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APRIL 16, 2007

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Kasenna, which sells video servers and IPTV middleware, is already involved as a video server supplier for a number of live IPTV deployments and has signed up with some big-name partners in the telco TV world. (See [Kasenna Deployed in Russia](#), [Kasenna Powers Jazztel](#), [Cavalier Picks Kasenna](#), and [Ericsson Brings the IPTV.](#))

Now, though, it's looking to position itself as a credible alternative to [Microsoft Corp.](#) (Nasdaq: [MSFT](#) - [message board](#)) as a supplier of an IPTV middleware system that can be deployed by Tier 1 carriers and scale efficiently as subscriber numbers grow to seven figures, as they are set to do in the next few years. [France Telecom SA](#) (NYSE: [FTE](#) - [message board](#)), for example, already has 600,000 IPTV customers, while [PCCW Ltd.](#) (NYSE: [PCW](#) - [message board](#); Hong Kong: 0008) in Hong Kong has 700,000. (See [Europe to Dominate IPTV Growth.](#))

The battle to win the attention of major operators among IPTV middleware players is intense, as vendors such as [Kudelski Group](#), [Espial Group Inc.](#), [Dreampark AB](#), [NDS Group plc](#) (Nasdaq: [NNDS](#) - [message board](#)), and others attempt to join the chasing pack that includes the likes of [Orca Interactive Ltd.](#) (London: [ORCA](#) - [message board](#)), [Nokia Siemens Networks](#) (Myrio), [Thomson](#) (NYSE: [TMS](#) - [message board](#); Euronext Paris: 18453), [Minerva Networks Inc.](#), and [UTStarcom Inc.](#) (Nasdaq: [UTSI](#) - [message board](#)). (See [Who Makes What: IP Video Systems.](#))

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So Kasenna has set up a simulated IPTV test network in HP's Grenoble, France, labs to show how, under certain conditions, its middleware and video server software can support the video-over-broadband needs of 1 million subscribers with just five HP ProLiant servers using Intel Dual-Core Xeon processors.

Of course that means Kasenna has created a set of criteria, such as the number of customers making on-network requests via their set-top boxes (STBs), the nature of those requests, and related network conditions, that will probably never match an exact carrier scenario.

For example, the test-bed assumes that for every 200,000 subscribers that are using a video service, there is a 60 percent concurrency rate for active set-top box use. That means, only 120,000 of the 200,000 are using a service that is making service requests of the network, while the remainder are using services such as STB-based PVR (personal video recorder) that aren't utilizing network resources, a user profile that's typical of a Friday or Saturday evening, according to Kasenna.

"We think that's a reasonable profile based on our experience," says Allan Linder, the vendor's spokesman.

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Kasenna's test-bed enables one HP server to provide services to those 200,000 customers. As a result, 1 million subscribers can be served by five servers, though that setup doesn't include any in-built redundancy to cope with network or server failures, something a carrier would need to include in a commercial deployment.

The results validate that "one server can scale to 120,000 active set-top boxes, compared to our competitors that can't scale that well," claims Linder.

And are there equitable tests to be able to make that comparison, and be sure that other vendors' systems don't scale in the same way? "So far no one else has been prepared to publish usage models related to their capabilities," so there is no evidence to the contrary, states Linder.

And Kasenna and its partners are publishing details of their benchmark test. They're printing the exact test scenario specifications (database, load balancers, etc.), details of the service tests run, and a list of the criteria, such as the number of subscribers requesting services simultaneously, so that service providers can assess the viability and applicability of the results.

"HP intends to make the code created for the tests available, and we are going to publish a white paper," says Bob Horen, director of partner integration at Kasenna, and the man who designed the test scenario.

In addition, HP is inviting carriers to visit the Grenoble test-bed, or a replica that is being set up in the IT firm's labs in Richardson, Texas, to inject their own criteria and service scenarios into the Kasenna-based system and record the results.

"Carriers can come to Grenoble and input the metrics they want," a process that "may come with a fee," depending on the criteria and work involved, says Linder.

That's likely to be quite an attractive proposition, given the amount of time, effort, and money it costs to set up a service simulation environment, though the drawback is that the test is performed using Kasenna video delivery capabilities only and doesn't allow for a bakeoff situation between different vendors. "It's taken a large investment to get this thing rolling -- this is the first large-scale test setup in the industry," says Linder, though he wouldn't specify the actual cost.

But although the test is based around just one IPTV vendor's technology, it's still a positive step in terms of creating a meaningful benchmark for service scalability, according to Gary Schultz, president of market analysis firm [Multimedia Research Group \(MRG\) Inc.](#) He notes, in a prepared statement, that "objective benchmark testing has been missing" from the IPTV market, despite the importance of scalability, and that the vendors involved in the Grenoble benchmark test have helped to remove "the veil of mystery about what it takes to scale IPTV to subscriber levels of one million while achieving fast channel change."

IneoQuest adds to team, portfolio

IPTV test specialist IneoQuest has been storing up its news for NAB, having just announced a new hire and a new IPTV quality management tool.

The new body is former Alcatel engineer Gino Dion, who has worked in IPTV service assurance for a number of years. He will be IneoQuest's VP of business development, and, given his background, he should know exactly what sort of pitches to be making to carriers as well as to prospective vendor partners. (See [IneoQuest Hires Dion.](#))

The new product is IQPinPoint, which pulls together a mass of video monitoring data collected from network probes to provide a network-wide view of video performance. (See [IneoQuest Intros IQPinPoint.](#))

This is a key area for carriers now as subscriber numbers ramp up and greater levels of revenue depend on the video streams arriving at the customer's set-top box without being degraded by typical IP problems such as packet loss or jitter, or without any codec-related issues.

That's why IneoQuest isn't the only company at NAB claiming to have the best end-to-end video monitoring tool, because Pixelmetrix is there pitching pretty much the same kind of tool and functionality. (See [Pixelmetrix Unveils EndGame.](#))

— Ray Le Maistre, International News Editor, [Light Reading](#)

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