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Mitel's sales chief steers move to service models p44



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Click to open Sky storms into Ethernet market

INDUSTRY titan Sky Business aims to 'rewrite the rule book' as a disruptive alternative for resellers targeting the high growth Ethernet market.

SPECIAL REPORT

Sky Business's just-launched connectivity division claims to offer resellers the largest exchange network providing 1GB Ethernet services.

The company boasts a 7,500km fibre network with over 2,800 exchanges covering 96% of UK business postcodes. Over 70% of exchanges are 10GB enabled with 99.95% network availability.

Strategy and Commercial Director Mike Greening (*pic-*

tured above) is seeking relationships with a broad spectrum of partners from specialist connectivity players and aggregators through to cloud providers, international carriers and SIs.

"We saw an opportunity in the channel to make a difference in terms of offering an alternative choice and meeting the end-to-end expectations of the customer – from nationwide gigabit coverage through to service support," he commented.

"Not having a legacy base gives us a chance to rewrite

the rule book. It means we are not restricted and can be open minded about where we go and where we invest, particularly focusing on areas that make a difference for our partners."

Greening also noted that Sky Business's channel proposition encompasses a roster of 'money can't buy' rewards.

"It's key for us to give partners access to sporting events, content and marketing support which they might not be able to get elsewhere," he added.

Full interview on page 22

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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

IS IT DELUSIONAL to think that Britain can be a global digital power? It needs a big increase in full fibre spending, and the comms industry has been summoned to the colours.

In July the Government published a long-overdue review of Britain's comms infrastructure and its future

purpose. The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) calls for full fibre coverage across the UK by 2033. All this is grist to the mill for alternative providers like CityFibre. But what wider industry realignment will prove a more helpful path to Digital Britain? According to CityFibre a new regulatory climate for investment must be created, while switching providers needs to be slick, and advertising rules on how the word 'fibre' is used should be clarified (see page 42). This all amounts to a levelling of the playing field and, in theory, all voices with a vested interest in implementing the Government's future infrastructure project will be heard.

Openreach Chairman Mike McTighe has rallied to the flag as Britain sets about becoming a tier-one digital power. He says Openreach has adopted a fibre-first approach to all network expansion decisions (see page 34).

For Britain to become a digital powerhouse the comms industry must work towards the common goal set out by the FTIR. But what should underpin the future of this new 'industry alliance'? Collaboration between Government, the regulator and industry is the current thesis. What is more clear is the channel opportunity. The idea that digital equals power and influence can be applied to resellers with a mind to drive the full fibre revolution – a model advanced by Entanet (see page 50).

Not only are we entering a new industry era defined by a single goal – Digital Britain – we are also embarking on an unprecedented period of cross-industry collaboration that will ensure Digital Britain is realised, rather than be a pipe dream.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

Stobart steps in as Zen chief executive

ZEN Internet's founder and CEO of 23 years Richard Tang has switched seats with Chairman and former Sage boss Paul Stobart who joined the Rochdale-based ISP in December 2017.

"It was crucial that anyone replacing me as CEO was absolutely aligned with our people-first approach," stated Tang.

"Paul brings that and more: He is an excellent communicator, a visionary, and an inspirational leader of people who brings a wealth of strategic experience in running transformative technology businesses.

"As Chairman I'll have time to champion Zen's mission to raise standards in the UK's Internet market. We believe these changes will make Zen more successful."

Zen's revenues are expected to exceed £71m this year as staff numbers approach 500. Zen hopes to become a £250m business within 10 years.

Stobart added: "I'm coming on board at a critical stage of development and we have plans to shake up the market and improve the standards consum-



Richard Tang



Paul Stobart

ers and businesses can expect from their Internet supplier.

"This change suits the skill sets and ambitions of Richard and myself. I will bring my

experience of running large high growth businesses, while Richard will be able to develop his role as a proactive voice for Zen in the UK and beyond."

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Editor: Stuart Gilroy
sgilroy@bpl-business.com 07712 781 102

Publisher: Nigel Sergent
nsergent@bpl-business.com 07712 781 106

Managing Director: Michael O'Brien
mobrien@bpl-business.com 01895 454 444

Sales Director: Simon Turton
sturton@bpl-business.com 01895 454 603

Production: Frank Voeten
fvoeten@bpl-business.com

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Beta puts dealers in frame for AV market

BETA Distribution's presence in the AV market is strengthening as dealers continue to secure high value digital signage contracts following its acquisition of AV company ContentWall and subsequent launch of an AV services division in June.

The hire of Mike Cunningham-Clayton from Exertis as Head of AV in July provided a boost to the operation that has quickly made inroads into a number of markets including the design, product supply and implementation of 50 meeting rooms with audio/video and UC capability, multiple digital menu and signage projects into stadia and retail and a number of large boardroom solutions.

"There will be digital signage opportunities in every dealer's existing customer base," stated Cunningham-Clayton.

"Walk down any high street and you can see just how much



Mike Cunningham-Clayton

digital signage has replaced traditional advertising media. The opportunity isn't just in the high street – consider schools, doctor's surgeries, sports centres and reception areas – the list is endless, and they're all potential users of digital signage."

Brisk AV business has prompted Beta to strengthen its

team with the appointment this month of Steve Grundy as Head of AV Sales and Steve Goodwin as AV Solutions Architect.

Both bring over 20 years experience in the industry and previously worked at Midwich.

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NEWS ROUNDUP

AS WE WENT to press Communicate Better bagged its third acquisition in three months, snapping up sister companies Chilli Telecom and BE IP. The deal follows the purchase of Telemaxx and Vision Communications.

SUNDERLAND-based UC firm CCS has rebranded as Nice Network. The company provides comms and IT services and has been trading for 32 years.

KUBENET has become the Official Technology Partner of Glasgow Warriors in a deal that runs until May 2020. Glasgow Warriors MD Nathan Bombrys said: "We are more reliant than ever on technology as we utilise a growing number of social media channels and analysis tools."



YACHT skipper and Virgin Media Business Sales Director Ian Hoddle (pictured) along with co-skipper Ollie Wyatt are competing in the gruelling Sevenstar Round Britain & Ireland race to raise funds on behalf of Virgin Media's charity partner Scope. Competing in the Virgin Media Business sponsored yacht their fundraising target is to turn the 1,805 nautical miles of the race into £18,050 with the help of Virgin Media Business employees who are supporting the challenge. Hoddle stated: "I am determined to beat my previous race time achieved in 2014 of exactly 12 days, win the doublehanded class and achieve our fantastic fundraising total for Scope."

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COMMENT: IT'S GOOD TO TALK



Richard Carter

IN AN INCREASING age of Unified Communications and social media, traditional voice still has a loud role to play: It remains 'good to talk'. This is according to a new Communications Market Report published by Ofcom last month which charts what it describes as a decade of digital dependence – and it makes fascinating reading.

The research indicates that a total of 78 per cent of all adults own a smartphone which is checked on average once every 12 minutes during waking hours. Just over 70 per cent of people say they never turn off their phones and 78 per cent state they could not live without it. Three-quarters of the British public still regard voice calling as an important function of their phones.

When asked in 2008 what was the most important device they owned more than half of the respondents said it was their TV with only 13 per cent identifying the mobile phone as a crucial gadget. Fast forward to 2018 and 48 per cent regard their smartphone as the most important, followed by the TV (28 per cent).

There's little doubt that digital technology continues to transform the world at home and in the workplace and its impact is destined to further grow to create ever more sales potential.

At the heart of communication remains voice. For me, the best way to hold a conversation is to pick up your phone, either a deskphone or mobile. There is simply no better way to interact in a natural, engaging and productive way. Voice communication still remains the focal point of many offices and the ever sophisticated functionality of today's technology continues to grow and develop.

The latest Ofcom research proves the importance of voice calling – it's still good to talk.

Richard Carter, Channel Sales Director, Nimans

Vaish invests to build SDN



Sachin Vaish

VAIONI Wholesale's Ethernet network (VEN) has received a multi-million-pound investment boost as the company seeks to realise ambitions to build one of the most significant Software Defined Networks in the UK.

Vaioni Wholesale first launched VEN into three of the UK's major digital hubs (London, Manchester and Birmingham) in 2015.

The network currently connects over 60 cities and towns, 96 exchanges and 180,000 post-codes throughout the UK.

This latest expansion phase will incorporate 170 UK cities and towns, connecting approximately 80% of UK businesses to the network.

MD Sachin Vaish stated: "By understanding the evolving demands from businesses and listening to our channel partners about the challenges they face with their customers, we've continued with our investment to standardise ultra-high bandwidth connections, incorporating intelligence and automation at the heart of the network."

"Vaioni Wholesale has empowered channel partners and their end customers with control over the network, allowing changes and upgrades to take place instantly through a few clicks in an app."

Got a news story? email: sgilroy@bpl-business.com

NEWS ROUNDUP

WAKEFIELD cathedral has been connected to full fibre Internet connectivity by local comms provider NGC Networks in partnership with CityFibre. Wakefield Theatre Royal has also placed an order for the CityFibre network. NGC Networks Director Nikki Guest said: "Our role is to connect businesses to the Gigabit City networks, enabling them to take advantage of new technologies."

ABZORB has renewed its links with Premier League football club Huddersfield Town as Official Partner in a two year deal. Abzorb founder Steve Beeby said: "This time we are sponsoring the South Stand which has been the scene of many great moments in this club's recent history." Abzorb's logo will also feature on the back of training wear which is worn during all first team training sessions.

Exponential-e has secured a partnership with Virgin Atlantic to deliver and manage the airline's infrastructure network across locations around the world, becoming one of Virgin Atlantic's 'Network Guardians'. The infrastructure will serve as the backbone of Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Holiday's technological team.

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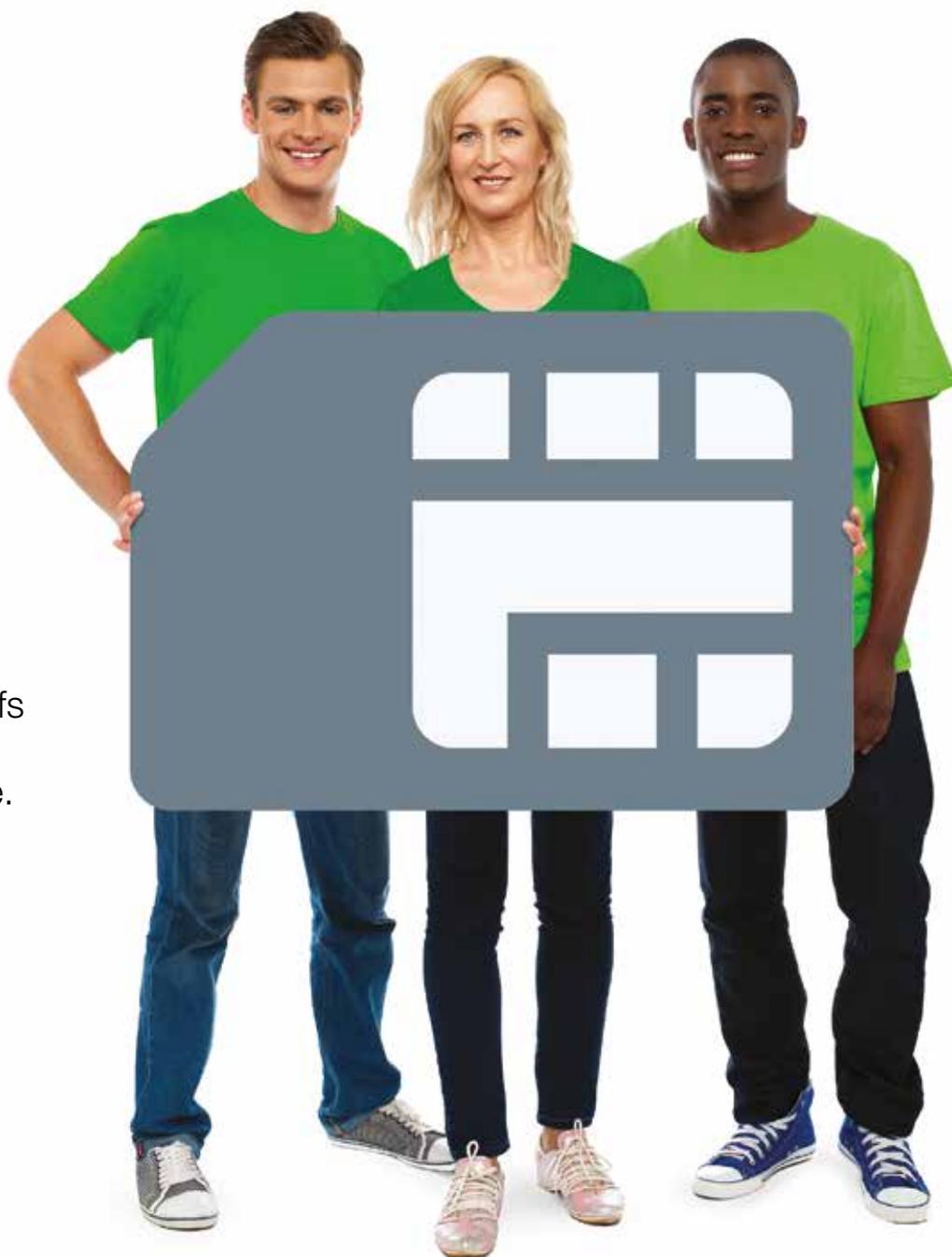
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COMMENT: ETHERNET MATTERS



Nick Powell

THE data bandwidth curve is a subject that carriers and analysts often disagree on. We believe that it will continue to grow, particularly with over 50,000 new EAD circuits expected to be connected this year. The demand for gigabit Ethernet continues to surge as the uptake of cloud applications grows and businesses choose to future proof their connectivity services. This demand has stimulated an opportunity

for the channel to offer a range of higher margin security, networking and managed solutions.

Ofcom's Business Connectivity report highlighted fixed data as the most critical communication service for businesses – that applies to the channel too. Availability of service and price are the two most important drivers when choosing a wholesale connectivity provider. We believe that this is the piece of the puzzle that is missing: Feedback from the channel is that no single operator can service the demand for high speed capacity on a UK-wide scale.

We see more and more examples of smaller community operations delivering high bandwidth to rural and off-net locations, while some operators in the channel are working hard to increase the reach and capacity of their networks to meet demand. But for some, especially those with legacy networks, this can be a long and complex task. They are battling legacy systems while also trying to offset margin losses against network investment – all at the expense of businesses that need functioning connectivity today.

Put simply, some network providers are not moving quickly enough with the development of affordable high bandwidth solutions. At Sky we recognise that network reach, capacity and commercial viability is no longer enough, so we bring all three of these elements together.

Nick Powell, Sales Director, Sky Business Communications

9 leads with digital focus

A DIGITAL marketing service designed to generate leads for partners has been rolled out by 9 Group under the brand name revvd. Headed up by newly appointed Digital Marketing Director Phil Cooper the operation harnesses the potential of search engine optimisation (SEO), pay per click advertising (PPC) and website design.

“People are surprised by the significant impact digital marketing can have on their business,” stated Cooper. “The team at revvd can help to demystify the process and manage campaigns on partners’ behalf.”

According to Group Marketing Director Mark Saunders 9’s agency level digital marketing capabilities are available to partners at a preferential rate while members of the Purple Partner Programme qualify for further discounts.

“Telemarketing, direct mail and e-casts still have their place, but the world has moved on and business is increasingly online,” commented Saunders.

“Supplying a small database of unqualified leads from a business directory is the equivalent of offering a starving man a fish – he will be fed for the day and then go hungry again.



Phil Cooper

“Digital marketing is the ‘teach a man to fish’ option and has the potential to keep a business fed with leads forever.”

The launch of revvd last month builds on the existing marketing services leveraged by 9’s partners, including the creation of marketing campaigns and materials.

“Portals stuffed with dated and unimaginative white label collateral are not the way forward,” added Saunders.

“You need to engage with partners on a one-to-one basis and provide some genuine marketing value.”

9 is holding a series of digital marketing workshops at its HQ in Gloucestershire.

Got a news story? email: sgilroy@bpl-business.com

NEWS ROUNDUP

ELITE Group has secured a £30m refinancing deal with Lloyds Bank. “With 16 acquisitions under our belt we now have a further £30m to continue building on organic growth through acquisition,” said founder Matt Newing. Gareth Owen, Director of Strategic Debt Finance at Lloyds Bank, said: “The deal provides increased headroom to push forward with expansion plans.”

COMMUNICATE Better has acquired Northampton-based Telemaxx for an undisclosed sum just weeks after bagging Vision Communications. “We have targeted ourselves to break the £10m turnover barrier this financial year,” stated CEO Wayne Cartwright. “We have doubled the size of our customer base. With one or two more targets in mind our business will build on these deals.”

CISCO is to acquire US-based private security business Duo Security for \$2.35bn. The firm provides unified access security and multi-factor authentication via the cloud. Integration of Cisco’s network, device and cloud security platforms will enable Cisco users to more easily connect users to any application on any networked device.

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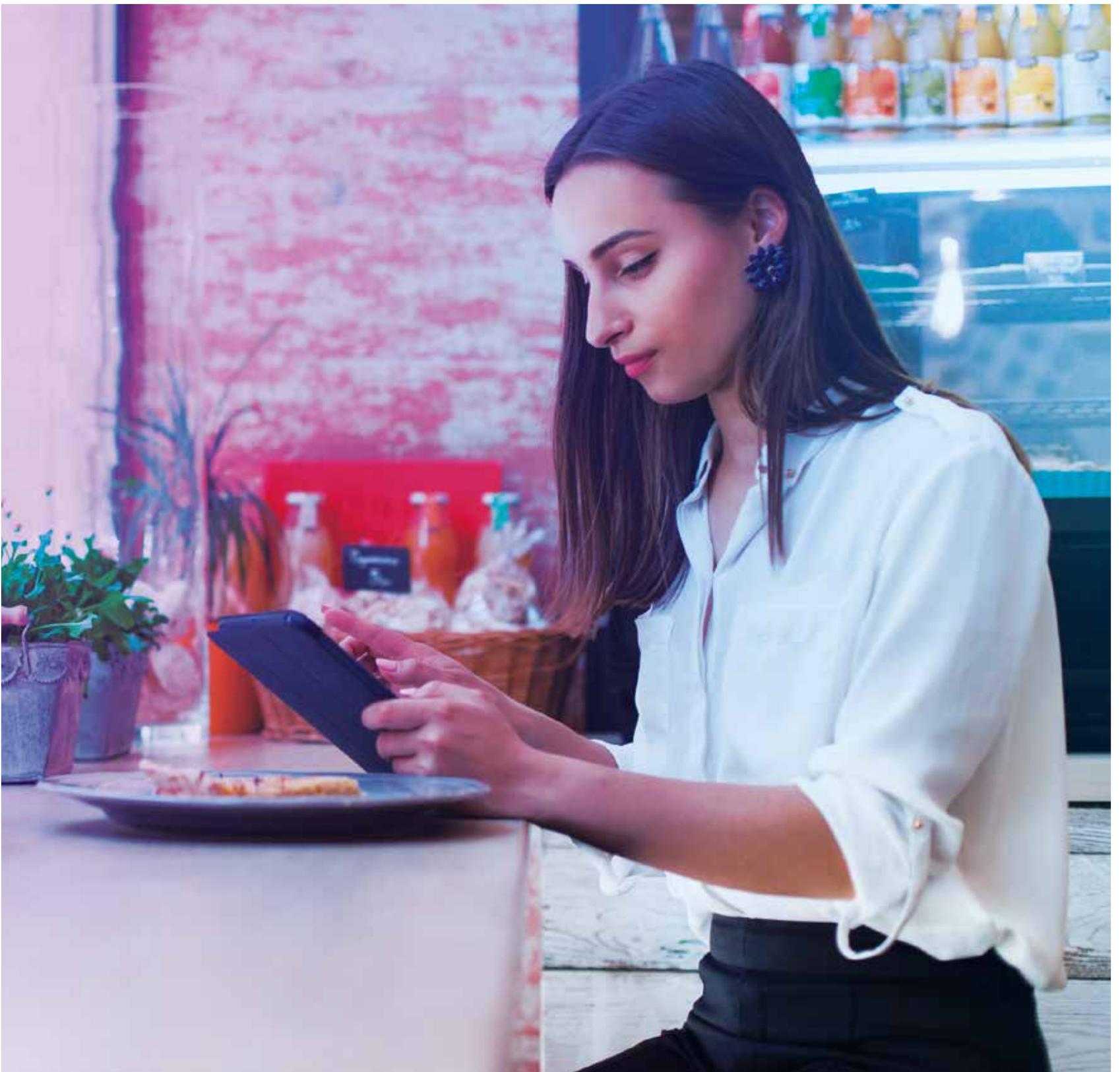
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Adept secures key Shift F7 acquisition

ADEPT'S presence in the London and south east region has been strengthened by the acquisition of vendor independent IT services provider Shift F7 Group and its subsidiaries for £5m.

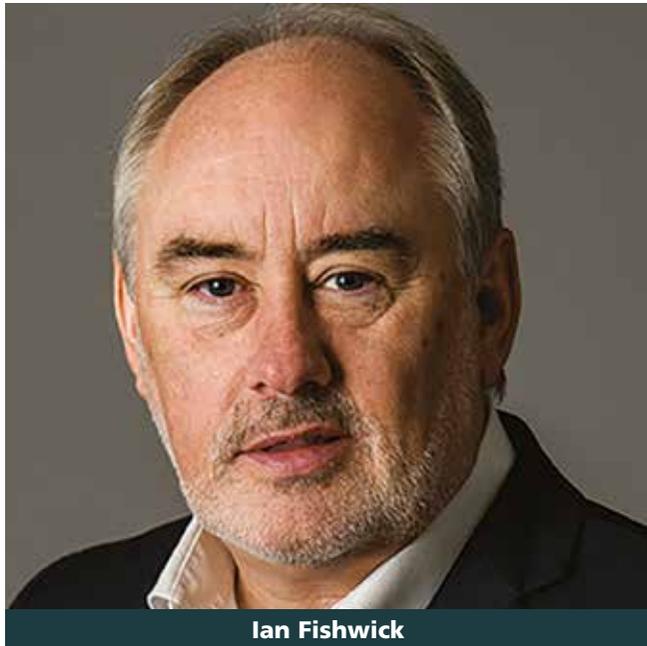
For the year ended 31st May 2018 Dorking-based Shift F7 reported 5m turnover.

The deal boosts Adept's revenues by 10% to circa £54m and depending on the trading performance of Shift F7 in the year post-acquisition a further £2.9m may be payable in cash.

Shift F7 was founded in 1995 and provides IT support services and technology solutions to 200 mid-market customers. Its key suppliers include Citrix, Microsoft, HP, Cisco, Ericsson LG and VMWare. The company also operates hosted platform environments in London Docklands and Heathrow.

The acquisition is a significant boost to Adept's IT capabilities and customer base, bringing expertise in outsourced managed IT and telecoms solutions including IT support, hosted IT, cyber security, data connectivity and next generation IP telephony services.

The companies are well known to each other having



Ian Fishwick

collaborated on projects over a ten year period during which both organisations displayed an appetite for building recurring margin while pursuing capital asset light strategies that are highly cash generative.

Approximately 75% of Shift F7's gross margin is generated from recurring products and services. Its Dorking premises will be retained along with the senior management team responsible for strategy, technology development and general day-to-day business operations.

Adept CEO Ian Fishwick stated: "Shift F7 enhances our market position in IT, particularly in London, and complements Adept's acquisition of OurIT in February 2017 which also focused on London and south east commercial customers.

"Following the acquisition more than 70% of our revenue will be generated from managed services including IT support, UC and data networks."

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Wavenet role for Grannum

THE appointment by Wavenet Wholesale of channel supremo Philip Grannum as Chief Commercial Officer provides a significant boost to its expertise and experience in the comms reseller market.

Grannum brings 20 years industry experience and first entered the comms sector when he moved from Xerox to AT&T two decades ago. He then joined Energis which was acquired by Cable&Wireless in 2005.

He became CEO of THUS, a subsidiary of Cable&Wireless Worldwide before joining forces with MDNX where he was MD of channel-only business Griffin. MDNX and Griffin were taken over by Easynet which was itself acquired by Interoute where Grannum led the UK business across both channel and direct customers.



Philip Grannum

"I chose Wavenet because of its innovative approach to the channel and wholesale customers," stated Grannum. "That includes supplier API integration and automated systems.

"This is a prime opportunity to leverage my channel experience and be part of Wavenet Wholesale's journey."

CEO Bill Dawson added: "Philip's experience will have a positive impact on our strategy and partnerships."

GERMAN telephone system manufacturer Auerswald is seeking UK and Ireland SME-focused channel partners in an exclusive tie-up with distributor SOS Communications. SOS CEO Colin Hepher believes resellers will value the build quality and support Auerswald's FONtevo brand and portfolio will bring to the channel. "This partnership has been developed over the past year to create a competitive differentiator in the UK&I market by offering a range of solutions in PBX and SIP up to 100 connections and specialist supporting accessories," stated Hepher.



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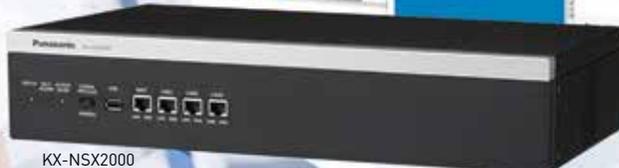
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ScanSource in Intelisys move



Steve Hackett (left) and Paul Emery

SCANSOURCE'S capabilities as a cloud service provider have shifted up a gear following its acquisition of London-based European technology services distributor Intelisys Global.

The acquisition follows ScanSource's purchase of the US arm of Intelisys a year ago and gives resellers access to telecommunications, connectivity and cloud services suppliers along with an opportunity to build recurring revenues.

Paul Emery, new Vice President of Cloud Solutions and Services at ScanSource, is responsible for managing the systems, processes and programmes for the cloud and UCaaS business.

He has been with ScanSource for more than 12 years, most

recently focused on leading the growth and direction of the company's communications business in the UK.

"The acquisition of Intelisys Global immediately opens up opportunities for partners ready to grow their cloud and services business," he commented.

"Our goal is to help resellers grow their traditional premise-based business while providing the tools, suppliers and support to build their cloud and recurring revenue business."

Former Intelisys Global MD Stephen Hackett joins ScanSource as Director of Cloud Solutions Development overseeing cloud supplier relationships. He led the launch of the Intelisys Global business in the UK.

Cross-border billing

STAINES upon Thames head-quartered SaaS cloud billing firm Strategic Imperatives has added multi-country and currency support to its Elevate billing platform, enabling service providers to more easily operate in multiple locales and geographic markets simultaneously.

"Elevate's new offering allows service providers to bill international end users in their chosen currency while seamlessly catering for regional tax

regimes, local suppliers and diacritic characters for names, addresses and destinations," commented Strategic Imperatives MD Wail Sabbagh.

"Many of our customers are planning to expand beyond the UK and Elevate can now enable this expansion as well as allow international service providers to serve their local markets."

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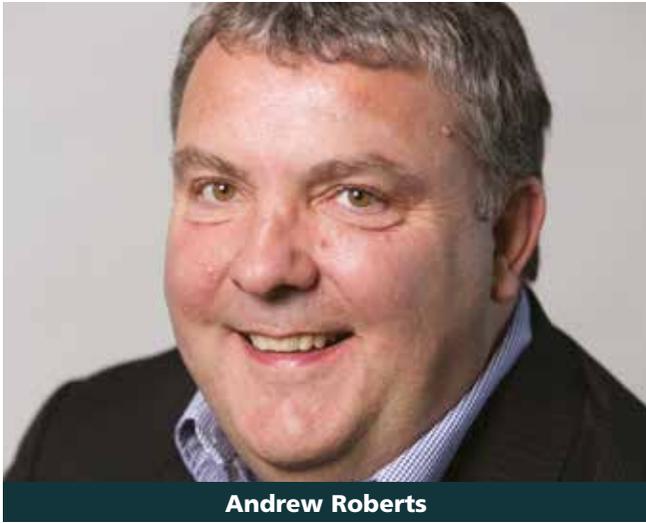
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Radio waves in high sales



Andrew Roberts

A SIGNIFICANT uplift in demand for managed services has put Pennine Radio on target to breach the £4m turnover barrier this year with sales at the two-way radio operation growing by nearly 80% between 2015 and 2017, and trading for the first six months of 2018 already 25% up on last year.

“We’ve seen a major shift in the market with managed services proving an increasingly popular option,” commented Pennine MD Andrew Roberts.

“Not everyone wants, or is in a position to commit to capital investment for two-way radio projects. Managed services provide an alternative with clients

able to benefit from knowing exactly what their operating expenditure will be over the term of their contract.”

Managed services revenues grew by 175% year-on-year, driven in part by Pennine’s acquisition last year of Bristol-based Co-Channel and Durham’s M Telecom this April.

The Co-Channel operation, which acts as a regional technical and sales support hub, is currently delivering managed services at the EDF Energy’s Hinkley Point C site. Other big clients include Bristol Airport.

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New rules for mobile billing

BILLING specialist Union Street has produced a white paper to help resellers get up to pace with a new Ofcom directive on Mobile Bill Limits which comes into effect in October.

The new rules require providers of mobile phone services to offer customers the ability to cap the cost of their bill and to notify customers when the limit is about to be reached. This will be available to all those taking out a mobile contract on or after 1st October 2018.

If a service continues to be provided without this consent, the provider is prohibited from billing the customer for any charges for the service after the limit is reached.

Ofcom hopes that providers will voluntarily offer bill limits to those in existing contracts but

this will not be a legal requirement. “Some comms providers may be considering the possibility of offering customers a range of pre-set bill limits to choose from instead of allowing customers to decide on a limit of their choosing,” stated Vincent Disneur, Head of Sales and Marketing at Union Street.

“This is currently not covered by the legislation which refers to the customer having an opportunity to specify a billing limit.

“From a practical perspective, Ofcom recognises this approach would assist providers in managing the billing limits across their entire customer base. Nevertheless, it remains mandatory for providers to ensure they comply with the new regulation.”



Vincent Disneur

Distie to buy CRM specialist

SCANSOURCE has acquired global Salesforce consultancy Canpango in a deal that boosts the distributor’s partner CRM services portfolio.

“As our partners continue to move upmarket into larger more complex UCaaS and CCaaS opportunities the requirements for CRM are increasing,” stated ScanSource CEO Mike Baur. “Canpango brings experience and professional services around these technologies.”

Canpango CEO Matt Lautz said: “CRM is at the core of every customer conversation as reliable data allows for more meaningful client relationships.

“The CRM conversation provides a natural entrance point for partners to extend their current offerings beyond UCaaS and CCaaS to include CRM, marketing automation, business consulting services and more.”

Canpango has circa 70 employees and is headquartered in Milwaukee with offices in Chicago, New York, London and Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Lautz, who co-founded Canpango, will continue to head up the organisation which will now function as ScanSource’s specialist CRM and business process consulting practice.



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NEWS ROUNDUP

MID-sized TMT firms are growing international sales faster than any other major UK sector in the last five years despite Brexit uncertainty, according to research from accountancy and business advisory firm BDO. Medium-sized companies in the sector have almost doubled (91.5%) overseas turnover since 2013 to £18bn, a significantly faster rate than manufacturing, consumer markets and financial services. In the last 12 months these companies have added £4bn in overseas revenues.

NIMANS' growing presence in the networking market is underscored by sales of DrayTek kit passing the £1m mark. Judith Addison (pictured), Nimans Business Manager, expects sales to continue as the profile of DrayTek's VigorACS 2 network platform is raised. "This



technology supports all current DrayTek routers, access points and switches, providing real-time integrated monitoring, configuration and management," she said. DrayTek has also introduced the VigorAP 920R wireless access point for outdoors and harsh environments.

Six Degrees pockets CNS



David Howson

THE acquisition of CNS Group by Six Degrees provides a boost to its cyber security portfolio and adds over £7m annual revenues while upping staff numbers by circa 50 heads.

London-based CNS provides security consultancy, compliance and managed services to public and private sector organisations including businesses operating in regulated markets and FTSE 100 companies.

"The increasingly complex cyber security threat landscape is a major challenge for businesses that struggle to align IT resources against the risks they face," said David Howson, CEO, Six Degrees.

"Existing clients want to place more of their IT estate with us and security is a vital part of the picture. CNS Group enables us to offer a broader set of cyber security services."

CNS Group CEO Shannon Simpson added: "Working with Six Degrees will enable us to bring our accredited security offerings to all of the services it provides."

Six Degrees will provide Government accredited managed security services through CNS Group's Cyber Security Operations Centre. Six Degrees will also deliver CNS Group's Cyber Security Maturity Benchmarking model, Aegis, into client sites.

"This benchmarking toolset brings context and understanding at senior management level of the risks that businesses face from a cyber security perspective," explained Howson.

"It also enables clients to understand their security needs in granular detail, helping them to gauge how and where to most effectively spend budget."

Pangea opens Scottish base

IOT COMPANY Pangea has secured a Scottish foothold with a new office in Glasgow from where it will work more closely with northern based partners and tap into the buoyant Glaswegian digital economy.

Sales Director Bernie McPhillips commented: "Opening an office and building a team in Scotland was a natural next step for us. Many of our 130-plus partners are based in this part of the UK."

McPhillips also noted that the IoT is driving business and public sector transformation across Scotland.

In 2013 Glasgow won £24m towards the development of its smart city programme from Innovate UK. The city now



Bernie McPhillips

boasts IoT enabled developments such as intelligent street lighting. Glasgow is also home to the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN), a public services network that connects over 4,600 schools, hospitals, council offices etc across Scotland.

Got a news story? email: sgilroy@bpl-business.com

Converged gets Inverness office

ABERDEEN-based Converged Communication Solutions has followed up recent contract wins across the Inverness region with the opening of a new local office in the Highland capital.

Converged has based its cyber security service in the city as a response to greater levels of investment to strengthen the region's digital infrastructure.

To support these moves Converged has appointed Stuart Mundy as Senior Security Engineer. He is a certified ethical hacker and advanced cyber essentials consultant with 25 years IT industry experience.

Establishing an Inverness office forms part of a six figure investment by Converged which includes work already completed to unbundle Openreach telephone exchanges in the city.

Converged MD Neil Christie commented: "The major investment in digital connectivity in



Neil Christie

the Highlands will have many positive benefits and help meet plans to grow and develop the region's economy.

"As technology advances so must our services. Cyber security is an increasingly important matter for every business and its employees. The appointment of Stuart adds depth to the support we can provide to companies in this area."

Pragma plans with partners

EQUIPPING resellers for the future was the central focus of Pragma's Partner Council meeting held at the headquarters of Formula One team Sahara Force India at Silverstone.

Pragma's fifth such event enabled key partners to discuss the Ericsson-LG iPECS product set and roadmap and Pragma's future plans.

"Introducing complementary new technologies and meeting new suppliers offers an opportunity for resellers to understand and feed back on the latest prod-



Will Morey

uct propositions and how these are going to be taken to market," said Sales & Marketing Director Will Morey. "These sessions are the backbone of what shapes the Pragma roadmap."

Citytalk Communications MD Matt Croxford said: "The discussion points gave us a chance to influence and understand Pragma's product roadmap. From the outside we are a room full of competitors, but on the inside was Ericsson-LG resellers who were all there to support each others' success and reach outcomes that would benefit every Pragma reseller."

Pragma also focused on marketing initiatives, lead generation, sales marketing tools and explored other future activities.

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Call to rid industry of porting scourge

IT IS A WELL known industry fact that porting is broken and the regulator is showing no signs of clearing the scourge, according to Simwood MD Simon Woodhead.

In an open letter to all wholesale operators he offered to grab the bull by the horns and 'transform routine porting' by modifying Simwood's porting agreements if fellow operators followed suit.

"It can either be bilaterally, or you never know we could achieve something multi-laterally with a common Memorandum of Understanding," commented Woodhead.

"We also all have vaguely similar policies around the extent of the abuse of the porting process by wholesale customers (resellers) we'll tolerate.

"We know some of yours would move to us if you permitted wholesale ports. We know some of ours have tried to move to you and found the same. We feel they should be free to move, even if the end user is not directly the one initiating it.

"Nobody wants customers who don't want to be custom-



Simon Woodhead

ers. Indeed, we all have some customers we wouldn't choose to keep! We all do, however, because of the costs of allowing abuse. Simwood is willing to modify its porting agreements with peers to permit this and transform routine porting."

Woodhead also noted that his goal in doing this would be wider than open porting alone as he seeks to catalyse a num-

ber of positive changes including settlement-free porting of numbers and a common public policy on porting.

"We should move light and fast, no bogging this initiative down with committees and talking shops," said Woodhead. "Even if two of us agree it would represent a big step forward and a huge benefit to customers and our collective end users."

GPs aided by Vapour Cloud

AN AUTOMATED appointment booking service developed by Vapour Cloud for the NHS has been integrated with EMIS Web, the clinical system for GPs.

Yorkshire-based Vapour's solution enables patients to book, cancel or change their appointment 24/7 via their telephone. An automated SMS confirmation is sent to the patient and the doctor's diary is updated in real-time.

CEO Tim Mercer commented: "With the increasing tendency for patients to use automated services, I'd expect this solution

to pick up around 20% of calls to a GP surgery, which would have a huge impact on easing pressure on receptionists and staffing budgets.

"Like many other industries, healthcare is moving towards cloud-based technologies to drive efficiencies and streamline processes for employees, delivering enhanced services to patients at the same time.

"We've seen tremendous advancements in the US in this respect, so it's crucial that the UK follows suit, especially given the pressures being encountered by the NHS."

Gamma Ball Rally

AFTER a year's break The Gamma Ball Rally returns on September 19th-21st with over 30 cars worth no more than £500 taking part.

The participating teams are aiming to raise £500k for charities Action Through Enterprise and SpecialEffect.

The popular fundraiser will kick off at Brands Hatch with the 'best dressed' competition followed by a number of GBR style challenges before heading

off to Marseilles via Reims and Lyon. After taking in a number of *en route* challenges the big event finishes with a flourish – a black tie dinner and the Auction of Promises.

Daryl Pile, MD of Channel at Gamma, commented: "We're proud of the reputation the rally has built across the channel and it's a great way for our partners and sponsors to have a brilliant time while raising money for two deserving charities."

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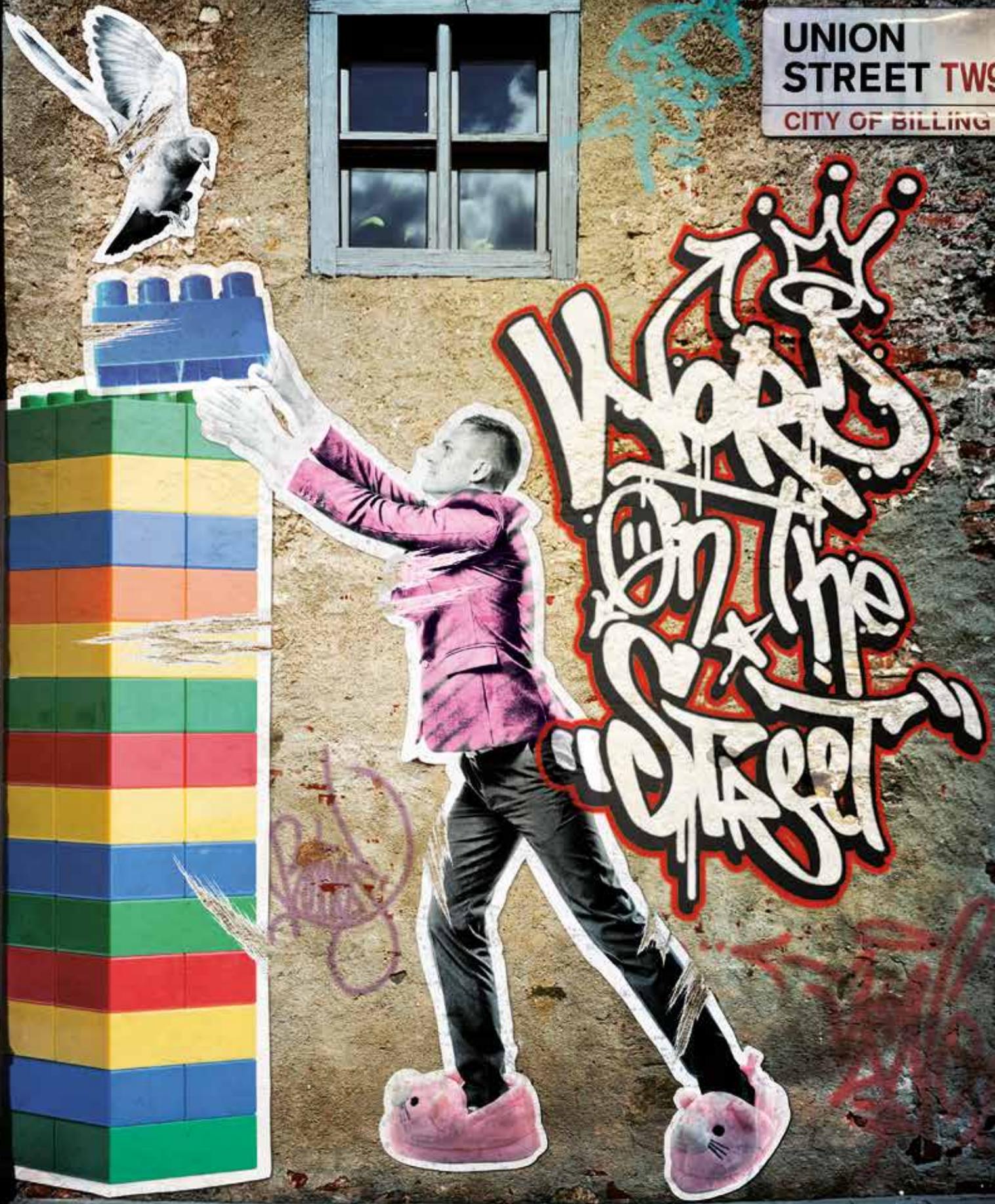
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CityFibre campaign delivers more bite

CITYFIBRE deployed impactful visual tactics in its latest anti-copper campaign which has been designed to deliver more bite with the roll out of Coppersaurus, a model Tyrannosaurus skeleton built to represent what the alternative full fibre provider says is the UK's 'prehistoric broadband'.

Research commissioned by the company reaffirmed that swathes of the nation's broadband users are not happy with the quality of their connection nor its speed.

The majority of those taking part in the survey also believe that broadband advertising rules should be changed.

CityFibre Chief Executive Officer Greg Mesch stated: "For too long the UK has been held back by a lack of investment in fibre infrastructure.

Although companies like CityFibre are building the networks that will give millions of homes and businesses access to full fibre broadband, providers continuing to advertise copper-based connections as 'fibre' is



The unearthing of Coppersaurus

leaving people confused about what is on offer.

"The way we work is increasingly becoming a blend of our home and work lives therefore it has never been more important for people to understand what broadband connec-

tion they really get at home. Years of misleading advertising have made this near impossible, which is why the rules must be changed now."

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Fidelity Energy offers bumper deal to Surrey cricket club fans

SURREY cricket fans are being offered a bumper deal by energy partner and sponsor Fidelity Energy. The deal also boosts the club's chosen charity Evelina London Children's Hospital.

Fidelity Energy is The Kia Oval's official energy partner and ensures its electricity comes from 100% renewable sources.

The company is offering Surrey fans the opportunity to get a cheaper home energy deal by using Fidelity Energy's comparison site to review prices and find the cheapest deal available in the market and, for every switch completed through



The Surrey cricket team

the site, will donate £10 directly to Evelina Children's Hospital.

James Benning, former Surrey all-rounder and now Business Development Manager at Fidelity Energy, said: "Having played cricket for

Surrey for many years it's a proud moment for me to once again be associated with the club. It would be fantastic if we can raise some money for such a good cause, one the club has supported for some time."

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Wildfire lights up new energy deals

IF ANY ICT businesses needed proof of the value of the one-stop shop, with energy services wrapped up into their services bundles, then Wildfire should be their first port of call.

Based in Southend-on-Sea on the east coast of Essex, Wildfire Phones is a major player in the mobile market and, since its foundation 12 years ago, has assembled an impressive list of clients alongside strategic partner Sprint Communications.

It is now successfully utilising those close relationships to further expand its Wildfire Energy business in partnership with Fidelity Energy, as Managing Director Grant Kops explained: "We offer independent telecoms and utility options to our clients including gas and electric savings, mobile tariffs and handsets and landline communications. We like to think we offer all our client's choice. We already have business landline and mobile offerings and the energy opportunity through Fidelity seemed like the perfect fit as it added diversity to our portfolio and gave us the opportunity to save our clients even more money than before."

Interestingly, for comms providers concerned about taking the plunge into a new service arena, Grant believes the energy market is simpler to work in because clients always want to save money.

"We have found working in the energy market easier than the

landline and mobile markets and see the business energy sector as a great way to 'cross-sell' the other parts of our business into clients.

"Like anything, it comes down to building relationships. People buy from people and we feel that our approach is relaxed; it is a relatively soft sell. Companies in the UK need to save money - where better else than their utilities. Not only that, it costs them nothing to get a quote hence it makes a lot of sense for businesses to use us.

"We initially targeted our current client base but have plans to widen the net to sign up new business. We have found that businesses have been very upbeat about hearing more and eager to share their utility information with us. Again, it comes down to the rapport or relationship you build with someone."

So, what would Grant say to telecoms companies that see Energy supply as a diversion from their core business?

"This is an important addition to our business and will add good revenue moving forward. We have managed to bring on several decent-sized customers and continue to work on others in the pipeline. We have not shied away from smaller enterprises either and have a number on board already. We are building a steady client base that we plan to expand extensively throughout 2018/19."



Picture shows Marc Miller (Managing Director of Stockvale Group) and Grant Kops, (Managing Director of Wildfire Energy) at Adventure Island, Southend-on-Sea.

Dawson eyes buys with £75m funding

BEECH Tree Private Equity backed Wavenet is set to accelerate its buy and build strategy having refinanced its banking facilities and raised a £75m acquisition war chest.

The new unitranche facilities are provided by Ares and the super senior facility by RBS.

Beech Tree supported the £35m MBO of UC provider Wavenet in August 2016 since when the business has completed four acquisitions and doubled in size.

CEO Bill Dawson said: "We set out two years ago to build a standout business in the sector with leading cloud-based unified communications solutions.

"Our progress to date has been substantial and the pace of growth has enabled us to provide better opportunities to our clients and staff. We now have the firepower to continue the story with further deals in the not too distant future."

Paul Franks, Managing Partner at Beech Tree Private Equity, added: "This new facility provides the capital to contin-



Bill Dawson

ue the build-up of this technology-led company by adding quality businesses that complement its converged data, voice, cloud, security and mobile offerings."

Solihull-based Wavenet was founded in 2000 and three years later Dawson invested in and

joined the firm. Today the company boasts a proprietary carrier grade network with a broadening product set, especially in UC and IT services.

Got a news story? email: sgilroy@bpl-business.com

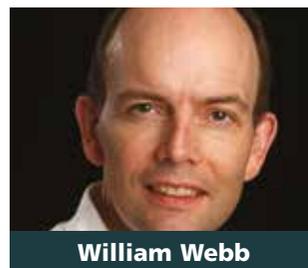
Top industry execs named as keynoters for FCS conference

TOP level industry execs have been secured by the Federation of Communications Services (FCS) to speak at its annual Comms Provider event in central London on 4th October.

Representatives from Ofcom, the DCMS and Openreach have been lined up including BDUK CEO Raj Kalia who will deliver a keynote focusing on 'The end of WLR and push for FTTP'.

William Webb, CEO of Weightless SIG, will close the event with a presentation entitled 'Aspiring to full fibre and 5G'.

FCS interim CEO Itret Latif stated: "This year's Comms



William Webb

Provider conference is set to be bigger and better than ever with a wide array of speakers to discuss how the communications industry can 'Create Competitive Markets', and how businesses can leverage changing technology and lay down a future growth path."

Kalia added: "With Government providing the framework for full fibre and 5G it is essential for industry professionals to come together, share knowledge, stay ahead and make the future happen."

Webb observed: "In the world of 5G these are times of both opportunity and challenge.

"Being able to discuss these with a knowledgeable and influential audience is by far the best way to build a consensus and deliver on the promise of being connected everywhere."

To find out more about this event visit www.fcs.org.uk

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With this being the case, the critical role of data service solutions in enabling customers to access their data is clear. As a channel partner, the key to empowering the growth and success of your customers is ensuring you're keeping up-to-date with emerging IT trends and providing best-in-class data service packages, allowing customers to access their data whenever they need it.

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Sky makes Ethernet market

Sky's disruptive Ethernet campaign combines the UK's largest exchange network to offer 1GB services with growth ambitions on the same scale, according to Business Communications Strategy and Commercial Director Mike Greening.

Limitless demand for bandwidth has become the default mode of the market and connectivity providers must respond in equal measure: Cue the bold and confident channel campaign embarked on by Sky Business Communications. "If anyone was in any doubt about our intentions in this space they should now be crystal clear," stated Greening. "Sky is staking its claim and truly open for business in the wholesale connectivity market. Our objective is also unambiguous: As the only nationwide alternative to the current incumbents we plan to shake up the status quo."

With a claim to the UK's largest exchange network to offer 1GB services and a strong foundation in the channel Sky Business has arrived at a step-change in its strategic intentions, according to Greening. "Our stronger focus on the channel is a

Divisional structure:

THE Business Communications department sits within Sky Business, the B2B division of Sky, and is led by Mike Greening, Commercial and Strategy Director – with Sales Director Nick Powell and Head of Operations Harmeet Kapoor driving the two core areas of the business. The unit works closely with Sky's UK Technology division which delivers the network.

natural evolution," he said. "We have developed the product, put in place service and support mechanisms and refined them with our initial set of partners. Early adopters are on board so now it's time to launch the proposition to the wider channel and articulate what we represent and how Sky Ethernet is different."

Channel relaunch

Sky's first channel project, the SNS Wholesale operation established in 2016 with partner FluidOne (then Fluidata), is now commercially led by Sky Business. "Our relationship with FluidOne enabled Sky to understand the wholesale connectivity market, develop the proposition and most importantly build the foundations needed to scale our communications business," said Greening. "The collaboration remains an important cornerstone for both organisations. We also have a relationship with SSE which has delivered great traction in the market."

At the time of writing this article eight partners had signed up to Sky Ethernet with a strong pipeline of new partners poised to join Sky Business Communications' rolling campaign convoy. "We want at least 20 live partners by the end of our financial year in June 2019," stated Greening. "We are open to varying profiles from aggregators, resellers and specialist



Mike Greening

We are coming to market with a fresh approach, without legacy and with a partner-centric mindset

connectivity providers, to cloud providers, SIs and of course international carriers – organisations that consume Ethernet in the UK on a layer 2 basis and want a better experience. We also want to get to scale so are working with businesses that can help deliver that for us. For example, we've been collaborating with Openreach for many years and it's a relationship we value."

The digital revolution is also potent with value and organisations simply cannot

resist its upsides, putting connectivity front and centre of all business planning. So, says Greening, it's time to focus on the network facts that he says makes Sky different. The company has built a 7,500km fibre network with over 2,800 exchanges covering 96 per cent of UK business postcodes. Over 70 per cent of exchanges are 10GB enabled with 99.95 per cent network availability.

According to Greening the market requires that

established national network operators like Sky should be seen as distinct entities separated from emerging network builders that lack scale. "There are more operators emerging, and major unbundling under way, but few have the appetite or budget for national expansion," added Greening. "We have already made this investment and will now leverage our reach and capacity."

The Ethernet market has become inundated by pressure from organisations demanding ever more bandwidth, but for providers 'trapped in time' their lack of agility may also hinder their scope to deliver what's required of them, according to Greening. "We are coming to market with a fresh approach, without legacy and with a partner-centric mindset," he stated. "The market has told us what they need – we aim to fill this space."

A running theme in Greening's message to the channel is Sky Business's lack of legacy, which he says offers a more optimistic and appealing future for all partners. "We are unencumbered by legacy issues and forward thinking," he stated. "With no legacy base or minimum guarantees to protect we also welcome discussions with players that have ambitions to build out their own on-net footprints. A prime example is SSE

Market manoeuvres

where we have provided both backhaul and last mile services enabling its 200-plus service provider customers to benefit from Sky's nationwide network."

Sky Business's success in large part rests on its onboarding and partner engagement processes which Greening said have been fully honed and tested. "Over the past two years we have developed these areas," he explained. "Our portal is predominantly for service and support management at this stage but is well regarded by our partners and an area we continue to refine and invest in. Furthermore, the reach and capacity of our network makes it easy for us to implement quotation and ordering. With our API soon to be deployed we see a high percentage of all postcode requests as being EAD LA circuits for Sky."

Despite the overall improving state of Ethernet provision in the UK what exercises Greening is that 'progress deniers' – such as inconsistencies due to a dependence on carrier and location – risk being worsened by a lack of human interaction in the supply chain, which he says progress depends on. "We are committed to delivering a comprehensive set of APIs

Greening's top tip:
CHECK the financial stability of your current provider. If your carrier isn't able to continue to invest in their network and services you should consider a risk assessment, and possibly a plan B. You are only as good as the underlying service you provide.

and see automation as the way forward, but we also recognise that some carriers are too reliant on automation so when things go awry they do not have enough direct human engagement to quickly resolve issues," he added. "Our partners have access to real people to answer their questions."

Migration opportunities

Greening also noted that the case for potential brand new connectivity business may be exaggerated as markets closer to home could offer lower hanging fruit. "The channel is often too focused on chasing new circuits when

Our stronger focus on the channel is a natural evolution

the existing market base is significant," he said. "Now is a great time to consider those migration conversations that are always put on the 'too hard' pile. Prices have declined significantly and not all carriers are passing on the cost reductions of either the market price changes or zero install charges that were amortised over the (usually) three year term.

"We also see a step change from the less business critical sites which were on ADSL moving up to lower end Ethernet circuits. Again, we are positioned here as we can offer a ubiquitous Ethernet service across the UK that doesn't rely on multiple carriers and mixed SLAs."

While Sky Business's Ethernet capacity is cutting-edge,

the nature of its channel programme also brings some 'Sky magic', claimed Greening, rewarding partners and their staff while delivering something 'new and interesting' to the sector. "Our reward programme is exciting," enthused Greening. "It includes access to our range of Sky products and content, partner incentives and a marketing development fund for each partner for bespoke and joint marketing campaigns, partner-specific promotions, bespoke pricing for larger or strategic opportunities, dedicated sales tool kits and proactive lead sharing."

Greening is one of the channel's most passionate advocates and his career background speaks volumes about his ability to give partners what they need as well as realise his ambitions for Sky Business Communications. Most of his 18 years in the telecoms industry has been spent in the B2B and wholesale space working internationally with operators such as BT, Optus, Telefonica, Telstra and Vodafone. Greening also held Partner roles at TMT consultancy firms Cartesian and Analysys Mason. Who better to catalyse Sky Business Communications' bid for channel expansion?

"Our priority right now is to execute our initial plans efficiently," he stated. "We have clear objectives for the next three to four years in terms of growing our Business Communications unit and are confident we'll deliver on them. We know our competitors are spending significant amounts of time working out what those might be. We'll let them keep guessing for now."

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Peach scales to £20m

Whiteley-based Peach Technologies has acquired local IT business Taylor Made Computer Solutions as it continues to expand its IT services portfolio both organically and through M&A. The financials of the deal were not disclosed.

The combined group will generate circa £20m revenue, have a headcount of 200 and serve over 1,000 customers. The expansion of Peach Technologies' IT products and services will enable the company to significantly broaden its growth ambitions, noted CEO Darren Scott-Healey. His post-acquisition strategy is to leverage Peach's own connectivity, cloud, mobile, telephony and existing IT services, while introducing the IT services, security, backup and disaster recovery solutions offered by Taylor Made Computer Solutions.

"Our immediate priority is to enhance the product and service proposition for the benefit of both organisations

and the customer base," he stated. "Both companies are hugely complementary and the acquisition enhances our ability to provide one-stop-shop solutions for IT, telephony and communications services."

Taylor Made Computer Solutions is based in Fareham and began its commercial life in 1994 as a provider of IT helpdesk, consultancy and managed services. Taylor Made's brand name and Fareham office will be retained. The company was listed fourth in the 2017 MSPmentor report, its high ranking a reflection of the depth of IT skills now available to Peach including particular expertise in Citrix and virtualisation. Its co-founder Nigel Taylor



Darren Scott-Healey

The acquisition enhances our ability to provide one-stop-shop solutions for IT, telephony and communications services

– who is continuing to work with Peach as a consultant to the board of directors – commented: "A driver to sell was the convergence between IT and communications. By combining both companies Peach has increased its skills and resources to deliver converged solutions. Our tailored approach to providing the correct products and services combined with our talent will deliver bigger benefits for customers and partners."

Strong pedigree

The deal comes a little over 17 months after Ian Brown joined forces with Peach Technologies as Chairman. Brown has earned a solid reputation for innovating and growing businesses

during his 30 year career in the technology, software, comms and IT services sectors; and his appointment catalysed Peach's organic and acquisition strategy as the company set about becoming a dominant force in the SME sector. "After joining the group in January 2017 we quickly identified the massive opportunity generated by the combination of these two businesses," he stated. "The acquisition is transformational as Peach Group continues to fulfil its aspiration to become a leading provider of IT and communications to UK SMEs."

Brown and Scott-Healey have confirmed that more acquisitions are in the pipeline while guiding for continuing strong organic

growth. "We will continue to look for acquisitions that will expand our UK footprint," added Brown. "The group has a number of funding options available for the future."

Scott-Healey's ambition in the IT space emerged early in 2015 when his company rebranded from Peach Telecom. Key reasons for the revamp were a strong period of growth, the acquisition of an IT MSP and a sharper focus on bigger businesses. At the time Scott-Healey said: "We have always specialised in small to medium-sized businesses, but are naturally progressing into the mid-market and use the word 'Technologies' in our name to reflect our expanding telecoms and IT offerings." ■



Ian Brown



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Global distribution power

The back story of £3 billion distribution giant Exertis reveals an ambitious and highly acquisitive company that is always heading towards the future and expanding requirements of the channel marketplace, according to Distribution Managing Director Gerry O’Keeffe.

Pre-Exertis O’Keeffe worked with the Caudwell Group for ten years in a number of senior roles. It was a character building experience that remains influential to this day. “John Caudwell was instrumental in forging my attitude and ambitions in business,” stated O’Keeffe. “He grew an organisation from scratch to £2.5 billion in around 15 years. And he helped to develop a number of people who have gone on to hold senior positions in retail and distribution with major companies.”

Also on the up is Exertis Group which reported over £3 billion turnover in the financial year to 31st March 2018. The distributor has partnerships with 700-plus global technology brands and over 45,000 resellers, e-commerce operators and retailers across Europe, and employs over 2,700 people in the UK, Ireland and continental Europe. Its supply chain business also operates in China, Poland and the USA. “We have acquired a number of complementary businesses and increased investment in our enterprise, Pro AV, components and print businesses,” explained O’Keeffe. “We have also established a presence in the Smart Tech arena.”

In 1996 O’Keeffe joined 20:20 distribution, the wholesale arm of the Caudwell Group now known



Gerry O’Keeffe

We are not short of growth opportunities and aim to expand across Europe and beyond

as Brightstar. The mobile distributor grew rapidly over the following decade in which O’Keeffe helped to set up the Irish and Scandinavian operations. It was therefore a natural progression to join Micro P (owned by Irish Group DCC) and move into IT distribution. Notably, O’Keeffe’s mobile experience was key in setting up of the comms and mobile divisions within Micro-P in 2009.

Exertis is the culmination of several acquisitions made since Micro-P was founded in 1980. For the first ten years the company just sold printers, peripherals and monitors. SharpText was also established in Ireland in the same year, quickly growing its vendor portfolio to 30 brands. Gem distribution was founded in 1984 focused on the gaming and entertainment

markets. In 1989 SharpText acquired Micro-P and in 1995 DCC acquired Gem.

Acquisition spree

Micro-P continued on a strategic acquisition path snapping up Tekdata (security) in 2006, Portix in 2008 to form its mobile division, Advent Data (consumables) in 2011 and Cohort (security, IP telephony) in 2013. Gem also acquired

Ztorm (digital distribution) in 2011. The ten divisions that were operational in 2013 were rebranded as Exertis, now the trading name of DCC Technology.

“Our parent company has been key to growth in enabling us to expand our technologies and geographical footprint,” added O’Keeffe. “Bringing different companies under one brand and integrating the teams while ensuring we retain their particular expertise and specialism has also been an important factor.”

Exertis’ investment in a new 543,620 sq.ft logistics centre in the UK will meet the needs of the business to at least 2030 with a further 200,000 sq.ft space available to extend the facility. Exertis has also opened a new facility in Norfolk focused on the print and scan market. Over the mid-term O’Keeffe expects to see Exertis operating in a wider number of geographical locations, taking advantage of opportunities to grow and add technology categories in Europe and even Asia, following the example of the DCC Energy business.

“We will also leverage our supply chain services to provide wider routes to market for our vendors, while offering more integrated solutions and services for customers focused on their respective markets

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er on the rise

– consumer, business or enterprise,” added O’Keeffe.

Current technology focus areas include VR, AR, IoT and AI. “We are the global distribution partner for the Oculus for Business bundle and have been partnering with resellers on providing solutions,” added O’Keeffe. “We have a case study example with SMB reseller, Immersicare, which provided an implementation of VR into the daily lives of patients living with dementia for its customer Quantum Care Homes.”

New business model

As well as keeping pace with technology resellers should adapt their business models as more customers move towards paying for products and services based on consumption, noted O’Keeffe. “Successful resellers are those that become trusted advisors for their customers and provide solutions that focus on the outcomes,” he added. “The service is often a key part of the solution but it needs to be valued and sufficiently recognised in the overall cost of doing business.

“The ‘as a service’ model is popular with end users, giving them access to the latest versions and scope to consume what they want when they need it. This is also gaining traction in the hardware arena and we are meeting the opportunity by providing a Device as a Service (DaaS) offering using the expertise of MTR and our mobile division. With our DaaS proposition we are adding in-life service and retirement to our services in an easily digestible format using a newly developed portal.”

According to O’Keeffe Exertis is poised to take advantage of the convergence of AV and IT as the distributor has expertise in AV, networking, UC, security and professional services, enabling the company to provide end-to-end solutions. “This is increasingly important as so many AV products sit on the network,” stated O’Keeffe. “Resellers prefer to partner with Exertis AV rather than a competitive counterpart. Consequently, we are enabling more IT resellers to sell AV and more AV resellers to broaden their product and service offering.”

Working alongside the AV division Exertis’s supply chain organisation has won significant new business. “Exertis SCS acts as a global outsourcing partner to companies in a variety of industry sectors,” added O’Keeffe. “These services have enabled our AV resellers to look beyond their perceived trading limits and expand into new territories.

“We have opportunities to grow in many areas. For example, with the integration of Hammer and our Exertis enterprise solutions team we can help our enterprise customers across a range of vertical markets. Cyber security remains a key issue and we have a strong security portfolio that can be white labelled by resellers. We also have a Unified Communications and wireless proposition enhanced by the recent additions of Mitel and Ruckus; and a professional services portfolio with ISO27001 certification as well as Cyber Essentials Plus. So we are not short of growth opportunities and aim to grow our business across Europe and beyond.” ■

Just a minute with Gerry O’Keeffe...

What talent do you wish you had? To play the guitar

What do you fear the most? Working too long, not completing my bucket list and missing out on time with my family

If you weren’t in comms what would you be doing? Working in a business that makes a difference to people or leaves a legacy

Best piece of advice you have ever been given? That your health matters and being prepared to fail can help you succeed

How do you relax when not working? Time with my family, a beer and cycling with friends

What’s the biggest risk you have taken? Leaving the comfort of working for a PLC, taking out a mortgage and jumping 25ft into Gorge Rock

Name three ideal dinner guests: Trump, Putin and Kim Jong-Un. It’d be interesting to hear their conversation

One thing you could not do without in your job: My PA always makes sense of my diary

Top tip for resellers? Constantly evolve new solutions to expand your business. Extract the maximum share of wallet you can from your customers

What possession could you not live without? My bicycle, it’s a great way to relax

Your main strength? I like to challenge myself and others by setting the bar high

How would you like to be remembered? As a genuine, trustworthy person who did what he said he would do

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illustrious Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

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This powerful combination means the Comms National Awards is the ultimate evening for the ICT channel to gather together, recognise excellence and innovation, network with industry friends and colleagues and, of course, have some much-deserved fun!!

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9 MAKE IT A STRAIGHT SIX BY TAKING POLE POSITION AT NATIONAL AWARDS

This year's Comms National Awards, to be held at The Park Lane Hilton, London on Thursday 11th October, will be sponsored for the sixth successive year by leading service provider, 9 Group.

According to Marketing Director, Mark Saunders, there was not even a moment's debate around renewing the service provider's commitment to the event, which is the unquestioned highlight of the awards calendar.

"Last year was another memorable evening and it's wonderful to recall how welcome our brand ambassador, Josh Webster, was made to feel by everyone in the hall as he opened the event, ably supported by a hugely amusing host, James Nesbitt. Saunders believes the standard of award entries will improve once more, meaning the judges will again face the unenviable task of separating them.

"If you win one of these awards, you really can legitimately claim to be the very best at what you do and I look forward to seeing a healthy mixture of familiar and new faces on the podium this year.

"I hope the channel's top people will be there to enjoy the very best night out in our industry and will enter as many categories possible to showcase the incredible range of talent that this industry should so rightly boast about."

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A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS...

Business Category



Justin Blaine

Channel Sales Manager

NTA

"NTA is proud to yet again be a sponsor at this year's Comms National Awards. The awards are recognised as one of the most prestigious within in our industry and this year we are sponsoring the Business Awards Category. There are a number of new awards in this category including 'Best New Innovation' and 'Best Business Growth' to recognise enterprising and forward-thinking businesses in our community which we endorse wholeheartedly.

"All of the NTA staff would like to take this opportunity to wish all entrants in all categories the very best of luck. The CN Award finals night is a highlight of the industry calendar and we look forward to seeing channel friends and colleagues and celebrating success on the night."

Vertical Market Solution Category



Vincent Disneur

Head of Sales & Marketing

Union Street

"Union Street's channel strategy focuses on developing innovative software solutions backed by comprehensive support, training and consultancy services. Encapsulated by our company strapline, 'powering your potential', this approach enables our partners to leverage maximum value from our solutions. It's a great honour to be sponsoring this year's CNAs, an event which like ourselves, encourages and celebrates excellence within our industry. At last year's CNAs it was extremely gratifying to see so many Union Street partners collecting awards for their efforts. On behalf of myself and team UST, I'd like to wish the very best of luck to all this year's entrants."

Hospitality Sponsor



Shaun Bodsworth

Managing director

Inform Billing

"The Comms National Awards are the industry's most prestigious and hotly contested awards, recognising excellence across the ICT industry. After experiencing the tremendous impact winning one of these converted awards has had on our business – much greater and further reaching than we could have imagined - we are proud to be supporting this year's event as a hospitality sponsor.

On behalf of Inform Billing, I would like to wish all entrants the very best of luck and we look forward to what will no doubt be an extremely fun and enjoyable night!"

Enterprise Reseller of the Year



Charles Aylwin

Director of Channel

8x8

"At 8x8, we're delighted to be sponsoring the Comms National Awards again this year. The evening is always a great celebration of the best our industry has to offer. It's also a fantastic recognition of the true excellence in communications, whether rewarding vendor solutions, resellers, innovative technology or outstanding customer service. The channel is essential to the continued growth of our industry and at 8x8 we will continue our rapid expansion with the unrivalled expertise of our channel partners. We want to wish the best of luck to everyone that has entered and we're looking forward to celebrating on the night!"

Network Category



Wail Sabbagh

Managing Director

Strategic Imperatives

"Strategic Imperatives is the UK market leader in SaaS billing with our ground-breaking billing platform Elevate, as well as being highly regarded for fixed line provisioning with award-winning multi-carrier solutions for Local Loop Unbundling, WLR, Fibre and traditional broadband.

"That's why we are so pleased to be among other leaders of the channel in supporting the UK's No 1 awards programme and event. The Comms National Awards celebrate product and service quality in the channel which rings perfectly with our commitment to 'Elevate' partners to a new level of billing excellence. We congratulate all the finalists and look forward to celebrating success with them on October 11th."

Reseller of the Year – SME



Garry Gowns

Sales Director

Daisy Wholesale

"Entering the prestigious Comms National Awards not only brings together great individuals and companies, whilst showcasing businesses' successes, it allows you to acknowledge the hard work, talent and determination of your teams. At Daisy Wholesale, we believe the SME sector has huge potential which is why we are proud to support our fantastic partners and the channel by sponsoring the SME Reseller of the Year category. This is your opportunity to reward the people that make your business a success, so grab it with both hands and get your entry in now."

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Tempest brings fresh per

Channel leaders who consider their organisation worthy of long-term preservation would be doing themselves a great favour by staying in ever closer contact with the fast changing and disruptive marketplace, according to BT Wholesale Managing Director Alex Tempest whose fresh perspective is key to remodelling the division's own future planning and direction.

Digital Britain is up for a land grab and only proper planning will ensure future success. So in April this year BT Group created a new customer-facing unit called Enterprise, bringing together the previously separate Business and Public Sector and Wholesale and Ventures divisions. Enterprise will start reporting its financial results as a single unit from 1st October 2018. "My first priority is integrating the Wholesale part of the business into the newly created unit, working closely with Gerry McQuade, CEO of Enterprise for BT, and his leadership team," explained Tempest. "As part of that integration the new Enterprise strategy will be defined, including the Wholesale components. We hope to reveal more details about that later in the year."

Also high on Tempest's to-do list is product portfolio development as she seeks to take advantage of new market opportunities created by the shift to all-IP, cloud communications, IoT, all-fibre networks and 5G. "With the traditional connectivity market flat, and with declining revenues and margins, it's imperative that we and the rest of the market transition away from older technologies which are becoming obsolete – and embrace the new,"



Alex Tempest

The role represented an opportunity to shape the business to become one of the most customer centric, agile and disruptive players in the market

stated Tempest. "Perhaps the biggest challenges associated with these major technology shifts are around driving awareness and demand. This is where

our channel partners, with their proximity to end customers and deep insight into the understanding of their business, have a critical role to play."

Improving the customer experience is also a big focus for Wholesale over the next year, as BT evolves its sales channel by investing in people, processes and

systems. We're making strides and I'm determined to maintain the upward trajectory," stated Tempest. "For example, we've introduced a new user



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spective to BT's strategy

friendly online Ethernet order journey to make things simpler for customers. It's proving popular and now 99 per cent of our Ethernet orders are coming through the new Business Zone online platform."

Wholesale and Ventures provides fixed network services to around 2,600 wholesale and channel partners – including Sky, TalkTalk, Telefonica O2 and Virgin Media, plus overseas communications providers operating in the UK. The division reported £2 billion in revenues, an operating profit of £443 million and an EBITDA of £754 million in its later financial year. "As part of the new Enterprise business we expect revenue growth over the coming years to be driven mainly by hosted communications, professional services, new deals, broadband and Ethernet," added Tempest.

"Our Wholesale business will continue to evolve with its integration into the wider Enterprise unit. Much of this will be driven by the new strategic direction for Enterprise which is yet to be announced. However, we can expect this to align closely with the wider BT Group strategy which is focused on delivering a differentiated customer experience, investing in integrated network leadership and transforming BT's operating model."

Tempest noted that the biggest factor influencing the Wholesale business in terms of market and portfolio development is the continuing decline of legacy products such as traditional fixed voice and partial private circuits.

"These older technologies will soon become obsolete so our focus now has to be on newer all-IP based alternatives that deliver richer features and better price points for end customers, and educating and informing our customer base about the benefits of making the leap sooner rather than later," she commented.

Internet of Things

A new tech area that's front of mind for BT right now is the IoT, pointed out Tempest. She noted that BT has created a new IoT Centre of Excellence within Wholesale and Ventures which serves the wider BT Group. "We've been working hard to develop our IoT propositions including intelligent assets, retail and automotive, and we've also developed a BT IoT platform to maximise customer choice," she explained. "We believe these IoT solutions build on our reach across fixed and mobile networks, and we're already working through an internal IoT transformation programme which will deliver benefits in terms of cost savings and learning to take propositions to market. Our initial focus areas are supply chain management, buildings and our fleet business."

Aside from a clear view of the future role of the IoT in BT's long-term strategic direction, Tempest's sights are also set on rising demand for bandwidth and superfast connectivity, particularly fibre broadband, which now makes up around 33 per cent of BT's total wholesale broadband market base. "However, with superfast fibre availability standing at 95 per cent in the UK there is still much that both we and the rest of the market,

including resellers, can do to encourage businesses and consumers to upgrade from copper to fibre," commented Tempest. "Much of this will be driven by price of course. We're seeing increasing price competition in the market for broadband and CPs will need to focus on value bundles and an improved customer experience as differentiators.

"Furthermore, with our infrastructure partner Openreach continuing to invest in the UK's digital infrastructure through its Fibre First programme, the move to ultrafast, all-fibre networks will become all important over the coming years. That's another shift that we'll be helping our customers

I want to ensure that we are strategic, forward thinking and nimble enough to change course

prepare for as demand for greater bandwidth continues to accelerate."

Providing an undoubted boost to bandwidth demand will be the emergence of ultrafast 5G networks. "5G represents a huge opportunity for fixed and mobile operators, and as a wholesaler we'll be focused on building the high speed Ethernet infrastructure required to support 5G," added Tempest. "Through

our EE mobile network we also help MVNOs to offer their own brand mobile products and services. Today, our MVNO business supports more than 3.7 million customers."

According to Tempest the industry must be laser-focused on the shift to all-IP over the coming years as BT prepares to migrate customers from PSTN-based products and services to digital IP infrastructure by 2025. "This needs precision planning in terms of portfolio development, product withdrawals and consultation with customers, partners, suppliers and the regulator," she said.

Tempest joined BT in December 2017 as Managing Director of Fixed, Wholesale and MVNO Sales, moving from TalkTalk Business where she was Director of Partners. She became Managing Director of Wholesale, BT Enterprise in May this year following the formation of the Enterprise business unit. "The role represented an opportunity to shape the business to become one of the most customer centric, agile and disruptive players in the market," she said. "And with BT's acquisition of EE you could see the positive impact of the brands coming together and the resulting culture that flowed through the new organisation.

"I bring an external perspective which I believe is critically important, along with my insatiable curiosity. Ultimately, I want to ensure that we are strategic, forward thinking and nimble enough to change course, and that we build integrative relationships with our business partners." ■

Just a minute with Alex Tempest...

Role models: My parents: It has never occurred to me that I couldn't do something. Empowerment is a sign of great role models

Your biggest career achievement? Seeing all of the people I've developed, coached and mentored go on to fulfil their potential

Your greatest fear? The inability to do something

If you weren't in comms what would you be doing? Futurology

One example of something you have overcome:

Being female in the tech world I always felt the need to over-achieve to 'prove' myself. You soon learn that this is a bar you, and not others, are setting for yourself

Tell us something about yourself we don't know? I trained to be an Olympic pentathlete

The biggest risk you have taken? Giving up on my Olympic dream to work when I realised I couldn't do both at the same time, brilliantly

Name three ideal dinner guests: Einstein for his scientific genius; Da Vinci for his ethos of interdisciplinarity; and Ada Lovelace for her brilliance in exploring the potential of algorithms in the 1800s

Lesson learnt: No matter how much fun you're having or how amazing your colleagues are, there is always a right time to move and develop your career. That time is usually much sooner than you think

How do you relax? Sports like kick boxing or hot yoga, spending time with my husband, friends and a fab bottle of wine

Opportunities in health

After so many changes to the health service its reform has almost become a ruling obsession. But one constant remains – the health sector’s reliance on technology innovation and those that provide it, says TeleWare Product Manager Andrew Fawcett.

Healthcare organisations have never felt more operational pressures than they bear today. But despite budgetary constraints, the sector has proved willing to invest where there are clear business benefits to be had. Examples cited by Fawcett include reducing real estate costs, delivering operational efficiencies and providing an enhanced patient experience. “As far as vertically aligned industries go, healthcare is one of the more high profile areas of opportunity for resellers – with good reason,” he stated. “Healthcare relies heavily on current technology and requires high resilience and uptime. It also utilises extensive backup resources for records and regulatory compliance and needs to be secure at all times.”



Andrew Fawcett

Healthcare is a complex industry which requires a strategic sales approach, pointed out Fawcett. “It is important that resellers adopt a tailored process mindful of the sector’s specific procurement, regulatory, security and governance requirements,” he added. “Historically, IT in the healthcare sector has been characterised by bespoke and often proprietary solutions which have proved expensive to deploy and maintain, which often create data silos through poor interoperability. Increasingly, we are seeing standardised and open solutions being

Increasingly we are seeing standardised and open solutions being adopted to replace ageing systems and infrastructure

adopted to replace ageing systems and infrastructure.”

The main priorities revolve around alleviating the burden on the NHS by using technology in a safe and clinically efficient manner. All technology must be able to deliver best practice in terms of clinical outcomes. But at the same time, not increase the risk to either the patient

or the clinician. “While technology is frequently used in treatment and care, there is a constant need to improve how it can be used in supporting services, particularly communications,” commented Fawcett. “By providing flexible and reliable communications the NHS and private sector can enhance the patient experience while reducing

costs through streamlining administrative processes.”

Mobility

Furthermore, mobility for healthcare professionals has the potential to enable new ways of working which can deliver significant cost savings. Making communications and information available securely on any device at any time

helps make best use of scarce and costly resources, as well as reducing errors and improving patient outcomes.

But tendering processes for healthcare contracts can often be complex and lengthy, with a formal and structured procurement process in place. “Most procurement exercises require a thorough investigation of all possible solutions and vendors to be undertaken,” explained Fawcett. “This often results in advantages for experienced incumbent providers who are familiar with the process. New suppliers therefore need to be able to break the mould by delivering distinctive and innovative solutions and fresh thinking from the request for information (RFI) stage onwards.”

Moreover, resellers new to the space can often leverage experience gained outside of the health sector to their advantage, demonstrating RoI and process re-engineering. “Whatever the case, it is vital that suppliers qualify opportunities thoroughly and are prepared to qualify out where the fit of their solutions is poor,” said Fawcett.

A number of high profile IT project failures has made the sector increasingly risk-averse to complex and long-term projects. This has resulted in an increased focus on contractual terms, vendor transparency and risk



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mitigation. "Consequently, shorter term framework and outcome-based arrangements are becoming more common with the delivery of IT and infrastructure on an 'as-a-service' basis," observed Fawcett. "Resellers need to formalise service catalogues to align with buying frameworks such as the digital marketplace (G-Cloud) and other health-specific frameworks."

Plan for cloud

While the Government has committed to a five-year NHS funding plan cash for technology will not become readily available in the absence of clearly demonstrated RoI. For this reason, partners operating in this vertical increasingly need to consider standardised cloud-based solutions which, in their very nature, require less upfront capital and offer the ability to trial solutions quickly and inexpensively, pointed out Fawcett.

Effective procurement is an essential component of commissioning improved services and outcomes for local patients and communities. It also ensures value for money. "As healthcare goes through major changes in its structure the procurement process is becoming much more

Top tips:

- Establish the fit of your proposed solution and be prepared to not bid if this is weak.
- Consider working with specialist parties if you do not have sector-specific experience.
- Be distinctive and innovative.
- Align your sales process with the customer's buying practices.

fragmented," added Fawcett. "This can bring opportunities to smaller resellers at a local level but can also increase the costs of sale for larger scale solutions. Restructuring in the sector has resulted in increased consolidation (especially within primary care trusts) with fewer and larger buyers clubbing together with a greater, more formalised vendor scrutiny. From a channel perspective this represents both an opportunity and a threat."

The push to devolve decision making to a more local level also limits the amount of technical knowledge within

Healthcare is one of the more high profile areas of opportunity for resellers – with good reason

the decision making unit. Therefore, a greater focus on business outcomes and support becomes more important than technical know-how. "Market entrants need to ensure that their propositions are clearly positioned against the evolving needs of the healthcare sector," stated Fawcett. "This involves working closely with customers to gain a deep and clear understanding of the requirements and desired outcomes.

"In some cases the vendor may be required to provide

trial and proof-of-concept solutions to gain confidence and acceptance. In cases where the reseller is not familiar with the sector's needs it may be appropriate to bring in external advice to accelerate the process and to consider partnerships with third parties where skills gaps exist."

Apart from establishing the fit of their solutions, the key challenges resellers face stems from understanding the competitive landscape and the individual prospect of the organisation's buying process. "For resellers who are unfamiliar with the health sector, this will likely be a big challenge as health organisations can be somewhat atypical in terms of buying IT software and equipment," added Fawcett. "Many resellers fail due to an over emphasis on winning the deal rather than detailed early stage qualification, competitive benchmarking and carefully aligning the sales process to the customer's purchasing process and buying practices."

There is also a growing trend for healthcare organisations to demand contractual terms that include onerous service level guarantees. "It is important to get early sight of these and be prepared to align your own contractual terms where appropriate," noted Fawcett. "Another stumbling block is that many sales organisations fail to establish the client stakeholders (influencers and decision makers) early enough in the process. As with any sales exercise, it is important to articulate your organisation's strengths in a way that is meaningful and resonates with key parties." ■

Health sector insights – p38

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McTighe's next steps

Openreach has increased its efforts to drive Britain's digital revolution with a plan to invest more than ever in its network and work closer with industry bodies and stakeholders, according to Chairman Mike McTighe.

The infrastructure builder, which last year spent more than £1.5 billion on its network, has bigger spending plans as it seeks to underpin Digital Britain. "This year we'll invest more than any prior year," stated McTighe. "It's been a busy time, simultaneously laying the foundations for Britain's ultrafast future, setting more ambitious targets for rolling out FTTP and investing in a better and broader network. We believe in a full fibre future, so we need to develop a viable business case that makes that possible."

Openreach fact file:

- Over 97,000 street cabinets and 4.8 million distribution points (telephone poles and junction boxes).
- Works with more than 600 'not-spot' communities to deliver Community Fibre Partnerships.
- Halted and reversed a six year rise in network faults.
- Over the past ten years £11 billion has been invested in the Openreach network.
- Carries out 9.5 million engineering jobs each year, dealing with 25,000 customers every day.
- CP customer satisfaction grew by 3.8 per cent during the year.

The moves come after efforts to reform Openreach following pressure on BT from the regulator which led to commitments made to Ofcom under its Digital Communications Review in 2017. That was seized as an opportunity by Openreach, said McTighe. "We've made big strides towards becoming a distinct, legally separate company within BT Group," he added. "Openreach has its own board responsible for setting strategy and overseeing performance within a strategic and financial framework defined by BT. We're tracking well against all of the commitments BT made as a result of the DCR and we're ahead on many, including our governance and rebrand."

Since the DCR, which also pressed for greater transparency of Openreach's operations, trading figures have been made public for the company's first year, showing that despite around £230 million of regulatory price changes it held revenue flat due to strong demand for fibre products. Operating costs were up one per cent, reflecting investment in delivering copper minimum service levels, halving missed appointments by the end



Mike McTighe

Let me be clear, we believe in a full fibre future

of the financial year and upskilling its workforce. Capital expenditure was £1,573 million, up £126 million (nine per cent), the rise attributed to investment in fibre coverage and speed and the delivery of more complex Ethernet circuits. EBITDA decreased one per cent with operating profit down seven per cent.

Superfast footprint

"This year we continued to grow our superfast broadband network," said McTighe. "Today it delivers speeds of at least 24 Mbps to almost 28 million premises. Few countries around the world can point to such a widespread superfast footprint. But everyone in Britain should be able to get decent broadband speeds and we're still five per cent short of good enough.

"Furthermore, having achieved such widespread access to superfast broadband it's right that we shift our focus to the next generation of ultrafast (100-plus Mbps) infrastructure. We're in the process of restructuring Openreach to focus on a Fibre First ethos. We now have a Fibre First approach to every network expansion decision we make, and we've started work in eight major cities. I firmly believe that with the right conditions we can reach 10 million premises by the mid-2020s and the majority of the UK thereafter. We've also continued to develop technologies that will help us deliver ultrafast connectivity to people quickly and cost effectively."

McTighe has plans to build the Gfast platform which

will make ultrafast speeds available to millions of premises between now and the end of 2020. "The beauty of Gfast is that we can build it fast and we'll be targeting areas that aren't in our initial plan for FTTP, so more people will benefit," he stated.

Openreach also set out to develop stronger relationships with customers through consultations on major strategic investments while forging closer ties with the industry, regulators and Government.

"Having consulted our Communications Providers customers during the summer we now have an accelerated plan to make full fibre/FTTP connections available to three million homes and businesses by the end of 2020," commented McTighe. "But we want to go a lot further, to 10 million premises and ultimately most of the UK if the business case is feasible.

"We've invested heavily in our people, training and systems, and we hired over 2,390 extra engineers to maintain our network and connect our customers throughout Britain. We'll hire a further 3,000 this coming year in support of our Fibre First plans. And we've introduced new training and career opportunities to help us develop and keep hold of the best engineering talent.

"Moreover, we support the Government's objective to deliver a Universal Service Obligation. I'm encouraged by the progress we've made this year in cutting the number of faults, keeping missed appointments to a minimum and fixing the faults we find much faster. But there's more to do." ■



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Market specialisation: Bold

Entries for this year's Comms National Awards prove there are many ICT solutions providers that specialise in specific vertical market sectors. There are others of course that prefer not to paint themselves into a corner when it comes to seeking and securing new business.

A diverse portfolio of clients and a certain reputation are all great things to have, but are they enough to motivate the best and biggest clients to seek out your services?

The strong argument against being 'all things to all people' is growth potential. ICT solution providers who chose not to specialise must cast a wide marketing net with a 'full service' message with the danger of pulling in small, lower quality clients. In contrast, word of mouth recommendations in a specific industry or sector could land much bigger customers.

As one telecoms reseller put it: "Having industry knowledge has helped us win bigger clients mostly because we have shown how we can save them valuable time by approaching projects efficiently and anticipating issues we know we will face."

The message is clear then: desirable clients understand the value of specialisation and are happy to pay for it. And the best part is that they'll give you the freedom you need to stay engaged in your sector and treat you like the consultative partner you are, not a replaceable vendor.

On the other hand, many ICT providers have grown very nicely by being a preferred supplier in a local area providing the highest quality of service into the bargain. And there's also the danger that market specialisation could be a growth killer (or even worse) if a sector goes into decline.

Whether generalist or specialist, if you're an established firm, the assumption is that you are skilled at your profession. When all's said and done, the critical skill that appeals to clients is your deep experience and understanding of their needs.



ENZO VISCITO
INCLARITY

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?

With new entrants coming in the need to differentiate services is paramount for resellers to be successful. This may be aligning themselves to a specific industry or providing a value-add to their customers in some other way.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?

Our resellers understand their customers' businesses and work closely with the vertical markets they serve. Our role is to provide product development services to support them when specific market applications and features are needed.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?

Many of Inclarity's partners embrace a consultative approach and are extremely knowledgeable within target verticals. For Inclarity it's about supporting the reseller to win the business.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?

Executed in the right way industry specialisation is a market winner. A partner of ours specialises in connecting local NHS surgeries and clinics to save on resource and increase productivity. Another specialises in communications solutions for Estate Agents by integrating our services with in-house sales and lettings management systems.



TIM DOCKER
MPS

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?

Vertical market specialisation can be an important part of a growth strategy whilst exclusive exposure to one chosen vertical is clearly high risk. At MPS we specialise in Healthcare and Education in conjunction with a broad horizontal market ranging from mid-sized SME to Enterprise.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?

Internal education is critical. Staff aligned to the sector must understand what drives the market, the specific commercial and operation challenges and how to overcome these to deliver process change and return on investment.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?

A specialist supplier can reinforce their advantage in a sector via reference ability; case studies, testimonials and results from third party validation processes, such as the patient access satisfaction surveys carried out by the NHS.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?

Staff training and development, portfolio, sales and marketing and service delivery differentiates a specialist from a non-specialist and it's a demonstrable fact that as your reputation and reference ability grows you can make money.



PHIL SCANLON
ELITE TELECOM

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?

Yes, a growing business should focus on being the best at one thing, rather than mediocre at a wide range of things. Once you demonstrate expertise, you gain client trust, which opens the door to more opportunities - 'land and expand'.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?

Employ a market expert if your budget allows and cross-educate your staff that way. Your entire team need to be a well-oiled machine and understand the customers' needs from order through to billing.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?

Customers need to know you understand their business, so it's essential you use the right language when completing tenders or when sat in front of a potential new client. This can mean the difference between winning and losing the business.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?

Market specialisation should make you money over time, but it can be a higher risk strategy. I saw the Estate Agents collapse in 2008, materially affecting the suppliers to that market.



JOHN MCKINDLAND
NIMANS

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?

Telephone system manufacturers have developed platforms and application suites that can be tailored to meet pretty much any vertical which makes it easier and attractive for resellers to specialise.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?

The challenge for resellers is not so much about education but creating an initial opportunity to enter a new sector. We can help resellers specialise or tailor a product or service into a particular vertical.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?

Our approach is consultative with our resellers to provide them with the knowledge and support they need to give them the edge. Knowledge is crucial in any tender or pitch.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?

It definitely makes money and is definitely worthwhile. Resellers that are moving to a solutions led business rather than a generic supply service enjoy the most success. When working in key verticals it has to be solutions led.



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RYAN KERSEY
NSN

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?
Flexibility is the key to winning business. Specialising in a specific vertical will benefit business growth as it opens the possibility for multiple referrals, taking you up the ladder from SME's up to corporate clients over time.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?
We promote hands on experience. If your main business focus is one particular vertical there will be an essential level of product specific knowledge to pass on, but it is important to encourage flexible thinking from a sales team.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?
Specialising allows you to formulate solutions that generally suit a specific vertical. This enables sales teams to enter pitches already armed with tried and tested solutions. This demonstrates expertise which ultimately wins business.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?
Specialising can open many doors through direct referrals, but it can also do the opposite. If you lose your solution flexibility it can narrow your opportunities. The trick is to always promote flexible thinking across multiple routes to market.



COLIN WOODS
SOUTH WEST COMMS

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?
Providing you research the vertical and satisfy yourself that it can sustain growth, you can truly differentiate yourself. The next step is to immerse yourself into the market and learn its language and variables.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?
All markets migrate toward people who understand them and speak their language. Therefore, knowledge is power not only because it informs your solution, but also because it enables you to present it in a way that will be well received.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?
Being able to broaden responses to encompass known pain points not only adds value and differentiates you, it also gives the client the comfort of knowing the responder truly understands and relates to their challenges.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?
It can do both. Failure to identify the growth potential can lead to investment outweighing returns. Likewise, lack of investment financially and in terms of time, can mean that you never understand the market well enough to differentiate your solution.



KATE BRODEY
9 GROUP

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?
Yes, the agile pace of our industry will only ever increase and there can be greater value in being a specialist in a highly innovative industry. It allows our partners to narrow down the competition, focus on an area of strength and deliver high value to their customers.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?
It is essential in our fast-paced and ever changing industry. Internal education must be constant and forward thinking to trigger the attention needed to clearly focus on a specific market and outwit the competition.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?
Vertical markets allow you to target customers and be the expert. It challenges the assumption that the customer always knows what they want and allows you to better advise on the most appropriate solution.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?
It depends on how you define and localise your speciality. Get it right and you are on to sure success but, get it wrong and the pressures of the specialisation could undermine your business.



NEIL WILSON
VIRTUAL1

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?
If your product mix is similar to many others, then a vertical focus can be a way of standing your business apart without significant upheaval. In verticals where community is strong, it makes sense leverage the reference ability of previous successes.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?
To succeed in a vertical market, it's essential to understand their specific pressures, demands and language. What might normally be a small change in one vertical, could be business critical for another. Context is king in delivering a winning vertical approach.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?
What customers ask for is often very different to what they actually want. Vertical knowledge stands you apart here, allowing you to translate and understand their goals and recommend the right solutions.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?
Specialisation is a long-term investment, it's not just about knowing that industry, it's being where they go, and engaging the right way. Networking takes time, money and critically patience to realise the returns.



GUY HOCKING
UTILISE

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?
If you are seen as a specialist in any vertical then you are naturally attractive to a prospect in that market. The key to growth is really understanding why you are good in that space (and then marketing it well).

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?
Really successful alignment is about having an affinity to a market that is sustainable and scalable. Education is then easier. Forcing market alignment with little or no reason can be costly and often less effective (in time, education and money).

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?
Listening is an art that is often lost in pitches with services or "company history" often forced upon a prospect. If you listen to and research your prospect and their vertical you will naturally be more consultative and more aligned with their actual needs.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?
Done correctly it will make you money. Done poorly or being a shiny object at the detriment of your service levels, it could cost you your business.



ANDREW DICKINSON
JOLA

IS MARKET SPECIALISATION ATTRACTIVE?
It can be, if thought through. Choose a sector that is growing and where you can differentiate. Perhaps spread your risk by choosing an aspect common to a number of sectors e.g. financial services, solicitors and health need secure communications.

WHAT INTERNAL EDUCATION IS NEEDED?
Choose smart people who can sell, over hiring someone from the target sector and training them to sell. Committing your whole organisation to a sector is a big decision - make sure all aspects of your business can be aligned to deliver.

DOES MARKET KNOWLEDGE GIVE YOU AN EDGE?
Market knowledge on its own is not a sustainable competitive advantage. You need to have a point of difference. This could be a piece of software or a unique combination of suppliers and products that differentiates you and adds value.

WOULD SPECIALISATION COST/MAKE MONEY?
Look for suppliers that have invested already and are innovative and flexible enough to help you with something unique. For example, some Jola partners specialise in 'Temporary'. They sell our unique 4G data solutions into the Events, Construction and Retail markets.

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No shortage of technology

No section of the public sector has undergone failed reforms more than healthcare, consuming huge resources but still suffering from massive squeeze points as demand for its services soars. But NHS news is not all bad. Why? Because it's time to trumpet technology innovation as perhaps the greatest driver of true reformation in the sector's history.

Digital disruption is occurring in every industry and the healthcare sector is no exception, in many ways blazing a trail with IoT test beds and the like (more on this later in the article). "The rise in automation across both private and public healthcare has helped nursing staff spend more time focused on patient care rather than the day-to-day administration," commented Tony Rich, Head of Global Propositions and Vertical Solutions, Unify. "However, despite innovations such as text message appointment reminders, online consultation services and electronic prescriptions, we can expect even greater transformational developments which can facilitate smarter ways of working, increased productivity and better patient care in the future."

For partners, conveying the business benefit of effective digital transformation is key. Technology not only makes staff and teams more efficient but it can also strengthen the hospital or health centre's brand and workplace environment, helping to make it an organisation where the best talent wants to work. "It's a crowded market but to succeed in this vertical partners need to think of technology as integral to a holistic approach to healthcare," added

Rich. "It's no longer just about medicine and patient care, it's about nurturing the patient experience.

"Doctors and nurses are not interested in gadgets, widgets and tools for their own sake but will readily become involved when they hear about the positive impact technology can have on patients and their own workload. Partners don't need to be specialists in a specific sector, but they need to understand that success will require a different approach compared with other industries and business environments."

Healthy balance

There is no question that healthcare professionals benefit from smarter working processes but according to Rich the answer lies in finding the balance between human and computer interaction. "For the NHS, which is under constant



Tony Rich

It's no longer just about medicine and patient care, it's about nurturing the patient experience.

pressure to streamline and increase productivity, collaboration technologies that promote team working and improve communication have the potential to improve processes, allowing doctors

and nurses to concentrate on providing the best possible care," he added.

"But healthcare is full of specialist areas and there is an inherent danger that focusing on one particular part can have a significant impact on the surrounding support functions or business areas. Therefore, understanding the wider industry is essential for a successful implementation."

The healthcare vertical is seeking innovation, but understanding how healthcare, especially the NHS, handles procurement is essential. Phil Reynolds, CTO at Oak Innovation,

commented: "The healthcare market is made up of a wide range of sub-sectors, each with their own funding structures and buying behaviours. To be successful, resellers must focus on and fully understand their chosen sectors. As with any industry, it takes time to accumulate knowledge, establish sector awareness and build a reputation. But having cracked one healthcare sub-sector resellers are usually well positioned to address the requirements of another."

Over the past decade the Government has made significant changes to its healthcare strategy with far reaching implications on priorities, structure and funding. Over the long-term, believes Reynolds, cloud services promise better value through shared infrastructure, increased flexibility and in-built technology refreshes. "This should allow healthcare providers to focus more resource on the all important frontline services such as patient record systems which are at the heart of healthcare operations," he added.

"Maintaining accurate information and improving access to data is key to increasing efficiency, securing better clinical outcomes and managing metrics. Healthcare providers must maintain a complete audit trail of patient care if they are to demonstrate professional

Phil Reynolds on how to be fit for purpose

- **Chose technology partners that understand and have an established brand in the healthcare sector.**
- **Demonstrate commitment to your chosen sector with thought leadership. Develop sales enablement content and customer references.**
- **Build sector awareness by working with industry associations and sector specific media partners.**
- **Focus on solutions that enable healthcare providers to deliver improved value or secure more funding through the better management of metrics.**
- **Tune your messaging. A wide variety of personas from clinical staff to ICT professionals and general managers may be part of the buying decision.**



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IoT test beds in health

competence and resolve disputes efficiently.”

Existing systems are being reviewed and renewed to realise efficiency gains, offer better value and meet future healthcare needs. And communication technology has a significant role to play in breaking down location barriers, making better use of limited resources and improving the patient experience. “This extends from telecare and video triage through to improving access to clinical records and leveraging scarce clinical resources,” said Reynolds. “But with so much change in progress it can be difficult for healthcare providers to align resources, make technology decisions and realise best value.”

Research indicates that the healthcare IoT market is set to hit \$117 billion by 2020. Intel claims that by 2025 the healthcare vertical will be the biggest contributor to IoT spend with a maximum value of \$2.5 trillion – a third of this figure devoted to portable health monitoring, electronic record keeping and pharmaceutical safeguards. “If a reseller is serious about this segment of the market then knowledge is key,” stated Anton le Saux, Zest4’s Head of IoT. “Stay up to date, get involved with industry events and

Benefits of IoT:

- **New efficiencies in delivery and diagnosis through remote doctor patient management**
- **To reduce healthcare costs so it becomes affordable for a wider demographic**
- **Improve asset management and enable a better patient experience**



Phil Reynolds

Maintaining accurate information and improving access to data is key to increasing efficiency, securing better clinical outcomes and managing metrics.

find a partner that’s ready to work with you.”

As IoT becomes more mainstream it’s influence in the healthcare sector has grown significantly over the past two of years, observed le Saux. “To date the IoT has been mainly used for the improvement of care with remote monitoring and telemonitoring as key applications,” he said. “A second area where many initiatives exist is tracking, monitoring and the maintenance of patients and assets. For example, hospital building assets using IoT and RFID.”

These use cases are just the beginning, noted le Saux, as they precede more advanced and integrated approaches that are starting to be used. “IoT plays an increasing role in specific applications such as smart pills, smart home care, personal healthcare, robotics and Real-Time Health Systems (RTHS),” added le Saux. “If resellers can keep pace with this emerging technology there

and intelligently, to know whether the patient is progressing towards wellness or deteriorating,” explained le Saux. “This streamlined communication process ensures that the patient can avoid risks, or at least benefit from timely detection, and go home sooner.”

For a reseller to win in this space they will be required to understand the ‘art of the possible’ in relation to remote patient monitoring, believes le Saux. “They will need access to asset and people monitoring devices, and access to a platform that can make sense of the data,” he added. “It could be seen as a niche marketplace if you just focus on hospital care. However, where resellers can gain traction from day one is in the private sector. Care for the elderly and less abled individuals is also a target market for IoT solutions. Resellers who keep up with the core healthcare market should get some key wins and building blocks in place by working on the fringe markets.”

It is reported that the NHS could announce a deficit of between £700 million to £750 million this year, so

maximising efficiencies is critical. Notably, the NHS has in the past been accused of being slow to adopt change, but it now has numerous IoT pilots running through NHS test beds. “The cost of cloud computing and storage, as well as the physical connected devices, has fallen to levels that often see IoT devices competing with the traditional infrastructures,” said le Saux. “It is easy to construct value propositions showing the increased efficiencies and reduced lifetime costs of IoT devices. We are seeing the health sector view IoT investment as a cost saving, as well as a more efficient way to manage patient healthcare.

“Resellers need to start understanding IoT and the art of the possible, and adopt simple solutions that enable them to cut their teeth before progressing to bespoke builds. The private sector for healthcare is a great place to get some wins and demonstrate an ability to service this sector. Building management and simple areas like air quality, water quality, energy consumption and patient and asset monitoring are all solutions that can be used to break ground in this sector.”

But le Saux cautions not to try too much too soon. For example, without any background, wins or history, resellers are not going to win a contract from the NHS to monitor MRI machines for maintenance and serviceability. “Start where you can add value and get some quick wins,” he reaffirmed. “Develop and grow at a strategic pace that enables you to keep up with market developments while not over committing.”



Anton le Saux

The health sector views IoT as a cost saving as well as a more efficient way to manage patient healthcare.



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One man's big vision

The One Connectivity project is on track as Managing Director Paul Stevenson continues to release SMEs into the world of enterprise-level business comms.



Paul Stevenson

When One Connectivity began its commercial life in 2013 Stevenson's ambition to elevate the comms services available to SMEs was realised. Prior to setting up he worked in finance sales for eight years when a close friend offered a position within his telecoms business. "The company sold and we decided to form One Connectivity," he stated. "It was established by myself and my wife with some guidance from two friends who had previously been business owners. We advise mainly in the small-to-medium business marketplace where larger providers find it difficult to service their customers, and deliver the enterprise level solutions and services they deserve."

On setting up five years ago Nottinghamshire-based One Connectivity had five employees, all with deep

experience in the IT and comms markets. In its first year the company registered £360k turnover with £20k profit. Year two generated £760k turnover, £80k profit and a headcount boost to 12 employees: Rising to 21 employees, £1.4 million turnover and £120k profit in year three. This year One Connectivity is guiding for £2.1 million turnover, £190k profit with a headcount of 25.

Milestone

"Our first milestone was after 24 months when we renewed our customer base," added Stevenson. "Thanks to great customer service and account management we retained around 95 per cent of our clients. The second milestone, and the biggest turning point, was our partnership with Pragma. We began our journey with the Ericsson-LG iPECS telephone solution and employed experienced sales

and engineering staff, initially offering the product to our existing customers. This has been a huge success."

One Connectivity now has a base of 700-plus customers, over half of them taking more than one product. The company provides a range of solutions including cloud telephony, on-site PBX connected via SIP, mobile voice and data, mobile device management, traditional fixed line and connectivity. Key partners are Pragma, Gamma, Plan.com and Mdee. "The IoT is on everybody's lips and we have this in our portfolio already," added Stevenson. "So WiFi is another product we are looking into with Pragma, trialling it with a few existing customers to get a full understanding. They are showing high levels of interest."

Also gaining attention are financial services which

Stevenson says plays a big part now with many businesses seeking to lease their equipment. "One Connectivity has partnered with Clear Asset Finance to offer this and hopefully remove some of the work for the customer," he added. "We now provide finance for mobile phones, telephone systems and IT equipment. But it's a saturated market and we need to differentiate ourselves. That's not easy, so we need to prove ourselves and make sure we offer the best advice, the correct solution and back it up with fantastic service and account management. Most companies want a telecoms partner they can work with, trust, who understands their business and can advise on the latest technologies that could help them. Therefore the role of resellers will continue to evolve and cross into other industries as we have seen with IT."

Stevenson's founding vision to create a business that would grow organically has been 'realised beyond expectation', he enthused. "For years the corporate marketplace has received a joined-up approach to communications and enjoyed cutting edge solutions," he said. "Why can't SMEs have the same experience? There is no reason why not if the solutions are co-ordinated by one provider consolidating all the different services. One Connectivity will continue to grow based on this ethos. In three to five years time I see us as one of the most respected telecoms companies in the UK. We must continue to do what we do well and always make sure that we are at the forefront of new technologies and solutions."

Just a minute with Paul Stevenson...

Role models: My parents: They brought me, my brothers and sister up with the correct values in life. It's something I'd like to achieve with our own children

What talent do you wish you had? To sing

What do you fear the most? Heights

In hindsight: I'd have probably got into telecoms a lot earlier

Top tip for resellers? Make sure you find the right partners and really get to know them

One example of something you have overcome:

Fear of heights. I did a bungee jump for charity

What's the best piece of advice you have ever been given? Never wait for things to happen, make them happen yourself

Name one thing you couldn't do without in your job: A good pen

Your greatest strength and what should you work on? Understanding people is a strength, but I need to work on not being too laid back

If you weren't in comms what would you be doing? Bored

What's the biggest risk you have taken? A bungee jump

Name three ideal dinner guests: Brian Clough to listen to his stories; Sir David Attenborough; and Gordon Ramsey to cook the meal

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I hate chips

How would you like to be remembered? A great son, husband, dad, grandad, friend and boss



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On target for full fibre?

The Government's ambition to achieve full fibre coverage across the UK by 2033 will entail years of investment and collaboration between industry, Ofcom and the Government if barriers to progress are to be overcome and the market potential realised, according to CityFibre's Director of Strategy Mark Collins.

The Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) published on July 23rd was hailed by DCMS Secretary of State Jeremy Wright as a 'radical new blueprint for the future of telecommunications in this country' that will deliver full fibre broadband coverage across all of the UK by 2033. The FTIR, which is part of the Government's modern Industrial Strategy, calls for a single infrastructure vision, clear goals and shared responsibilities between the Government, Ofcom and comms industry to drive large-scale investment in the fixed and wireless networks deemed vital for the UK to remain globally competitive in a digital world.

According to Government figures the UK currently has only four per cent full fibre connections, lagging countries like Spain (71 per cent), Portugal (89 per cent) and France (28 per cent). "The UK must urgently move away from copper and revolutionise its digital infrastructure," stated Collins. "Meeting

the FTIR target is critical to driving economic growth and productivity in the national and local economies. The target is tough though, requiring a leap from four per cent to 100 per cent coverage in just 15 years."

The FTIR aims to drive competition and commercial investment in full fibre networks but for this to happen three key barriers must be addressed, believes Collins. "We must create the right regulatory climate for investment, ensure consumers can switch between infrastructure providers and change the rules on the misleading use of the word 'fibre' in advertising," he said.

Misinformation

"The main switchover barrier is advertising rules which allow copper broadband to masquerade as fibre, thereby preventing consumers from making the informed choice that Government says is critical to drive take-up. The Advertising Standards Authority must take action for the aspirations set out in the FTIR to become a reality."



Mark Collins

The main switchover barrier is advertising rules which allow copper broadband to masquerade as fibre

Greater transparency across the industry will also be required, which the Government has acknowledged as an accelerator of commercial network roll out. Meanwhile, the proposed new European Electronic Communications Code allows for the mapping and forecasting of build plans. "We believe that this would provide clarity on who is building full fibre where and to what timescale, helping to maximise coverage, prevent unnecessary network duplication and minimise disruption to communities," stated Collins.

"We also need to ensure that investment in new infrastructure is maximised

to increase coverage. CityFibre has long argued that end-to-end infrastructure competition – the encouragement of multiple full fibre networks being built down the same streets to compete with each other – is both undesirable, in the context of nationwide rollout, and unnecessary.

"Undesirable because network duplication (or overbuild) significantly weakens all players' full fibre business case; and unnecessary because with open access wholesale networks consumers can access the full range of ISPs on a single network, without having their streets dug up multiple times to lay multiple networks. We

want to see a model that discourages overbuild and instead encourages a single underlying full fibre network to be built in each location as a neutral platform on which multiple ISPs can deliver choice to customers."

Removing barriers that prevent consumers switching smoothly from copper to full fibre is also key to creating the right environment for investment and realising the consumer and economic benefits of new networks. "The Government and Ofcom should act sooner rather than later to stop this becoming a significant problem," urged Collins. "Although the copper network is owned by Openreach, how consumers move from copper to full fibre is critical. The Government suggested it will establish a mechanism with Ofcom and industry to ensure a managed switchover. This should be done promptly and the principles fleshed out into a comprehensive strategy. Governance of this mechanism must ensure that the views of alternative players are given equal weight to those of Openreach.

"To meet the Government's target, competition between Openreach and new market entrants must be meaningful and sustained. This means creating a level playing field, something the Government and Ofcom have already acknowledged doesn't currently exist. They need to take up-front action to prevent Openreach acting anti-competitively and slowing down the rollout of full fibre. Otherwise we could see whole swathes of the country left behind on copper and unable to join the UK's digital progression." ■



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FREE TO PERFORM

Mitel talks up services

Mitel's EVP for Global Sales & Services Todd Abbott has urged UK channel players to embrace the reality of disruptive subscription models as customer demand for collaborative communications services accelerates and agile cloud-centric rivals move into the sector.

Resellers with an installed base of customers need to get educated and equipped quickly if they are to defend their hard won clients from the approaches of rivals with attractive cloud offers, warned Abbott. "If you are not leading a cloud discussion, I guarantee there will be start-up companies reaching out to your customers and educating them on this technology before you," he stated. "They are one step ahead."

Abbott also noted the emergence in the UK of Master Agents like Intellisys (now owned by Scansource) which are set to manage cloud implementations from technology superhubs, threatening traditional distribution models. And he emphasised that the rationalisation of Mitel's channel had taken place before its sale to investment group Searchlight and would accelerate the company's move towards enterprise sales of cloud services.

Mitel has already reduced its European distributor

base from 60 to 20 and, as Abbott confirmed, the move will give distribution partners such as Westcon the finance required to ramp up their support for smaller resellers willing and able to move into cloud service sales. "The fundamental reason why we are going private is to accelerate the move to service models," he commented. "We were having great success being the number two UCaaS player in the world but we needed to be much more aggressive in our investments to drive innovation and international expansion. This really allows us to double down on those growth plans."

Strategic refocus

"We have spent too much of our time on small transactions, propping up channels that did not make the necessary investment in technology to be able to quote and demonstrate our products. Distribution partners are much better at handling smaller transactions from the standpoint of supporting partners and quoting, configuring and shipping. Those are



Todd Abbott

I guarantee there will be start-up companies reaching out to your customers and educating them on this technology before you

functions that we are just not world class in.

"Reseller partners will of course be anxious to receive the same level of support from distributors as they used to get from us, so the first step was to put sufficient money into Westcon and other distributors. They now have enough revenue for the skilled bodies that can help support partners as they make the move into cloud services."

Abbott pointed out that he was pleased by the number of UK resellers embracing recurring revenue models but feels they must have

the finance and mindset to completely transform their business to the cloud. "We would be hard pressed to not find a partner in our ecosystem that hasn't had an engagement or request from a customer for a cloud solution," he commented. "The challenge they have is a capital issue because when you go from a capex model to a monthly recurring revenue basis it typically takes a minimum of two years to get a return from the investment.

"You have to have the finance and psychologically you must want to make that shift. It's a three to five-

year investment in time and effort and there are partners who simply may not want to make that leap. In the US a lot of the PBX VARs are consolidating. The bigger players are buying the smaller ones who don't have the wherewithal to make that long-term investment."

Abbott noted that the transition to the cloud will be slow – Mitel ships over one million on-site seats per quarter and 50,000 to 100,000 cloud seats – but he believes those figures will change soon. "The inflection point is about to happen in the next six to 12 months," he commented. ■



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App unlocks potential

If we value the customer experience it must be wholly streamlined and integrated, says Kakapo Systems Marketing Director Steve Tutt who is championing the CX cause with intelligent apps that unify BroadSoft hosted PBX and ACD deployments.

Tutt has called on BroadSoft-based resellers in the UK to unlock new markets with apps previously only available to BroadSoft service providers. Developed by Kakapo Systems, Unity Contact Center can be added to any BroadSoft hosted PBX or ACD deployment to intelligently overlay web chat and call back capabilities. "The opportunity for resellers to tap into this new market – specifically web chat where SMBs purchase stand-alone solutions, and email routing – is significant," stated Tutt. "Incorporating presence and chat, Unity optimises the inbound and in-team call handling experience. This routing logic is crucial in delivering a blended experience to the user."

The idea to unify a user's entire BroadSoft telephony experience via an intelligent application first came to light ten years ago. "There were too many different touch points for a customer to access all the features, including toolbars, star codes, buttons on phones and logging into a portal," explained Tutt. "For many users this is a barrier to usage so they just don't access the features.

"Over time we expanded into all use cases for BroadSoft with UC, reception and mobile apps. Our Agent and Supervisor apps for BroadSoft call centre provide wallboard functionality and access to the features of the ACD such as Unavailable and Disposition codes. BroadSoft's biggest call centre customer has over 6,000 agents, all using our Unity Agent and Supervisor apps because of the intelligence we can layer over the top."

Ninety five per cent of Kakapo's revenues are currently generated outside the UK, its biggest market being the US, which may come as a surprise given it is a UK company. But that's about to change as Kakapo embarks on a reseller-focused channel campaign on home territory. "Primarily we only work with BroadSoft service providers but we are introducing a UK reseller model where any current BroadSoft-based reseller can deploy our apps and contact centre," added Tutt.

Fragmented features and tools that render comms solutions half utilised smack of pre-digital days, according to Tutt. And while there is much industry talk about



Steve Tutt

Web chat is in demand and fast becoming an expected customer service tool

the upsides of call analytics, the benefits of harnessing key data such as the number of emails, tweets and web chats received by a customer (and the associated SLAs) go largely unspoken, he pointed out. "Tweets and emails are often routed to marketing teams rather than customer service, creating a disconnect between departments because the comms platform cannot join up the communications," he stated. "That's the scenario we are seeking to solve with Unity Contact Centre.

"Resellers can help customers report on their incoming contact across all media. For example, they may have had 102 calls into the call centre, but we can now show that they also received 217 emails, 104 web chats, 86

call back requests and 56 incoming tweets. In the past these were enterprise level statistics but anyone with customers to look after needs these tools now. All chats and calls are automatically logged against leading CRM platforms including Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics."

Call back tipping point Furthermore, noted Tutt, inbound call centres may be on the verge of a fundamental change as more customers opt to request a call back rather than sit in a queue. "Presence Based Scripting will automatically change or hide the web chat prompt and change the message displayed to 'Request a Call Back' if there are no agents available," explained Tutt. "Call backs mean no abandoned calls

and the customer saves because they do not need expensive ACD licences for call back and just use a regular BroadSoft hosted PBX extension."

It is an undisputed industry fact that the customer experience is a key factor in determining end user buying decisions, and this plays into the hands of resellers able to give customers what they want. "Big changes are coming with CX and we see this becoming the decisive criteria for customers as they evaluate different comms solutions," added Tutt. "Rather than seeking cost cutters as a primary buying factor, clients want to assess their customer satisfaction ratings, ways to build their sales funnel and new methods to more effectively engage with visitors to their website.

"You cannot underestimate the granularity of what individual customers want. Over time we have built-in a huge degree of customisation for our apps, such as being able to hide or limit the call recording options the user has. We see backend flexibility like this as also key to helping resellers adapt and win.

"We want to get these tools into the hands of UK resellers and their customers. The demand for web chat, in particular, is there and fast becoming an expected customer service tool. But it's too often sourced as a standalone solution and bypasses the channel. Now, the channel can tap into these new margin opportunities and also provide customers with chat that's integrated into their overall comms set up." ■

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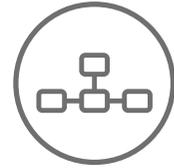
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Tempest on how BT Wholesale towards Digital Britain

As throughout the comms channel's history, technological advances and innovations in ICT require partner businesses to shift direction and service providers to keep pace with change and map the road ahead – perhaps more so now than ever as we consider the new realities of Digital Britain, according to BT Wholesale's Managing Director Alex Tempest (Comms Vision Platinum sponsor).

The reality of Digital Britain is that its momentum will yield short and long-term disruption across all private and public sector markets. But history shows that agile ICT providers can survive and prosper under such conditions. Even though the march towards Digital Britain will perhaps be the ultimate test of their ability to adapt and flourish, the challenge will be eased by working in partnership with progressors such as BT. According to Tempest, BT is enabling digital Britain via its investment in fibre and the One BT strategy. Meanwhile, Openreach's Fibre First programme aims to reach 10 million premises with full fibre by 2020 under the right conditions. 5G will also be super-critical in delivering Digital Britain, and having secured 40MHz of 3.4GHz spectrum BT hopes to deliver speeds of over 1Gbps when its EE mobile business trials a 5G network in East London next month. "5G promises to create more reliable and responsive mobile Internet connections, enabling the widespread adoption of technologies like virtual and augmented reality in apps and services," said Tempest.

BT expects all customers to be using digital voice services by 2025 at which point the ageing PSTN network will be fully phased out. The potential impact and challenges arising from the post-WLR world and BT's switch to all-IP means that collaboration between the industry, Government and regulators will be 'absolutely key', noted Tempest. "The move to all-IP represents a huge shift for the whole sector," she commented. "The transition is

being carefully managed and we're already engaging with industry, Government and Ofcom about our plans to ensure that all parties have sufficient time to plan and understand the implications, the timescales involved, along with the opportunities and benefits to customers."

Architectural evolution

Society's intense reliance on mobile connectivity and superfast or ultrafast means the comms sector must continually focus on improving availability, latency and quality, emphasised Tempest. "For BT Wholesale this means an extensive evolution of the current architecture, including moving content and applications closer to the edge and extending quality of service implementations to full network slicing," she explained. "Capacity and coverage challenges, combined with network performance and commercial realities will demand bold, robust and dynamic architectural solutions. We are working through what these will look like with our customers.

"We also need to explore packet core evolution, Network Function Virtualisation, Cloud RAN and Mobile Edge Computing, as well as mass small cell deployment and a shift to a service-based architecture that can scale on demand. All of this has to be taken into account while coping with legacy infrastructure. Ultimately, our integrated network strategy which is at the heart of the One BT programme will help to underpin Digital Britain, enabling truly seamless digital experiences for customers."

To some extent over time 5G technology may gradually displace Wi-Fi, fixed access and PSTN-based products

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Wholesale is paving a path

BT has opened a new lab within its R&D headquarters in Adastral Park, Ipswich, to help providers of 'special services' such as those who operate medical alert devices, security systems and fire alarms, to test their equipment with the new generation of BT's digital voice products. Openreach is also consulting industry on its plans for the withdrawal of WLR and associated products. "From a wholesale perspective we'll be working closely with reseller partners to make sure they understand the end-to-end journey and facilitate a smooth transition for their end customers," affirmed Tempest.

"We'll provide regular roadmap updates over the coming months which will incorporate inputs and requests from the reseller community as far as possible. And we're running a series of all-IP events throughout the year to ensure that resellers are well positioned for the transition and able to seize new opportunities such as adding mobility and convergence offerings to cloud voice. This will see BT provide an omnichannel customer experience that is cohesive and real-time.

"But to realise Digital Britain we need to create a regulatory environment that promotes network investment and the take-up of new fibre-based technologies, along with regulatory support for the switchover from copper to fibre, with greater flexibility to withdraw legacy products when launching newer, replacement products with richer features."

5G: A new era of connectivity

Among these innovations is 5G which Tempest says will first be felt by mobile, media and broadcast customers as an enabler for 3D video and augmented reality, through to smart cities and self-driving cars. "5G will be key to bringing the IoT to life," she said. "And by 2022 we could potentially see 5G outstrip our main product portfolios for fixed access by some tenfold in capacity and speed. Therefore to some extent over time 5G technology may gradually displace Wi-Fi, fixed access and PSTN-based products consumed



today in our channel segments. The development of IoT and integrated networks will create a multitude of as yet unknown requirements from customers."

The comms sector should prepare for these challenges by moving to an on-demand commercial and consumption model for infrastructure and IT services which is network technology agnostic, believes Tempest. This requires a change to the tradition of term and volume contracting and ultimately a shift to PAYG. "Annuity-based maintenance and support contracts will decline and as these have been a mainstay for resellers this becomes a challenge, especially where services move to the cloud," she added. "It is also important for all platforms to be API enabled to ensure that the digital journey is end-to-end from consumer or business via the channel into the CPs and infrastructure providers.

"Resellers that have invested in customer facing portals and APIs for supplier integration are the ones who are winning. Acting as the 'Amazon' of the IT services world they understand that their customers demand choice and immediacy when making buying decisions.

The ability to price in real-time, place orders, track progress, make service changes and manage faults without picking up the phone is a must. Ultimately, this reduces the cost to serve as well as providing a better customer experience."

Customer expectations in terms of availability of connectivity have changed beyond recognition over the past few years. The expectation of 24/7 access on any device, anytime, anywhere, not only creates challenges but also opportunities to complete the convergence journey, believes Tempest. "This requires commercial flexibility to reflect customers' expectations of ubiquitous service, a trend already established in the mobile marketplace," she added. "As the ARPU for core connectivity reduces, channel growth will come from cross selling into adjacent portfolios using connectivity as the foundation that underpins the services and applications that customers will be consuming." ■

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The development of IoT and integrated networks will create a multitude of as yet unknown requirements from customers

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Full fibre framework off

what of practicalities?

The Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) offers the gigabit full fibre utopia everybody is voting for, according to Entanet CEO Elsa Chen (Comms Vision Platinum sponsor), who discusses the key issues afoot as the Digital Britain blueprint hits practical reality.

The concept of Digital Britain envisages the nation emerging from digital reality denial and joining the ranks of other European countries currently streets ahead in the race to full fibre. "The Government has seen the light and is clear that gigabit full fibre provision is the essential objective for a truly digital Britain," stated Chen. "The targets set out in its FTIR for UK-wide full fibre by 2033 and 5G access by 2027 – which also relies on full fibre infrastructure for backhaul – are achievable thanks to the emergence of committed, focused and suitably backed alternative infrastructure providers."

Chen believes that the key challenges are in ensuring that competition is on a level playing field, that transparency between providers is increased and that opportunities for collaboration are vigorously pursued. "Our colleagues in CityFibre are working closely with the Government and Ofcom to ensure there's fair competition among infrastructure builders and minimal overbuild for an efficient roll out – and to encourage wholesale access among providers to deliver full fibre infrastructure to as much of the UK as possible, as quickly as possible," added Chen. "We also believe that consumers, be they businesses or households, should no longer be hoodwinked by the practice of fake fibre advertising."

The core challenge is to create the right environment and conditions for a truly digital Britain. "This means replacing an aged infrastructure that's no longer fit for purpose with one that delivers against businesses' requirements for speed, capacity and resilience," added

Chen. "It's about ensuring that British businesses and households have the platform to be able to thrive in an increasingly digital world. The key aspect in achieving this is delivery. More investment is needed and the drivers for this are alternatives, like CityFibre and its wholesale subsidiary Entanet, to the incumbent provider.

"Our channel partners – whether resellers, aggregators or wholesalers – are an essential part of this delivery and we want to help them recognise the significance they play in making new network provision happen, through the decisions they make and by shifting their thinking from being simply recipients of connectivity options to proactively driving the adoption of full fibre where doing so propagates further investment and growth."

Incentivising success

Considering the potential impact and challenges arising from the FTIR, and the belief that collaboration between the industry, Government and Ofcom will be key, the success of the project will largely depend on how Ofcom and the Government incentivise network providers, believes Chen. "If the wrong incentives and regulatory framework are in place we may see a situation where some areas of the country are subjected to multiple network overbuild resulting in significant disruption to local communities for no benefit, while other areas miss out altogether.

"We want to see a model that discourages overbuild and instead encourages a single underlying full fibre network to be built in each location as a neutral platform on which

The Government has seen the light and is clear that gigabit full fibre provision is the essential objective for a truly digital Britain

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multiple ISPs can deliver choice to customers. To achieve this a level playing field is required to ensure competition between Openreach and new market entrants and it must be meaningful and sustained. What's needed is for the Government and Ofcom to take up-front action to prevent Openreach acting anti-competitively and slowing down the roll out of full fibre. Otherwise we could see whole swathes of the country left behind on copper and unable to join the UK's digital progression."

Empowering partners

As a wholesaler, Entanet's priorities are to empower partners to effectively sell a new full fibre proposition in towns and cities across the UK that until now have been out of bounds. "We're opening up new markets for partners and actively helping them through THRIVE!, our partner programme, to promote a differentiated service that businesses are crying out for," commented Chen. "We are already collaborating vertically with the channel and our partners play a vital role in helping determine areas of demand. As the wholesaler, Entanet is aggregating this demand to create the business case for network build, be it expansion of existing infrastructure into new business parks or into new cities. We also think horizontal collaboration should be explored, including reciprocal builds. This has helped to drive deployment in countries that now have high coverage, like Portugal and Spain. This makes sense for wholesale networks and also reduces disruption to local communities."

The channel's opportunity is huge, enthused Chen, who noted that common agreement between the Government and regulator and the FTIR's widely publicised ambitions has put full fibre front and centre before Britain's businesses. "It has triggered a race to fibre-up the UK and this puts proactive channel partners in a great position to win," she said. "Digital is already

a key consideration among business customers. And, with the Government setting out an unequivocal and bold agenda to move the UK away from copper to full fibre, as well as drive 5G availability and adoption, we're encouraging the channel to do the same."

The digital age will free us up from a copper legacy and also release a new wave of technologies such as IoT, cloud computing, virtual reality and 5G, each affecting every aspect of our private and working lives. "The UK's ability to harness these technologies will be a determining factor in the health of our economy and the competitiveness of UK businesses," stated Chen.

"IT services and users' online experience of them can only be as good as the networks over which they are delivered. Customers' adoption of new technologies and their demand for always-on availability requires high speed, high reliability and high quality connections.

Expectations

"As more businesses have access to full fibre and experience the benefits of speed and reliability they'll rightly demand a digital infrastructure that can continue to keep up. Buyers will have exceptionally high expectations of their IT solution provider's ability to understand and interpret their objectives and have the knowledge, skills and connections to deliver against them. We're seeing partners move from simply reselling what's available to thinking strategically for the customer."

Digital Britain has awoken and stirred into life, and according to Chen CityFibre and Entanet are at the heartbeat of the UK's full fibre infrastructure rebuild. "We have open access networks in 51 towns and cities and the backing of large infrastructure investors," she commented. "We're building full fibre to five million homes by 2025 and our ambition to have network in 100 towns and cities across the UK by the same date will create even greater opportunities for the channel." ■



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We're seeing partners move from simply reselling what's available to thinking strategically for the customer

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Oriium chief launches an

There is no better illustration of an entrepreneur at work than Oriium's Managing Director Chris Kiaie who, boosted by significant funding, has entered the next phase of expansion.

In July fast growing channel-only cloud services and solutions provider Oriium secured a seven figure funding package from Allied Irish Bank to fuel organic growth and acquisitions. The company is already on target for £11 million revenues this year, a significant leap from £2.8 million in 2015. And according to Kiaie the new investment signals another step-change for Oriium and its expansion strategy. "Up to this point the business has been fuelled by its own steam and cash generation," he stated. "While that's a sound way to build a sustainable organisation it doesn't necessarily equate to rapid unrestricted growth. We've got Oriium to this point as fast as possible, now we're supercharging our development and growth while remaining fully in control with our debt partner."



Chris Kiaie

When Chairman Ryan McCarry joined the company in 2015 both he and Kiaie set their sights on achieving a £10 million-plus run rate by 2018. "We've achieved that and exceeded our initial goal," stated Kiaie. "But to sustain this rate of growth and ensure that all areas of the business continue to receive the level of investment required it was the right time to find a funding partner."

Leeds-based Oriium has evolved greatly over the last 10 years, as has the markets in which it operates.

We've got Oriium to this point as fast as possible, now we're supercharging our development and growth

Therefore products and services require continual development and Oriium's focus during the last three years has been on application delivery and the associated data dependencies.

"The environments where applications and data reside have become broader and more complex than ever before and we need to continue to invest heavily to ensure our services not only

remain relevant but lead the market," he stated.

Prime opportunity

Kiaie founded Oriium in 2007 on his return from Sydney where he worked for a 'phenomenal' software start-up that specialised in data management. "Australia was meant to be a year out but I took a job opportunity at Commvault that was too good to miss," he said. "Oriium's first incarnation

was a direct technical services and outsourced infrastructure supplier targeting small and medium size organisations. The initial goal was to fill a void and supply enterprise grade solutions and quality of service into a market segment that at the time was poorly serviced. I started the business because I have a passion for technology and believed in what we were doing and how we wanted to help our client base."

Oriium's customer base is largely made up of heavily regulated organisations – pharmaceuticals, financial services, blue light etc – with stringent compliance requirements. The company also serves clients with vast complex IT estates spanning on-premise, hybrid and cloud environments. All the services are delivered by a team of 70-plus staff based mainly in Leeds but also spread throughout the UK.



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ambitious expansion bid

"A major milestone in our development was the need to recruit a capable sales team and business unit leader," noted Kiaie. "This was a real challenge for me personally. Once set up, creating coherent sales plans, commission structures and managing targets presented a steep learning curve. We're now in a great place where we have confidence in our team to deliver against forecasts, but it's easy to see why this is such a pain point."

Practicalities

Kiaie has a practical rather than academic leaning and at the age of 17 a poor college attendance forced him to leave education and start working full-time for a local television producer in Leeds. "That year he was BAFTA nominated for his documentary on the world land speed record, so to be part of the technical production team was immensely exciting and gave me a technical appetite," commented Kiaie.

"A year later I was lucky enough to be offered a directorship at a newly formed Harrogate-based IT services company. We had a superb initial year but at 19 I had underestimated the pressure the role would bring and left to pursue a more focused financial integration job in the UK bedding industry. This taught me a lot about finance, process and management – all skills which are invaluable to any MD."

Kiaie learnt that a thriving business development strategy that fuels organic growth is key. "We've built platforms, processes and personnel for scale," he explained. "This was

a significant priority for us during the last two years. We have also spent time integrating the add3 application practice into our business following the acquisition in 2016.

"Oriium's application practice represents an exciting opportunity for customers to truly understand and control their complex application estates, rather than taking a legacy infrastructure approach. Gaining visibility of the end user experience and application interaction allows a business to deliver applications far more effectively. When you combine this with our skilled data teams you have a complete 360 degree view of two of the most important client assets – applications and data."

Applications in the context of public cloud migration is still relatively immature and poorly serviced in the marketplace, believes Kiaie. "There's generally a one-size-fits-all approach with companies simply lifting and shifting existing virtualised workloads," he stated. "This doesn't represent the ethos or power of public cloud computing platforms and customers get a less than ideal final solution.

"Mid-market ERP is another area of interest for me. The mid-market remains poorly serviced in my opinion and the legacy players are both unwieldy and costly for most mid-sized organisations. Finance software has come a long way in the last three years but in comparison to other sectors remains far behind. You only have to look at the banking sector for the evidence. But change is definitely coming – it has to."

Oriium's efforts are now focused on both mid-market and enterprise organisations as Kiaie finds these segments less congested and in need of greater specialist attention to resolve their challenges. "We have the credentials and experience to support their stringent requirements and ambitions as we continue to innovate in our core competency areas – application control and data management," he said. "This ultimately means building a range of managed services, cloud services and professional services that help

We've exceeded our initial goal. To sustain this rate of growth it was the right time to find a funding partner

customers manage, control and protect their data and applications, no matter where they reside. We do this by working with vendors such as Commvault, Citrix, Microsoft, Druva to name a few."

Operating solely via the channel Oriium takes many cues from partners. "We listen to their feedback on product and service demand, commercial requirements and enablement activities and translate that into our portfolio," said Kiaie. "We're also agile enough to develop or change our products as the market or our partners

evolve. Subscription services and utility billing is a good example of this with the vast majority of our services being made available flexibly as capex, opex, short or long-term. We've also broadened our portfolio of services so that members of our network are able to take advantage of cross-sell and up-sell opportunities within their accounts. An added benefit of working with Oriium is the combined feedback received from over 200 partners, 1,000 clients, the market and vendors alike."

Now in its 10th year and hurtling towards £12 million revenue Kiaie confirmed that it's likely he will seek more investment in the future. "Firstly, we intend to apply the capital we have to generate significant business growth, mainly organically but also through acquisition," he added. "It's vitally important to the entire Oriium team that throughout this journey we don't lose sight of the attributes that made us the company we are today – complete customer focus and services that excel from a technology and commercial standpoint.

"In terms of acquisitions, you have to be open minded as high quality well run businesses that are looking for an acquirer don't grow on trees. We have some criteria that must be met – excellent customer satisfaction, not just good. A service catalogue that delivers real value, not questionable 'man in the middle' or 'supplementary' services. And good recurring trade focused on managed services and customer support. It is also vital that the business offers value to customers in our core focus areas of data and apps." ■

Just a minute with Chris Kiaie...

Role model: I respect anyone who has the tenacity and vision to lead a business and succeed

What talent do you wish you had? To play the piano

Your greatest fear? Failure. That's the biggest driver of my work ethic

If you weren't in comms what would you be doing?

A project such as smart home technology, home automation and what the IoT means for consumers

One example of something you have overcome:

Surviving the housing market crash with a string of property investments. Painful, costly and hard to rectify

Tell us something about yourself we don't know? I own a robotic lawn mower

What possession could you not live without?

Our big blue Audi Q7 we call the 'mega bus'. Great for our kids, family visits and luggage

Name three ideal dinner guests: Chris Evans, Kevin Bridges and Adel. There'd be great stories, laughs and music

Top tip: Deliver tangible value and be relevant to your customers. They always vote with their feet

How do you relax? Time with my family and friends and messing about in sailing boats when I get the chance

Best piece of advice you have received? Fail fast. Failure is normal, just do it quick and learn from your mistakes

Your key strength and what could you work on?

I react very quickly to events. Sometimes this is great, other situations call for more consideration



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Moulton's comeback



Neil Moulton

NEIL Moulton has returned to CCaaS (Contact Centre as a Service) company Cirrus as Chief Commercial Officer after taking a four-year study break. Describing his sabbatical as 'the most benign mid-life crisis ever' Moulton wanted to understand more about environmental matters so he undertook a BSc(Hons) in landscape management. "I had a great time and created a green infrastructure leasing company on the back of my thesis research, but when Jason Roos at Cirrus asked me to come back it was a no brainer due to the changes the company has made

since I left in 2014," he said. Moulton also said the firm's enhanced CCaaS proposition is 'transformative' following the launch of Omni Channel and Cirrus Artificial Intelligence (Cai) solutions. Meanwhile, expansion into North America and South Africa will see Cirrus operating on a global platform by 2019, claims Moulton. "There's no dilution of our overall service proposition for new territories," he added.

Fowle joins with Exertis



Gary Fowle

FORMER Microsoft exec Gary Fowle has joined Exertis to head up the next phase of Kondor's integration. The Dorset-based distributor was acquired by Exertis parent company DCC

in July. Fowle was previously a VP at Microsoft responsible for the OEM device business in the US. Prior to that he was General Manager for Microsoft in the Asia Pacific and a Senior Director in the UK operation. He has also worked in senior positions for Fujitsu Siemens and Tech Data.

Paul Bryan, Exertis UK Managing Director, said: "Kondor has an exciting future and we intend to significantly invest in the people, product portfolio and customer engagement, taking advantage of the company's expertise in providing a range of retail services. Gary knows the channel and distribution well having spent many years in senior board level positions over the last 18 years."

Also on the move...



Caroline Gissing

CAROLINE Gissing has joined IPCortex as Channel Account Manager as the company seeks to expand its partner operations. Her previous experience includes a stint at ShoreTel where she was tasked with recruiting cloud

partners and managing the distribution channel. She was also involved in Mitel's acquisition of ShoreTel after which she managed distribution and the implementation of Mitel's channel strategy. Gissing stated: "It's an exciting time for the communications industry with fast innovation, increasing demand for cloud technologies and the ever diverse workspaces and practices that shape comms needs."

MAYFLEX has promoted Ross McLetchie to the position of UK Sales Director. For the past six years he was Regional Director for the firm's Middle East



Ross McLetchie

Africa and APAC business and will relocate to the UK to take up the new role from October 1st, retaining leadership responsibilities for the APAC region. Managing Director Andrew Percival stated:

"Ross has repeatedly demonstrated the qualities we are looking for in the person to take on this challenging and exciting role. He is ambitious, hungry, has great market experience and a passion for excellent service and teamwork."

Pangea pulls in tech chief



Alister Green

FORMER JHL Communications Sales Director Alister Green has been pulled in by Pangea as Head of Solution Innovation. He brings IoT experience working with major telcos including a seven year spell at Vodafone where he held a number of senior positions. Pangea

MD Dan Cunliffe said: "Alister is a great fit for our business and already engaged with a number of new and existing partners to support the acceleration of their IoT strategies."

Green added: "With the global IoT market forecast to reach revenues in excess of \$400 billion in the next two years, my goal is to utilise my experience to help our partners and end clients generate real benefit and revenues from IoT solutions and connectivity."

Green's appointment is Pangea's third top level hire of the year, following the arrival of former Active Business Communications Sales & Marketing Director Georgie Gardiner who joined as Head of New Business Development in February; and Nicola Mercer who was posted as Pangea's IoT Channel Partner Manager in May.

Maxwell hails three decades



Tom Maxwell

NIMANS' Head of Channel Sales Tom Maxwell is celebrating 30 years service with the distributor. Maxwell, pictured celebrating the milestone with colleagues, began his career in 1988 as a sales executive and has witnessed many technological changes over the last three decades – starting in a pre-Internet era. "It's gone in the blink of an eye," said Maxwell. "When I first began my career I was selling telephones, answering machines and fax machines. There's been lots of changes both here and in the world of technology but I'm enjoying working in the channel as much as ever."



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