

Tarantula provides the go-to product for all things shared infrastructure



TowerXchange: Please introduce yourself and your background.

Felix Chan explains how Tarantula integrates all aspects of site management into one enterprise product

Thanks to its highly flexible workflow platform and portfolio management system, Tarantula supports around 350,000 towers worldwide with a value of approximately US\$25bn and tracks over 6mn assets. In this interview, Felix Chan, Tarantula's Director of Strategy, shares details about the company's latest projects and the successful utilisation of the Red Cube and Orange Cube solutions in the Asian telecom tower market.

Keywords: Asset Register, Health & Safety, Interview, KPIs, Operational Excellence, QoS, ROI, Revenue Assurance, Security, Site Management System, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Tarantula, Valuation



Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: I have over fifteen years of direct experience with mobile operators and towercos, working primarily in strategy, commercial and finance roles over that time. I started off with Vodafone in Australia, then went on to co-found a towerco, Insight Infrastructure, in India where I worked until it was acquired by American Tower Corporation. I then returned to Australia and took on the role of General Manager of the Commercial Strategy group of NBN Co. Finally, I've been with Tarantula for the past three years as Director - Strategy and CFO.

TowerXchange: Could you give us an update on some of your recent activities in the Asian market? What have been the highlights of the past year?

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: At Tarantula, our mission is to help our customers succeed. The past year has been all about this — working on supporting the goals of our towerco and telco clients. To do this, we leverage the experience of our team and their backgrounds in telecom companies and towercos and distil this knowledge into our products and relationships with our clients. We don't offer generic solutions, so we're always looking for the next opportunity to create value for our customers.

This has been a pretty busy year for us; we engaged

Read this article to learn:

- Tarantula's latest projects and the evolution of their products
- Adapting Red Cube and Orange Cube to the Asian tower market
- The benefits of linking contractual obligations and commercials with site inventory
- Managing multiple stakeholders onsite and adapting to different processes and workflows

in a long-term integration project for two of our clients and combined two Tarantula systems into one merged solution. To do this, we consolidated reports and data and merged management of the sites together. This was a full-on project for the delivery team over a three-month period, during which the data from all the sites was scrubbed and made consistent so that it could operate across both systems. This requires a good knowledge of the customer's business and how they operate, and this is a key strength of ours. When launching a new process, there is always a risk of "garbage in, garbage out" if the wrong approach is taken. It requires detailed knowledge of how the client operates, and knowledge about the way the industry works that only comes with experience. After integration, users from both client companies were able to continue working with a consistent way of working with the same data sets.

We also engaged in separate installations across six markets for one of our key clients so that their group headquarters could see what was happening across all of them. We rolled out country-level Red Cube systems that can operate as independent entities, and then on top of that we integrated a reporting system to oversee the activities of the six underlying businesses. Red Cube helps towercos balance the management of network uptime versus the management of individual sites. It's part of an overall vision that enables our clients do everything from managing lease services to ensuring backhaul connectivity for each site. The group-level reporting added immense value to the

information maintained by the individual Red Cube systems.

Orange Cube is another main product offering for telcos, and it enables monitoring of more assets, including active equipment; we can tailor this to the telco's specific requirements.

The focus on active equipment can help telcos review the spectrum of options available and identify the best solution for a given area. It can determine whether a new piece of equipment can be added to an existing site, whether it would be better to lease a tenancy from a towerco or telco, or whether a new ground-based or rooftop BTS site is the way to go.

We also undertook a client project to push data collection out into the field with our mobility tool to provide much more useful information to the engineers responsible for operations. This tool was used to complete over 21,000 actions in the field and made life easier for our customer by streamlining the collection of data into mobile devices. This data could then be synchronised with the system in a controlled manner to ensure that it is accurate and reliable at all times. Our clients received the immediate benefit of higher efficiency in field operations with accurate data being captured at all times.

TowerXchange: We know that your products are continually evolving to meet the needs of the market; how has it changed since we last spoke?

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: We are constantly adding new innovations to our product capabilities, be it to cater to the dynamic industry changes, to create value for various types of markets and stakeholders, or to address specific problems. Asia is a very diverse region and the evolution of the industry varies from country to country. You have everything from very mature and stable tower markets in India to totally new and growing markets like Myanmar which is just a few years old now. There are big differences in operating and commercial environments across Asia, and Tarantula has the ability to cater to different requirements across a broad spectrum. We leverage our telecoms experience to learn from our clients and adapt our solutions to work around their roadmap to best support them.

A big innovation this year involved the billing module and how it ties in with our clients' contractual obligations and asset entitlement. This enables us to link commercial deals with a co-location process and the existing capacity on a given site. A lot of tools on the market keep a record of what assets are present on the tower, but we are able to manage the broader commercial relationships. When a new tenant is ready to be added, we can look at how to manage site access for multiple tenants, how much physical space there is on the site, and what adjustments are necessary. It also enables the integration of pricing from the MLA to the co-location and manages this all the way through. Our product is very flexible and can support companies with a big customer base and

a lot of MLAs to manage. Again this is where we leverage our knowledge of different MLA scenarios; for example, I've negotiated between fifteen to twenty of them and Udhay has negotiated even more. This feeds into the adaptability of the product for a wide range of commercial scenarios. Through our normal customer engagement process, we have received a lot of feedback and input in Asia and Europe into how the product works and this has contributed to its evolution. Our customers can see that we take the feedback from our discussions with them, and insights into how their businesses run, and these are integrated directly as features in our products.

TowerXchange: How does your products help manage different stakeholders within the tower supply chain, from tenants to subcontractors?

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: There are a lot of different stakeholders in a site and many users that require site access. There can be many different protocols for this in different jurisdictions; for instance, in some cases health and safety documents must be received to permit site access, and this needs to be managed. Contractors need to be given time slots to access the site to avoid overlap and crowding.

Our products can create different user groups to issue approvals in line with different processes, and provide electronic approval of requests to protect the integrity of the assets. This enables towercos to manage multiple tenants, allows them to know who

is involved in what, and provides a project contact list with all stakeholders recorded so it is clear who is involved. Sometimes our clients find stakeholders that they weren't aware of and unauthorised equipment that has been installed. The product enables them to do a match-back with the asset register and identify any unauthorised equipment so they can decide the necessary action such as increasing the lease rate or moving the equipment elsewhere.

The product also enables work orders such as site inspections, diesel checks, or asset counts to be allocated on the mobility app; this enables proactive management of subcontractor work and allows our clients to know that the work orders actually happened. Red Cube tracks milestones so that all stakeholders know what they need to do, what's next, and whether any changes are required.

TowerXchange: How can your product be configured to adapt to different towercos' unique business processes and workflows?

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: Red Cube has over thirty real-world processes included out of the box; a start-up towerco could take this and use it right away. Having these processes makes a good baseline to configure for different clients. They could split one process into two steps, creating a legal and financial component for example. They can configure processes into layers, change what different roles in the company do, split one task into two, or combine three into one depending on their

requirements. They can slim down the processes, make them more complex, and then break them down again if necessary; since the core processes are available out of the box, it's easy to change them.

The biggest complexity in tower portfolio management usually involves the different legal and commercial regulations in each country. Again, our experience in different markets has enabled us to create solutions that minimise problems for end-users and this is integrated with all the other elements such as billing, capacity on site, discounts for existing tenants, tax, et cetera. Any of these features can be dragged and dropped in or removed as necessary to create the necessary overview of the project. Our products integrate with the multiple systems that towercos use, including trouble ticketing, ERPs, remote monitoring systems, and document management tools; this full data integration across all these systems enables towercos to maintain a single source of truth.

TowerXchange: How can a robust approach to asset registers and asset lifecycle management improve the valuation of tower assets?

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: I would say the question is how can it not? The more you know about your assets the better valuation you're going to get. The key parameters are tracking, managing assets on site, creating a matrix, knowing what's there and being able to create a direct link between these and the MLA and billing

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system. One of the biggest elements in valuation is recurring cash flow, and this can integrate all of the necessary elements of site management and link them together: this asset belongs to that company, this is their lease, we bill them this and this is their interplay with the site.

TowerXchange: What are your plans for growth and expansion, and what is your future vision for the company?

Felix Chan, Director - Strategy, Tarantula: Our focus is purely on all aspects of shared infrastructure. We've developed Red Cube, the go-to product for managing shared telecoms infrastructure. We're the market leaders in the towerco space and our aim is to get there in the telco space as well and provide coverage of both sides of the infrastructure sharing

model, including towercos and telcos. To achieve this, we have rolled out Orange Cube, which is a product tailored to the needs of mobile network operators. We're driving project management and asset reporting to include commercial management functionality for MNOs to help them improve valuations and ROI. We have implemented partner and relationship management so that we empower our customers, and in turn, their customers to succeed.

There is a lot of growth ahead on both sides of the infrastructure sharing model with the advent of 4G and later 5G. More sites will be required with more capacity, more small cell coverage and all operators and infrastructure providers need to start thinking about the new demands of this changing marketplace ■

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