



**The challenges  
of setting up  
a new IXP:  
feedback from France-IX**

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## The story behind

- In 2009, the peering market in Paris was fragmented: around 10 existing IXPs with various business models.
- One IXP after the other came to live.
- None tried to set interconnections to gather and increase the traffic.
- French operators were peering abroad on wider and more efficient IXPs.
- A survey and a workgroup called Pheonix fostered the change.
- The survey showed that the market was longing for one big federative IXP.

**That's when the idea of France-IX was born**

## A challenging start

- But it wasn't an easy road.
- Among the challenges overcome:
  - ⇒ Convince the first partners to help out: datacenters providing free racks for 3 years, operators supplying dark fibers between the POPs.
  - ⇒ Deploy a solid infrastructure without cash on day-one.
  - ⇒ Convince people to believe and to connect (pilot phase).
  - ⇒ Have a legal structure set off.
  - ⇒ Deliver the quality of services expected (and promised).
- Now more than 180 members are connected, both French and foreign parties

## 5 tips to share

- 1/ Ask yourself the right questions before engaging the project
- 2/ Get support
- 3/ Always keep in mind it's a business
- 4/ Be and remain independent and neutral
- 5/ Publicize your services

## Is the market ready for it?

- Knowing your market is prior to anything:  
**‘What would my customers want, when, where and how?’**  
You have the answers. Then start planning.
- France-IX was designed and formed upon the results of a market survey and we knew:
  - ⇒ What the potential members wanted
  - ⇒ If they were ready to pay for the services
  - ⇒ Whether they were firmly interested in getting connected soon or not

**Advice #1: Ask yourself the right questions before moving on**

## How to have a working infrastructure without cash?

- In our case, the founding members:
  - ⇒ Provided human resources for the first 2 years + donated equipment
  - ⇒ Paid the invoices for 1 whole year while France-IX was saving up all the recurring costs
  - ⇒ Were paid back once the organisation was strong enough (2<sup>nd</sup> year)
  - ⇒ Attended weekly board meetings over the phone (and still do!)
  - ⇒ Helped establishing partnership with third parties
- This investment from the founding members gave legitimacy to the project because a) they were well-known actors b) putting their names and reputation on the line.

**Advice #2**

**Seek and get the support you need**

## How to make sure the IXP will last?

- Whether your IXP aims to be a non-lucrative association or a mixed structure with shareholders, you have to make money to run on the long term.  
ALL FREE MODELS HAD TO STOP IN FRANCE
- We strongly believe in the paid model which enables you to stay independent and not to rely on external helps like public funding. So we implemented a pricing with equal conditions for each and every member.
- At the end of the day, your IXP will survive and then thrive if you treat it like any other commercial entity:
  - ⇒ Satisfy your members: they should agree to pay such a price for such quality
  - ⇒ Motivate your staff with enthusiastic projects and a career plan
  - ⇒ Stay aligned with your environment: competition, suppliers, regulation bodies....

**Advice #3: Always keep in mind it's a business**

## How to STILL make sure the IXP will last?

- We often hear that neutrality is a key to success. In the IXP sector, it is a common truth.
- Neutrality means various interests force against each other to find an equilibrium.
- Our administration board consists of datacenters, operators and CDN. They are elected for 3 years. The board is renewed every year by a third.
- Every member has an equal vote inside the association. The association owns entirely the commercial entity.

**Advice #4: Be and remain independent & neutral**

## How to keep on expanding?

- You can set the best IXP ever possible, without communication, the business won't take off.
- France-IX set up a reseller program (cf. [presentation](#) done during Euro-IX 21)
- Communication is part of France-IX's DNA:
  - ⇒ Communication through the events = get known
  - ⇒ Public relations = get known and ensure they still speak about you
  - ⇒ Website = corporate image
  - ⇒ Newsletters, mailing lists and social networks = deliver content and stay in touch with the members
- It's a steady and perpetual process

**Advice #5: Publicize your services**

## Conclusion

- In less than 3 years, France-IX managed to connect over 180 parties (including Middle-East operators such as Etisalat and Hotnet) to its infrastructure and to exceed 150 Gbps of traffic
- France-IX concluded 5 partnerships with other regional, national and international IXPs
- While there was a gap to be filled on the French market, France-IX's success is not entirely due to this fact.
- France-IX's team has worked hard to develop the adequate services, attract and build the community and be independent.
- Every market is different and nobody holds the truth but there's a generic trend and a common sense to follow.
- France-IX's team is here to meet you and discuss this topic furthermore during breaks and socials.

Thank you for your attention



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