

Tarantula provides the go-to product for all things infrastructure



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



Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula

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, Maurice Barnes, Tarantula's COO 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.

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Read this article to learn:

- Tarantula's recent activities in Asia and highlights for the year
- How Tarantula has innovated to meet evolving client needs
- How Tarantula can help effectively manage multiple stakeholders
- Benefits of systems and data integration for tower portfolio management

TowerXchange: Please introduce yourself and your background.

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: I have over ten years of experience in telecommunications infrastructure management. I was previously involved in international business development with Telstra Corporation and worked as Director of Business Technology Services with Crown Castle Australia. More recently, I spent five years working in the APAC region in enterprise software sales before joining Tarantula in early 2015 as Director, Customer Solutions prior to assuming my current role as COO in late 2016.

TowerXchange: Tell us about the Volaris acquisition of Tarantula.

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: In January 2017, we announced that we had been acquired by the Volaris Group, a company with deep experience in growing vertically focused software companies such as Tarantula. Volaris Group is a wholly owned division of Constellation Software Inc. ("Constellation"), which is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX:CSU) with a market capitalisation in excess of US\$12bn.

Volaris has a philosophy of never selling businesses that they buy. This provides us clear-cut stability and allows us to focus on our long-term goals. With the support of Volaris Group, we can continue to grow our business to better serve our customers worldwide.

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?

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: Last year has been very exciting for Tarantula and gave us a chance to apply our long standing experience to different customer problems. Our customers faced various changes in their business and these needed to be factored into their tools. We came up with a number of practical solutions by leveraging the experience of our team with telecom companies and towercos. We distilled their expertise into our products and delivered value-add solutions to solve our customers' business challenges.

We are in the process of helping one of our biggest towerco customers to deploy the O&M module to track their maintenance activities across multiple geographies. Usage of our mobility tool to track remote field activities as well as capture accurate site data will provide enormous value to the towerco in reducing operational costs. Additionally, we have been continually providing support to fine-tune the billing module to ensure that our application generates accurate and consistent financial data that can be used to secure revenue.

We also helped one of our major customers in India to integrate their application with Oracle and streamline BOQ management for additional efficiency. Keeping track of materials and services

required for large-scale rollout is a time and labour-intensive process. When this information is retained by multiple stakeholders across multiple disparate applications, discrepancies can arise, leading to bottlenecks in project progress. Providing an interface between our application and Oracle will ensure that the application data flows seamlessly across the IT landscape and reduces data discrepancies. The interface also provides a mechanism to easily transfer key milestone dates to the Oracle system and ensure that the supply chain and procurement of parts is efficiently managed.

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

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: Asia is a very diverse region and the evolution of the industry varies from country to country. The region offers everything from mature tower markets in India to new and growing markets like Myanmar which is just a few years old now.

There are big differences in operational and commercial environments across Asia and Tarantula has the capability to address various 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.

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. We have been focusing on adding two new modules for transmission management and improved asset planning this past year.

As bandwidth is expanding, transmission is becoming an even more important feature for our customers who need to match the demand. The transmission module is being developed specifically for telcos enabling them to plan, source, and provision their transmission equipment and links as part of their network deployment. They will be able to track and manage the entire link lifecycle as well track costs through a workflow-based framework.

Additionally, the asset dictionary feature is being designed to extend our asset management capabilities and reduce asset duplication. The feature will minimise repeated manual inputs in creation of assets and their attributes. Users will need to register their asset in a centralised asset catalog and then be able to reuse the same asset information in site and project management.

Both these features will evolve further as we take on board feedback and inputs from our customers through our customer engagement process. Our customers can see that we absorb 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 product help manage different stakeholders within the tower supply chain, from tenants to subcontractors?

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: There are a lot of different stakeholders involved in tower site management 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. Contractors need to be given time slots to access the site to avoid overlap and crowding. All of this needs to be managed efficiently.

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. 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.

Red Cube also enables work orders such as site inspections, diesel checks, or asset counts to be allocated on the mobility app; this promotes proactive management of subcontractor work and

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allows our clients to know that the work orders actually happened. The platform 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 solutions be configured to adapt to different towercos' unique business processes and workflows?

Maurice Barnes, COO, 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 each process down or 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

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for end-users and this is integrated with all the other elements such as billing, capacity on site, discounts for existing tenants, tax, etcetera. 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?

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: Accurate asset management has a huge impact on valuation of tower portfolios . The more you can demonstrate that you are implementing contracts, collecting your receivables, and ensuring there is integrity in what's sitting on the sites, 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 system. Being able to integrate all of the necessary elements of site management and link them together can provide a clearer picture of recurring cash flow: this asset belongs to that company, this is their lease, we bill them this, and this is their interplay with the site.

Moreover, the asset dictionary feature will reduce data duplication and offer more accuracy in the capture of tower assets.

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

Maurice Barnes, COO, Tarantula: Our focus is solely on improving how our customers manage and operate their shared infrastructure business. 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 into 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 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 ■