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The 451 Group: Grid Computing Technology Is a Critical Resource for the Digital Media Industry to Succeed in Delivering More Sophisticated Animation and Special Effects

Vendor Companies Are Facing Numerous Obstacles and Challenges in Selling Grid Computing Technology to the Digital Media Industry

New York, September 28, 2005 – The 451 Group has found that grid computing technology has become a critical resource for the digital media industry – necessary to deliver more sophisticated animation and special effects – but technology vendors are facing numerous obstacles and challenges in delivering solutions to movie production and electronic gaming organizations. These findings appear in a report released today by The 451 Group, a New York-based technology industry analyst company focused on the business of enterprise IT innovation.

The movie and electronic gaming industries are the markets – within the aggregate digital media industry – where 451 analysts have seen the widest deployment of grid computing technologies, usually supporting animation and special effects. Indeed, a form of grid computing has long been used by the movie industry; however, grids have always been called “render farms,” as they’re known by industry insiders, so “grid computing” remains a foreign concept in many corners.

“The 451 Group has found that grid computing technology attributes – including virtualization, collaboration and heterogeneity – are important to studios seeking to better manage their digital media assets and reduce the number of masters required to create the growing range of products spawned by a movie,” said Jim Davis, Senior Analyst at The 451 Group and primary author of the report. “One issue we see is that this industry appears more hesitant toward adoption of grid computing technologies than others – with concerns about cost, location, data movement, security and performance. Grids and utility computing can be of great advantage to the digital media industry, but technology vendor companies still have a lot to do in order to address these concerns in terms of offering concrete benefits instead of theoretical ones.”

The 451 Group has found that within the digital media industry there is an ongoing need to have the latest and greatest technology on the market, but the definite focus is on cutting costs. Many strategies are employed by enterprise IT end users in the industry to cut costs, including finding technology vendors willing to provide free or discounted hardware and software in return for the benefits of being associated with a given movie, as well as using open source technology and in-house development. Another issue affecting enterprise IT decisions – including those about grid computing – is the increasing demand for heightened realism from special effects in both live action and animated films.

The 451 Group also found that many companies are wary of the outsourcing/utility model. The studios believe it is more efficient to build their own core technologies, such as rendering engines and grid management components, rather than outsourcing, since the cost has to be right and the ease of implementing these technologies as a service has to be addressed. The studios are also sensitive to the idea that data will be compromised or that it will find its way into pirate distributions. Thus, 451 analysts believe that technology vendor companies must demonstrate the benefits of deploying leading animation and rendering applications on grids, and that they must work hard to address user concerns.

The 451 Group: Grid Computing Technology is a Critical Resource for the Digital Media Industry to Succeed in Delivering More Sophisticated Animation and Special Effects – 2-2-2-2-2

“A big difference between the film industry and other vertical markets is that technology is being used by people who think of themselves foremost as artists, not enterprise IT end users,” said Davis. “The traditional approach to developing enterprise IT solutions does not apply – instead, there is a need for tools to look and feel appropriate for this community. Sector knowledge is key, and a technology vendor company will fail if it tries to treat digital media firms as just another vertical market for grids.”

The new report, “Grid Computing – Adoption for Digital Media Creation and Distribution,” is the seventh one in the 451 Grid Adoption Research Service (GARS) – an investigation into user experiences and vendor strategies. The 64-page report was written by Jim Davis, with contributions by William Fellows, Principal Analyst; Steve Wallage, Director of Research; and Aidan Biggins, Associate Analyst, Grid Computing. The report highlights the approaches of nine enterprise organizations in the media sector in deploying grid computing technology, key obstacles and challenges they face, and the expected future usage of grids in this sector. The report also examines nine technology vendors, outlining the various approaches they are using to help companies in this sector overcome the challenges they face in successfully implementing grid computing technology within their enterprises.

Key Companies Covered

The report includes in-depth competitive assessments of the following vendor companies (although this is not a complete list of companies covered in various sections of the report): Exanet, GridIron, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Pipelinefx, Seriss, SGI, Sun Microsystems and Veoh.

User case studies include the following early-adopter companies: Axyz Animation, BBC, Can Factory, DreamWorks Animation, Hammerhead, Pixel Corps and Sample Digital, as well as other unnamed organizations.

Report Orders

To learn more about this report, or to discuss developing a client relationship with The 451 Group, contact Simon Carruthers, Vice President of Research Services, via phone at 212-505-3030 x-103, or via e-mail at: simon.carruthers@the451group.com.

About The 451 Grid Adoption Research Service (GARS)

The 451 Grid Adoption Research Service (GARS) – an investigation into user experiences and vendor strategies – extends The 451 Group's proven expertise in analyzing the grid technology market. This service analyzes the track record as commercial enterprise users introduce grid technologies to their core IT operations, and it examines the effectiveness of the strategies of vendor companies whose technologies early adopters are deploying. It is an extension of The 451 Group's analytical program on grid computing, which provides an assessment of customer demand, looking at the opportunities and challenges facing early adopters and covering adoption within key industries. It also presents the unique opportunities and challenges in specific vertical market segments.

About The 451 Group

The 451 Group is an independent technology industry analyst company focused on the business of enterprise IT innovation. The company's analysts provide critical and timely insight into the market and competitive dynamics of innovation in emerging technology segments. Clients of the company – at vendor, investor, service-provider and end-user organizations – rely on 451 insight to support both strategic and tactical decision-making for competitive advantage.

The 451 Group is headquartered in New York, with offices in key locations, including San Francisco, London and Boston. For additional information on the company or to apply for trial access to its services, go to:

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