

Picking a winner in the expanding market for cloud services is the savvy reseller's best path to prosperity. Cloud columnist **Sholto Macpherson** cuts through to your best bets in this exciting market

Google search appliances racked up

# How businesses can catch today's trailblazers, consumers

The business world lags the consumer technology wave and cloud resellers such as Hedloc have found a way to help them catch up with Google. Perhaps you can, too

**B**runo Pisano no longer finds it surprising when enterprise customers ask him variations on the same question: why can't my expensive corporate IT system do the same thing as cloud services that consumers get for free?

Pisano decided to set up cloud-services reseller Hedloc to provide his customers with better answers. "We were seeing consumer technology move at such a rapid pace – we're still seeing that – and business lagging more and more behind," says Pisano, Hedloc's chief executive officer.

Hedloc turned to one of the kings of consumer cloud services, Google, to provide the required technology and inspiration, and the relationship turned Hedloc into a champion for the vendor in the Asia Pacific.

Some may find it surprising to read that Google even has a channel. The tribe of new vendors spawned by the internet had no experience, and seemed to show little interest, in building a reseller channel. The internet was a channel itself that allowed a vendor to sell

directly to consumers, as Dell's deft business model first demonstrated. Many vendors followed Dell's early belief that the same would hold true for business.

But it didn't, and Dell has followed the time-honoured path of winning over business customers through a growing army of resellers.

Cloud software companies have reached the same conclusion and are quietly looking for resellers

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that "get it". These resellers are less likely to be well-established integrators with a business model and mentality that revolves around selling tin to corporate data centres.

Some integrators have managed to expand into cloud services, but the best known – such as Salesforce premier reseller SquarePeg – have started from a blank slate.

A reason for this is that it's very difficult or impossible to build

## Mobile a natural partner to cloud

Two trends in technology have emerged hand in hand – cloud services and the mobile devices that deliver them. Hedloc's Bruno Pisano calls the developments in the mobile space "a tectonic shift".

"It's an enabler for so many things that we've never seen before," he says.

Mobile advances have blown open the potential in mapping (or geo-spatial) technologies as mobile devices live within a metre's radius of the body and provide detailed information.

"You can understand where [a mobile device] is, what it's capturing and what it's interacting with. When you couple the new mobile [device] with the power of cloud

computing, we have applications on our mobile that access some of the world's largest data centres," Pisano says. Mobile technology is accelerating faster "than any platform we've seen".

Although mobile phones sport multi-core processors, it isn't the power of the devices that is driving change but the connectivity to the cloud.

Google's focus on mobile platforms gives Hedloc an advantage when it comes to software development and delivery. Pisano says the ability to deploy applications onto devices accessed by the mobile workforce is a huge differentiator to competitors pushing on-premises solutions.

in-house systems that can solve the questions Pisano hears. It's easier and more cost-effective to harness the resources of the cloud vendors instead. Pisano gives three examples that are addressed by Google's product triumvirate.

"Why can't search inside our organisation be as effective as finding information on Google.com? "Why can't I visualise my business assets and find out where things are located like I can with Google Maps and Google Earth, be they power poles or buildings or manholes? "And in the collaboration space, why should my organisation spend huge amounts of money trying to catch up with world-class, user-friendly applications such as Google Docs, Gmail and [Google] Calendar?"

Pisano labels the adoption of consumer technology as "the enterprise evolution".

"A lot of this technology is and has been adopted quite readily and with huge uptake in the consumer space. We go home and have great technology and then go to work and not get that great technology in the enterprise. It is evolutionary because it is already there and it's just a matter of business lagging and not seeing the advantage and the opportunities."

A signature cloud technology that has little peer in the on-premise world, at least on the scale practised by Google and Microsoft, is mapping. Google has Google Earth Enterprise and Google Maps in the geospatial area with which organisations overlay their data on Google's to visualise asset locations.

"You can do a lot of this behind the firewall so sensitive data remains private and they're using Google Maps to visualise it," Pisano says. Levels of data can be added.

For example, a company could plot a bus route with all the stops on the route with their respective arrival times. Then telemetry data could map the exact location of each bus along the route.

A third step would be to create a mobile interface so that a person waiting at a bus stop could track the bus' progress.

One of Hedloc's most visible mapping projects was to show where taxpayer funds were

being spent under the Federal Government's economic stimulus plan, the counterattack to the global financial crisis in 2009.

The project took weeks to put together and launched the night before the federal budget was released, though Pisano refuses to reveal how much Hedloc was paid. (You can see it at [www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au](http://www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au).)

The government data overlaying Google Maps is stored in a private government database, part of which has been exposed to the public, Pisano says.

How do you structure a reseller business around a cloud mapping service? Hedloc sells the Google Maps API as a service with "various strategies and advantages" which he declines to share, though he adds that "it's based on a traditional pricing model, there's no surprises".

Pisano says taking consumer cloud services to the enterprise is not just about selling the right technology. He says the traditional channel is focused too heavily on maintaining current technologies and not enough on strategic development of IT, otherwise known as innovation.

Pisano ascribes this to a lack of demand. He says businesses have difficulty finding the time, money and resources to innovate, which created an opening for Hedloc. "The last thing a business stakeholder wants to hear is that they need to deliver more servers or software. They want a result.

"We believe innovation is fundamental to the survival of businesses, especially in today's economic environment.

"We believe those organisations that take advantage of innovation initiatives now have a game-changing opportunity to transform themselves into market leaders and break away from their competitors."

Hedloc has taken up the mission of bringing consumer technology to enterprise as a proven and cost-effective path to innovation.

Pisano says cloud services have radically shortened the speed of delivery for IT projects and that, instead of taking years to implement and test viability, Hedloc aims to deliver "value on steroids" within weeks.

## Storage service win for Hedloc

Hedloc kicked off the new financial year with the announcement it had won exclusive rights to distribute cloud storage service Box in the Asia Pacific.

Box, formerly Box.net, pitches itself as a content management platform to rival Microsoft SharePoint Online.

Hedloc would run Box's Asia Pacific partner program that aimed to provide resellers and their customers with "a simple, open, cloud content management solution that reduces complexity and cost", Hedloc said in the release.

Box, which claims to have nearly six million users and 60,000 companies as customers, targets the SMB and mid-market with a platform that can share information internally and externally. Box can be accessed through native applications for iOS and Android devices, and is integrated with the Google Apps productivity suite and Salesforce.

The technology is "stuff that CEOs and CIOs get excited about. And we really find that they do get excited about it," Pisano says.

Hedloc has established a technology lab in its Sydney headquarters it calls the first Google Enterprise innovation centre. The centre's goal is to demonstrate Google technologies and test out solutions to customer problems.

In the centre customers can play with search, geo-spatial and collaboration applications, create prototypes and then test them with stakeholders within the company.

"Once the stakeholders are engaged it takes a different level because stakeholders have ideas of their own," Pisano says.

The centre is available only to Hedloc customers and, as the services are all cloud-based, is accessible from anywhere in the world. The reseller has customers in Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and New Zealand. Pisano calls it "innovation as a service".

And how does the vendor hold up its end of the bargain? Pisano says Hedloc was one of Google's first enterprise partners in the APAC region and has become one of the biggest, with many large-scale deployments under its belt.

"It's been a great ride. We have definitely been able to achieve close alignment and that's been borne by the fact that both organisations come from a very similar way of thinking – that there has always been a better way and that we can push the boundaries."



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**Bruno Pisano,**  
CEO, Hedloc