

Views from Asia Pacific & Japan

Having worked both for PE backed enterprises and leading corporates across the technology sector, **Martin Mackay** recently opted for a new kind of challenge, moving to Singapore to take up the role of President and General Manager for CA Technologies in Asia Pacific and Japan (APJ). He spoke to **GS-insight** about his experiences in the role so far.



Martin Mackay, President and General Manager, CA Technologies, Asia Pacific and Japan

Why did you move to CA and to Singapore?

My motivation for leaving Europe was the realisation as to the kind of challenge I wanted to take up next and that CA offered me. To date, I've had a wide ranging career which has seen me working for large US multinationals such as PeopleSoft and Verisign, as well as running

smaller PE backed companies. The last three of these were turnarounds which can be really exhilarating because you can make a real difference. In the years I ran Calyx Managed Services, Neverfail and then Experior, we definitely changed a lot of things about those businesses for the good. At the same time however, we never had

the resources to fulfil the full extent of our ambition. Having done my last turnaround and having been approached to take on a couple more, I asked myself, "What do I want to do next? What do I really enjoy?". I realised I most enjoy working for large multinationals on the international stage, delivering relevant solutions.

At this point I was already in touch with a number of people, concerning potential options, including Mike Gregoire, the CEO of CA Technologies, whom I had worked with at PeopleSoft. He put me in touch with Adam Elster, President of Global Field Operations at CA. We got on well and talked about options. Adam told me he believed the best fit for me would be running the APJ business and asked if I'd consider moving to Singapore. I replied, "In a heartbeat." My children are all teenagers now and my wife is a serial expat. This all helped to make the decision a straightforward one. The whole process from first talking to Adam, to arriving in Singapore took about two and a half months.

How did you find the transition of moving to Singapore?

Singapore must surely be the easiest place to be an ex-pat. It's a thriving and dynamic city, representing a fusion of East and West, with a diverse range of cultures, though English is the lingua franca. Everything works incredibly efficiently; public transport is amazing for example, and the weather is incredible. Despite recently being branded as one of the world's most expensive places to live, the fact that we don't need a car or have any children to educate

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here allows us to live cost effectively. All this, coupled with the fact that CA helped us to find an apartment when we first arrived, rendered the transition of moving to Singapore remarkably simple.

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The second part of the transition was making the move to CA which has again proved incredibly easy. There are many things that make CA a great company to work for and our APJ operation a great place to work. One is CA’s technology which is genuinely at the forefront in terms of what customers want. Second is the region itself. Even with some of the geopolitical issues, North Korea for example and the restructuring Prime Minister Modi has undertaken in India, the business opportunity is huge. Finally there is the culture at CA. Though we’re very much a results oriented business, it’s a really open and friendly place to work. My welcome into CA was the best I’ve had in my twenty-eight years’ career. It was phenomenal, enabling me to make the transition from Europe very smoothly.

What does your new remit look like and how do you manage such a large region with numerous cultural differences?

CA currently employs around three thousand people across APJ, whilst I have fourteen direct reports, of various different nationalities. Besides Singapore, we have offices in Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. It’s a massive region with huge geographical distances between countries. Additionally, there are cultural differences across the region and I’ve got to do a lot of work to understand what works best within the different territories. You can’t operate in Japan the same way you would in the US or the UK. In certain markets, you need to have

more patience, whilst in Singapore things are pretty straightforward. You need to be flexible and able to manage different people in different ways. Good, consistent communication is vital and it’s important to be physically present, as well as keeping in touch remotely, which means I need to travel a lot.

Despite the cultural variation across the region, it remains important that we continue to uphold the global values of CA Technologies which is a global brand with global products. This shared set of values represents a great unifying factor and so it’s vital that the leadership works to uphold them. One of the best things about the region is that, though people are very demanding as to what they expect from their leaders, they do respond really well to good leadership. If the management team can uphold the global values of the company, whilst communicating frequently across the region, with sensitivity to cultural variation, then employees will respond with great entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. There’s an insatiable hunger for success out here which makes it a great region to work in.

What is the business model for CA in the region, is it a blend of direct and channel or is it mainly one or the other?

CA has traditionally been a direct business, but over the last couple of years we’ve invested massively in the channel and will continue to do so as we look to make it a key part of our route to market. This is generally a trend in technology across APJ. I have some really strong channel leaders and CA has lots of people selling with and through the channel.

Historically, CA has been really strong selling high end enterprise software to the largest enterprise, we’re really good at doing Enterprise Licensing Agreements. What we need to do now is substantially increase the velocity going into the channel which will really help to drive growth.

How does the region compare to Europe in terms of digital transformation?

I think the APJ region ranks above

the rest of the world in terms of digital transformation. We recently conducted a global research into the convergence of agile and DevOps to support digital transformation and countries like China emerged streets ahead of their Western counterparts. It’s almost as if the client server and the internet age 1.0 passed the region by and instead, they’ve leapt forward to the internet age 2.0. If you take China for example, the apps that are available there on smart phones make what we use in Europe look like legacy technology. The scale alone is unbelievable; something like 60% of the world’s smart phone usage is in the region, whilst the market opportunity for new technology such as fintech is huge. A retail bank in the UK might have up to ten million customers, but in India, the largest banks have over one hundred million customers. Even in countries like Japan which are relatively conservative, there is nonetheless, an acceptance of the digital transformation agenda. There’s a liberty and trading spirit indigenous to this part of the world which is really enabling and driving digital transformation.

How do the challenges around hiring vary in the region compared with Europe?

The competition for talent here is far greater. CA APJ has strong programs that make it a great place to work, and this helps in our recruitment of top talent. At CA in general, we invest a lot in the employee experience. There’s a great emphasis on engagement programs, as well as referral programs, encouraging people to recommend their friends to come and work here. For two years running now, we’ve been listed as one of the world’s most ethical companies by the Ethisphere Institute, which is not an easy feat. All this helps us to build a reputation as a great place to work and to attract the best talent. In the six months I’ve been based in Singapore, we’ve already managed to hire some really strong leaders.

All in all the combination of the CA culture, the opportunity in APJ and the personal experience make the decision to move out almost a year ago the best one of my career.