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Huawei finds favor at CERN: researchers sign up for more UDS cloud storage

by David Meyer   FEB. 1, 2013 - 3:54 A

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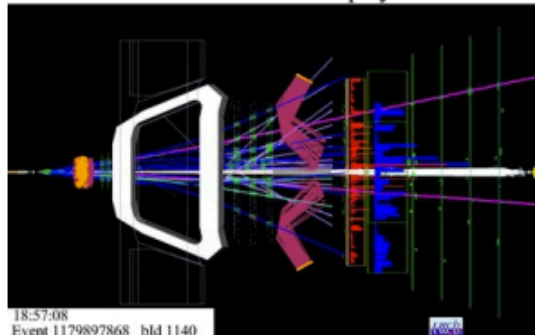
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SUMMARY: *Huawei has become an official partner of CERN openlab, with the physics research facility giving the thumbs-up to the Chinese firm's exascale-targeting, mass object-based storage infrastructure.*

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China's Huawei may find business tough in the U.S. due to suspicions over its motives, but its cloud efforts are clearly appreciated elsewhere. A year after it started working with CERN on cloud storage – something of a priority for a research organization that generates more than 25 petabytes of physics data each year – Huawei has become an official CERN openlab partner, with at least three more years' collaboration now assured.

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The new arrangement was announced on Thursday, along with confirmation of Russia's Yandex becoming an openlab associate in the field of data processing. Huawei's involvement is a bigger deal than that, as it puts the Chinese firm on a par with Intel, HP, Oracle and Siemens, all of which work particularly closely with CERN to see how their technologies can help with the Large Hadron Collider experiments.

In Huawei's case, the company is contributing its self-healing UDS cloud storage system for use and validation. UDS is targeting the upcoming exascale (an exabyte is roughly a million terabytes) era with a mass object-based storage infrastructure that uses ARM's energy-efficient processor architecture alongside cheap SATA disks. It also offers Amazon S3 API compatibility and claims eleven-nines (99.999999999 percent) reliability, so users *theoretically* don't need to back up data stored in a UDS-toting cloud.

UDS provides a bit of insight into how openlab works. Huawei first delivered a 384-node version of UDS to CERN in early 2012, after which the researchers played around with it for three months. In September of that year, Huawei released UDS to the general enterprise market (in more normal eight-node configurations). The benefits for both sides of this partnership are clear: CERN has to push technological limits in order to handle the very big data generated by the LHC, and Huawei gets both valuable feedback from the researchers and a glowing report card to show off to the wider world.

As for the next steps in this partnership, CERN has now hired two computer scientists to work with Huawei on its implementation there, and more UDS storage systems will be deployed at the Swiss facility in the next few months.

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