BIG DATA, BIG WORLD: STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH GLOBALISING FILE TRANSFERS

Taking advantage of the worldwide marketplace without compromising security and performance in collaboration and data sharing

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It's a well-known fact that business is globalising. The BRIC countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China have stormed international commerce, changing the pecking order of leading business nations. They have been followed by the so-called CIVETS, a group consisting of Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa. Or consider the 'Next Eleven', a subset of the CIVETS plus Bangladesh, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan and the Philippines.

These countries are attracting interest because their economies are relatively vibrant and they stand a strong chance of growing further both as consumers and exporters. We could easily add other countries too, that are booming because of unprecedented demand for energy and mineral resources, or because they have become hubs of outsourcing and logistics. Even if we don't deal directly with these fast-rising countries today, our data might well be passing through their networks and datacentres.

The world is changing and this is bringing more pressure to bear on companies that must create fresh value chains that fold in newcomers. Creating systems that allow organisations to work together with partners, suppliers and customers will often differentiate the winners from the losers in a world that is getting flatter. We can take advantage of the 'global village' to lower costs, 'follow the sun' so our companies are always working by taking advantage of global working hours and to create new markets. But, ultimately, our success all depends on our ability to communicate. Globalisation is a boon when it comes to the opportunities to source from more places and sell to new markets, but it can be a pain when it comes to collaboration and efficiency.

One big challenge is getting our ideas, concepts, messages and information to other parts of the world. Design files, video, audio, rich images, software disk images and data sets for analytics are big and usually can't be handled by servers with file size limits. Adding to the challenge, some major international gateways can be particularly challenging, notably China with its Golden Shield Project of surveillance and censorship, often known as the 'Great Firewall'.

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File sizes are growing at an alarming rate. The total amount of data in the world is almost doubling on an annual basis. In part this is due to the increased digitisation of everything from business to education to healthcare and leisure. In part it's to do with globalisation putting more devices for creating and consuming data on more desks all over the globe, helped by falling prices of hardware and bandwidth. But it's also because trends such as HD video, high-quality phone cameras and audio, increased use of social networks, peer-to-peer sharing and so on, lead to ever-larger files. Where once we measured our files in kilobytes or megabytes, today it can be gigabytes and terabytes.

What's needed is a way to expedite the transfer of files safely and securely from origin to destination. And this must be done without the sky-high costs of building your own service or investing in technologies like MPLS and avoids the inefficiencies of shipping files on a disk.

Thankfully, fast networks, secure and fault-tolerant transmissions, extensive tracking of messages and access to local datacentres can provide rapid and reliable communications. In this way firms can take advantage of globalisation without being slowed down by ICT roadblocks, thereby increasing workflow efficiencies. We need services that guarantee connection speeds, adhere to security standards, create audits of transmissions and can house precious information in datacentres close to recipients.

Without addressing these issues we can be left exposed to risk as our valuable data travels across networks in countries we may never visit. But by deploying these state-of-the-art services we can negotiate the challenges and opportunities of globalisation, steering a path through data traffic like having a dedicated lane on the motorway.