

Star Gazer Marc Benioff – Chairman and CEO of salesforce.com

Marc Benioff is chairman and CEO of salesforce.com. He founded the company in March 1999 with a vision to create an on-demand customer relationship management (CRM) solution that would replace traditional enterprise software technology. Benioff is now regarded as the leader of what he has termed "The End of Software;" the growing belief that on-demand applications can democratize CRM by delivering immediate benefits to companies of all sizes at reduced risks and costs. Under Benioff's direction, salesforce.com has grown from a groundbreaking idea into a publicly traded company that is the market and technology leader in on-demand CRM.

[start box] "In looking at the future of software, I think it looks a lot like the Internet today, a stream of heterogeneous services delivered by providers all over the world who are able to integrate their applications to provide composite technology that outpaces and outshines the traditional enterprise software market.

The key features are very low cost, very easy to use, very fast to get going, and very easy to break out of the traditional enterprise software model. This creates lots of unique applications through the concept of a mash-up which was made popular when Craigslist and Amazon.com came together to create apartment rental applications. You are really going to see now for the first time how these applications are able to come together to create unique web services delivered to corporations, not just consumers.

Ultimately, it's because customers have been much more successful with the On Demand model than with the traditional model. You look at a lot of companies, whether it's Merrill Lynch or Cisco or so many of our customers, thousands of our customers who had bought products from Oracle and Siebel and PeopleSoft and Microsoft but never got them running, they were proverbial "shelfware." What our model has been able to do is take that shelfware and get use out of it. Gartner says that only about 18% of SAP's CRM users are actually users. That is, only 18% of the software they sold is in place. There's no other industry in the world with that rate of failure.

We have 1% of our equity in a 501C3 public charity called salesforce.com Foundation, 1% of our profits and 1% of our employee's time. That gives us the ability to on a worldwide basis provide a level of community service that is unprecedented for a company of our size. In fact, we've won every major award in corporate philanthropy, mostly as evidence that most companies just don't really focus on, or care about, this idea that we call compassion capitalism. For us, it means that we not only have been able to do a lot of good in the world, but we've created a better company, too. In fact, our ability to recruit people, for example, is much higher than any other company our class because people want to work for a company that's doing this kind of service work." [end box]