

Taiwan's Acer launches software 'cloud' service drive

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Taiwan's Acer on Thursday unveiled its cloud service centre as the struggling computer maker seeks to revive its fortunes by diversifying away from the low-margin hardware business.

Stan Shih, chairman and company founder, revealed further details about its software service programme called "Build Your Own Cloud" (BYOC), which he initiated late last year after returning to the helm of the company to launch a series of reforms.

"I'm not saying we don't want hardware any more, it's still crucial, but in the future, Acer will set its sights on both hardware and software services," the 69-year-old said at a press conference.

He said Acer needed to get away from the traditional business model that had once made it the world's number two personal computer maker, as stiff competition from rivals such as Apple in recent years had caused fortunes to slide.

"We need a new mindset. Me-too is not my style," he said.

Acer is pushing BYOC as the future of cloud computing, where individuals can access information saved in their personal [cloud storage](#), on multiple devices.

Users can store the information on their personal computer and the cloud storage feature enables them to connect to it remotely on other devices. This means consumers can potentially access their information anywhere, anytime.

Acer have said that firms joining the BYOC open platform, will be able to provide services to individual clients through apps.

During the press conference, Studio X-Gen Co, a Taiwan-based car designer which is one of 18 firms to have so far joined the platform, demonstrated how a prototype of their new electric car would work with BYOC.

A panel inside the car, for example, would measure the car's speed, electricity consumption and transmit the data via the internet to users' personal cloud storage, and the information can be accessed on any device.

If consumers download the company's app, then it will alert when fuel is running low and provide directions to the nearest charging station.

Shih has said that he plans to retire as the chairman in June, six months after he returned to launch a series of reforms. He said he expected Acer to "return to glory" by 2017.

Last November, Shih replaced chairman and CEO J.T. Wang and corporate president Jim Wong, who resigned after the company reported a net third-quarter loss of Tw\$13.1 billion (\$442.2 million).

Then in December Shih relinquished his position of CEO and president to Jason Chen, a senior vice president of worldwide sales and marketing at Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co, the world's leading contract microchip maker.

Senior executives have taken voluntary salary cuts of 30 percent since January as the company struggles financially.

Shih founded Acer in 1976 and built it into the world's second largest PC maker in its heyday, and one of the best known Taiwanese brands internationally, before retiring in 2004.

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