When Pascal Viginier was appointed Group CIO of France Telecom – Orange in 2010, he received not a charter but a conquest. Under the oversight of CEO Stéphane Richard and as a result of collaboration across countries and between business units, a new corporate strategy—conquests 2015—was announced. “The foremost objective is to deliver an optimal customer experience,” Viginier says. “And IT is everywhere in this experience. It is the basis that allows our customers—both consumers and businesses—to interact and conduct business—from fixed-line and mobile services, to the network, to the international development and expansion of the company.”
Priority one: the basics
As Virginier aligned the Corporate CIO organization, which consists of more than 400 professionals, with the business priorities of conquests 2015, he pinpointed four IT priorities that will drive IT until 2015. The first priority is to fix what he calls the basics. “We need to deliver highly available, reliable, and secure IT services to our employees and customers,” he explains. “This translates into a productive workforce and loyal customers. This year, we are looking to evolve our security environment to address new requirements around data loss prevention and compliance.”

Priority two: cost management
The second priority is about improving operational efficiency. “We want to reduce operational expenditures and reinvest those savings in IT growth and transformational initiatives,” Virginier states. “IT will help France Telecom – Orange achieve our smart savings target of €2.5 billion in 2015.” Efforts that Virginier’s team are helping to drive include rationalization of services between countries, further development of private cloud services, and optimization of IT costs. Virtualization is one of the strategies France Telecom – Orange embarked upon as part of its larger focus on cost management. Approximately 40 percent of France Telecom – Orange’s 30,000 servers—spread across 17 data centers—are virtual using VMware vSphere for Microsoft Windows- and Red Hat Enterprise Linux-based servers, along with a select number of Oracle servers using Solaris Containers. Virtualization is delivering substantial operational efficiency gains and cost reductions.

Other projects include consolidation of data charging solutions from 20 to 3, a reengineering of the billing ecosystem for 11 countries, and standardization of ERP functions for sourcing, finance, and HR in six countries.

Another area where France Telecom – Orange has seen cost management gains is backup and recovery. The company has relied on Symantec NetBackup for data protection since 2005 across Microsoft Windows, UNIX, and Linux environments. “For example, seeking operational efficiency, we standardized on NetBackup,” Virginier comments. “It has evolved with the requirements of our data centers, specifically with the emergence of virtualization and cloud services.” In 2007, France Telecom – Orange added Symantec System Recovery for managing disaster recovery of approximately 1,000 Microsoft Windows technology-based servers.

Priorities three and four: transformations and new business
The focus on cost management leads to the third priority, to
facilitate and support a series of IT transformations. “Each year, we manage about 30 transformational projects through project assurance and architectural guidance,” Viginier states. “Examples of projects include infrastructure consolidation and integration of services.”

The final priority is to enable new business development through delivery of “best-in-class” customer experience, convergence of services, and expansion into new international markets. There is an intertwining of each priority; their individual success requires their collective success.

**Infrastructure tools**

Veritas Storage Foundation and Veritas Dynamic Multi-Pathing were adopted by Orange Business Services, a division of France Telecom – Orange, in 2002 and are currently used to manage storage volumes and file systems on Oracle Solaris, HP-UX, and Red Hat Enterprise Linux platforms. Dynamic Multi-Pathing provides faster and more efficient storage management between Oracle Solaris and HP-UX servers and France Telecom – Orange’s tiered storage environment. Storage Foundation enables dynamic storage management between physical, virtual, and private and public cloud environments.

Since 2005, Orange Business Services also uses Veritas Cluster Server from Symantec for high availability clustering on select business-critical Oracle Solaris and HP-UX systems. The architecture has evolved over time, and Veritas Storage Foundation Cluster File System was added to reduce recovery time when unplanned failures occur, enabling multiple servers to share the same storage resources instead of dedicated storage resources per server cluster. For proactive support, which includes quarterly reviews and recommendations, Orange Business Services relies on Symantec Business Critical Services.

“Symantec technologies are proving valuable in the solutions France Telecom – Orange directly offers customers. Orange Business Services offers hosted SAP services to its customers that often include backup and recovery using Symantec NetBackup and storage and high availability management capabilities running Veritas Storage Foundation and Veritas Cluster Server. “We use Veritas Storage Foundation within our virtualization schemes and Symantec NetBackup for centralized data protection,” says Didier Delabre, the head of IT Delivery at Orange Business Services.

“‘They play an important role in helping us to deal with large, heterogeneous networks and systems.’ Orange Business Services also provides email archiving and eDiscovery services using Symantec Enterprise Vault.

**Into the Cloud**

Recognizing the benefits involving agility and lower cost, France Telecom – Orange began moving in the direction of private cloud platforms.
services several years ago. “We have Infrastructure as a Service, Platform as a Service, and Software as a Service,” Viginier says. “Because of the global nature of our business, the ability to offer shared services through private clouds reduces our capital and operating expenditures while dramatically decreasing the time it takes to provision infrastructure for new services. For example, with our private IaaS cloud, we can launch new facilities in a couple of weeks versus several months.”

The greening of IT
Sustainability is an important part of France Telecom – Orange’s corporate responsibility strategy and an initiative on which the IT organization has been focused for the past couple years. Specifically, the France Telecom – Orange executive management team established a goal in 2012 to reduce energy consumption by 20 percent by 2020, and IT is an important driver.

With that in mind, Viginier’s team has a long-term green IT strategy in place. “We rationalized the number of data centers down to an average of one or two per country over the past year,” Viginier reports. “Now we’re focused on reducing this number even further, to a few in each region. This will dramatically reduce our energy consumption and our carbon footprint.”

Intertwining of personal-professional paths
Viginier is just as passionate about his personal life as he is about his professional career. His mix of personal interests is as eclectic as his professional skill sets. An avid sailor, runner, and gardener, Viginier sees a number of parallels between these “weekend hobbies” and the philosophical approach he’s taken in his career.

Being well-rounded is certainly one facet. Another is the rigor that embodies nearly any dedicated runner. Then there are the teaming and competitive aspects of sailing, something Viginier finds stimulating and invigorating. And finally there are the nurturing and creative sides of gardening; the opportunity to grow something from a small seedling and see it flower and flourish.

Motto: IT is business
Viginier’s background is quite diverse, falling into three basic areas—engineering (R&D), business, and IT. Their interconnection has shaped his career and serves as an important lens for him as Group CIO. “My motto is ‘IT is business,’” Viginier quips. “Whenever one of the business owners asks me how the IT organization is doing, I tell them only as good as your business.”

Viginier joined France Telecom – Orange in 1981 as a member of the central IT department, leading a number of projects related to billing systems and strategic plan-
“Whenever one of the business owners asks me how the IT organization is doing, I tell them only as good as your business.”

– Pascal Viginier, Group CIO, France Telecom – Orange

“Understanding how software can transform the services of the company is a critical underpinning when you start talking about innovation,” he says.

So what are some of the strategies that Viginier follows to help ensure that his team is aligned with their business counterparts? “First, I insist on a collaborative spirit within the team and between our team and others,” he relates. “This means that we must be pragmatic, straightforward, and situation-oriented. Second, I want the team embedded as virtual members of the business units they support so that we can proactively manage to their expectations. The final point is to practice what I describe as business intimacy. IT must be able and willing to have strategic IT and business conversations anytime and everywhere. This helps us to identify potential issues much earlier in the process and to get more strategic in working with our business counterparts to evolve existing services and to develop new business.”

In addition, Viginier formed an IT-business council that meets twice a year to ensure ongoing strategic discussions with the business. “This allows us to determine progress, pinpoint issues and provide appropriate escalation, and identify new business initiatives,” he says.

Speak the right languages

At the end of the day, Viginier is emphatic that IT must speak the languages of the business—from the Office of the CFO to the Office of the CMO. “The business should never be required to speak the language of IT,” he argues. “We need to be fluent in their languages.” And for a global powerhouse like France Telecom – Orange, speaking the languages of its different customers is where communications really makes the difference. It is then that conquests 2015 becomes not just a strategy but a reality.

Patrick E. Spencer (Ph.D.) is the editor in chief and publisher for CIO Digest and the author of a book and various articles and reviews published by Continuum Books and Sage Publications, among others.

Podcast

For excerpts of the interview with Pascal Viginier, check out the Executive Spotlight Podcast at go.symantec.com/viginier-podcast.

Video

Didier Delabre explains how Orange Business Services relies on different Symantec solutions to deliver highly available, cost-effective solutions for its customers at go.symantec.com/orange-video.

Technology Translator: Symantec

> Symantec NetBackup
> Symantec Dynamic Multi-Pathing
> Symantec Enterprise Vault
> Symantec System Recovery Server Edition
> Veritas Storage Foundation
> Veritas Storage Foundation Cluster File System
> Veritas Cluster Server
> Symantec Business Critical Services