

# An interview on open source and MySQL with Michael Sorg from neckermann.de

June 2007



## Michael Sorg

*Michael Sorg, head of new media at neckermann.de GmbH is responsible for the e-, m- and t-commerce activities (electronic commerce, mobile commerce, tv shopping) of the company. Prior to joining neckermann.de Michael Sorg worked at Hewlett-Packard. Before becoming head of media at neckermann.de he held positions in marketing, direct marketing, sales and IT. In 1998 he established the New Media department at neckermann.de.*



**Q:** *Good morning Mr. Sorg, and thank you for taking the time to answer our questions today. neckermann.de decided to use open source software several years ago. Regarding your IT systems, what's most important for your business?*

**A:** For our daily business we need failsafe, scalable, flexible and high-performance systems. In addition it is important for us that the components are cost-effective and secure.

**Q:** *Could you please give some background information about neckermann.de for our readers?*

**A:** With revenue of 1.3 billion Euro neckermann.de GmbH is one of the largest mail order companies in Europe. www.neckermann.de allows customers to choose from an assortment of 250,000 products. neckermann.de generates about 50% of its company revenue through the online-shop.

**Q:** *When did you start exploring open source solutions and why?*

**A:** neckermann.de began to focus on open source software around the time when e-commerce first started to evolve. It was back in 1995 when the first shopping sites went live. At that time the main reasons to consider open source were low costs and fast development cycles which resulted in faster innovation. neckermann.de constantly wins awards for its innovative strength. Among them are "Best Online Shop" (2003 and 2004), most popular shopping site 2005 and the "Konzept-Award" for the first dialog-oriented search engine www.n-express.de (2006). In May 2007 neckermann.de also received the intermedia-globe Silver Award and the award "most customer oriented service provider of Germany 2007".

**Q:** *Did you yourself or others in your department express any concerns against the use of open source software?*

**A:** No, we had a many years of experience with open source software. But of course we first completed extensive tests and started with open source in less-critical areas. Based on excellent results there, we then continued to roll-out open source based solutions also for core, mission-critical applications. In addition, we backed our use of open source with support contracts from vendors such as MySQL AB.

**Q:** *What are the key advantages of open source software and of MySQL for you?*

**A:** We can save a lot of money, it helps us be more flexible and agile, and it prevents us from vendor lock-in. And, our innovation continues to accelerate.

Continued >

**Q: There are thousands of open source projects out there in various stages of development. How would a CIO know which ones to select?**

**A:** It is very important to pay attention to the strength of the community, to look at the number of installations, the activity on the mailing lists, etc. A healthy and active community helps guarantee a more reliable and a faster evolving product.

**Q: So, do you believe that open source at some point will replace proprietary software altogether?**

**A:** No, there will be a more integrated and complementary co-existence.

**Q: Despite the advantages you describe, the acceptance of open source seems to be slower in some regions and vertical industries than in others. What do you attribute this to?**

**A:** In some areas open source is still not fully accepted yet. Some supervising committees are not fully convinced about open source yet. They tend to be conservative organizations that keep using the legacy proprietary technologies instead of innovating with open source solutions.

**Q: So what's your advice to a CIO who is curious but still hesitant about using open source software and MySQL?**

**A:** Again I simply just refer to the advantages of open source. We have been able to build a high-performance database system based on MySQL in a very short time-frame that fully meets our very demanding requirements.

**Thank you very much for answering our questions Mr. Sorg.**