think this is an important benchmark for any software product. There is nothing worse than bringing on

expensive resources prematurely into a company and not having a foundation for success firmly established with customer evidence. It can cause a lot of chaos.

Another thing I'm focused on is culture. For Cirro, we are fortunate to have our core management team and our core engineering team working together for the last eight years in multiple companies. This creates a very collaborative and fun-to-work culture. We also take time to have fun as well, and I think that is important. Finally, I really appreciate giving people the freedom to do their jobs and deliver on their responsibilities. I have seen too many startups in the past where the founder tries to control too much, do too much and ends up stifling the success of many other people hired to perform those functions.

**CEOCFO:** When you have a core team that has been together, how do you ensure that somebody new coming in can feel a part of the team and not an outsider?
**Mr. Theissen:** I think that is a part of the interviewing process. Our interview process is extensive. Clearly, we focus on technical skills and prior experience, but we also evaluate people in terms of cultural fit. Are they a self-starter? Have they worked in startups before? What are they looking for in the culture of a company that they want to work at? What is it that turns them off? Just even asking those types of questions is something that I do not think a lot people even ask in interviews, but we do. It's all part of ensuring that a person will be successful in the company and I think that screening process is important.

**CEOCFO:** What changed from your first concept of your product to the actual roll out or since you have rolled it out?
**Mr. Theissen:** Well, our vision of data federation didn't change but the market didn't quite understand our revolutionary approach to the

federation challenge. So we did work on our positioning to ensure that analysts, press and customers understand our unique value proposition. We really focused our positioning on 'next-generation data federation.' That sounds like a mouth full, but when you are talking to CIO's and data architects, they really understand this differentiation and positioning. It's always interesting to me when you're introducing a dis-intermediating product in the market. We essentially are establishing a new, unique market segment with our positioning of 'next-generation federation.' Timing is always crucial factor, too, as you want to ensure the market is ready for the new solution we're delivering. So as we exit 2013 and head in to 2014, our message is resonating loud and clear in the analyst communities and with our customers. Most importantly, our unique differentiation has been well received by our customers and partners.

**CEOCFO:** What is ahead for the company?
**Mr. Theissen:** 2014 is a big growth and scale out year. I believe the Big Data market has matured quite a bit in 2013. And next year is a year of market entrenchment for Cirro. We also have a very exciting product version 2.0 slated for mid-year driven by customer and market feedback. As you can appreciate I cannot share details right now because I don't want to discuss those things publicly yet. So I view 2014 as a springboard year for us and one that really starts an accelerated growth phase for Cirro well into 2105. This includes significant staff increases, a broader partner program, a reseller channel, and international expansion.

**CEOCFO:** Final thoughts?
**Mr. Theissen:** It's a great time to be at Cirro. We deliver a game-changing approach for the Big Data market and believe our most exciting days are ahead of us.

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