

1,2,3... start-ups !

Focus on ActiveEon

 French version

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Interview with Denis Caromel, founder and scientific adviser to ActiveEon, Publisher of open source solutions for distributed and parallel computing to accelerate applications and virtualization.



Denis Caromel

- 44 years old
- Researcher at INRIA since 1993
- Specialist of the Parallel and Distributed Programming
- Founder and scientific adviser to ActiveEon.

■ You have been a professor at the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis since 1991, and head of the OASIS project-team for over two years. What pushed you to move forwards with ActiveEon at the same time?

Denis Caromel: I had been thinking about it for a long time, but it took a while to finally decide and then to complete the project. I actually did it for a number of

reasons, starting with the desire to see the research applied in a broader context than the laboratory. I wanted to make things as useable as possible in industry and scientific research. And after supervising fifteen doctoral students, I also wanted to see our work applied within a start-up that would create jobs, and have a life of its own. The frustration of having to work with students who were just passing through contributed as well. I met extremely competent people who would stay with us for three or four years, but then have to leave because of the rules governing public positions, with the result that they left to work abroad. One of our objectives was to keep their skills here in France. We made the decision in late 2005, and from there on we had a clearly marked path to follow. Initially, we were supported by several INRIA employees responsible for helping put research to use. Later, in July 2006, we joined the PACA-Est incubator, which was extremely beneficial.

■ ProActive Parallel Suite was already being used in industry before ActiveEon was created, by Amadeus for example. Did that make you certain that there was a place for your technology?

Denis Caromel: Absolutely. You have to realize that we

ActiveEon in brief



ACTIVEeon
SCALE BEYOND LIMITS

Publisher of open source solutions for distributed and parallel computing

to accelerate applications and virtualization.

As computing progress slows, it is often more effective and profitable to distribute highly demanding applications between several machines rather than waiting to see if a new processor comes out. In order to meet this need, under Denis Caromel's leadership, the members of the OASIS project team (INRIA Sophia-Antipolis) decided in late 2005 to create a start-up. At INRIA, Denis Caromel researches parallel, distributed programming and grids; one offshoot is the *ProActive Parallel Suite*, which he has been working on for ten years. The start-up chalked up several early successes, winning the "Concours national d'aide à la création d'entreprises de technologies innovantes" twice (in 2006 and in 2007) and earning a prize for a service-oriented project based on the ProActive Parallel Suite. At the time, the scientists were working in partnership with Oracle and Hewlett Packard. Administrative delays pushed the actual launch back until November 5, 2007, but that did not keep ActiveEon from having already begun working with Thales Avionic on the simulation of aircraft electrical systems. It has also established contacts with the company Cadence Design Systems. The start-up also offers professional training in grid technologies, consulting, integration and subscriptions for open source-related contracts.

About the Technology

have now reached a turning point in computing. Up to now, computers have been doubling in speed every eighteen months, so if you had a capacity problem all you had to do was wait until a fast enough machine came out. But this has changed, and manufacturers can no longer keep up the pace. Processing data properly now requires several machines working in parallel. Our software may not be the only solution available on the market, but ours is the only one programmed in Java, which is suited for industrial purposes.

■ **Economic players seem to believe in you already, even though your company is so young...**

Denis Caromel: True, but I should point out that the contacts you mentioned were established when we were already in the PACA-Est incubator. This means that ActiveEon was already operational even though officially it did not launch until November 2007. We went through a tense period when our industrial and official partners were late in paying the subsidies they had promised, and that was when we realized that not everyone is truly aware of how fragile new companies are at the start. But even though things are not always easy, you can't get discouraged! ActiveEon is currently holding discussions with integrators about placing project bids. We have also somewhat diversified our business activities, and we already have clients in Boston for training and consulting on ProActive Parallel Suite. ActiveEon currently consists of seven people (six of whom were part of OASIS), and we are planning to hire three more employees in September. As you can see, we're quite optimistic!

Interview by Cécile Fradin, Technoscope.

ProActive
Parallel Suite

The ProActive
Parallel Suite

software is above

all a tool to better manage computing infrastructures. The OASIS project team that created it is working on application parallelization, a method that harnesses the power of several computers to optimize data processing. This streamlining requires fewer machines, and reduces management costs and energy consumption. Migration to Services Oriented Architectures (SOA) does require managing corporate infrastructures, but it also means distributing parts of the applications among machines that are not fixed. The ProActive Parallel Suite software makes this faster and simpler by providing tools to help programmers "split" their applications. The OASIS scientists are also working on technology based on Java, the programming language of the corporate world, in an attempt to match the speed achieved with the languages generally used for these types of software: Fortran and C++.

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