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FatPipe serves up ace with 'clustering' router products

by Martin Desmarais, 1 October 2004

When the U.S. Tennis Association wanted to set up a network for the reporters covering the recent U.S. Open, they turned to FatPipe Networks Inc. and its routers - becoming another in a increasing line of big-name customers that are relying on the company.

All the Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts locations in the United States run their credit card lines through FatPipe. The University of California, Berkeley, connects all of its dorm rooms over FatPipe's equipment. Other customers include the National Football League's Jacksonville Jaguars, the American Diabetes Association and the Juilliard School of Music.

It's all in a day's work for a company that is also continuing to rack up patents for its routing products. The Salt Lake City-based FatPipe calls its products "router clustering devices." Companies use them to connect to the Internet and Wide Area Networks for high-speed data transmission and setting up networks, Intranets and ecommerce.

As with a lot of router products, the key is the ability to keep companies up and running even when other equipment supporting the network goes down or Internet Service Providers are having problems.

FatPipe Network´s router is used by a number of well-known companies such as the U.S. Tennis Association, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, the University of California, Berkeley and the National Football League´s Jacksonville Jaguars.

Ragula Bhaskar, FatPipe's chairman, chief executive officer and president, believes his company has this problem covered and has enough unique capabilities to separate itself from the competition. In fact, he said his company is so far ahead, and continues to push forward with each patent its secures, that it doesn't even really have competition.

One of the key capabilities that FatPipe emphasizes is its routers abilities to bond together lines from different service providers - such as AT&T, Sprint and MCI - without having to deal with the service providers.

"You can manage it on your own," he said. "This hands the destinations back to the customers. They don't need Internet providers cooperation."

"There are 10 to 20 carriers around the world and this way you don't have to deal with all of them," he added.

According to Bhaskar, FatPipe has a range of customers from small to large companies. Depending on the application its routers range from $6,000 to $25,000.

Bhaskar co-founded the company in 1998 with Sanchaita Datta. Datta serves as the company's chief technology officer and vice

Bhaskar

president of engineering.

FatPipe is backed by $12 million venture capital, with its last round coming in 2003 when it raised $3 million.

The company has 60 employees and is consistently ranked as one of Utah's fastest-growing, private companies.

Bhaskar said the company's growth is driven by its own cash and that the next step will be to add more sales staff.

The roots for FatPipe Network were laid in a parking lot at the Pennsylvania State University where Bhaskar and Datta first bumped into each other while graduate students in the 1980s.

Over the years, their

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Datta

collaboration and discussion gave birth to the idea that would become FatPipe.

"This was an idea we felt that had merit in long-term value," Bhaskar said.

Bhaskar, who came to the United States in 1981, spent six years at Penn State. He received a doctoral degree in engineering, a dual master's degree in engineering and operations research and a master's degree in business administration from the school. He also began his career as a research technologist in Penn State's engineering department.

In 1988, he left to join the faculty at the University of Utah. He taught there until 2000 as an assistant and associate

professor. He is a member of the university's college of engineering industrial advisory committee and an advisory committee to the U.S. Secretary of Labor on labor-related technology issues.

Before co-founding FatPipe, Datta worked for Megahertz (part of U.S. Robotics) as the project leader for the remote a

ccess server group. She helped develop a remote access server that won the "Best of Show Award" at the 1994 Interop/Networld. She is a voting member of the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers' standards committees for 100 Mbits technology and wireless LANs. She has a master's degree in electrical engineering from Penn State.