

Database Development Tool for Complex Integrations



Rick Banister
Chief Executive Officer

CEOCFO: Mr. Banister, would you tell us the concept behind Sesame Software?

Mr. Banister: I was a consultant for many years in Silicon Valley. The things I did most were data integration projects. It seemed to me at the time that there was a serious need for integration products that could facilitate this and make it a lot easier. That led to a lot of effort on each project to build something that worked for the client's specific needs using native database programming. After roughly eleven years of that, I decided to go off and build a tool to do a project and the tools sort of worked out and I learned some lessons from that. After that, we became a product company and it has worked out well for us since. The premise of our tools is that it should be easier for a database developer to do what they already know how to do much more efficiently and without a lot of things standing in the way of what they are doing. That is very much in contrast with the other products I have seen at the time and currently.

CEOCFO: What is the key to being simple but efficient?

Mr. Banister: Database programmers turn out to be the best people to do these projects; the company secretary or CFO usually does not have the technical skills to pull off the data integration project. Having database programmers who already have the skills means that you are talking to them in their native language, which is SQL. We built our stack based on the premise that if you want to copy data from a SaaS data source to an on-premise database, it is a copy command and you do not have to code anything. If you want to do some integration and tie two data sources together then you should speak to the programmer in the language they already know.

CEOCFO: Who is turning to you for service?

Mr. Banister: We get customers all over the world. We have some of the smallest companies around between ten and twenty employees and one maybe halfway decent programmer, to companies like General Electric, Cisco and Symantec who have large staffs and huge databases. Data integration has to happen in any industry because people buy off-the-shelf applications for accounting, sales and customer support. They then need to tie it together.

CEOCFO: What do you understand about the process that competitors perhaps do not recognize as meaningful?

Mr. Banister: One of the leading competitors asked me personally in 2006 to create a third party bolt-on for their product that would build a Salesforce.com data warehouse. I refused because they built it on marketing concepts. Their thinking was that it was a good idea to put an existing on-premise product in the Cloud and the world would love to have that kind of an implementation. My whole thought process has been that marketing should help sell products that work well instead of developing products that may be buzzword compliant but not so easy to use. That has been our whole focus, to build things that actually work in the best way and using the best techniques, platforms and hardware configurations, rather than start with marketing guys laying down the spec.

CEOCFO: When a company is considering Sesame Software do they understand the depth of your offering or are they pleasantly surprised to find out?

Mr. Banister: We get a lot of business from customers who have been using or tried to use some of the other products that are focused more on looking good than feeling good. By focusing on functionality and usability rather than looking good in a demo, we are able to satisfy the ultimate goal of the developer, which is to get something done rather than impress the person attending the tradeshow with how pretty it was in the demo. Not that our product isn't pretty, but it actually works. And when things go haywire in the implementation the developer is able to figure out what is going wrong with their logic rather than having to figure out what is going on with the product.

We are very contrarian. When somebody tries something that is newfangled but does not work out, they come to us because we have the reputation for being such a straightforward product. We also have scalability patents and other things that make our competitors jealous. We get a lot of business from companies that first buy from vendors with huge marketing budgets. Then they come to us when things do not work out with those products.

CEOCFO: Do you have plans to get the customers for their first try?

Mr. Banister: Yes, we have vastly increased our marketing budget in the last two years and it is paying off very well for us.

CEOCFO: Why has this been the time to do so?

Mr. Banister: The general economy is good and we have figured out what kind of marketing strategies work best for us. We are spending a lot of money, time and effort to do that. We have been penny pinching over the years on marketing because word of mouth has been working well. I have decided it is time to go big and get out there in a whole lot of new ways and it is paying off.

CEOCFO: How are you attracting attention?

Mr. Banister: We hired an SEO consulting company to advise us on a number of things. We hired a specialist that does web design to take over the construction of our website and I love working with the guy. We built an internal marketing staff capability and developed the processes with a lot of my involvement. We are doing press releases a couple of times a month. We are developing white papers and putting a lot of content onto the website. We are joining user groups, and actively participating in the integration community. When people come to us, I ask them how they know about us. Most of the time they say they do not even know. To me, this means that we are embedded into the psyche of the community.

“Choose Sesame Software because it actually works. It is easy to learn and we can teach anybody how to use the product within an hour. That is very different from the other products, which focus on visual appeal of the user interface and overreaching claims that anyone can do anything, no matter what their experience level, if only they spend big dollars on the product and a month in class. That is the key – that it just works.” - Rick Banister

CEOCFO: What have you learned as the company has grown and developed -- what has changed?

Mr. Banister: I think we are capitalizing on the strengths that we already have. We are taking a lot more risks investing in marketing. We are not a publically traded company and do not want outside investors, so we live on our profits. We are reinvesting those profits in marketing, and it is working. Doubling down on what we have already been doing seems to be the best strategy.

CEOCFO: What might be different a year from now?

Mr. Banister: We will continue the programs that we started this past year, take more risks, and spend more dollars on marketing as well as continuing our product development. We are basically going to be continuing along with the development of the product that we re-architected three years ago, which is our core Extract Transform Load product. We are adding dozens of new data sources as well as implementing things that work in the Cloud or on premise. We have some things under wraps that are going to be patented techniques that will jump ahead of the crowd rather than just follow the crowd.

CEOCFO: How do you stay ahead of the crowd?

Mr. Banister: I attend many tradeshow and I see what other vendors are coming up with. Most of it tends to be marketing hype rather than things that will actually work. A key thing that is being propounded lately is citizen integration; that is people that have no technical skills can do their integrations. The reality is that it does not work no matter how good the tool is. Complex integrations need to be done by people who understand what is going on behind the scenes. That focus has enabled me to counter some of the industry analysts who are abdicating citizen integration, drop and drag user interfaces that tend to be nice looking but really hard to use. People have told me at trade shows that these other products take up to six weeks to learn how to use. The products do not need to be and should not need to be cloud based to do things like integrate with on-premise applications. We have developed a suite of products that actually work best rather than focus on marketing driving the process. That is why people come to us when the other solutions fail. They fail because they were not designed right in the first place.

CEOCFO: How do you spend your time as CEO?

Mr. Banister: I work with the product managers as well in marketing and the technical side. I work in the finance side and I am very involved in all the details of the company. Staff development is very important to us; we have basically zero

turnover. People love working for this company because they believe in what we are doing. We treat them right and believe in employees. We do not hire consultants or offshore people. By having that kindred spirit among the team, we have developed a team that really loves working together. The results are outstanding and the customers love that about us. They love developing a relationship with people, and they can count on the honesty of the answers and the effectiveness of the solutions.

CEOCFO: *Why choose Sesame Software?*

Mr. Banister: Choose Sesame Software because it actually works. It is easy to learn and we can teach anybody how to use the product within an hour. That is very different from the other products, which focus on visual appeal of the user interface and overreaching claims that anyone can do anything, no matter what their experience level, if only they spend big dollars on the product and a month in class. That is the key -- that it just works.

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



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