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Megascend - helping Procure-to-Pay Clients Implement SAP Ariba and Make Sure it Works Well for Their Business



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Interview conducted by:
 Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
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CEOCFO: Ms. Harris, what is Megascend?

Ms. Harris: Megascend is a consulting company in the space of business procurement. We cater to many procure-to-pay clients who are installing SAP Ariba and really want to have a client to work with them that understands Ariba. We dig into clients' requirements beyond what they think they need, and help them implement the product to really work for them and their businesses.

CEOCFO: What is it about Ariba that you have created a company all around it?

Ms. Harris: I have been working on Ariba for twenty years. I worked as an employee for companies who are maintaining Ariba and I have worked as a contractor to help implement installations of Ariba. I do believe it is a great product for what companies need for their purchasing and their contracts. It has gone to a cloud solution which is great and is being sold as sort of a plug-and-play solution. I think it is not quite that. There is always that need to truly understand the product and not just plug it in as is. Further, there is a need to make it work for the client and not just have it installed and then the person installing it walks away and leaves them scratching their heads with some of it not working for them.

Megascend is here to not only help you get it up and running, but also be around when you have issues or your business needs change. We can come in and look at what you need and really get it to work for you.

CEOCFO: Do you find most of your clients have been proactive and come to you before they decide or start the implementation of ARIBA or is it more typical that someone is turning to Megascend when they have a problem?

Ms. Harris: We have a little bit of both. We have situations where they may not have decided on which procurement system to purchase. So, part of what we do is not only be the implementation partner, but also sell Ariba as the best product versus some of the other solutions. We also come to rescue enterprises that already have Ariba installed and not working the way they really want, or there are bugs, or the company that put it in, did it vanilla and walked away, and then they find it is not working. We take care of all the above.

CEOCFO: What are some of the challenges using Ariba that Megascend can solve?

Ms. Harris: Part of the challenge in my opinion is Ariba has gone away from being an on-premise/on-demand solution where you actually put the product in and then you can customize. This was great and clients did take advantage of that. However, the problem is that then clients customize it and had to maintain it.

Ariba, in recent years, has moved to a cloud version which is trying to get companies back to more generic features for the procurement processes and not make it as customizable. Therefore, clients are not hiring an entire staff to support their software. Ariba has made the code base unavailable; so a client doesn't need an IT team to support changes as these would be done by Ariba itself, if they are possible.

The challenge is Ariba has gone from one extreme where the client had all the control to the other with no control. So, we, at Megascend, work with the constraints of a cloud solution and achieve individual needs of the clients.

CEOCFO: *You mentioned having worked with Ariba for many years; what led you to the CEO role at Megascend?*

Ms. Harris: I am not sure if I actually aspired to this but I guess I am good at what I do. So, Chayapathy Gangadarappa, our Founder and President, approached me to be the CEO of Megascend. In this role, I will lead the company forward and advance my philosophy which is to give the customer what they want even if they do not know what they wanted; listen to them and find out what they need. I do not think that a lot of consulting firms do that. They just come in and do what is expected of straight out-of-the-box. They hardly take time to go beyond to make sure Ariba will work for their clients.

It is reading between the lines because the client does not know the software. So they do not realize what is available to them to ask for it. I want to instill that in all Megascend employees and make Ariba work for them.

"Megascend is here not just help you get Ariba products up and running, but also be around when you have issues or your business needs change. We can come in and look at what you need and really get it to work for you." Heidi Harris

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us a little about your personal life and your family?*

Ms. Harris: Before anything I am a mother. I have two children one of which just went to college and my other child is a special needs child. My son was diagnosed with autism at two years old and that is when I actually started working from home. I have been working from home for fourteen plus years, mainly to be able to support him and his needs.

At two years old he had to be pulled out of daycare and have extensive therapy and now he is sixteen, but he cannot be left home alone. I am always here for him as a mother but I can also do that working, which has been a very good balance for me because other than being a mother my work is very important to.

I feel like I am very good at what I do and I think that rubbed off on my daughter who is off at college. She does not want to have anything to do with IT or computers, but I think she sees that a woman can do something when she puts her mind to it and I hope she follows that lead.

CEOCFO: *Are you surprised that women are still in a somewhat second class rank?*

Ms. Harris: I know this isn't the case with many women but I have been lucky and in all my years in this field, I can't recall a time I was ever treated differently because I was a woman.

It is interesting that I jokingly have to remind people that I have another job and that would be mother/wife. That is the only time I believe people forget I am a woman. This may be due to being in a predominantly male based profession where they really do treat me like "one of the guys".

CEOCFO: *Does Megascend have one comprehensive offering, with several components?*

Ms. Harris: Ariba is our specialty and Ariba offers different products, so we find that it varies. The original product for Ariba was purchasing and then they added invoicing and then they did contracts and sourcing. So they slowly added products over the years and we see a variety of people, it really depends on their needs. I worked with a recent client that their prior process for doing contracting "red binders." Everything was on papers and emails; nothing was in any sort of system at all. For them, they decided to tackle contracting and they will actually be doing other modules.

We have also gone in and actually done the entire end-to-end solutions from the beginning to end and then we have other clients may just be doing the purchasing and invoicing. Ariba does have a learning curve. So implementing modules individually typically works best.

CEO CFO: *How is business?*

Ms. Harris: It has picked up. Last year was a rough year. In 2019 and early 2020, before we realized what was going on with COVID, we had done a lot of RFPs and a lot of those were put on-hold because a lot of companies suddenly had their entire staffs work from home, and that threw them off. Ironically, I have been saying in my position there is no reason you have to pay for me to travel to your client's site. Hopefully they will learn from this and we'll see working from home on such projects more common place.

We have a sister company Skyscend that took it upon themselves during the downtime to write side systems. These are plug-and-play with Ariba and other procurement systems.

CEO CFO: *I understand revenue is in the million-dollar range?*

Ms. Harris: Yes it is.

CEO CFO: *What is your geographic range today?*

Ms. Harris: We have projects based in the US and India. Working from home is going to open up some options. We can really do a project anywhere.

CEO CFO: *How do you reach out to new clients?*

Ms. Harris: We are trying to get our name out there; so people know we are available. The founder of Ariba is also a hands-on person who goes out to conferences and gets his name out there to make sure people know they are around and available. He also has a huge contact base. A lot of these companies go through other third-parties. So, he makes sure to get contact with those companies and makes sure people know he is out there and who we are.

CEO CFO: *Why choose Megascend?*

Ms. Harris: With Megascend, you are not just going to find what you think you want; it is going to do what you truly need. We have a lot of experience behind us; we have been doing this for twenty years each. We really understand the product inside and out. We think beyond what you just think you know you need, to what you really do need to make your business succeed. We ensure your implementation of Ariba is worth the time and really work for you.

