TRAILBLAZERS TALK

Ravi Kumar S., President, Infosys, in conversation with Dev Ittycheria, CEO, MongoDB Inc

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Ravi Kumar S. (RK): I have a distinguished guest, also a friend of mine, for this chapter of Trailblazers - David Ittycheria. Dev is the CEO and Managing Director for MongoDB. He has a diverse background of operational, entrepreneurial and investing capabilities from a variety of roles he's played in his past life. Dev has been an investing partner with Greylock Partners and a managing director of OpenView Venture Partners. He founded a company called BladeLogic, which was sold subsequently to BMC where he was a president running a $1.4 billion P&L. Dev has also done multiple IPOs and has successfully taken Mongo into the market as well. Thank you Dev, for being here.

Dev Ittycheria (DI): Ravi it's nice to be here, thank you for having me.

RK: Thank you so much and every time I speak to you I always learn something new about what's happening in the market so thanks for talking to us.

Tell us a little bit about yourself, you are very uniquely positioned from the fact that you had a background of entrepreneurship, you founded companies, you've been an investing partner and now you are running a fast growing software company today. Tell us what's that one shared trait which kind of makes you successful across the spectrum of roles.

DI: Well, thank you, it's very kind of you to say that. I would say luck plays a big part in everything. But I would say what I try and look for is what are some of the big secular trends because you want to go where the puck is going and not obviously be where the puck has been.

Two, you want to find or develop products that have strong product market fit. So obviously it comes down to the product, the fit in the market, how compelling, and how defendable your value proposition is relative to the competition. The other thing that I think we focused on a lot is making sure that not only is our product really good but our go-to-market strategy is equally compelling and so we invest a lot in our sales organization and our marketing organization, try and hire very very strong people, and then we also put a lot of effort in partnering, so this relationship that we have with you is a key part of our go-to-market strategy at MongoDB, and it's obviously been very important to us and very beneficial and mutually, hopefully, beneficial to both organizations and so when you can marry a great product with a great distribution in a big market, that's when magic happens.

RK: Your teams tell me that you have a relentless focus on execution.

DI: Yeah, I would say like you know as a leader of a business, I essentially have to focus on three things. One is you know, setting the strategy, making sure I have the team in place to execute that strategy and breaking down all the barriers to prevent us from executing. And so the first two you know you don't do every day. But the third one you focus on every day, what are we doing to kind of move the business faster, you know close business faster, scale the business faster, expanded new markets and deliver results consistently quarter-over-quarter. So again I have a great team, so I can't take all the credit but so far things have gone well.

RK: So Dev you know let me switch gear. You know we work with MongoDB extensively for a lot of our clients. It is in many ways a blockbuster new age database company focused on modern applications. Tell us what makes it so unique.

DI: Yes, so thank you for saying that, so I would say in contrast to the relational database which has now been around for almost 50 years, [**RK:** Yep] when we decided to build a database that really addressed developer productivity right. Relational databases were designed in an era when storage was very expensive and so people wanted to minimize the duplication of data so which is why they came up with the relational database which is really Excel spreadsheet on steroids. But we realized now, fast forward 40-50 years later, the biggest challenge is how can organizations innovate and do so very very quickly and that's all about enabling developers to do more, frankly with less, and so the MongoDB database is architected in what's called a document model, and we believe the document model is truly the best way to manage data. It allows you to really express data in its most natural state, things like dependencies, parent-child relationships, lists and arrays, it's very synonymous with how developers think with new modern object-oriented programming languages. And so it makes the developer's life

so much, it's very easy to iterate, so it's very easy to add fields and features and change the schema, where it's hard to do so in a relational database. So in a world where you're constantly changing, you need a platform that's very agile and adaptable. So that's one big reason.

The second big reason is that we provide a lot of intelligence about how to distribute data by definition to a distributed database. So things like performance, scalability, high availability are all important things for customers today. And also things like GDPR, like how do you make sure certain data stays in certain locations, you can ensure the privacy and security of that data. And so our platform enables that to happen so it enables the developer not have to build that functionality in the application tier. So that's another big reason.

And the third reason is you can truly run MongoDB anywhere. You can start literally as a developer with your laptop at a Starbucks. You can obviously build and run your infrastructure inside your own data center. You can run imagine the cloud, you can manage across clouds and you can consume it as a service. And so building an application on MongoDB in some ways future proofs that application because if your business decides in the next years to move to the cloud, you don't have to rewrite the application. Or if you want to move from one cloud provider to another cloud provider it's very easy to do so, you're not tied or locked in to any specific platform. So that becomes very compelling for customers as they think about their long-term plans and want to preserve optionality in terms of how they want to run their business.

RK: You know the one thing I hear from clients who use MongoDB, and you did so as well, is that it's a very expressive database [**DI:** yes] What does that mean in a sense? Is it easy for developers who can actually query it faster, you could almost run it like a database platform rather than just a database?

DI: Right so our belief and a lot of the mistakes other modern databases made was they threw the baby out with the bathwater. They said we're gonna make the database work really fast, but we'll force make you give up on some features that you liked in the relational database. We said let's take the best of relational databases, express in query language like SQL and put that in MongoDB so you can do things that you can, also have things like secondary indexes, you can have different consistency models based on the type of work layers you're running. So we took the best of relational but put it on a very modern platform that is highly performant, highly scalable, very easy to you know iterate on and very very synonymous with how developers work. So when when people say it's very expressive, it's very easy to express the data in MongoDB in the document model, it's very easy to change the data, it's very easy to add field. So I'll give an example, a simple social use case where if I want to model your social profile you know I would need 70 different tables on our relational database and MongoDB I can map that in one document. And it is something you want to track, say I want to track what sports teams you follow, that's just another entry in the document, whereas it's another table in a relational database. So it just makes it so much easier for developers to work on MongoDB so as organizations want to iterate and innovate very very quickly, we give them a platform to do so.

And you mentioned that we're we're now not just database we're data platform and that's true. We recently announced capabilities on full-text search, we allow you to do very sophisticated analytics on our platform, both you know so you can do analytics on both your online data and your offline data in places like what if your data sits in S3. We have a very sophisticated capabilities around like serverless so you can build applications very very quickly. We allow you to connect to standard BI tools if you already invested in tools like you know Tableau or Click, so you truly make our platform incredibly valuable that people can, the time to value is so important.

RK: You know the more I think about it, there is a blurring line between enterprise workloads and digital workloads, do you see MongoDB playing a big role in mission critical workloads, in some sense those lines are blurred. [**DI:** Yes] And do you see customers adapting it on mission-critical applications as well?

DI: Absolutely, so our customers range from some of the largest companies in the world to cutting-edge startups you know. And so those companies could be telecom, media, you know banking and financial services, insurance, and we have a lot of mutual customers we work together. And what we're finding is that originally they first would work with us on say on an e-commerce site or their web platform. Once they found out how easy it was to use, system engagement you know use cases, then they move to system of record use cases. So we have you

know utility companies replacing their billing platform from relational to MongoDB, we have banking customers replacing their trading platforms from relational to MongoDB, we have large e-commerce sites who do millions of transactions on MongoDB on a daily basis, we have gaming companies you know if you have children at home who use Fortnite, Fortnite was built on MongoDB. So a lot of gaming companies use MongoDB because games are like movies you don't know if you have a hit or a dud. If you have a hit you go from a few thousand users to millions of users around the world, you need a platform that can scale. And so MongoDB is designed to do that. So our customers truly use us for some of the most demanding and mission-critical use cases out there.

RK: Absolutely, you know in fact one of the things I have noticed is the purchasing and the buying process for databases was driven from the CIO's office to the procurement teams. I think what you've done is you've democratized that decision-making, if I may, or at least you're in that journey of democratizing because the developers prototype rapidly on your infrastructure and then they actually go to their institutions to productionize it so is that a big switch in how databases are bought and consumed?

DI: Clearly and the reason what's happening is you step back, every company today is becoming a software company. In fact if you think about it, your impression of a company is a function of the software built, whether it's a mobile app on your phone or the website you go to, you quickly discern how sophisticated and compelling this company is by the software you use. So every company's putting so much pressure in improving their software skills and using partners like you to beef up their skills. And so as developers by definition, who then are the builders, end up having more power and influence in terms of how technology decisions are made. And so developers have enormous voice in choosing technology and one of the benefits we have is we are the world's most popular modern database and that's an objective measure, if you look at you know the reports and the rankings of all the database providers out there. And so the reason developers love us is because we make their life so much easier, so naturally developers will be much more interested in using a platform like MongoDB than say a traditional platform or platform that's very niche in nature. So they are big advocates for us and our business frankly starts and stops with a developer.

RK: Awesome I want to squeeze in one last question for you, what's your view on the adoption of open source and large enterprises? You know every time I meet a large enterprise CXO, I get this feeling that they're stuck in this ecosystem of enterprise software. The adoption of open source is still very high in digital workloads and digitally native companies, but enterprises have a long way to go to adapt it. And in some ways MongoDB is a part of the value chain. [**DI:** Yes] Where do you see that going from here so that this consumption is accelerated in a big way?

DI: So to your point, open source is becoming very popular because people want to get out of one, they want access to modern tools and technologies and open source is now … frankly the best technology is now open source, in the old days open source was viewed as a cheaper version of the enterprise product [**RK:** Because of cost driven reasons] it was driven by costs, now people are saying the best technologies, they are built on open source. So that's one.

RK: And it's much more iterative as well.

DI: And it's much more iterative. Two, is that we've invested a lot in the tooling around the open source product so people have the confidence saying 'I know how to provision and configure and manage and secure and scale and automate the platform' so that I don't have to worry about like all the onus being on me to figure out how to do that. And we even offer a cloud service, so we can also offer a managed service so people don't have to worry about imagining the infrastructure, they can just focus on building amazing applications that run their business. So with all that investme in management, people get more comfortable running mission critical workloads on MongoDB.

RK: And do you see that we've got to that inflection point where open source is more mainstream than ever before?

DI: Oh absolutely. In fact if you look at our customers we have 14,000 customers around the world. Every major vertical industry, every geography from North America to Europe to Latin America to Asia for almost every conceivable use case, people are using MongoDB. So you're seeing the promulgation of open source you know really accelerate, and we're one of the first open source companies to go public in October 2017 and you've seen a few others follow and the market has been very receptive because these open source companies are growing very very quickly as a function of how rapidly you know customers are adopting open source.

RK: Thank you, Dev thanks so much for this wonderful conversation, I look forward to working with you. We are a big fan of MongoDB as a company.

DI: Likewise, thank you for the great partnership.

RK: Exciting opportunities together thank you.

DI: Thank you nice to see you again, take care.

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