

Chayora 朝亞

An Interview with Jonathan Berney, **Chayora** Co-founder and COO: 'We Provide the Fastest, Most Reliable and Assured Route to Your Business Engagement in China'

"We're developing a series of hyperscale, fully licensed data centre campuses in key locations across China: initially in Tianjin to serve the greater Beijing and Northern provinces; and in Shanghai to serve the eastern provinces."



Jonathan Berney
Co-founder & COO

"Our vision is To be the trusted digital infrastructure partner to international Cloud and Colo players, delivering large, scalable high performance data centre campuses in China supporting efficient, high value access to the Chinese digital economy."

Modern technology is giving us unprecedented capabilities to attain what was previously deemed impossible. If you can imagine it, there's probably an app that works it out.

Similarly, applications need to evolve and businesses need to modernize as customers grow in sophistication and embrace digital technologies, but new innovative capabilities also mean that workloads are getting more data-intensive.

For businesses seeking to manage these exponentially increasing workloads, it all starts with the data center. It has a crucial role to play in any business that has a robust digital transformation strategy.

In view of the above-mentioned scenario, we're thrilled to present **Chayora**.

The company develops hyperscale, world-class designed and operated, scalable data centres and data centre campuses in China. Chayora serves global Fortune 500 companies and premium Chinese data centre operators offering cloud services, ICT services, financial services or other

services offerings dependent on intensive, high-quality data centre infrastructure in the country.

Chayora was incorporated in 2011 and is headquartered in Hong Kong.

Jonathan Berney, Chayora Co-founder/COO, spoke exclusively to The Silicon Review. Below is an excerpt.

Why was the company set up? And how did you expand your company and its offerings over the years?

The company was set up in response to being asked to solve a problem for a banking client – *'work out how I can develop and run my own data centre in China'* – it was unsolvable at the time. But we (the founders; myself, Oliver Jones and Steven Cao) knew that if we could solve it, there was a significant scalable business to be created. We initially set out to solve each of the barriers, which included regulatory, cultural, quality, custom and practice and funding issues. Solving this allowed us

to get in the game but a combination of raising money from small shareholders and then a much bigger injection of US\$ 73M from Standard Chartered principal finance gave us the firepower to put the various structures, licenses, agreements and plans into action, and demonstrate that we not only could write down a great plan but could execute on it as well; which we have with the development of our first facility in Tianjin.

What challenges did you face in your initial years?

The key challenges have been to understand that in China any business model has to be multi-dimensional and deals with cultural, regulatory and custom and practice issues and requires time and commitment. The real key is to be able to spend the time to really understand what is required by all stakeholders in China and then to build a business model that works rather than force-fitting a pre-existing model.

What kind of responses have you received from your consumers over the years? How have they motivated you to shape your offerings/grow the company?

I think we have seen consistent rather than mixed responses from our customers. The macroeconomics mean that China is, was and will be a highly exciting market in cloud and data centres. All of them know that there is a significant opportunity but that risk is also huge.

Initially, our customers' view was that we had a very intriguing proposition which if it could be delivered would unlock an otherwise difficult to access market and generate significant opportunity to participate in the Chinese digital economy. Our customers have in general recognised

that the work we have done has significantly de-risked their access to the market and presented a very real way forward.

If you have to list five factors that have been/are the biggest asset to your organization, what would they be and why?

Much of this is protected under confidentiality and IP protection however they are broadly as follows:

- Designing our business from our target customer's boardroom back to operational delivery in China. Our view is that the business has to be about accessing the digital economy and making a meaningful difference to our customers' shareholder value
- Licensing and regulatory environments – this is critical to success as without it you simply can't play
- Building long-term relationships with government, partners and supply chain is imperative because it has allowed us to understand what they need in detail and how we can deliver for them
- Working with a highly committed, confidence inspiring and energetic team that can take on and resolve the challenges of our business in China
- Having enough capital to make high-quality decisions and investors that are aligned to the long-term value of the company

What are the factors that make your company stand out from the competition?

We are effectively the only independent provider of build to suit hyperscale campuses in China today. This will change over time. Our core aim is to be the "trusted partner" for

Cloud and Colo players in accessing the Chinese digital economy. Key aspects of this include assurance, scale and scalability, having the lowest total cost of operation, designing building and operating to suit, resilience and providing a long-term capacity.

Where do you see your company a couple of years from now?

We want to be in a position whereby major Cloud and Colo players, when they think of accessing China they think of Chayora as the trusted partner for achieving this. We want to have our second campus well under way and our first campus in Tianjin fully committed. We also want to be known for delivering highly efficient, secure and resilient data center operations that are enabling our customers to deliver their business in China.

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Jonathan Berney: A Brief Background

Jonathan Berney is a British-born international business leader who commenced his career in construction in the UK, and rapidly became enticed by the bright lights of international experience in Japan, Kazakhstan, Yemen, Bosnia, Hong Kong, and China. He moved from construction to finance becoming an analyst in the city of London to a leading business in the mobile commerce space in early 2000. Prior to founding Chayora, Mr. Berney also led a business that outsourced complex critical property portfolios including data centers and trading floors for major financial institutions in Asia.

Mr. Berney is married to Alexandra (who is Dutch) and has three children. The family permanently resides in Hong Kong.