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By Carol Wilson

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IPTV software provider Kasenna announced today that it has teamed with HP and Intel to successfully prove scalability of its Portal TV product suite to support one million customers. The benchmark testing is intended to show the Kasenna system, used with HP servers and Intel silicon, can support a large IPTV rollout.

The testing process, which began in September of 2006 and concluded in mid-March, was conducted at HP's Communications, Media and Entertainment Center in Grenoble, France. That test bed and a new facility being developed at Richardson, Texas, will be available for service providers who want to test their IPTV solutions, said Peggy Dau, worldwide director of broadband and media solutions for HP's communications, Media and Entertainment unit.

The test used the Kasenna Portal TV suite including its LivingRoom middleware and MediaBase video server software, and HP's ProLiant servers using Intel Dual-Core Xeon processors. The initiative for the test came from HP, which selected Kasenna as its IPTV middleware partner for this exercise.

"We have background in doing scalability and benchmarking," Dau said. "We knew we needed to show this as an IT solution first – everyone thinks about IPTV being about the network but it does require servers and software, which I think a lot of people forget. We chose Kasenna because they have been a very friendly partner. They are a small company but they understand where this market is going and they want to be a bigger player. To move upstream, you have to prove scalability."

For Kasenna, hitting a one-million customer benchmark showed its middleware/software solution is ready for the big time, said Scott Mirer, product director.

"This validates the scalability and resiliency of our product in an open standards environment, using the HP server and Intel chip set," he said. "This [testing] actually went well beyond what we thought was going to happen. We believe it goes to validate that our middleware especially is scalable for large scale deployments."

To date, Kasenna's U.S. deployments have been primarily in Tier 2 and Tier 3 service providers, while globally, Portal TV is being used by larger companies including China Netcom. The company has been adding resources and expanding the reach of its sales force as well, poised for major growth this year.

"This opens up a broader market for us," Mirer said. "Tier 1 service providers buy from established companies. We are showing a differentiation that opens We are showing a differentiation that opens up that market that wasn't there before."

Scalability has been a major concern for IPTV players, Dau said.

"You have to prove you can make it work – can I make streams come down and what is the quality, can I get them to a set-top and what is the quality there?" she said. "Once you've gotten past your friendly trials, what do you have to think of next? One of the challenges is being able to manage distributed servers, to keep track of what is going on in IPTV middleware and tie into billing systems. How do you start correlating all this, while you are adding subscribers?"

HP already partners with Alcatel-Lucent and Microsoft, and is open to doing similar benchmark testing with them, she said.

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