



Business Objects _ France _

« *Business Objects was born out of an idea, out of hope, and out of great motivation* » Bernard Liataud

- **Founders:** Bernard Liataud (studied at Stanford) and Denis Payre, colleagues at Oracle
“Complementaries between Denis and I were critical. Denis brought the energy and the business feel. I brought the product feel and the management know-how. This team lasted for 6 years” BL
- **Founded:** 1990, Paris
- **Idea:** Bernard Liataud and Denis Payre commercialized a tool invented by a third-party inventor that Oracle declined the opportunity to commercialize. Business Objects, now a division of SAP, was the world's leading BI software company at the time of its \$6.8B acquisition by SAP
- **Funding:** Raised \$5m total in 3 rounds.
\$1m in round A (Feb 91) after 8 months of bootstrapping from Innovacom and Partech and Don Lucas one of the early investors in Oracle. \$2m in April 92 to start US expansion. \$2m in June 93 to continue global expansion with new VC Atlas Ventures.
- **Acquisition :** Went public in Sep 94 on Nasdaq., acquired Oct 2007 by SAP for \$6 .8 billion
- **Revenue:** 42 000 customers worldwide, \$1.077 billion
- **Q&A with Bernard Liataud**

1) *How did you come up with the idea?*

An independent developer came to Oracle France with a small query tool on top of Oracle. We felt it could be a good idea. We built a much bigger idea out of the first prototype. One with an abstraction layer that shielded the user from the database complexity, but through which they could ask all questions they wanted and therefore have all the data they needed to make informed decisions.

2) *How did you get started?*

We concluded a deal with developer to transfer his IP to us in return for future royalties. We started selling to Oracle customers in France through our network (both my partner and I were ex-Oracle France employees).

3) *When did you think about coming to the US and why?*

We went to the US just after 1 year (when we were less than 10 staff in France). We felt that we had to grow in the US and confront the real competition at the outset because the software industry is dominated by US companies. It would make us stronger in the long run. The US strategy was baked in our initial business plan.

4) *What are the challenges that your company faced when you moved to the US?*

Many cultural issues. Doing business in the US is different. Running a US sales and distribution subsidiary from France proved almost impossible. Recruiting great sales people being a French company was difficult. But we put together good option plan, plus we had US investors (that was key) and we could argue that the product was already doing well in Europe. When we started it was important to focus on sales, as opposed to building a big infrastructure, which could have burnt a lot of cash.