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Grape Escape 2010: Of Cloud & Angel, Fun & Games, and "In Vino Veritas" – Part 4

by [P.J. Jakovljevic](#)

Part 1 of this blog series talked about the historical background of the [JRocket Marketing Grape Escape\(TM\)](#) event. Grape Escape has become a June fixture over past several years, after the high traveling season to major vendors' events subsides and before everyone takes their summer vacations. It is a signature event that showcases the intimate analyst relationships (AR) and event expertise that [JRocket Marketing's](#) president and founder Judith Rothrock delivers to her software vendors' client base by giving them exposure to a selected group of industry analysts.

Part 1 also analyzed the news announcements by [Jeremy Roche](#), CEO of [FinancialForce.com](#), followed by the testimony from its customer [Wi-Fi Alliance](#). Part 2 analyzed the Grape Escape 2010 news announcements from [Meridian Systems](#) CEO [John Bodrozic](#) and [SYSPRO US](#) CEO [Brian Stein](#), followed by these vendors' customers ([Walt Disney](#) and [Lee Spring](#), respectively).

Part 3 analyzed major news coming from [UNIT4's Agresso](#) product line, as presented by [Shelley Zapp](#), CEO of [UNIT4 North America](#), and followed by the company's higher education customer, [Augsburg College](#).

Love is in the Air, err, ...in the Cloud

It was not hard to realize that the common theme in all four vendors' announcements was getting the "cloud religion." I am still amazed to see some of these vendors' businesses transform from "Our customers do not ask for it!" to "We are in the cloud too!" in just a couple of years.

Indeed, it has been interesting and satisfying for me to watch the increased traction and the shifts in company size, applications footprint, and vertical markets that are looking to [cloud computing](#) technologies. And all that mindset change took place in a manner of a few years, from the times when the concept was both new and prescient.

[Jeremy Roche](#) said that two years ago when he announced the first iteration of [FinancialForce.com](#), interest in [software as a service \(SaaS\)](#) was absolutely relegated to what the "[Crossing the Chasm](#)" paradigm describes as "the pioneers." Those early buyers had to be rebels of sorts, bold in their thinking, have a willingness to deflect what many folks thought was risky business – and more than a little bit of a visionary.

During those early deals, [FinancialForce.com](#) sought out a combination of the big-picture visionaries on one end and the disenfranchised users of cumbersome on-premise accounting systems on the other. The fledgling company's first customers tended to be smaller, more nimble, and have fewer folks involved than one would typically see in group think-tank stylized sales

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cycles. The conservative Doubter Thomas buyer would attempt to sink the newcomer solution, and so FinancialForce.com saw fewer large established companies and more of the entrepreneur crowd.

Today, the company is now engaging in large enterprise competes with multi-thousand user seats. But beyond the proof point that cloud software accounting platforms can indeed effectively support large organizations, FinancialForce.com has integrated into an on-premise enterprise backbone that is not in the clouds (e.g., at the **Daily Telegraph**).

Shelley Zapp of UNIT4 underscored that different market needs by different types of companies dictate that no one type of cloud-based deployment solution is right for all companies. In some instances, a [multi-tenant](#) approach of FinancialForce.com (i.e., one version/instance of a software release is upgraded and maintained simultaneously for all subscribers) is appropriate for some types of companies; whereas others that might be more dynamic and rapidly changing companies need the ability to move migrations and customizations back and forth without a major cost burn.

All these choices might be perplexing for users that need to determine whether cloud computing makes sense for their company. My colleague Jorge Garcia's [tutorial article explains well how to approach cloud computing from a down-to-earth, practical point of view](#). In addition, my recent [blog series on Consona's acquisition of Compiere offers an in-depth "pro et contra" analysis between a private \(single\)-tenant cloud approach vs. multi-tenant cloud approach](#).

Ending with Lighter Notes

As mentioned in Part 1, this year Judith invited Doug Nervik, an entertainer from New York City who played a discreet and no obtrusive piano music during the dinner. Once the desert and coffee were served, he regaled the audience with his voice, his piano skills, and with the lyrics that poked fun at the vendors and that were to the tunes of well-known hits. Some excerpts from over 25 minutes long performance are as follows:

Grape Escape (Song theme: **Comedy Tonight!**)

Welcome to Boston, with Nine Zero tossed in,

Welcome to Grape Escape and Comedy Tonight!

No consequences, no mending fences,

No grief for anyone, it's Grape Escape Tonight!

FinancialForce! Syspro, and more—

We've got Meridian, even Unit4!

No complication, no consternation,

No time to sweat or have a fight:

Tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight!

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Before reading the excerpts from the vendor-related songs below, let me just acknowledge that this series talked only about “feel good” positive news from these vendors, as one would expect from such an event. Certainly, every company has challenges and issues, and these will be analyzed in forthcoming research articles (“Tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight!”).

FinancialForce.com (Song theme: **Surfin’ USA** by **Beach Boys**)

FinancialForce is on fire, we’re aiming for the stars,
With services and solutions, and upbeat WEBINARS!
The hippest thing in accounting—it’s what the analysts say;
FinancialForce has gone crazy, crazy USA!
The client gets a general ledger, accounts receivables,
We’ll give ‘em accounts payables, fixed asset systems, too.
Software as a Service, the multi-tenant way!
FinancialForce has gone crazy, crazy USA!

SYSPRO (Song Theme: **Beast of Burden** by **Rolling Stones**)

We’ll never be your beast of burden
Our Syspro clients are never hurtin’
All we want is, for you to be family!
We got a president named Benadretti,
He’ll make an offer, when he is ready,
It’s an offer, a client can’t refuse!
Are we close enough?
Do we trust enough?
Can we cling enough?
Our clients are family!

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Meridian Systems (Song theme: **Lydia** by **Groucho Marx**)

Meridian, Meridian, have you met Meridian, Meridian

Meridian the miracle workers.

They're from out in California,

And, my friends, I gotta warn ya'—

Meridian, schepidian, there's nothing quotidian,

Their software is A #1;

ProjectTalk, Proliance, and Prolog, will do

As Bodrozic and Watkins and all of the crew,

Will Plan Build and Operate even a zoo—

Top to bottom with Meridian!

Disney (Song theme: **Be Our Guest**)

Be our guest, be our guest, put our systems to the test,

We have so much to be proud of: Disney thinks that we're the best!

Be impressed! We don't rest!

And Meridian's not stressed—

If you need a new space mountain, or a maple tree sized fountain,

We don't shirk, we don't hedge,

After all, we have an edge:

InfraSTRUCTure lifecycle management.

We get construction done, and have a lot of fun,

So be our guest, be our guest, be our guest!

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UNIT4 (Song theme: **Both Sides Now** by **Joni Mitchell**)

The angel assigned to the Vita Cloud

Is making UnitFOUR folks proud!

And that includes the CODA crowd,

And mostly Shelly Zapp...

And now sustainability,

The CLOUD for green technology!

I hope you'll sell it to B.P.

They really don't know clouds at all!

Given Judith's creativity, I am both intrigued and having trepidations about the **Grape Escape 2011** theme. Let's just hope that analysts will not be put through the **Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals** celebrity hazing (i.e., Harvard happens to be UNIT4's customer).

*Besides being a rookie father and a Starbucks addict (the two may or may not be related), **P.J. Jakovljevic** is a TEC veteran and an APICS buff. He is an equal opportunity analyst (EOA)—one of the first to pay due attention to the little guys that tend to be overlooked by the big analyst houses. P.J. is a proponent of "separation of church and state" (both in society and in the analyst world) and is committed to writing equally "tough but fair" analyses about all vendors and solutions, whether they are TEC clients or not.*

TEC BLOG: <http://blog.technologyevaluation.com/blog/2010/08/05/grape-escape-2010-of-cloud-angels-fun-games-and-%e2%80%9cin-vino-veritas%e2%80%9d-%e2%80%93-part-4/>
JRocket Marketing: www.jrocketmarketing.com