

National Grid brings business to NewMedia

By OLIVIA HO

A YEAR down the road from the National Grid initiative's first baby steps, business is blossoming for designated grid service provider NewMedia Express.

Alan Woo, chief technology officer and co-founder of the home-grown Internet solutions firm, said that the National Grid venture has contributed a 15 per cent increase to NewMedia's total revenue since the initiative kicked off in November 2008.

Part of the government's Intelligent Nation 2015 (iN2015) ICT Master Plan, the National Grid was an effort by the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) to promote adoption of grid computing and establish Singapore as the shared services hub in Asia. It is also Singapore's first large-scale commercial grid computing platform, and is said to be the first of its kind in the world.

NewMedia and its partners make up one of the three National Grid service providers appointed by IDA. Besides NewMedia Express, other members of its consortium are Fujitsu Asia, Microsoft, 1-Net Singapore and Advanced ERP.

In the other consortium are SCS and Hewlett-Packard, with a platform

called Alatum. The third National Grid service provider is homegrown data management vendor PTC System, with a platform dubbed PTC SaaS.

The NewMedia-led consortium, which has called its service NGRID, now has about 700 customers, among them individuals, local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and overseas companies, Mr Woo told BizIT.

Last year, the consortium bagged a key government deal with the National Library Board, which is using NGRID for its Web Archive Singapore project.

NGRID will be hosting the Youth Olympics Virtual World, a 3D interactive platform created by ST Electronics (Training & Simulation Systems)

for the inaugural 2010 Youth Olympic Games. Another customer is Kentucky Fried Chicken, whose online ordering system makes use of NGRID's services.

NGRID's offerings comprise a plethora of on-demand software and services. Available are offerings from Microsoft, Virtual Machine, Online-Drive and cPanel among others.

Looking ahead, Mr Woo disclosed that NewMedia is set to launch a new SaaS (Software as a Service) platform, which will simplify the subscription of SaaS services for SMEs. Third party SaaS developers will be able to develop and host their SaaS applications with NGRID, he said.

"The target is to have 1,000 SMEs sign up to this new platform and subscribe SaaS services from different third party providers."

Mr Woo admitted that there are ongoing reservations about grid computing as a service. Customers have expressed concerns about having their confidential data hosted by an external provider, he noted.

"To overcome this, customers who need additional security to secure their data will need to install data encryption software to encrypt their data hosted in our infrastructure."

Network firewalls and intrusion detection systems are the basic security measures that NewMedia uses to secure their system infrastructure, he said.

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