# Disruptive technology leads to positive change

Sage's chief technology officer and head of product strategy, Himanshu Palsule, visited South Africa last week as a keynote speaker at the Sage ERP Africa partner conference, Sage Insights 2013. Addressing more than 255 Sage business partners from South, East and West Africa, Palsule said that there are two distinct global trends shaping the technology landscape.

He said that while the internet has disrupted the value chain and workflow, as we know it today, it has created immeasurable opportunity and is shaping customer requirements. "Choice and flexibility top the list of most users today. We no longer have a classic business model within a structured work day. Customers are often remote and disconnected, thus demanding access anywhere, any time and on any device"

This has led to a significant transformation strategy for the Sage group, if not the entire technology industry. Palsule said that it has accelerated innovation and brought about a new way of thinking. "We get accounting and we get ERP. The challenge we set for ourselves was to understand our customers even better and what they wanted going forward."

## Feature fatigue

He said that taking complexity out was a key requirement. "A testament to the new way of doing business was our customers asking us to stop doing things. There is clearly a case of feature fatigue and, despite having asked for the numerous features, customers now want simplicity. Whether this is a result of a slowing economy or global complexity is unclear, but customers want simpler workflows and we will give it to them."

Palsule has brought together a team of product design and experience professionals hailing from companies such as Google and AOL. "We didn't need this level of innovation in design before, but the world has changed and we do now."

Tasked with bringing the required innovation, consistency and simplicity to all Sage products, Palsule said that the team spent four months interviewing hundreds of CEOs and it was clear that it was time for a change. "There were two obvious trends: mobility and cloud computing, both of which have already had a positive impact on our current product roadmap."

## A cloud-first culture

In North America, smartphone usage went from 49% to 77% and the same trend exists in South Africa with 75% of companies in South Africa using smartphones. From a cloud computing perspective, IT budgets went from 10% to 24% in 2012. Palsule said that this not only shows a distinct shift, it is also proof that we have indeed entered a cloud-first culture.

Seeking a balance in its innovative approach, Palsule said that all Sage products going forward will be built with a mobile

and cloud strategy in mind. This is not a trend with an end in sight; it is a new way of life. "There are industry-wide predictions that by the end of this year, there could be more smartphones on the planet than humans, and that by 2016 there could be 10 billion smartphones. We cannot underestimate the impact of mobility, nor can we see it as a technology. The simple truth is that technology is just an enabler to a connected, simpler way of life."

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