



“My aspiration is to actively help shape new business models”

Jan Brecht wants to move away from managing and administration to a focus on software and system architectures. The new Daimler CIO, who joined the premium car group from sporting-goods maker Adidas in November 2015, has made speed his top priority. In an interview with automotiveIT, Brecht spoke about his agenda, the opportunities he sees and his plan to make IT play a decisive role in getting Daimler ready for a new automotive era. Excerpts:

Mr Brecht, is Daimler's top management aware of information technology?

For too long, many companies have viewed corporate IT as purely a cost factor. That is changing a great deal at the moment. As for Daimler, I can say that we are taking digitization very seriously in all areas and we have understood that IT, as the architect of digitization, must contribute significantly to the success of the transformation.

You say that the genie of digitization is out of the bottle at Daimler. How many of your wishes have been fulfilled?

Let me give you two concrete examples. They are new developments, both from the technological standpoint and as a component of our business model. First, Daimler is very interested in increasing capacity use at its production facilities. Thanks to sensor systems, we are now capable of identifying when a welding gun will break down by using precise data analysis. With this knowledge, we can boost the use of our capacity by up to 3 percent. Second, we recently started selling new Mercedes-Benz vehicles over the internet across Germany. This is not an exciting issue from the IT standpoint. E-commerce shops have been around for 20 years. But for car manufacturers, an online store is an important symbol of the transformation that is letting them address young target groups with tailor-made offers. I am absolutely convinced that the potential that we can develop with IT will continue to grow. We will position ourselves very closely to core issues such as software development and system architectures.

How are these issues anchored in the new IT strategy that the group's management board adopted in May 2016?

We have defined five priorities in our IT strategy. The mix of issues has a vertical effect on the group's business domains or runs horizontally through all parts of the value creation chain. Speed is the top mandate that senior management has given us as we move forward – the desire to implement and deliver IT solutions even more quickly. The second point is an approach to customers that taps the full potential of all the options in the digital world and allows a seamless



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connection between brands, products and the customer. We have labeled the third point as "data insight driven" – it is the heading for thorough data analysis on whose basis the best possible business decisions can be made. The third point addresses the potential that we would like to increase through digitization in our core development and production processes. And the fifth point actively integrates all the employees in the company – we want to use IT to make our workplaces attractive and boost individuals' productivity.

Daimler IT is clearly taking on different tasks in individual group divisions. In what world do you feel more comfortable – as a reliable infrastructure operator or as an innovative business enabler? We're turning IT into a moneymaker that contributes to company profitability. To answer your question: my aspiration is to actively help shape new business models. IT is very well integrated into all the current plans. In the end, it doesn't matter who is in charge. The main thing is for the results to fulfill expectations.

You have already stressed the importance of speed. What can you specifically do to make your organization faster?

We have identified three accelerators that we are approaching very pragmatically. For one thing, we will take advantage of iterative methods such as agile or scrum to pick up the pace. We want to streamline our project organization and work with smaller teams that you can satisfy with two pizzas, that is, 10 people at most. The specialist divisions in IT sit at the same table and all pull together. In this agile construct, the client and the chief developer both hold responsibility and can closely coordinate the concrete design of the software product. I see technologies such as the cloud as the third component of speed. "Infrastructure as a service" helps us reduce setup times and cut costs to boot.

-Interview by Hilmar Dunker and Ralf Bretting

Read the full interview in the September issue of automotiveIT international magazine. For a complimentary subscription, please go to: www.automotiveIT.com/subscribe.