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Former Member

April 12, 2013 | 9 minute read

A Brief History of Lars: From Commodore Gamer to HANA Superhero

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Those of you active in the SAP [HANA forums](#) on SCN are no doubt already familiar with [Lars Breddemann](#), who often swoops in to help people with their most difficult HANA questions. In fact, if you're not aware of what an expert he really is, feel free to take a bit of time to read some of his [blogs](#), or some of the better forum [discussions](#). And don't forget to take notes, because there is some great content there!

So it should be no surprise that Lars is one of the first people we sought out as a [HANA Distinguished Engineer](#). The Distinguished Engineers, after all, are [about](#) the top hands-on HANA experts who are active in the community, helping others learn the skills that they have developed. And Lars is a prime example of [what it takes](#) to be a Distinguished Engineer.

I had been following Lars' database blogs for several years, as an SAP customer, and now an SAP employee, and finally I had the pleasure of meeting Lars in person at SAP TechEd Madrid 2012, where he joined in a Distinguished Engineer Q&A. We had a great discussion about HANA technologies, and what makes a standout Distinguished Engineer.

But still I wondered, what makes him tick? Well, if you have wondered the same thing, here is a bit of insight into the man who has run the gamut – from programming on the Commodore and Amiga, to gaining his MCSE, even tracking down the occasional Oracle DUMMY. 😊

Q: How long have you worked for SAP, and in what capacities/positions?

A: I started working at SAP in 2003 and was hired to do primary support message solving for database technology, specifically for Oracle databases. At that time the SAP Global Support Center Austria had several offices, with Vienna (Austria) and Budapest (Hungary) being the largest ones. The database support team was pretty small – besides me in Vienna, there were two colleagues in Budapest and that was pretty much the full team. Luckily the team got staffed up quite a bit over time, so part of my job was it to help the new colleagues with getting into the topic of database technology support.

When I left the database support team in 2011

(<http://scn.sap.com/people/lars.breddemann/blog/2011/01/06/new-shores-in-sight>) it had grown to 7 full time database technology supporters covering Oracle, MS SQL Server, SAP MaxDB and Informix. From the 4 NEXUS consultants (see explanation e.g. here <http://scn.sap.com/community/software-support-and-maintenance/blog/2012/11/09/message-solving-in-the-city-of-the-tribes>) for SAP database support around the globe, three of them were sitting in our office. Back then I was NEXUS for SAP MaxDB and eventually helped out the NEXUS for ORACLE with tricky problems 😊

We had a really good team work up there – basically sitting in one room and discussing tech issues directly. That was super effective knowledge building and sharing. As everybody had different interests and preferences all aspects of the software we supported were covered pretty well. I really liked working with this team a lot and when I moved to the BW support team, I was happy enough that this move in fact was just about two doors down the corridor (and we literally do have glass doors and walls in our office). That way we're still in touch.

The next position was in the BW support team and this was a lot different as the team already was a complete well-grown one. In turn there could focus a lot on the in and outs of how our SAP BW software uses databases. Things like query optimization, partitioning and wrong result sets (on Oracle and SAP MaxDB) were my bread and butter during this time.

When it was announced internally what we should expect from this HANA thing product wise there was an immediate demand for support staff that would be able to deal with the incoming messages. At that point in time most folks somehow put HANA into the BW/BO drawer, so the primary support topic had been given to my manager (BW team). It was a no-brainer for us that I would be on this topic right away and with one other colleague I had been sent to a very early SAP HANA workshop where we started to create support techniques while getting familiar with this new software.

A few months later it was clear to everybody that HANA indeed is a full blown database management system that requires strong core DBMS-technology skills

to support it. That led to a couple of requests for training sessions from my side as many of the HANA supporters and field consultants really had their core strengths in BW or BO, but not so much in the “lower levels” of our solutions.

Starting in end of 2011 I started what in hindsight looks like a world-tour of training, educating and up-skilling colleagues and partners. This tour covered SAP US HQ in Newtown Square, Vancouver, Melbourne/Sydney, Dublin, Madrid and of course Vienna and Walldorf (a couple of times...). At that point in time I had left the actual job description of a primary support as far as possible. It was clearly time to move on to a position that would better suit what I was actually doing. And by chance the Customer Solution Adoption (CSA) team was looking for a DB person just like me. That finally brought me to my current position as a Solution Expert with the CSA in the TIP department.

Funny enough, this move that I made last September again just meant to roll my desk chair two doors across the corridor – I’m still seeing all my former colleagues every day.

Q: What type of mobile phone do you carry?

A: I got an Apple iPhone for my job. My private phone is one of those cheap “not-so-smart”-phones you get for free when signing up for a plan. Actually I’m not too much into phones – if they do what they are supposed to and don’t require constant battery recharging that’s what I’m interested in. And of course they should come with a Bluetooth adapter so that they can work with my hands-free speaking system in my car.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your technology background, and how you got into database work.

A: That was actually a bit of an accident. As many teenagers I loved playing computer games a lot and started to try out to do a bit more than that with the Commodore C128 and later Amiga 500 we had. Creating little games with two other friends, stuff like that. To earn some money while going to the university I worked at the municipal of my home town (Wuppertal) and did some admin jobs there. You know, setting up workstations, writing documentation, that sort of stuff.

In 1997 Microsoft had program running for students where you would buy the education material for the first exam for the MSCE (Microsoft certified system engineer) track and if you pass it all the remaining exams and trainings would be covered by MS. The price for that was around 300 DM but the whole certification track was easily worth 1700 DM at that point in time. Of course I took this opportunity and learned a lot about networking and MS Windows administration.

What was funny seen from today was the IT job market at this time. Companies were really looking for skilled staff and after I finally became an MSCE I only needed to post my short CV in a job website to get offerings. So I decided to set my studies into quiet mode and to get some work experience (I took philosophy, mathematics and communications design as majors – not exactly what the job market was looking for...). A small IT company that wanted to tap into the market of network setup and administration hired me and with my MSCE that was exactly what I was interested in. I clearly remember one talk with my boss when I told him, that I might even do some programming but I had no interest whatsoever in getting into this database stuff the company was also doing.

Unfortunately the project pipeline for such admin work dried out rather quickly, so I got assigned to, you guess it: database development 😊

This other “database stuff” in fact was the main cash cow of the company. They had Oracle*Forms based applications for the planning and documentation of GSM networks and later UMTS networks. From then on I had to learn my ways in, out and around the Oracle database (version 7.3.4 at that time – scary, right?).

That’s where it started for me.

Q: You worked in the SAP support organization, answering questions for customers all day long. What has inspired you to also be so involved in the SAP Community, answering questions on your own time?

A: Hmm... that’s not a single thing for me. One point is of course that I learned a lot by reading blogs and tech forums myself. So I liked the form of knowledge exchange. Another thing is the discussions about topics. Unfortunately that doesn’t happen a lot in SCN at the moment, but to me hearing what others think about something was always very important. Learning about that other approach to a question or seeing how wrong I could be with my conceptions is something hard to put a value tag on.

In contrast to support, the range of topics for questions is not limited, as there is no “not supported” statement available in SCN. 😊

Last but not least – releasing material, publishing if you will, is something that I found to be very interesting to me. Putting my materials and ideas out in the public is a challenge a lot different to technology support. Up to now I feel that SCN is the right place for me to do that.

Q: Which do you prefer – Windows/Mac/Linux?

A: Hmm... generally I prefer whatever works. My work laptop runs Window 7 which I find to be fast and stable. At home I've got an iMac since 2003 and never wanted to have anything else. Linux is something I regularly use for work – none of those platforms feels uncomfortable to me.

Q: Many educational resources are focused on developers – have you any recommendations for how a DBA can learn and practice with HANA?

A: Besides the cloud offerings to get hands on a running HANA instance, I can currently only recommend to check the documentation on help.sap.com/hana_appliance and the saphana.com website. The latter contains a lot of How To papers that have been created by my team (CSA).

Q: How difficult was your learning curve transitioning from traditional disk-based databases to HANA?

A: Actually not very – there's a lot of classic DBMS technology in HANA. I guess the most difficult corner to turn was to get the thinking away from rows and much more towards sets. A lot of features in HANA are optimized to work on sets and separate columns. In row oriented databases this is not so much the case.

Q: Is there a feature in HANA that you feel people are missing, from which they could benefit?

A: There is not one feature, but a lot of them and I spend a big deal of my time asking for those features and proposing improvements. Besides functionality features I feel what's missing the most is a good documentation on the inner workings of HANA. How does the column store work? What are those plan operators we see in the Plan Visualization? How does a join work internally? Right now I'm working on something to shine some light onto questions like this, so hopefully this feature (I consider documentation as a core feature of a product) will be improved soon.

Q: What was the craziest DBA issue you've encountered in your years in support?

A: Uff – there had been a lot of crazy stuff, including the infamous “I needed space in the file system and deleted this PSAPP1.data10 file and now my users complain about short dumps...” type of messages. Maybe the most surprising one to me was when a customer reported that the Oracle upgrade failed repeatedly. After some investigation it turned out that somebody thought it would be a good idea to store a second line in Oracle's internal DUMMY table. This table is heavily referenced by the upgrade scripts and nobody expects more than one row in it – which renders all SQL statements used to get function values broken.

Q: Since I've always wanted to go there, I must ask, how do you like Australia and New Zealand?

A: I totally love those countries and am happy to return to Oz just next week. My colleagues keep on telling me how wonderful their summer is/was when we in Europe faced the darkest coldest winter in centuries... 😊 The great seafood is a treat and how everybody seems to be into outdoor activity and sports – just awesome.

Q: What do you find customers get most excited about when migrating from another database to HANA?

A: Well, the speed of certain query types is a very obvious selling point here. The notion of having a built-in BWA when running BW on HANA is compelling as well. From my experiences when holding HANA trainings like the HA300 course (Modeling and implementation) I'd say that the full text/fuzzy search even on top of analytic models is a sure jaw dropper. That's something typically not found in other DBMS.

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Jon Reed

April 19, 2013 at 11:56 am

Lars, glad to have you on board with the Distinguished Engineers. I've been prattling on about the "new learning models" of networked "just in time" learning. None of that is possible without...drumroll...gurus like yourself. Thanks for sharing so much expertise as you go along.

I'm glad you mentioned the full text/fuzz search on top of analytic models. That's one aspect of HANA I am eager to learn more about. Maybe in Orlando. 😊

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Lars Breddemann 

April 21, 2013 at 9:42 am

Jon,

thanks for the kind words.

Not too sure about this Guru-thing, but I sure will try to churn out some more insights I got as long as these are useful to anybody,

Let's see where this leads me to this year... 😊

Cheers, Lars

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Ravindra Channe

April 21, 2013 at 3:48 pm

Nice to know more about you [Lars](#). I always learnt a lot from you on formal as well as informal forums and it has always been a wonderful pleasure to interact with you. "HANA Superhero" for sure, fully agree.. 😊

Regards,

Ravindra Channe

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Lars Breddemann 

April 21, 2013 at 11:58 pm

Thanks for the kudos Ravi.

Probably see you again later this year 😊 .

- Lars

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Raj Kumar Salla 

May 21, 2013 at 5:47 pm

Congratulations Lars !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Good things come to those who wait... greater things come to those who struggle and do anything to make it happen.

You are one of them. You really play a role model and many others get inspired by you and just follow you without your notice.

Me too got inspired by you.

Initially i was little bit hesitated to involve in forums but now became an active contributor. All the credit goes to you.

Happy to see you as HANA Distinguished Engineer and you really deserved this title 😊

Regards

Raj

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Lars Breddemann 

May 22, 2013 at 5:50 am

Thanks for the congratulations Raj!

It's a treat to get that kind of recognition and it is indeed a motivation to continue being active in SCN.

- Lars

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Kumar Mayuresh

May 22, 2013 at 8:03 am

Hi [Lars](#).

Congratulations for becoming

 *'From Commodore Gamer to **HANA Superhero**'*

Nice to know about you. Your blogs and contributions in discussion has always helped me and have learnt a lot from you.

Regards,

Kumar 😊

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Former Member

May 23, 2013 at 8:55 pm

Congrats Lars and continue the great job and all your hard work and extra effort is really appreciated by the community.

Cheers,

Rajiv

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Tom Cenens ⚡

August 6, 2013 at 4:54 am

Hi Lars

Congrats and thanks for all the knowledge sharing! You know I'm a regular reader. I can't believe I didn't bump into you at SAP TechED Madrid.

Best regards

Tom

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Kamal Mehta

August 12, 2013 at 9:07 am

Congrats Lars.

I have gone through your blogs and posts in discussion forum and they are really helpful.

Thanks again for sharing all those stuff.

Regards

Kamal

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**Krishna Tangudu**

February 4, 2014 at 10:16 am

Hi [Lars Breddemann](#)

Congrats on being an inspiring HDE 😊 .

Have been out of SCN during most period of 2013 so i found this blog very lately.

Its great to know more about you adding to what i have already seen you as an inspiring SCN contributor.

I got inspired from your forum discussions and blogs which gave me a desire to be active in SCN to "Learn more by Sharing more".

I always wanted to ask you this question, how do you manage your time effectively?

Being an active member in SCN along with your regular job and managing your personal life. how do you manage this multiple roles and still emerge as a "Super Hero" ... ??

i have taken a resolution this new year to be active in SCN & learn more and manage others as well effectively. With the inspiration i received from you i hope i will be able to do this.

Thank you so much for inspiring us.

Regards,

Krishna Tangudu

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**Lars Breddemann**

February 5, 2014 at 2:59 pm

Hey Krishna,

thanks for that!

Really glad to hear that my overall goal here on SCN to get other people into writing blogs and answering questions finally pans out... 😊 I'm with [Hannibal](#) on this one.

Concerning your question, I think I'm not the best person to talk about time management.

My activity in SCN is actually not taking so much time, since a lot of the content I upload can be seen as a byproduct of my day to day job at SAP.

So, when I prepare some training material I usually keep in mind that I might want to publish it in some way here on SCN to increase the size of the audience.

Other than that I answer questions that I know the answer to already. If I don't I pick the questions that I personally find interesting and try to do some research on it.

I guess it's the same as with most things we do: once you do it regularly you get used to it and rather efficient.

That's what I can say about that.

Other than that, I really like to see how many active contributors the HANA forum attracted over the course of the last two years. Let's hope for that this trend stays on!

- Lars

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Stefan Koehler

February 5, 2014 at 3:56 pm



Yeah !!! Lars rocks !!! 🤔 🤔



... unfortunately we have lost him to the dark "in-memory-alien-stuff" side 🙄

Just getting a little bit confused about the statement *"Funny enough, this move that I made last September again just meant to roll my desk chair two doors across the corridor – I'm still seeing all my former colleagues every day"* as i thought that he went back to Germany (Wuppertal) and is not in Vienna anymore.

However if you are still there ... i will come to Vienna end of June for round about a week (Pearl Jam concert 🐱) - maybe we can meet then somehow and i can convince you with some beers to come back to us (Oracle techies) 😊

Just keep on doing all of your great work.

Regards

Stefan

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Lars Breddemann 

February 5, 2014 at 10:17 pm

😊 Hey Stefan, good to know that you're heading to Vienna.

Actually I'm not living there anymore (I first rolled the chair two doors into the next office and then all my stuff over to Germany ...) but I will definitively spend some time there this year.

Not plans for June up until now, so when I actually go, I'll let you know 🤔

Concerning the "dark" side... it's getting brighter all the time. Even my long term role model for system analysis and performance tuning M. Frauendorfer now joined the ranks of SAP HANA ...

Cheers,

Lars

p.s,

and btw, next to all the sweet talking you do here, I think you're doing an awesome job in the Oracle forum! Clearly, you should be a mentor there.

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Stefan Koehler

February 6, 2014 at 10:06 am

Hi Lars,

i get the feeling, that you are hiding from me ... DOAG - no Lars ... Vienna - no Lars 😊 , but i don't give up ... someday i will catch you 🤔

Oh no seriously .. you have even ripped off Martin to SAP HANA? What's wrong with you guys 😞 😞 Just out of curiosity - which outstanding Oracle performance troubleshooting guy (by SAP) is left in that "old" area? Martin was one of the last guys i know.

Regards

Stefan

P.S.: I think that an Oracle / SAP (performance) guy will never become a SAP mentor. I was even nominated once by someone (as he told me), but was never contacted by SAP ([like announced here](#)) before they started the internal selection process on that nominees. So i think there is a SAP Mentor keyword filter on Oracle before selecting the candidates at all 😊 😊

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Lars Breddemann 

February 6, 2014 at 11:22 am

Hmm... I guess it's going to be a lot easier to catch me when you look for the SAP HANA events hehehe.

And of course you're right, that Martin is a huge loss for the Oracle team, but clearly it does make sense to get the best people working on our own product instead the work of our competition.

Not sure about the Mentor filtering thing... as I am no SCN mentor I have zero insight into the whole selection process there.

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Stefan Koehler

February 6, 2014 at 4:23 pm

hehe ... no, i don't cheat on Larry ... better don't mess up with Iron Man, you know 😊

For sure i can understand SAP's idea of putting Martin into the HANA area as well, but it is an absolutely loss for the majority of your customers. However there may be several new options for my own company in the future as it seems like SAP is blowing out its own Oracle (performance) team 😊 ... we will see ..

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