

Renaissance Man

Philippe Magne innovates in rocket science, music and software development

BY SHIRLEY S. SAVAGE

Philippe Magne has been called many things: space agent, funky musician, software developer and CEO. At first glance, these talents may not appear to have much in common ... or even much effect on one another. But Magne, CEO and chairman of ARCAD Software, is not your typical—well, anything.

Magne started working within the computer department of the European Space Agency (ESA) in 1988. It would become a pivotal point in his life. While based at the ESA Kourou spaceport in French Guiana, located on the northern coast of South America, Magne was tasked with improving the quality and dependability of ESA information systems. During his tenure, the ESA became one of the first companies to implement a high-availability system and one of the earliest accounts to outsource application maintenance. Magne was key in the development of both.

Also while at the ESA, Magne bought his first drum kit, picking up the skill by playing over CDs. His natural sense of rhythm and a love of dancing drew him to drumming. “Playing drums is somewhat like dancing,” he says. “You move both arms and legs in sync.”

Synchronization has important implications from a business perspective, too. At the ESA, Magne sought to blend quality methodologies with development. When the quality-assurance manager position was established, Magne was a natural choice for the job of creating control validation in applications. He insisted on keeping one foot in the development arena while he also worked on control and quality issues. His development

concept proved to be such an innovative solution that the ESA and Magne both saw the benefit of launching it to a wider audience and, in 1992, ARCAD Software—focused on IBM i software management—was founded.

Magne also kept a foot in drumming and has evolved into a drummer who likes to play “funky music—a bit of rock, a bit of jazz.” In a band, the drummer plays a pivotal role, listening to the other players, driving the tempo and changing the beat. Now, Magne melds his musical expertise into his management style. “Being a drummer is very important for being a CEO because the CEO is setting the pace for the rest of the company,” he says.

“For relaxing and improving my creativity, music is very important,” Magne believes. It’s no surprise there’s a drum kit stored at the office in Annecy, France.

Clearly, Magne places a high value on music and its effect on business. If a candidate for a developer’s job is a musician, “I know there’s going to be rapport,” Magne says. “Development calls for a certain amount of creativity, and music is a combination of creativity and a lot of work.”

Frank Zappa used to ask auditioning musicians: “What can you do that’s fantastic?” That’s a question that Magne might ask himself and his colleagues every day. The answer just might be this: Watch us jam and you’ll see innovation.

“I have a reputation of being a visionary, which has its strong point and weak point,” Magne says. “The weak point is that you may not speak to the market at the moment. The strong point is that you are convinced that one day the market will react to what you have developed.” Now that’s a creative truth whether you’re in space, music or technology. **i**



Philippe Magne

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