

## Opinion and Analysis



# Cloud high on the agenda for French media companies



Huawei is reaching out to French companies keen to adopt different forms of cloud technology and which could fancy an alternative to the big US providers. Moderator **Catherine Wright** reports from the co-hosted Huawei/TVBEurope roundtable

**D**uring a roundtable, organised by Huawei and TVBEurope in Paris last November during Satis, named 'How to help the IT architecture revolution for broadcasters facing the cloud era', a number of French broadcasters and media companies voiced their interest for cloud technology and started a constructive dialogue with Huawei, which provides hardware and middleware solutions for cloud-based systems, whether public, private or hybrid. Prior to the discussion, presentations were made to set the scene, starting with director of technology and strategic insight at IABM, John Ive, who gave a global market overview of the broadcast and media industry, with particular emphasis on cloud technology. He highlighted the rapid pace of

the industry's transformation, which is morphing from "technology suppliers selling high price, high

'A number of the French broadcasters voiced their interest for cloud technology'

margin products to a commodity industry, led by software and IT engineers, based on a very different business model." IABM estimates the professional supply market size worldwide to

have generated \$48.5 billion revenue in 2015, of which a massive 54 per cent comes from services alone. In other words, service revenue is growing and product revenue is decreasing, a trend very much apparent in the different IBC surveys conducted by the IABM. The 2015 survey reveals, for instance, that 55 per cent of the end-users at IBC were likely or quite likely to deploy some sort of cloud-based technology in the next two to three years.

One of Huawei's key partners in Europe, data storage solutions provider Equinix then took to the floor to briefly present Cloud Exchange, its Ethernet switching service that enables private virtual connections for direct cloud access with automated provisioning. Alexandre Damien, head of alliance and channel manager for France, informed participants that "90 per cent of all internet traffic passes through Equinix Data Centre", that the company made \$2.4 billion in annual revenue and had invested \$7 billion in expanding its services across the world.

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He was followed by Huawei's sales-president for western Europe, Jiang Guang Hui, who introduced his company's strategy towards the media and entertainment industry. He started by

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company employs 76,000 people in that area alone, spread across 16 R&D centres, one of which opened in 2009 in Cergy-Pontoise, in the Paris outskirts. He also highlighted Huawei's very strong global performance in terms of sales. "In 2014, our sales revenue amounted to \$46 billion and this year our target was \$56 billion. But according to the most recent figures released by our financial team, our revenue has already reached £60 billion, of which 15 per cent comes from western Europe," he asserted.

The company made between 35 per cent and 40 per cent of its sales revenue in China, but

that also meant that 60 per cent of that revenue comes from the rest of the world, underlining the company's international expansion. He summed up Huawei's global strategy, focusing on three separate business groups: the carrier network business group; the enterprise business group, which includes the broadcast and media sector; and the consumer business group, which includes the company's huge smartphone business. He explained Huawei's interest in the broadcast and media business. "Why do we focus on the media and entertainment industry? It is a small business compared to other sectors. My answer

making a global presentation of Huawei, which is beginning to make inroads into Europe, but is perhaps not as well known as rival Japanese, US or European suppliers, especially in France. He told participants that Huawei employed 170,000 people worldwide, "of which half is in engineering", he stated. Huawei is present in more than 140 countries and had 15 regional headquarters, the one for western Europe being in Germany. "For the last ten years, our focus has been mainly on R&D", he described. The



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→ is because our customers are changing. If you take a big manufacturer like Volkswagen, it is interested in providing media and video to entertain its customers when they are stuck in traffic, for instance." The customer base and potential for media is thus expanding very rapidly. "In the future, the media industry will not be a small industry but a very big one extended to most manufacturers and even the financial sector," he concluded.

The discussion then kicked off in earnest focusing on the requirements for cloud technology in each company. For instance, Jacques Duval, who manages the IT infrastructure at French broadcaster Radio France, stated, "We are looking to deliver services faster to our end-users." For Henri Jabko, technical advisor at French archiving and DVD company Les Documents Cinématographiques, speed is also an issue. "We provide producers with stock shots from our legacy database of images and films. We need to provide these very quickly. Cloud computing can provide us with a very fast way of distributing images," he explained. Olivier Nidal, IT developer at Goom Radio, highlighted the problems related to file transfer, as many cloud systems are proprietary. "Integration is not easy. It is also difficult to find files in some cloud systems. It can take up a lot of time, which is totally counter-productive," he indicated.

Security remains a concern, but even more important are workflow and media and content management issues, according to several participants. "There are so many different formats. Our customers are content providers and they want to know where their content is," said Wenping Jiang, senior product manager at Globecast.

This is an issue that was fully acknowledged by Huawei's Guang Hui. "That is very true. But we can only work with our customers in this area

and rely on them to provide the right media management system. That's why we work with big, established service providers like Sony that can be relied upon and trusted. But you have two choices: either you build your own system from scratch and employ 50 people to do so, or you rely on what is already out there and buy a service from a service provider. Only the top five or ten media companies in France have the

'Huawei could be looking to partner with Orange in France to provide a public cloud solution for end users'

scope to build their own system, but the others have to rely on service providers."

Henri Jabko explained one of the dilemmas related to private cloud. "We could use our own private cloud system but the problem is nobody else will understand it. The ideal system would be a public cloud where people could make their requests for images, and all sorts of companies could answer; us, but also others." The key issue for him, he went on to say, is "image distribution. Safety is important but it won't bring us more clients." According to Laurent Durieux, who is an IT specialist at Arksens, a French software developer specialising in cloud security, "our clients mostly request hybrid cloud solutions because these are early days, and they are starting to use this technology, but in the long term I think they will all move to public cloud solutions."

One of the issues, he continued, was the skillset. "We are trying to recruit people with cyber security skills, but it is very difficult to find the right profile," he admitted.

Another of his concerns is the domination of the public cloud market by big American players such as Amazon and Google. "It is a big challenge for us because, as you know, the winner takes all when it comes to big data storage. In western Europe, we are late to the fight with these companies and it is a big problem. But China is building a lot of data centres, which could lead to an alternative."

To conclude the discussion, two short presentations were made to introduce some of Huawei's products. Quan Yi, one of Huawei's technical directors, took to the floor to briefly touch upon some of the company's solutions in a number of scenarios for hybrid, public and private cloud storage.

These include the company's WAN acceleration solutions as well as VM and GPU virtualisation technology. He ended his presentation with a few words on the company's BDII (Business Driven ICT Infrastructure), a programme for joint innovation with the company's partners.

"We have a number of open labs worldwide, for instance in Germany, where we can test solutions we have built with our partners. We have a thousand media customers across the world and we hope we can build solutions with companies in France." He mentioned that Huawei could be looking to partner with Orange in France to provide a public cloud solution for end users.

A final presentation was made by another Huawei technical director, Thierry Bucher, who introduced the company's Oceanstor 9000 storage system. "It has massive big data storage capacity but can be adapted for the media world and 4K production, where performance is more of an issue. It can include up to 75 disks with 6TB storage capacity," he explained. ■

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