

# Tarantula platform designed to facilitate co-location in Europe



Enabling tenants and tower companies to collaborate and realise significant time savings



Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula

Tower companies and their tenants have historically struggled to get visibility into the end to end co-location process. They have not been able to identify hold-ups and have often found it difficult to manage documents waiting for approval. Tarantula has a proven, trusted and highly configurable software platform (Red Cube) which leverages the latest technology to significantly improve the efficiency of co-location operations. In this interview, Ravi Kuppan, Founder of Tarantula, explains how Tarantula is shaking up the world of site management.

**Keywords:** Asset Lifecycle Platform, Asset Register, Capex, Co-locations, Due Diligence, Infrastructure Sharing, Installation, Investment, Job Ticketing, KPIs, Leasing & Permitting, Masts & Towers, MNOs, Monitoring & Management, Novation of leases, O&M, Operational Excellence, Operator-Led JV, Opex Reduction, Procurement, QoS, RedCube, Risk, RMS, Sale & Leaseback, Site Management System, SLAs, Tarantula, Towercos, Transfer Assets, Uptime

## Read this article to learn:

- How Tarantula's platform helps towercos and their tenants to collaborate and reduce costs
- How independent towercos and MNO JV infracos are taking differing approaches to portfolio management
- The 30 Tarantula tower best practice processes
- Tarantula's experience working in Western and Eastern Europe

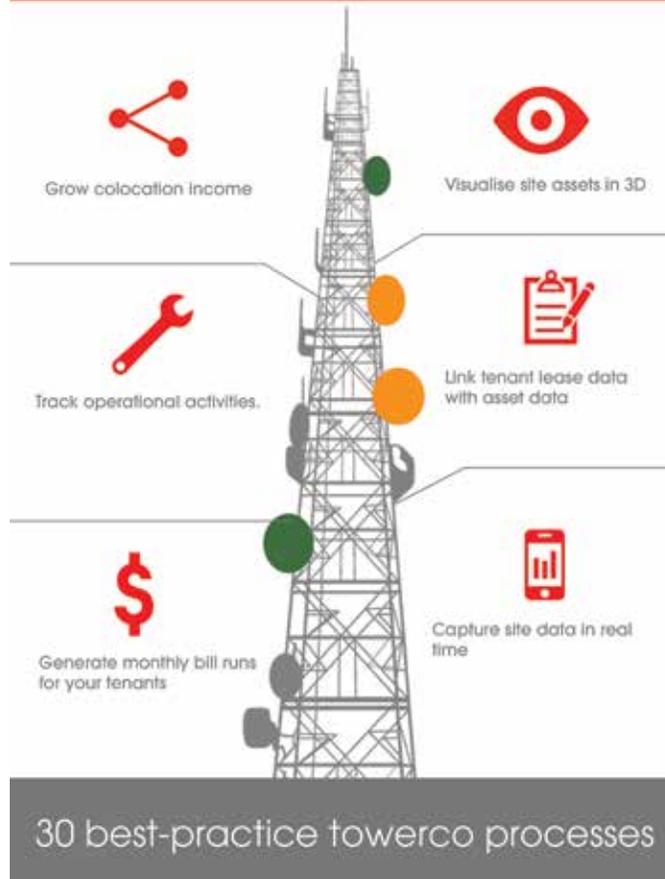
**TowerXchange:** Please introduce yourself and Tarantula for readers less familiar with your company.

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: I was developing OSS tools for Telefónica in the UK before going on to found Tarantula in early 2000.

The company formally launched in early 2001 as an industry-wide site sharing co-location platform in the UK. Our software has helped manage more than 18,000 co-locations on this platform in the UK and hundreds of thousands of co-location transactions across Europe, Asia and Africa. This equates to millions of dollars of site rent being collected each month, all enabled by our platform. Our co-location module provides centralised management of co-location on the web, which in turn enables the customer and tower owner to collaborate and yield time savings for all parties. Tarantula provides transparency for end to end co-location – users can identify hold-ups, manage documents awaiting approval, improve performance against SLAs, and reduce disputes.

So what makes us stand out as a company? Our team has in-depth knowledge of working with and experience in operating tower companies. This alignment means we understand their software needs inside out. Based on this, we have taken 30 real-world, best practice towerco processes and brought these to life through persona-based workflows, linking together towerco data such as assets and leases into one central business model. Moreover, we have linked this integrated data with

## End-to-end order to cash lifecycle



master lease agreements to offer a built-in pricing and billing platform. This is available straight out of the box, allowing companies to quickly integrate and deploy a towerco business model and end to end site management in a single software platform. The software is being used in 20 different countries around the world which gives us a wide breadth of industry experience.

It is these inherent values and benefits that have

powered our product philosophy and links the Red Cube platform to the creation of business value.

### **TowerXchange: What has been Tarantula's experience of working with European towercos, infracos and MNOs?**

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: We have been working with UK opcos since early 2001. Over the last 15 years we have also worked with a variety of tier one MNOs and tower operators across Western and Eastern Europe.

We've learnt that Western and Eastern European MNOs and service providers operate slightly differently. For example, in Russia, planning processes are slightly different than in the UK – things tend to get done much faster in Russia.

### **TowerXchange: How do you see the evolution of the European Tower industry in the past year?**

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: It appears that the time is ripe for European tower divestment. A lot has been spent on licenses. There are a number of planned divestments across Spain, Russia, and Italy. On top of this, we've also noticed an increasing number of interested buyers - strategic as well as financial – getting engaged in European tower transactions.

All of these players have one overriding concern – how to absorb or transfer these assets quickly and how to monetise assets in a sustainable manner. That's why out of the box software is so critical.

The industry will need to adapt faster as time to market considerations become increasingly important factors for start-up tower companies and newly acquired portfolios. Out of the box software will play a critical part in developing best practice processes for these businesses so they don't need to re-invent the wheel.

### **TowerXchange: How does the unique structure of the European tower industry - consisting of many operator-captive and MNO JV infracos as well as independent towercos - affect their respective appetite and need for portfolio management information?**

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Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: I'd like to answer this question in two parts. The first thing that needs to be borne in mind is that there are two very different drivers affecting the market. Fortunately, we have experience in both segments.

The Indian market is a good example. In India, you have Indus, which is an operator-led joint venture tower company. You also have traditional tower companies like American Tower. Both of these companies have quite different goals and objectives. One goal is to serve their MNO parents and ultimately deliver efficient service provision. In this regard, automated portfolio management tool-sets are critical for managing and provisioning the process for installing and upgrading equipment. MNOs are less interested in how the lease agreement links back to the original customer order and whether it was installed at the correct height. Joint venture infrastructure companies are often more interested in being efficient service partners than in monetising the rental of the tower. So portfolio management is more asset and SLA centric.

For independent tower companies, the business is all about real estate. Managing the space on towers is central for these companies' profitability. As a consequence, a portfolio management platform needs to provide a level of data granularity that can efficiently link leases with assets and ensure revenue is not lost.

A lot of people seem to think the tower industry

is homogeneous, when it clearly is not. Over the last 15 years we've learnt a lot about the nuances in our industry. We understand the differences between different geographies and business models. So we know a lot about the different ways in which companies view their portfolios. This is why we have built a software platform that is flexible and configurable and takes into account the different business drivers for each type of tower company.

**TowerXchange: We hear increasing appetite for the European tower industry to engage with active as well as passive infrastructure, and broadcast as well as tower assets - how can management information support this extension of the business model?**

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: Extension of the business model for tower companies will link back to processes being extended and adapted. This will ultimately drive the management information. Capturing data and providing a flexible and configurable process layer that is scalable will allow the tower industry to quickly seize new opportunities.

**TowerXchange: New tower businesses are being created, carved out or acquired on an increasingly regular basis in Europe - where should such entities start when it comes to improving asset register accuracy and commercialising tower management which might have previously been managed purely on a cost charge-back basis?**

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: First of all, tower companies need to understand what is on their sites in terms of assets. Secondly, they have to understand how these assets link back to commercial site licenses.

This allows tower companies to enjoy cost optimisation when they service their sites, and this represents a substantial proportion of opex.

Understanding these two questions is not an overnight process. The faster a new tower company can invest in a proven software platform such as Tarantula, the quicker they can enhance their asset valuation and accelerate the whole process of integrating assets.

We have seen several examples of this such as the recent American Tower-Viom transaction; Helios Towers Africa buying assets from Bharti Airtel; and edotco buying Digicel MTC in Myanmar. A solid platform provides confidence to the investors when conducting any due diligence and this makes integration of the towers easier once purchased. Tarantula has developed an integrated tower purchase module to ensure customers benefit from a 'step by step' process to ensure any new assets can be monetised quickly.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that adopting the 30 Tarantula tower best practice processes can enable a new tower company to rollout the platform faster across its ecosystem of operations to create a single version of the truth. Managing the business through multiple Excel sheets does not inspire

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the same level of confidence with investors and potential transaction penalty warranties can be invoked later if substantial data mis-matches are found.

**TowerXchange: How would you characterise the current state of portfolio management information in European telecoms - are built-for-purpose platforms like Tarantula's widely used, or is your main competition still Excel spreadsheets?**

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: Portfolio management only covers one part of the challenge – assets are typically understood in a narrow sense. For example, many telcos see it as the ground and tenant lease. We look at portfolio management in a much broader, holistic sense. For example - the end to end process from the

initial co-location request through the installation all need to be covered and managed. A tower asset is constantly changing and the key is ultimately to derive a full history of all changes on the tower and track how they are linked back to the commercial lease arrangements.

Some companies think they can 'build it themselves', using Excel or other building blocks. Building your own tool really makes little sense when standard products like Tarantula are available with millions of dollars of ongoing product investment that reflect improved business practices across the industry. Also, it dilutes the core "lease management" focus of towercos by needing to build IT teams and manage "non-core" IT projects.

Tower companies are waking up to the importance

of data quality, but face numerous challenges with data integrity. Our experience is that the challenge of creating and managing a new tower company via a single software platform is often underestimated. Managing expectations when all users have 'one platform' and they have their own Excel or Access database is not a trivial matter.

**TowerXchange: Finally, please sum up how you would differentiate Tarantula's solution from competitive site management platforms.**

Ravi Kuppan, Founder and Director, Tarantula: Tarantula brings 15 years of experience in this sector globally with its software platform. We recognise that markets are different, the US is not Europe or Asia, while other solutions are still learning the market differences. Having global experience with roots in co-location from early 2000, gives us a depth of knowledge no other competitor has when it comes to implementation.

With an installed base in 20 countries, we are always well aware of the industry's needs and this fuels our ongoing roadmap enhancements, providing our customers with the latest knowledge incorporated within the product.

Our 30 real-world tested, best practice towerco processes integrate all data including assets, leases, billing information, and financials, into one central business model. This allows companies to quickly integrate and deploy a towerco business model as a single source of truth delivered as a software service ■