



Haworth's lifework
to elevate channel
partners P26

Tollring chief makes
confident strides
across the world P32



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Ch- Ch- Ch- Changes



to launch s division

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“The network division’s
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This month's movers and shakers



Nine set to launch networks division

NINE Group is gearing up to launch connectivity and hosted telephony services through Nine Networks, a new division headed up by Barnes Clutterbuck.

EXCLUSIVE

The acquisition of a data services business last summer provided a foundation for Nine to create its own data network, offering a full portfolio of broadband and Ethernet services to be rolled out later in Q1 2016.

Nine will also provide SIP and hosted IP telephony services following a trial run in Q1 ahead of a full launch in Q2.

A key part of the proposition is a revised ordering, provisioning and management portal.

"Nine has invested in software development throughout 2015 to develop an intuitive interface that gives resellers the visibility and information to better manage their client base," said Clutterbuck (pictured), MD, Nine Networks (formerly Nine Group Operations Director).

"Being in control of our own network portfolio rather than buying from other players will help to improve both the commercial and service offerings that we provide for our resellers through Nine Wholesale."

The Gloucestershire-based service provider has witnessed 10% growth in channel numbers and growing demand for SIP and hosted services.

CEO James Palmer commented: "Nine Networks is a major step for the Group and represents a key development in our business transformation.

"The network division's product set will help our existing 450 resellers to be more successful, as well as play a key role in attracting new resellers to our business."

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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

FEW jaws will drop in astonishment at this year's outbreak of industry predictions. As with all preceding annual predictafests, the prophets have been mulling over things for 12 months, waiting for their day, and last month like kettles coming to the boil they let off their steam. But in this cloud of

super heated air the only certainty is that this ritual reveals nothing new. It is predicated on trends that have long been predictable. That is the irony.

We all know how the market is likely to continue to shape up. There is no immediate deviation from what we already know, which are known facts, rather than what we suppose might happen this year. No business leader should build a strategy according to 'predictions'. Certainties and tangible opportunities are what really count, not personalised manifestations projected onto a podium in the full glare of a hyped up New Year epiphany. After all, the industry's timeline is not truncated, only to start afresh on January 1st.

At this time of year we should fly the flag for clarity of strategic vision, continuum, improved leadership, faster growth, driving ambition, high optimism, overcoming challenges with gusto, aligning product and service portfolios with the needs of the market, forming fantastic partnerships etc. These are the logical, grounded responses rooted in what is already happening. These are the hands-on building blocks that grow a channel business.

So see page 22 and delve into the driving forces behind the UK's fastest growing ICT businesses; and page 42 for insights into the nature of the leadership challenges, pitfalls and opportunities that will define success or otherwise in our dynamic industry. If we do more of the same and keep one eye on the market dynamics, and do what we already do better – I predict an even more successful 2016.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

CityFibre in KCOM assets acquisition

CITYFIBRE has acquired KCOM's national fibre and duct network assets for £90m and secured financing of £180m to facilitate the deal and commercialise its national network.

The transactions increase the number of CityFibre's metro footprints to 36 cities and enables CityFibre to target a total of 50 cities by 2020, reaching 20% of the UK market.

The new financing comprises £80m of new equity and £100m in debt facilities. Both the financing and acquisition transactions are scheduled to complete in mid-January.

The acquisition of KCOM's national communications infrastructure (excluding Hull and East Yorkshire) will extend CityFibre's UK footprint by more than 300%.

The physical infrastructure assets include 1,100 km of duct and fibre network in 24 UK cities, as well as 1,100 km of national long distance network that connects these cities to major data centres across the UK and to Internet peering points in London.

On completion CityFibre's expanded footprint will address more than 7,000 mobile cell sites, 24,500 public sector



Greg Mesch

sites and 245,000 businesses; and positions CityFibre as an enabler for gigabit speed, ultrafast broadband to support FTTH deployments to 3.5 million homes.

CityFibre will speed up the commercialisation of its wholesale fibre networks via a growing portfolio of service provider partners including KCOM, which now has access to CityFibre's national footprint.

The expanded network footprint will enable CityFibre to deliver end-to-end wholesale dark fibre connectivity to national and regional service providers, data centres and mobile operators.

The acquisition builds on big gains already made by CityFibre including its rollout of Gigabit Cities, the UK's first deployment of Fibre-to-the-Tower with EE and Three UK, the Fibre-to-

the-Home (FTTH) deployment in York with Sky and TalkTalk and a master services agreement with Vodafone.

CityFibre CEO Greg Mesch said: "The UK now has a secure independent infrastructure alternative. Cities, service providers, mobile operators and investors have boldly embraced a new model of future-proof infrastructure provision and paved the way for its acceleration across the country.

"With our enlarged footprint and strong pipeline of cities demanding better infrastructure, we will continue to grow, offering existing and new partners an increasing opportunity to capitalise on a pure fibre future."

KCOM Chief Exec' Bill Halbert said: "The acquisition unlocks value in relation to an under-utilised asset, built more than ten years ago and which is no longer core to our strategy.

"Over the first half of the financial year there were encouraging signs that our business transformation is delivering results, and the proceeds from this transaction offer us the opportunity to accelerate investment in those plans, without the need for any material increase in our indebtedness."

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COMMENT: END OF THE LINE?



Richard Carter

IS THE domestic landline dead? It's an interesting question and I suspect whether or not you use yours will vary depending on your age. There's little doubt that with the continued dominance of smartphones the role of the traditional landline is diminishing. This obviously has an impact on our daily and business lives. It seems the landline is dying with more and more people relying on a combination of their mobile phones and Internet connections. But has it died yet?

The results of a recent nationwide survey indicate a clear difference in usage depending on age ranges. When asked how many non-work calls are made and received on a home phone compared to mobile/web calls, some stark differences became apparent. For those aged under 25, 33 per cent of respondents don't have a home phone and more than half never or rarely use the home phone for calls. Perhaps not surprisingly, just three per cent use a home phone for all/almost all calls. At the other end of the scale just two per cent of those aged 65 and over don't have a home phone; 22 per cent never/rarely use the home phone for calls while 51 per cent use it for all/almost all calls.

As technology evolves the use of landlines for calls will reduce further. Our reliance on smartphones and their many different applications and solutions are a powerful combination. Their influence will only grow. For many of us a landline is simply being used to provide a broadband connection at home. Its days as a means of traditional voice communication definitely seem to be numbered. Happy New Year and have a very prosperous 2016.

Richard Carter, Group Sales and Business Development Director, Nimans

Cloud uptake rises despite resistance

COMMS resellers wedded to traditional products have created a barrier to greater uptake of cloud technologies and recurring revenue business models, according to Frost & Sullivan's Digital Transformation Programme Director Elka Popova.

"Many perceive hosted services as a threat to equipment sales and their cherished relationships with equipment vendors," she said.

But their market position is under threat from influential industry trends, she believes.

"Technology maturity, new architectures and business models, and greater awareness of cloud communications and their advantages are increasingly addressing these barriers to hosted services uptake in Europe," added Popova.

"The wider availability of hosted solutions also means enterprises can find the best fit for their specific needs.

"In the future, greater incumbent carrier focus on next generation services as well as mergers and acquisition among smaller providers will expedite industry expansion."

Ongoing solution enhancements, such as better mobility support and tighter integration



Elka Popova

with other communications and productivity apps, will reinforce the appeal of hosted IP telephony and UCC in the European market, pointed out Popova.

"However, businesses with specific customisation, integration or security requirements

continue to choose premises-based solutions over hosted services," she commented.

"Fear of losing control over communications capabilities is another factor preventing some firms from outsourcing telephony and UCC solutions.

"Lingering concerns about quality and reliability also prevent some businesses from migrating to IP-based communications systems and services."

Despite these concerns Frost & Sullivan expects the European IP telephony and hosted UCC services market to be worth circa £12bn by 2021.

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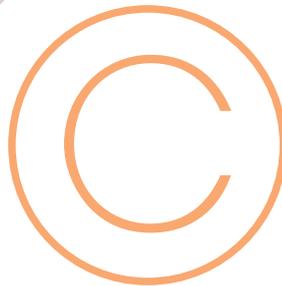
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COMMENT: MARKETING MATTERS



Andy Grant

MARKETING planning is often discussed by partners and vendors but sometimes the process is not taken that seriously or documented. Many vendors have MDF budgets available for partners to create a credible marketing plan. Partners and vendors already have an agreed business plan with revenue targets and

objectives, so why not extend that to a joint marketing strategy? Vendors usually supply a simple template.

A major element of the partnership is the marketing plan. This should concentrate on creating awareness, consideration and action for target contacts in key markets. The marketing plan should include timelines and costs for the major activities that have been discussed and need to be executed.

Partners and vendors should not try to boil the ocean. I always advise them to include no more than four joint activities for a calendar year. Both parties need to be realistic and the activities need to be achievable to create real results. The partner should insist that the vendor makes their PR team available, and their corporate reach for the initial and ongoing communications, but the actual integrated campaigns should be led by the partner with the vendor's support.

Partners should plan integrated campaigns that have more than one element. Sending a simple direct mail letter and hoping for hundreds of responses will not create leads. If you plan an activity with a number of touchpoints you will have taken the correct steps towards channel marketing success.

Andy Grant, Managing Director, Bowan Arrow

• RAMPANT claims to market differentiation are often ballooned out of all proportion according to TeleWare's CEO Steve Haworth who punctures the 'trusted advisor' bubble and points to the substantial stand-out factors that really matter. (p26)

Camworth's buy strategy

IT SOLUTIONS firm Camworth has kicked off a long-term acquisition campaign with the purchase of Bristol-based Cabletec Communications.

Camworth's Operations Director James Luck commented: "We've worked with Cabletec for many years and know that its expertise will help us to grow our own business.

"This acquisition allows us to deliver a full range of services including Cisco solutions and support."

Cabletec's employees will be retained, including owner and Director Marc Johnson who will head up the Infrastructures Services department.

Camworth plans to relocate its logistics operations to Cabletec's premises, maintain-



James Luck

ing its current Stonehouse base as the company's head office.

Johnson commented: "We're looking forward to introducing Camworth's expertise to our own customers and playing a key role in providing an all-round offer."

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SHORT CALLS

NTA's channel building ambitions have been boosted by the appointment of Michael J Thornton, formerly of Frontier Voice & Data. His primary remit is to drive NTA's hosted proposition through to channel partners, drawing on his experience in delivering products and services through a channel-only model.

Skyscape Cloud Services has donated £10,000 apiece to the Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity and Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospitals Charity. Simon Hansford, CEO, said: "As a socially responsible organisation we strive to do the right thing and part of this is sharing our profits with our community, providing financial help to worthy organisations."



PROVU'S link-up with a local college to offer apprenticeship schemes at its Huddersfield offices has paid big dividends with technical apprentice Luke Warby (pictured) named Apprentice of the Year in the Kirklees College COLS (College Outstanding Learner Success) Awards. ProVu's MD Darren Garland said: "Since adopting the apprenticeship scheme we have seen some great outcomes. We work closely with Kirklees College which has provided us with a great level of support and advice regarding technical careers for our apprentices. Developing and nurturing our own workforce is important to the development of our team, and we feel confident that our partnership will allow us to do this." ProVu has so far recruited three apprentices under the scheme.

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COMMENT: ERA OF OPPORTUNITY



Mark Saunders

EVERY year-end sees business predictions for the following year scale new heights of eulogy and hyperbole. But in our market, there is genuinely so much to be excited about – and with the economy showing signs of sustainable improvement this is a fabulous time to do what we do.

Our current priorities are preparing for a seismic year of change in

2016. We will launch our new networks division and provide a range of connectivity and hosted telephony services of our own making, with a fresh approach to branding and a new portal. We have worked hard at engagement, from improving our personal interactions to high quality printed and electronic media.

Nine has experienced 10 per cent net growth in channel numbers, with the increasing demand for quality SIP and hosted services being the most noticeable feature. But the requirement for traditional fixed line services is still there and it would appear a number of providers are neglecting the basics. Poor levels of service and hard to use interfaces will not be tolerated, so we invest heavily in both areas with significant developments to announce early in 2016.

Personalisation is increasingly moving across from the consumer world to the business arena, so the standards set by Amazon and John Lewis etc in terms of customer insight are now expected in B2B. By investing in global standard CRM and automation systems we are able to keep pace with this development. Complacency is not an option, and the opportunities are almost endless.

Mark Saunders, Group Marketing Director, Nine Group

• COMPANIES ranked in the Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 awards 2015 generated over £820 million in total annual revenues, they employ more than 7,400 people and recorded an average four-year growth rate of 1,883 per cent. Comms Dealer's Fast 50 snapshot provides insights into the growth factors that really add up. (p22)

TWL numero uno in Wales

TWL Voice and Data is on a mission to become the biggest business comms and UC provider in Wales.

The Cardiff-based firm achieved 28% growth last year with £2.1m turnover, up from £1.5m in 2014. The forecast for year end 2016 is £2.4m.

Andrew Nicholson, MD, stated: "We have implemented systems to encourage organic growth by focusing on client services and retention, as well as new business processes.

"However, our acquisition of JVH Communications in June last year was key to reaching our target turnover."

JVH was TWL's second acquisition, it followed the purchase of Danwood Telecoms in 2012. Business advisory group Mustard consulted on the deal. Its Chairman, Alan Jones, point-



Andrew Nicholson

ed to the role that acquisitions will play in TWL's growth.

"Acquisitions have been a key part of the growth in 2015, adding an additional 30% onto one of the monthly income streams," he commented.

Nicholson has 'numerous growth strategies', saying: "We will expand the services that we offer to our customers."

SHORT CALLS

Swyx Solutions Gold partner EBC Group is to offer the vendor's cloud-based UC platform via its privately owned data centres. EBC Group MD Richard Lane said: "We already provide our customers with a range of services via the EBC Cloud Suite so adding telephony to our portfolio was a natural progression."

James Vickerage is to lead Imago ScanSource UK&I as VP. He joined Imago in 1997 and became Head of Northern EMEA in 2010. Imago ScanSource was formed out of the acquisition of Imago Group by ScanSource and operates as a separate business unit under the guidance of founder and former Imago MD, Ian Vickerage, who is now President of ScanSource's European Communications business.

Timico launches texting service

TIMICO has witnessed a big increase in the number of businesses interested in texting information to customers and has responded with the launch of a new volume SMS service, based on a close collaboration with ProcessFlows.

Businesses are using texts for appointment reminders, booking confirmations, to market exclusive offers and discounts, as well as boosting the level of interaction with customers.

Timico's service includes virtual mobile numbers, short

codes and various SMS solutions that can be integrated into a range of CRM systems. The SMS solutions can be backed up on either a cloud-based or physical server. Texts can be bought in bulk before billing, reducing the overall cost of messaging.

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COMMENT: OWNERSHIP WANES



Pete Tomlinson

PEOPLE often cite Uber, the world's largest taxi firm that owns no cars, and Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider that owns no real estate, as proof that in business it is now the service you deliver that sets you apart from the crowd, rather than the assets you own.

However, surely someone needs to own something somewhere to make all of this possible? Cloud may now be the default delivery platform, but someone still owns a data centre somewhere.

In this new world we witness some fantastically successful businesses based on an asset ownership model, Amazon Web Services being one that springs to mind. Intellectual property is also an important asset – take Office365 which none of Microsoft's competitors can really match. The scale of these companies can make them feel remote from our own businesses, but the question for us all remains the same – where do I truly add value?

At KCOM, we recently made the decision to divest the physical assets that form part of our national network (we sold the duct, fibre, chambers etc to CityFibre last month). This isn't because there was no value in them – the £90 million price tag clearly indicates there was value. The reason we did this was because we recognise that while someone needs to own the asset, it makes no difference to our customers who that is.

Our customer relationships are built on the difference our services, agility and innovation can make to their businesses. The investments they want to see us make are in value added propositions, integration and customer experience – and now we can make even more. Judging by the recent performance of the share price, our investors seem to agree.

Pete Tomlinson, Director of Product, Marketing and Sales, Eclipse

Chen poised to hit target

ENTANET'S £32m turnover goal is squarely in its sights following a year of strong partner growth. The wholesale connectivity provider has signed a number of new partners and grown its leased line and Ethernet business significantly over the past 12 months.

Entanet has recorded 25% growth in its Ethernet and leased line estate; witnessed growth of broadband connections and upgrades as the UK fibre roll-out continues apace; and seen a 14% increase in headcount to 100 staff.

Entanet has also invested in key areas such as provisioning, support, customer services and software development.

New strategic relationships formed last year include a partnership with UCaaS specialist 8x8 Solutions.

Additional investments in operational systems, the launch of an Ethernet Quoting Tool and a new dedicated VPN management portal have positioned Entanet for continued growth this year, according to CEO Elsa Chen.

"Our growth is largely down to the efforts and loyalty of our partners and staff," she stated. "Entanet thrives on the deep



Elsa Chen

understanding and trust that we've built up with them over many years.

"We've formed a number of new relationships over the past 12 months and will develop more alliances in 2016.

"Entanet will also carry on investing in its network and systems. We envisage another year of steady, profitable growth ahead for our partners and our own business."

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SHORT CALLS

Mobile workforce technology provided by Aeromark has delivered a 20%-plus increase in productivity and 40% improvement in service levels for customer Arcus Solutions, a national refrigeration, HVAC, M&E, lighting, drainage and renewable maintenance specialist. These improvements were achieved during the first six months of full operation.

In its H1 financials for the period ended 30th September 2015 cloud company iomart reported revenue growth of 16% to £36.4m including 10% organic growth in the hosting operation, up 2%. The firm also reported adjusted EBITDA growth of 11% to £15.5m and adjusted profit before tax growth of 8% to £8.7m.

24 Seven Communications is offering reseller partners M2M services following a wholesale agreement with EE. David Samuel, founder and MD of 24 Seven, commented: "M2M services are fast becoming business critical. Increasing automation and shared information are vital for businesses of all sizes."

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COMMENT: M2M MATTERS



Anton Le Saux

THE Internet of Things (IoT) provides 'a way of boosting productivity, of keeping us healthier, making transport more efficient, reducing energy needs and making our homes more comfortable', according to a report by The Government Office for Science. This is certainly a belief that we share and have supported by working with a number

of local authorities, offering advice around how to deliver effective services through digital expertise. The IoT is now beginning to make a real impact at local Government level, as more councils begin to adopt the technology and apply it to real life challenges.

One recipient of O2's expertise and advice is Newcastle City Council, which launched its SelfTrav app. The app uses tracking technology to help young people with learning disabilities to travel safely on public transport. The idea was to support the young people involved who want to be able to travel normally, without being conspicuous. The app empowers them to travel safely and independently, without standing out from the crowd as most young people carry smartphones. The development of the app revolutionises how the council is able to deliver special educational needs and disabilities transport.

The applications for m2m technology in local Government are enormously diverse and can touch on anything from smart lighting and parking to measuring passenger journeys on public transport, traffic flow systems and energy management. There are councils that have struggled to understand how the IoT can be put to work to their advantage, but as more councils adopt the technology and knowledge is shared, the benefits will be widely felt. (anton.lesaux@telefonica.com – partnersdigital.telefonica.com)

Anton Le Saux, Head of Connectivity and Partner Sales at O2 Telefónica UK

SCC secures mobile deal



James Rigby

SCC has taken a controlling stake in One Point, adding mobile voice and data capabilities to complete its Cloud Delivered Managed Services (CDMS) proposition.

One Point is SCC's third major investment in 2015 following investments in Fluidata and SIPCOM earlier last year.

Having invested £50m-plus in its own data centres, including the acquisition of SSE's tier 3+ data centre in Fareham in 2014, SCC has since bolstered its capability in connectivity, voice, and now mobile to complete its CDMS offering.

One Point will operate as normal under its own brand and existing leadership team.

James Rigby, SCC Chief Executive, commented on the deal: "We've been pursuing an

investment in mobile, and in One Point we've found the right business to complement our existing services portfolio.

"We'll now look to drive the proposition forward adding additional capacity where necessary, alongside organic investments in our own data centre services."

Ben McElligott, One Point's MD, added: "Aligning our business with SCC increases our service offering, expands our own capability and makes the most of our service offering.

"The investment from SCC cements One Point firmly in the mid-market space and provides our customers with additional choice and value."

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SHORT CALLS

Nimans has boosted upfront margins on its GS-hosted voice proposition that includes a low per-month cost plus a phone, three years service and bundled minutes. GS-hosted has three pricing structures depending on the chosen handset, and resellers can take up to 60% profit upfront using GS hosted finance. Nimans has also added the GS-6400 Android-based video phone to its line up of GS-hosted handset solutions.

EE has been selected by the Home Office to provide Britain's Emergency Services with a national mobile network, giving 300,000 emergency workers access to 4G voice and data for the first time.

Vision Group has appointed Andrew Woollard as Head of UC. His experience includes a six-year Directorship at Network Europe Group that was acquired by Daisy in December 2010, and a later stint as MD of Coms Group. Woollard commented: "Following five successful years Vision has built a fantastic client base for our Unified Communications team to penetrate."

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Lyons poised to spearhead Pinnacle push



Gavin Lyons

THE appointment of Gavin Lyons to the post of Executive Chairman at Pinnacle Technology Group underlines the firm's plans for securing acquisitions and keeping the overall strategy on track.

Lyons takes over from Dr James Dodd, Non-Executive Chairman, who will remain on the board as a Non-Executive Director until the company's annual general meeting in March 2016.

Lyons has significant experience in the TMT sector and joined IT security specialist Accumuli as CEO in 2012 where he spearheaded a successful buy and build strategy that culminated with the company being sold to NCC Group for £55m in October.

Prior to Accumuli Lyons was Head of Telecoms and Utilities UK&I at SAP and he held various senior positions at Trend Micro, having also worked at Xerox, Compuware and The Caudwell Group.

During his career Lyons has been closely involved in three

exits, generating close to £100m in value, as well as completing several acquisition and integration projects.

He is also a Partner at MXC Capital, the AIM-quoted technology-focused merchant bank, which was appointed by Pinnacle to advise on the company's strategy and identify acquisition opportunities.

Non-Executive Director of Pinnacle Technology Group, Tom Black, stated: "Gavin's experience of buy and builds and track record of achieving transformational growth will be a powerful asset to the company. As a result, we believe we will be better positioned to expand our solution set across a growing base of customers."

Pinnacle offers a range of managed IT Services, IT security, connectivity, mobile, telephony and infrastructure services. It operates in the SME market and the broader mid-market and public sector.

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Unauthorised sales spark legal action

PLANTRONICS has started a legal action in the English High Court against Manchester-based Digiphone and two of its directors. The claim relates to sales by Digiphone of unauthorised non-European Plantronics headsets bearing counterfeit labels and packaging.

According to the claim, Plantronics first became aware of Digiphone's activities in January 2013 and then undertook investigations lasting more than 18 months, with a number of test purchases confirming Plantronics' initial suspicions.

The parties have been unable to resolve their differences and the dispute is now heading to the courts. "We are keen to ensure a level playing field for



Paul Dunne

all our resellers," stated Paul Dunne, Head of UK & Ireland Channels, Plantronics.

"Until we started this activity they have faced ever-growing competition from dealers

who choose to run the risks of being supplied with unauthorised or counterfeit goods by buying from outside the authorised channels.

"Those who prefer to buy through our authorised European distributors don't run such risks.

"We want the market and our customers to know that we have a zero tolerance attitude to any dealings in illegal or counterfeit Plantronics goods.

"They need to be confident that if it bears our badge, it comes from us, has passed the relevant legislative tests and can be sold legally in the market."

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Paul Burn

Hosted trend gathers pace

AN UPTICK in PBX shipments during 2016 was not enough for distributor Nimans to reassess its predictions on the speed of hosted comms adoption.

"We are still seeing growth in PBX sales," stated Paul Burn, Head of Category Sales. "But 2015 was undoubtedly the year of change in terms of a shift towards hosted.

"For the best part of three decades we were known as a voice specialist and we have thousands of resellers who rely on us for their 'tin' technology. Nimans will never move away from that, but we also see resellers moving across to hosted."

The transition to hosted represents a key point in the histo-

ries of reseller businesses, and also Nimans. "We've had to ask some searching questions ourselves. We understand the pain points many resellers will face. In many ways 2015 has been a grasp the nettle year."

Nimans has also experienced a turning point in collaboration trends, according to the distributor's Head of Conferencing Sales, Ian Brindle.

"The market is moving into a new area of activity where smarter and more advanced technologies are driving collaboration forward," he commented. "This year will see collaboration trends strengthen and open up more sales opportunities or resellers."



NETPAY Solutions Group is celebrating a brace of award wins having bagged the Business of the Year Award at the Growing Business Awards just one day after MD Carl Churchill won a bronze award in the Great British Entrepreneur of the Year for Small Business awards. Churchill said: "Our team continues to push the boundaries, raising expectations in the market and developing services that deliver tangible benefits to our customers and partners."

Nicole Jay, co-founder and Director of NetPay, added: "When we started NetPay our intention was to make a real difference to organisations, to give them more than just a method

of taking payment. We deliver vital performance insight beyond the commodity payment capability for thousands of customers across multiple countries, allowing them to plan and grow their business."

SHORT CALL

Solar Communications, SW Communications and Response Data Comms have been commended by ShoreTel for high attainments in areas such as net billings and billings growth, new cloud bookings and monthly recurring revenues, proficiency with advanced applications, and customer satisfaction. The companies were named Global Theatre Circle of Excellence Partners by the vendor.

8x8 opens in Manchester

CLOUD-based UC and contact centre solution provider 8x8 has expanded its UK operations with a new office in Manchester.

Kevin Scott-Cowell, who is the UK MD of 8x8, said: "Manchester has spent billions creating a global hub for digital companies and its Northern Quarter is tipped to rival London's Tech City.

"Working with our channel partners we want to be part of that growth and be able to support not just those fuelling the digital economy in Manchester,



Kevin Scott-Cowell

but also those in the burgeoning north west."

This is the latest move in 8x8's growth plans and follows

its expansion into Europe in 2015 with the acquisition DXI.

In other company developments last month, 8x8's Easy-Contact-Now (ECN) cloud contact management solution has been accepted for inclusion on G-Cloud 7, the Government's online digital marketplace for the broader public sector.

ECN is an important part of 8x8's Enterprise Communications as-a-Service (ECaaS) suite and is complementary to the company's Virtual Contact Centre solution.

SHORT CALL

New Star Networks (NSN) has been ranked 328th in the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 EMEA 2015 list, a ranking of the 500 fastest growing technology companies in EMEA. Rankings are based on percentage revenue growth over four years. NSN CEO Mark Shraga said: "To be acknowledged as one of the fastest growing technology companies in such an enormous market as EMEA is incredible."



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Social values champ wins Hoque builds on early gains



Vivian Woodell

THE Phone Co-op's Chief Executive Vivian Woodell is on a mission to create an alternative economy built on the values upheld by social enterprises.

His efforts to date have been rewarded with a national award that recognises the organisation's role in a major social enterprise investment.

The Phone Co-op, based in Chipping Norton and Manchester, scooped the Best Consumer Facing award at the UK Social Enterprise Awards.

The Phone Co-op set up its Co-operative and Social Economy Development Fund to support the growth and development of other like-minded co-ops and social enterprises.

For example, it loaned HCT, the social enterprise bus operator, £500K as part of its recently raised £10m funding.

This funding, from a variety of social lenders, is a new record for a social enterprise investment in the UK.

The Phone Co-op is a staunch supporter of public transport with over 91% of its business miles undertaken by public transport.

"We are happy to be using surplus capital to support another social enterprise that is providing public transport, something we actively try to use, and with an organisation that shares our values," stated Woodell.

"We see social enterprises co-supporting each other in this way as an example of the type of alternative economy we'd like to encourage and grow."

The UK now has over 70,000 social enterprises that contribute more than £24bn to the economy each year.

A NORTH west business man who could not get what he wanted from regional data centres and decided to build his own has reaped the rewards of his 'must do something' approach with a year of growth and bigger plans for 2016.

Mashukul Hoque, MD of Manchester-based software firm Sandyx, launched his purpose-built data centre in 2014 under the company name Datacentreplus at Media City.

He said: "At the end of 2013 we were developing applications for a customer and needed data centre services. I required somewhere nearby with the ability to colocate and get easily accessible support.

"Big data centre operators were not interested in talking to me about my relatively small, but vital, requirements."

Hoque aims to 'disrupt the marketplace' by applying competitive pressure to the pricing and flexibility of the cloud and hosting services currently offered to SMBs.

His strategy is to help new start-ups with 'cash-friendly' access to the cloud, and help organisations with traditional operating models transition to the cloud.



Mashukul Hoque

"Businesses need to be talked through a transition and hand held, not bamboozled with technology or offers that lock them in for long-term contracts. Our mission is to provide transparency for those we work with."

SHORT CALLS

Ingram Micro is to acquire the Parallels Odin Service Automation platform along with associated cloud management technologies, intellectual property and the Odin brand. Ingram Micro adopted the Odin Service Automation platform in 2013 as the backbone of the company's automated Cloud Marketplace.

Albion Rovers fans can access free Wi-Fi at the Cliftonhill Stadium following a deployment by Wi-Fi specialist 802 Event WiFi. The Scottish League One team has become only the third football ground in Scotland to bring high density free Wi-Fi to their supporters and away fans.



Richard Carter

THE 2016 edition of Nimans' Product Catalogue includes information on 7,000 products across 460 pages. "The Nimans trade catalogue is affectionately known throughout the industry as 'The Bible' and its popularity remains as strong as ever," said Group Sales and Business Development Director, Richard Carter. "The world of communications continues to evolve and the catalogue encapsulates all the new areas of our business such as WLAN and hosted along with many traditional favourites. It also highlights customer support services such as leasing, training and logistics."

SHORT CALL

SIPHON Networks has been ranked 23rd in the 2015 Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 with a 644% growth rate over the past four years (rankings are based on percentage revenue growth over that period). Steve Harris, MD, said: "Increasing numbers of service providers and VARs are turning to us for our expertise across a broad portfolio of UC products and professional services." See page p22

Cloud pricing tool Softcat's purring

EXPONENTIAL-E has added a channel cloud pricing function to its Partner Portal. The platform, known as CloudPort, enables partners to price and order cloud and networking services, and offers live quotation tracking and price protection.

Lee Wade, CEO, commented: "With spending on cloud computing infrastructure expected to grow by 21% year-over-year to \$32bn in 2015, CloudPort will empower partners to meet growing customer demand for cloud services.

"Channel partners will be able to tap into Exponential-e's cloud solution portfolio to build and order a range of solutions."

Michala Hart, who is the Head of Channel Strategy at Exponential-e, said: "CloudPort provides a service creation platform for our partners, offering the tools to create, price and order solutions tailored to meet their customer's needs.

"We will work with our partners to incorporate additional functionality into the automated portal in the coming year."

AGAINST the backdrop of the completion of its IPO Softcat announced its Q1 2016 trading update (ended 31st October 2015), reporting revenues for the period up 14% on the prior year to £141m, compared to £124m in Q1 2015, with period-on-period growth evident in both customer numbers and revenue per customer.

Martin Hellawell, CEO of Softcat, commented: "This performance provides a firm foundation on which to begin life as a public company."



Martin Hellawell

Softcat admitted its ordinary shares to the Official List of the FCA and to trading on the London Stock Exchange on 18th November 2015.

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iomart secures key hosting acquisition

IOMART has snapped up managed hosting company United Hosting, its second acquisition this year, for a total consideration of up to £11m, with £7.5m settled in cash on completion.

A further £3.5m is contingent on United Hosting achieving EBIT performance targets.

United Hosting was founded in 1998 and provides managed, dedicated and shared hosting services and domains to approximately 6,500 customers, mostly small businesses.

The company is based in Hemel Hempstead where its main data centre facility is located. It also leases data centre space in London and Dallas, Texas, and has a support function based in India.



Angus MacSween

Angus MacSween, CEO of iomart, said: "United Hosting is a profitable, growing business that reflects the services we offer. As such, it fits well within our acquisition criteria and will be a valuable addition to the Group."

The co-founders of United Hosting, brothers Matt and Simon Wallis, will remain with the business. Matt Wallis stated: "This is a huge opportunity to develop and grow the business."

"We are now backed by one of the leading providers of managed hosting and cloud services in the UK as well as a company with all the regulatory and financial strength that comes with being listed on the London Stock Exchange."

In June last year iomart acquired SystemsUp, an IT consultancy specialising in the design and delivery of public cloud solutions.

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Carter chases more resellers

VOIP and connectivity services provider Cloud Telephones aims to double reseller numbers in 2016 from its current group of 70 partners.

Cloud Telephones has seen monthly income from voice services subscriptions grow by over 200% over the past 12 months with half of all monthly revenues going to the reseller.

John Carter, MD, said: "The demand is there, we just need more resellers to get involved. We generate the original leads, manage all the provisioning and provide support. We have managed thousands of installations already, so the customer gets a great experience and all the reseller needs to do is go out and sell."

David Rushton, Business Development Manager for



John Carter

UC at Gamma, added: "Cloud Telephones has carried the flag for the Gamma Horizon service and achieved phenomenal partner sales growth since the start of this year."

"It has paved the way for what we believe and expect will be a further and considerable increase in volume in 2016."

"Selling VoIP services will deliver long-term rewards for reseller businesses."

Skyscape wins fast growth awards

DISRUPTION and innovation are the primary drivers for exceptional growth according to Simon Hansford, CEO of Skyscape Cloud Services, which came top in the Communications category of Deloitte Global's 2015 Technology Fast 500 EMEA listing.

Skyscape took sixth place overall and came second in the

Deloitte Technology Fast 50 UK shortlist of the fast growing technology firms with a growth rate of 13391%.

Hansford said: "Our core business objective is to deliver assured, agile and cost-effective services to the public sector, ultimately delivering better value for money for UK citizens and tax payers."

Skyscape has grown to more than 100 employees in just three years and expects to almost double that figure in 2016. Its channel partner programme has also strengthened since its launch in 2013, with 200 organisations now able to market their services to the public sector by hosting on Skyscape's accredited platform. **See page 22**



CONVERGED Comms scooped Channel Telecom's Dealer of the Year award at its fifth Reward and Recognition Evening held at The May Fair, London.

The winning line-up included Virtual 1 which won the Supplier of the Year category. Channel Telecom also handed over a holiday of choice to the Overall Partner of the Year. MD Clifford Norton said: "These awards evenings recognise the phenomenal success of our suppliers and partners over the last year." Pictured (l-r): Steve Yates, Head of Partner Sales, Channel Telecom; Jonathan Sheridan, Converged Comms MD with the Dealer of the Year award; and Clifford Norton.

SHORT CALL

Interoute has unveiled a cloud hosted contact centre add-on for hosted Microsoft Skype for Business and Microsoft Lync. "Interoute Hosted Contact Centre helps companies enhance their call or contact centre services by leveraging the features of the Microsoft enterprise collaboration suite using Interoute's global and private networked cloud," said Mark Lewis, VP for Communications & Connectivity at Interoute.

Advanced opens two new offices

SOFTWARE provider Advanced Computer Software Group has secured two new offices close to Heathrow Airport and in Birmingham as part of a recruitment drive that will boost headcount by a third.

The premises at Ditton Park and the refurbished Mailbox in Birmingham city centre will house the new recruits.

Advanced has grown significantly since it was founded six years ago and plans to take on more than 1,000 members of staff in the next 18 months.



Gordon Wilson

The firm hopes to attract new talent to its Ditton Park location by providing a 'premium working environment' for staff, offering a restaurant, coffee shop, gym, tennis courts,

sports pitches and a kids centre. Advanced will launch its Midlands regional Birmingham city HQ in March 2016.

The Group will lease the entire third floor, a 45,000 sq ft space, said to be Birmingham's largest commercial accommodation on a single floorplate.

Gordon Wilson, CEO, stated: "Our investment in these new cutting edge facilities is part of a major recruitment drive which will see the business grow by a third. It is also part of our wider strategy to foster more collab-

orative working, while further driving expansion."

Advanced employs over 2,000 people and provides healthcare, business and learning management software and services to 20,000 customers.

The Group's sales growth secured it a ranking in The Sunday Times Grant Thornton Top Track 250 league table having grown revenue to more than £200m in six years.

Advanced was acquired by Vista Equity Partners for £750m in March 2015.

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Recording in the cloud for Skype users

A NEW cloud-based recording function designed for Skype for Business and launched by TeleWare incorporates compliant voice recording with IVR and enterprise class voicemail.

"The solution captures and analyses call data, helping users to gain a deeper insight into their business," said Steve Haworth, CEO of TeleWare Group.

"The result is improved employee engagement, business agility, process efficiency and customer satisfaction."

He claims the enhancement addresses some of the limitations of current off-the-shelf offerings. "Existing customers have come to us looking for a recording solution they can use within their Skype for Business interface," said Haworth.

"This new offering allows businesses to integrate additional functions to enhance the core product. It is integrated into the existing network infrastructure and requires little investment, making it an easy and cost effective solution to deploy."

According to Haworth, the real value of this enhancement is through the analysis of the call data captured.

"This insight is translated into valuable information that can be used to train and coach staff to provide a better customer experience. Ultimately, improving productivity, increasing revenue and lowering costs," he commented.

"TeleWare's analytics solution provides productivity and performance reports, giving complete visibility of the customer journey."

TeleWare's cloud-based voice recording solution is device-agnostic and allows customers to record voice calls through their Skype for Business inter-



Steve Haworth

face. The solution is fully FCA and Dodd-Frank compliant.

The IVR application enables businesses to offer alternative contact options, including callback, email and SMS, eliminating caller waiting time and abandoned calls.

Also introduced is an Intelligent Number function, a non-geographic number that travels with, and is linked to the user rather than a device, meaning that the number can be accessed on any device, fixed or mobile, around the globe. >p26

Windows 10 poised for big hit

WINDOWS 10 is set to become the most widely installed version of Windows ever with 50% of enterprises starting deployments by January 2017, with an eye to completing their migrations in 2019, according to research firm Gartner.

"In the consumer market, a free upgrade coupled with broad legacy device support and automatic over-the-air upgrades ensures that there will be tens of millions of users familiar with the operating system before the end of 2015," said Steve Kleynhans, Research VP. "For enterprises, we expect that implementation will be significantly more rapid than that seen with Windows 7 six years ago."

Several factors are driving migration, specifically awareness of the end of support for Windows 7 in January 2020, compatibility with Windows 7 applications and devices, and a pent-up demand for tablet and 2-in-1 device rollouts.

"The result is that many enterprises are planning to pilot Windows 10 in the first half of 2016 and to broaden their deployments in the latter part of the year," added Kleynhans.

BroadSoft integrates with MS Office 365

BROADSOFT'S integration with Microsoft Office 365 blends BroadSoft BroadWorks, BroadCloud and UC-One solutions with the cloud office productivity software.

"This is a great example of how partners can build on the new Office 365 platform to better serve our mutual customers," said Steve Guggenheimer, Corporate VP of Microsoft's Developer Experience & Evangelism (DX) group.

Customers can leverage BroadSoft's cloud PBX and

UC-One capabilities from their Microsoft Office 365 desktop applications including cloud-based calling.

Users can also click-to-call any phone number in emails, documents, databases, address books and on web pages.

Michael Tessler, President and CEO, BroadSoft, added: "With Microsoft Office 365's significant and growing commercial installed base, these users represent an attractive market opportunity for BroadSoft and service providers."

RPE backing boosts Zycko

DISTRIBUTOR Zycko has big expansion plans in EMEA following a significant investment by Rigby Private Equity (RPE), the private equity arm of Rigby Group Investments.

David Galton-Fenzi, CEO of Zycko, said: "The backing and support of RPE means we are now in a position to accelerate our ambitious growth plans."

"It's a great opportunity for the company to continue its transformation into a significantly larger organisation focused on providing support to vendors seeking services-oriented, EMEA-wide distribution."

RPE is building an EMEA-wide specialist distribution business and in July 2015 made a big investment in security value added distributor Wick Hill.

Paul Eccleston, Head of RPE, commented: "Zycko is already in 12 countries in EMEA, which helps us move forward rapidly with our growth plans. The benefits for Wick Hill, and its partners and customers, include



David Galton-Fenzi

access to the international scope offered by Zycko's established EMEA network.

"The benefits for Zycko include access to Wick Hill's strength in security and the chance to build on high value and consultancy opportunities for channel customers."

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TIMICO acted quickly to secure sponsorship of the Cheltenham Gold Cup in March, the first time the race has been open to sponsors in 36 years. Alongside the four-year sponsorship deal Timico has been given preferred supplier status to The Jockey Club's portfolio of 15 racecourses. Timico already provides ICT services to Goodwood and Newbury racecourses.

The firm's Chief Executive Officer, Tim Radford, and his family have long been associated with horse racing as owners of frequent runners Knock House, Somersby, Calgary Bay and Racing Demon. Timico's Chairman, Lord Daresbury, is a former champion amateur jockey. He was Chairman of Aintree Racecourse for 25 years from 1989 and took over as Chair at Haydock Park in 2013.

Radford commented: "As an ambitious business working in a fast-paced industry, we were quick to recognise the tremendous opportunity of partnering with The Jockey Club to be part of one of the country's most prestigious events."

Pictured (l-r): Chairman Lord Daresbury and CEO Tim Radford

ProVu in expansion mode: Gears up for 2016 growth drive

PROVU continues to make big strides following a busy pre-Christmas period in which the distributor sealed a distribution agreement with VTech Business Phones, added the Snom D series IP phones to its portfolio and incorporated the complete Gigaset pro range of desktop and DECT phones into its independent hosted Zero Touch Provisioning System.

Darren Garland, MD, commented: "Our sales increased by 20% in 2015 and we expanded our team to accommodate this growth. In 2016 ProVu will build on the significant gains achieved last year."

The VTech distribution deal enables ProVu to supply the ErisTerminal SIP range, including entry level to high end desk phones and DECT solutions.

Garland added: "While not commonly associated with telephony in the UK, VTech is a major global player in the telephone space and we believe this new range will be a strong competitor in the UK SIP market."

Expanding its product portfolio further the distributor also introduced the Snom D series models. ProVu's Sales Director Ian Godfrey noted that the range (from the D710 entry level phone to the D765 and D375 executive level phones) is fit for all business applications.

"Through ProVu's reseller portal ProSys, Snom resellers can add configuration settings to their orders and have phones automatically provisioned to work out-of-the box," he stated.

ProVu's end-of-year business phone strategy culminated with the completion of a total integration project with Gigaset pro. Through ProSys, all Gigaset pro desktop and DECT phones are now available via ProVu's



Darren Garland

Zero Touch Provisioning system. To date ProVu has provisioned over 300,000 phones and Garland expects shipment rates to accelerate following the addition of the Gigaset pro range.

"ProSys allows SIP telephony service provider partners to select and ship phones that have already been programmed with configuration settings and user credentials, directly from ProVu to end customer premises, allowing rapid service activation," he added.

Following certification of the Gigaset pro portfolio, ProVu partners have the option to access remote device management services including device firmware updates and configuration changes through either ProSys' self-service portal or through an automated bulk process for larger installation.

Garland also noted that ProSys is used by 50 VoIP services. "The service has proved popular and our work with all of our vendors reflects strong demand from SIP telephony partners and their end customers," added Garland.

"Provisioning services like this are helping service providers to meet the demands of the rapidly growing cloud-based

telephony market, especially for smaller customers that don't necessarily have on-site technical capabilities and just want to plug in a device and get up and running straight away."

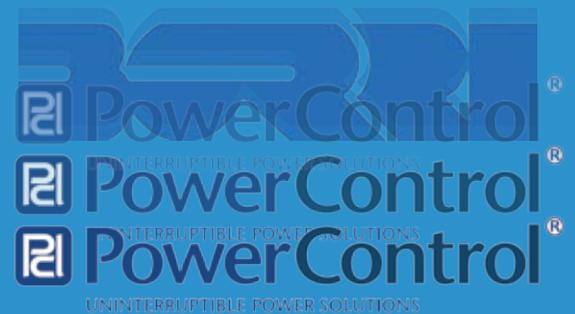
He says that some of ProVu's SIP telephony service provider customers have reduced the cost of device deployment by 80%, and the time between end customers placing an order and receiving a phone has dropped from as much as five days to next-day delivery by using ProVu's services.

"ProVu's API enables SIP telephony service provider customers to connect their web-based ordering system into the ProVu provisioning platform, further streamline customer activation," added Garland.

"As the hosted telephony market continues to mature we foresee a shift in resellers' approach to purchasing.

"Resellers are not only looking for cost-effective solutions, they are also looking for reliability and assistance in the maintenance of end devices. ProSys enables us to provide this service."

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Much to learn from fast

Companies ranked in the Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 awards 2015 generated over £820 million in total annual revenues, they employ more than 7,400 people and recorded an average four-year growth rate of 1,883 per cent. Here, our Fast 50 snapshot provides insights into the growth factors that really add up.

**Skyscape Cloud Services
Ranked 2nd**

13,391 per cent growth

Skyscape Cloud Services has rapidly grown to more than 100 employees since its launch in 2011, and is expecting to double that figure this year. Skyscape has won a number of high profile public sector contracts with HMRC, DVLA and the MoD to name a few in little over three years.

"We remain focused on the UK public sector and are working to accelerate our growth outside of central Government in areas such as healthcare, education and utilities," explained Simon Hansford, CEO. "Our partner programme has also gone from strength to strength since its launch in 2013, with 200 organisations now able to market their services to the public sector by hosting on our accredited platform."

With pay-by-the-hour consumption models departments are able to scale up or down based on their needs, and only pay for what they use, pointed out Hansford. "We offer the ability to turn servers off during times of low demand, such as evenings and weekends, and also rapidly scale services and increase resources to accommodate busy periods," he said. "Not only does this provide tangible cost benefits, but it also helps organisations to improve their carbon footprint with a more



Simon Hansford

Much progress has been made in transforming public sector ICT procurement

agile, smarter and greener approach to the use of IT."

Hansford has witnessed rapid and widespread adoption of the cloud by public sector organisations, initially adopting Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) solutions moving through to Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS). "Much progress has been made in transforming public sector ICT procurement, with Government policies such as Cloud First and the G-Cloud Framework altering the public sector cloud industry and our business, in particular," added Hansford. "As a G-Cloud supplier, our support for digital transformation within the public sector has contributed to a number of high profile contract wins as well as exponential internal and partner programme growth, which in turn has enabled us to pass on price reductions to our customers."

Simply being listed as a vendor on G-Cloud isn't enough. For resellers or potential partners looking to grow their public sector business, they need to demonstrate security and assurance credentials, provide services that offer connectivity to not just the Internet but also the public sector's private networks, and be successful at marketing and engaging with the public sector through G-Cloud.

While Hansford attributes Skyscape's success to disruption and innovation, he said the single greatest reason for the business' success has been the ability to attract the right people. "When hiring, it's important to find candidates with the right attitude and the ability to learn fast," he added. "When developing a rapidly growing business, taking the time to establish a culture with a clear mission is imperative. Our core values are embedded in everything we do. We believe in doing what's right, being honest and transparent, being innovative and disruptive, and we do that by focusing on simplicity, community and partnership."

**VoiceHost
Ranked 21st
818 per cent growth**

VoiceHost has grown from a start-up working in a small office to being the fastest growing technology firm in Cambridgeshire

and East, with a 21st UK ranking and 111th in Deloitte's EMEA listing. The core focus for VoiceHost is providing resellers with hosted telephony, SIP trunks, broadband and leased lines, and according to Technical Director Ross Beer the company's revenue percentage growth is in the main due to a big shift away from analogue services towards cloud telephony.

VoiceHost's reseller accreditation programme introduced in the summer of 2015 has proved popular and is based on a policy of giving partners what they want. "Listening is a big part of growing a service," said Beer. "We listen to resellers about the features they want to see, and offer VoiceHost development requests to every reseller regardless of size. This way, resellers gain new features they can re-sell



Ross Beer

We offer VoiceHost development requests to every reseller regardless of their size

profitably to their clients, while VoiceHost gains key insights to prioritise the development of services that will be in high demand."

**SIPHON
Ranked 23rd
644 per cent growth**

SIPHON has 42 full-time employees with plans to hire five more during the first six months of 2016. A particular growth driver for the company is voice-enabling Microsoft Skype for Business and Lync. "The requirements of successfully delivering enterprise voice are often not well understood by Microsoft and traditional IT resellers, so this is where SIPHON adds value," stated Steve Harris, co-founder and Managing Director. "Because our pedigree has its foundations in cloud voice and UC, we understand the inherent complexity and have now combined this heritage with skills in Microsoft Skype for Business solutions and associated technology."

To underpin this growth SIPHON secured funding from private equity investor Finance Wales in spring 2015. This equity arrangement enables the firm to make further investments in its in-house skills and systems, including process automation. "These advance preparations should go some way to offsetting the usual challenges that arise when managing rapid growth," added Harris.



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growth firms

Aside from its acquisition of VCOMM Distribution in 2012, SIPHON has grown organically since it was founded in 2009. "During 2015 we invested significantly in developing our skills," added Harris. "The acquisition of VCOMM allowed us to extend our product portfolio to include a full range of CPE, which meant that SIPHON was able to offer an end-to-end capability to cloud UC providers. This acquisition gave us the base product portfolio around Microsoft Lync, which has since been evolved to a full Microsoft Skype for Business practice.



Steve Harris

We invested in developing our skills to support the voice-enablement of Skype for Business solutions

"We have grown revenues significantly, which, at times, has been a challenge to manage operationally. However, since agreeing the equity arrangement with Finance Wales we have made significant investments in staffing, facilities and automated systems, and now have a robust infrastructure in place to support our future growth."

**New Star Networks
Ranked 49
315 per cent growth**

New Star Networks (NSN) was also recognised by Deloitte in its Fast 500 EMEA rankings at 328. The company employs 17 staff and its 2015 revenues of £5 million are expected to grow to £6.5 million in 2016 and £8 million the following year. Growth will be split between existing customer up-sales, new partner acquisitions and organic channel sales achieving an average uplift of £125k monthly revenue, noted Mark Shruga, Chief Executive Officer, NSN.

"The NSN proposition is to fully integrate the customers'

business communication technologies, enhance their business performance and deliver value across a range of product areas," he added. "Our target market is primarily a broad array of channel partners spanning the telecoms and IT industry through to office supplies, print media and energy brokering."

NSN has around 2,600 customers, mostly SME. The main growth areas are schools and care homes with an emerging focus on construction and the third sector. "Recruiting partners widely across multiple industries has been key to our growth," said Shruga. "We aim to do more of this while targeting smaller resellers in the IT space."

He's also interested in the growth of SaaS – 54 per cent of the Deloitte UK Fast 50 came from that area of the technology industry. "We see this as a natural fit with our proposition to assist the customers' evolution by focusing on enhancing lean business performance

without weakening important infrastructure," added Shruga.

His growth strategy is largely characterised by achieving the broadest product suite with commercial flexibility consistently delivered into a loyal channel. "Our key challenges are to ensure all of our employees continue to see NSN's future as a solid way of meeting their life goals, and to ensure we effectively communicate all of the new positive developments as they happen with our partners and customers," commented Shruga.

The main change for the business has been the shift to cloud-based services. This trend prompted a brand revamp. The new NSN logo represents an elevation of the company to a new level, explained Shruga. "Our transformation included a host of new suppliers, SLAs and entering the cloud-based IT service arena, while investing in up-skilling key staff to higher levels of technical capability," said Shruga. "Growth has come from the emerging product sets while maintaining the existing customer base with healthy growth."



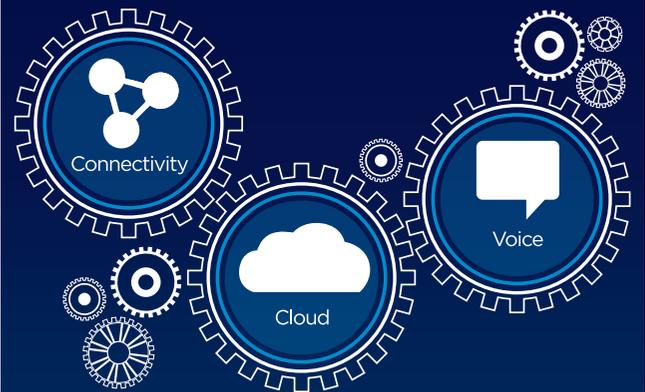
Mark Shruga

Our transformation included a host of new suppliers, SLAs and entering the cloud-based IT service arena



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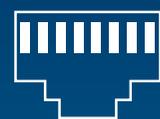


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Cisilion's global pursuit

Global expansion is beckoning fast growing Cisilion and Sales Director Nick Paul has no qualms about answering the call.

The name Cisilion draws attention to the company's heritage as a Cisco house, but there was the rub – the market had expanded and Cisilion recognised the need to provide its clients with a wider vendor offering, enabling it to be an end-to-end systems integrator. Cisilion was established 16 years ago by Roger Paul to help businesses simplify their IT deployments. The firm provides solutions to a client base in 56 countries across five continents and has big plans for global expansion.

Long-term strategic relationships with technology partners including Cisco, Microsoft, Riverbed, Dell and Oracle were bolstered in December when Cisilion built on its hybrid enterprise offering following a link-up with EMC. "This agreement allows us to work more strategically with EMC to help our customers achieve cost reductions while strengthening our own storage propositions," commented Nick Paul. "EMC's expertise lies in leveraging performance versus capacity, automating the provision of data protection and delivering infrastructure control via simplified reporting."

Cisilion expects to boost its £36 million turnover to

circa £50 million this year, focusing on enterprise and commercial companies with between 500-10,000 employees. It targets senior level decision makers from all lines of business but primarily IT. "We provide transformational IT solutions spanning infrastructure, collaboration, security and the cloud," said Paul. "Our target markets include global organisations within the financial services, legal, insurance and construction sectors. Over the next five years we aim to continue our global expansion and increase revenues significantly."

Opening in Hong Kong and New York cemented Cisilion's reputation as a global partner to its clients. Another important development was moving the front office to the City of London in close proximity to clients and prospects. "In this office we launched our state of the art Innovation Centre where customers can experience first hand the latest IT technologies and solutions," said Paul. "They rely on us to understand the market and key trends, both today and what's coming in the future. One of our biggest strengths is the partnerships we have with clients. This enables us to understand their needs and in turn tailor our business to support them. We work closely



Nick Paul

VARs and SIs need to adapt their offerings to deliver a much lighter, often hybrid IT infrastructure

with key vendors to shape our propositions; and our flexibility and level of service is what differentiates us."

Shifting models

The rise of the cloud continues to climb steeply and shifts towards the subscription model are well advanced. "Revenues are shifting from tin and

boxes to virtualised systems and services," added Paul. "Businesses no longer want three or five-year big refreshes, therefore VARs and SIs need to adapt their offerings to deliver a much lighter, often hybrid IT infrastructure, which is less dominated by hardware choices with more focus on service and support."

This trend is redefining the role of many systems integrators and resellers who in the past have been focused on the plumbing of the network, often rooted in the provision of hardware infrastructure and licenses. "While this won't go away any time soon, in order to remain competitive SIs need to spend time building service propositions, consultancy services and user adoption practices to help their customers make the transition to cloud," added Paul.

Cisilion scooped Comms Dealer's Best Enterprise UC Solution 2015 at the Comms National Awards held last October at the Grand Connaught Rooms in London. The award recognised the merits of a large Microsoft Lync deployment at LeSoCo College where the company transformed its education system. Cisilion was also runner up for Best Enterprise Vertical Market Solution for its impressive work in the insurance sector. Rob Quickenden, Chief Strategy Officer at Cisilion, said: "Collaboration solutions are one of our strongest capabilities, and this recognition showcases the hard work we put into training our employees."

With an army of highly trained and motivated workers Cisilion is now stepping up the pace of its global growth ambitions. "To achieve our goals it's important to attract and retain the best talent in the market," added Paul. "It's the quality of our people, along with offering the most up-to-date technical solutions that will ensure we keep out-performing the market." ■



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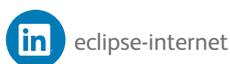
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Haworth's lifework to el

Rampant claims to market differentiation are often ballooned out of all proportion according to TeleWare's CEO Steve Haworth who punctures the 'trusted advisor' bubble and points to the substantial stand-out factors that really matter in today's fast-evolving marketplace.

Every industry spawns its hype and comms is no exception. The trick is to create substance, and resellers can only do this by sharpening their focus on what they do best and then strive to do better, according to Haworth. "Stop wasting time worrying about what everyone else is doing and make sure you execute well," he stated. "Create a specialism or halo proposition that helps you to stand out. Too many ICT suppliers claim to be one-stop-shops and 'trusted advisors'. These labels are no longer differentiators."

Haworth aims to help resellers step closer to their goals with a boost fuelled by the benefits of analytics. "Right now we are adding multi-mode, multi-media and analytics to all of our products to help drive greater insights across the business and bring more revenue opportunities to our partners," he explained. "The intersection of mobile, cloud and Big Data to enhance the customer experience, governance and compliance are important drivers. We have invested heavily in gaining new data capture and analytics capabilities to take advantage of this area as we see it exploding over the next few years."

While highlighting the lack of market differentiation, Haworth does not lack the ambition to elevate

TeleWare's partners above the crowd. "Part of our proposition is to help partners stand out and differentiate themselves," he stated. "We have to challenge ourselves to do the same. We live in a world of over-supply in so many areas. How and why you do things is just as important as what you do."

In more detail, TeleWare routes, records and analyses communications to improve customer service, governance and compliance. The company focuses on markets that require the agility to cope with flexible customer demand, where a high proportion of employees are mobile or distributed, or have specific regulatory requirements. Retail, leisure, finance, healthcare and utilities are particularly strong markets for TeleWare.

The firm finished last year with over £10 million in revenues and has a headcount of circa 80 staff. "We set out a growth plan to double revenue over a three year period and we hit our profit target within the first six months of this year," commented Haworth. "We have invested more in our new products and services as well as partner recruitment, and have some exciting products coming to market this year."

Haworth wants to build a dozen 'great partnerships' over the next two years,



Steve Haworth

Stop wasting time worrying about what everyone else is doing and make sure you execute well

to jointly focus on creative propositions that differentiate partners and drive their value. "We want to find partners who share our values and vision and believe in the power of communications to drive business performance," he commented. "Our partners are likely to come from different areas so that they can work together. Some might be the more traditional communications

players while others more Microsoft and IT, although these are merging fast. New areas for TeleWare are the creative digital agency or data analytics driven partners who can drive additional value from the data that communications provide."

That said, Haworth still sees a place for the more commoditised products and services delivered easily

and with APIs for partners to create 'great solutions'. But he believes that these solutions have more value when integrated with other technologies and made easy to buy, sell and service. "This is where we see real value in a distribution partner," Haworth said. "Our current priorities are recruiting partners who will get the most benefit from our new products and services. We see Microsoft as a key partner in this space and helping other partners to leverage these technologies, complement them and integrate with other platforms is where we are spending much of our time."

Adaptation is the most potent of survival methods, but managing change is never easy. "The shift to the cloud was a particular challenge," added Haworth. "We have always focused on great software but the cloud requires a different mind-set and business model. So we have expanded our services to make it easier for partners, while remaining focused on the areas that have made us a great company. We have also witnessed massive growth in mobile and communication recording and see these areas as huge opportunities for partners."

"Finding partners who have a strong knowledge in specific markets, and helping them to develop more differentiated offerings that drive greater

levate partners

value is where we see our future. We leverage and build upon the great work of others to help partners hit their own goals. For example, by adding value to their cloud strategy and integrating third party cloud services where required, or building secure private services for industry verticals such as health and finance."

Transforming the TeleWare business into a Software as a Service operation is perhaps Haworth's crowning glory. "This is my biggest career achievement to date because I underestimated the challenge and didn't expect the undertaking to involve every aspect of the business, from people to technology to finance. Many of our partners are doing similar transitions in their business models. I still come across people who see this as a small change in product portfolio rather than a business transformation."

Despite Haworth's years of industry experience, business transformation does not get handed over on a plate. He began his career selling ERP software to large enterprises. "We used TeleWare to provide flexible input via phones in offices and mobile phones for engineers," explained Haworth. "I then set up a company selling mobile gateways to corporate customers. They were spending 20p per minute to a mobile and 80 per cent of their bill was from calls to mobile phones. The recurring revenue model got me hooked, so when the opportunity came to work for TeleWare I jumped at the chance."

Geoff Haworth formed TeleWare with a business partner in 1991. The

company began as an R&D project looking into the art of the possible following the release of Digital Cards that connected computers and telephones. "Our first real customer was British Gas via Siemens to help extend the capacity of a phone system and support flexible working," said Haworth. "They bought into the ideas and capability more than a deliverable, but we had to deliver something convincing to win the business. TeleWare grew through a great relationship with Siemens in the 1990s."

Turning points

TeleWare's biggest challenges and opportunities have always been around technology developments and partnering. "The step from being totally reliant on Siemens and signing partnerships with BT and others created an interesting challenge as we had to learn to manage multiple partners," added Haworth. "As most partners were larger than ourselves they tended to require a level of up-front resource. This was an exciting challenge. In terms of technology, we have seen the migration to the Internet, mobile and the cloud as huge shifts, but the latter was perhaps the greatest challenge as it required a change in business model."

There is now a copious literature on the whys and wherefores of changing business model and it is the knowledge gleaned from the experience of pioneers such as Haworth that will make the process more bearable for those who follow in his footsteps. "Focus and timing is critical," he stated. "When we first moved into the cloud

we wanted to do everything. We were driven to move fast but, at times, ahead of the market. We spent much time, effort and money educating the market rather than being laser focused on the biggest issues that we could address, and accepting that fast growth in revenue during the initial phases of launch is not the best KPI. Setting out the next most important goals and doing everything you can to get there is something I learned later rather than sooner. It really does make a significant difference." ■

Just a minute with Steve Haworth...

One thing you could not do without in your job: A team and my BlackBerry

Industry wish: Open up the mobile networks to enable faster innovation

What do you fear the most? Letting people down

How would you like to be remembered? Six foot six with a lifelong six pack and a good sense of humour

What talent do you wish you had? To draw well

One example of something you have overcome? Skydiving helped to overcome my fear of heights

Name three ideal dinner guests: Alex Ferguson; Michael Lewis, author of Liars Poker; Paul Allen (ex-Microsoft)

TeleWare's culture: We take our work seriously but inject fun whenever we can

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: Although a proud Yorkshireman I was born in Newport and still support the Welsh rugby team



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Inside story on the growth

Large numbers of ICT resellers are turning to third party support companies for reasons that are all too evident. Here, we explore why outsourcing is the focus of growing attention among resellers wanting an ingrained partnership that is also an extension of their business.

The big customer support handover has begun and the chemistry between outsource providers and their partners is more potent than ever, based on the evolving comms market and its knock-on effects on many ICT resellers. In line with these trends Comms-care has taken steps over the past 12 months to respond to big changes in the technology industry, which saw its channel partners require access to a broader range of professional and managed services to sell on to their customers.

“Developments in the technology industry have created a shortage of skills, especially in the area of higher end professional services, so we have made acquisitions such as Platform

Consultancy and increased our efforts to attract apprentices who can be trained in key competencies and add value to our clients,” said Rob Darby, Sales Director.

Comms-care’s reseller partners want the firm to become more ingrained in their businesses, so rather than just ask Comms-care for a quote they want the company to be involved in the whole end-to-end sales process. This new dynamic is reflected in the split between its services. Maintenance services account for 50 per cent, managed services 10 per cent, and professional services 40 per cent, with the bias in favour of managed and professional services happening over the last year.

“We are not just about break/fix maintenance

– a business that we are still proud of – but can offer a much broader set of professional and managed services to our clients’ customers as part of their own propositions,” added Darby. “Our ambitions are still very much focused on growth, whether that’s organically or through further acquisitions, concentrating on delivering our channel-only business strategy.

“But the skills shortage is the biggest challenge facing any company operating within the technology industry. As skills become more rare, they become more expensive and employers have to fight to attract them. Unless we find ways to nurture new people through apprenticeships or other channels, this problem will only get worse.”

Rise of hosted

The speed of change in the market was also underlined by Paul Benson, Managing Director at National Telecoms Installations (NTI), who during the past 12 months has witnessed a big increase in requests from dealers for installations of hosted systems across a number of different platforms. Just 12 months ago these installs amounted to one per month, NTI now installs two or three sites per week for its dealer customer base.

“While hosted is still not right for every end user client, the format is certainly a trend we are adapting to



Shaun Lynn

Having the right parts available when required is becoming ever more important to businesses.

serve,” stated Benson. “The increase in hosted telephony installations has also driven demand for our cat5e and cat6 cabling services as dealers look to remove older PBXs on traditional CW1308 cabling and replace them with hosted telephony on a proven certified LAN.”

Benson has not, to date, seen a drop in demand for NTI’s PBX installation and maintenance services. On the contrary, the move of existing systems from ISDN and analogue to SIP is on the increase, and sites with larger more complex needs often don’t suit the hosted model, he pointed out. “We find the most successful

resellers have expanded their portfolio to ensure they are selling a solution handpicked from a toolbox of products which includes traditional PBX, hosted, PSTN and SIP technologies, rather than focusing on one or the other,” added Benson.

Agilitas’ main area of expertise is in Inventory-as-a-Service. “By extending our wholesale Inventory-as-a-Service portfolio to provide inventory support, training, repairs, hardware sales and technical support, we’ve developed our offering and grown turnover by 30 per cent in the last year as a result,” said Shaun Lynn, CEO of Agilitas.



Rob Darby

The skills shortage is the biggest challenge facing any company operating within the technology industry.

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The growth of the cloud and mobile workforce has changed the demand for spares, focusing on delivery in data centres with less on-premise hardware. "We've seen dependence on IT rise fast," added Lynn. "Having the right parts available when required is becoming ever more important to businesses. At the same time, we see the wider industry facing a number of challenges. The continual squeeze on margins is making organisations look at new ways to maximise revenue, and post and pre-sales services are now an integral part of all profitable product sales and processes."

The company has grown its partner base by approximately 18 per cent and found Inventory-as-a-Service to be in most demand. "However, this service is being increasingly adopted in conjunction with technical support or training," added Lynn. "This enhances the service offering and introduces elements of differentiation to partners. We're also expecting to see a significant increase in cloud-based data storage and the criticality of uptime in onsite and offsite infrastructure."

Agilitas has developed two key opportunities for growth – identifying new partners and extending its capability into additional product sets and markets. "We constantly need to adapt in order to be ahead of the curve, and continuously improve service levels to meet expectations while investing in skills and development to maintain current product experience," said Lynn.

Investing in the future has also been a priority

The chemistry between outsource providers and their partners is more potent than ever

for Maintel which created a new partner services team following its merger with Proximity. It supplies two main types of service – Professional Services (including engineering, installation and consultancy) and Managed Services (including maintenance and support). Over the last year Maintel has increased its number of partners by around 10 per cent.

The key requirements in demand are taking on the support of legacy systems, specialist skills complementing its channels' own resources,

and providing a single point for consolidating all unified communications, contact centre, workforce optimisation and data networking needs.

"Tactically, the requests have been for our skills, expertise, geographic coverage, availability and breadth of portfolio," said Chris Bain, Director of Partner Services, Maintel.

"There will be a natural progression for systems integrators and outsourcers to want to address a bigger market. For telcos, they will need to focus their energy and effort on current systems, not legacy devices, so will need partners to do that. Channels need a partner who will allow them to keep what they have now and move to the future. Resellers need to show value beyond the traditional sales model. They will need to assist the customer at the beginning and end of investment cycles.

"Partner services enable resellers, outsourcers, systems integrators and
Continued on page 31



Chris Bain

Channels need a partner who will allow them to keep what they have now and also move to the future.

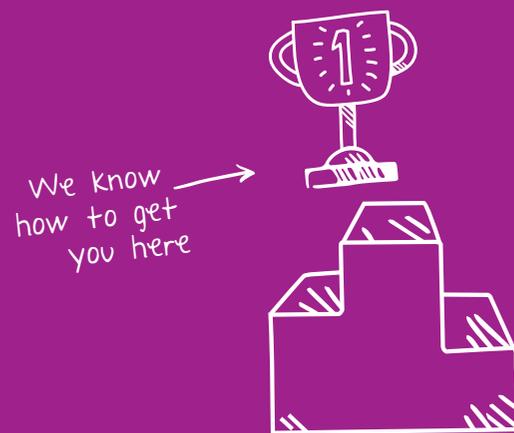
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The bandwidth booster

Inequalities in high speed broadband access are a great concern for many businesses in the deprived regions, but Philip Davies, CEO of Worcester-based VeloComms, has set about equalising this disparity with a bandwidth boosting bonding solution.

Accepting the broadband status quo is not an option for any business: Enter VeloComms, a specialist in broadband bonding, WAN connectivity, IP voice and a security systems integrator. "Our primary focus is broadband bonding," stated Davies. "By bonding between two and 12 broadband connections together, high speed connections can be cost-effectively delivered throughout the UK. Bandwidth can be quickly and easily increased to provide the flexibility and scalability that businesses require. With the increased use of the Internet, cloud-based services, IP voice and video, the need for high speed, cost-effective bandwidth has never been more important."

Although broadband is becoming widely available the bandwidth offered can vary remarkably by location. Three years ago Davies identified this variance as a clear opportunity to provide fast broadband connectivity to under-served businesses wanting to exploit VoIP, cloud and other online services. In

2013 the company signed an agreement with US firm Mushroom Networks to bring its broadband bonding solutions to the UK. The Truffle range of products enable the aggregation of low cost, readily available broadband connections. Individual Truffle units can be used for high speed access to the Internet and multiple units can be deployed between offices.

"We've come across companies on large business parks with connections of just a few Mbps," said Davies. "Using broadband bonding we increased their bandwidth and enabled them to boost productivity and reduce costs through the deployment of online and hosted services. With products that offer leased line emulation capabilities we can bond ADSL, fibre, EFM and other line technologies to create point-to-point and point-to-multi-point networks for branch offices. These are cost-effective and offer high performance, resilience and scalability."

VeloComms initially launched a series of dedicated routers aimed at the corporate



Philip Davies

market. They delivered throughput in excess of 900Mbps and had a feature set suitable for the most demanding of environments. "By launching a monthly subscription-based service with a range of affordable bonding routers we opened up a new range of market opportunities for our partners and ourselves," said Davies. "Low cost of entry and monthly subscription costs made broadband bonding viable for SMEs and home workers."

Key partners

As well as Mushroom Networks, VeloComms' technology partners include Jola, Nubo Consulting and Sharedband. VeloComms has grown significantly over the last 12 months, primarily through the recruitment of a number of partners wanting products and services that complement their own offerings – whether that's VoIP, UC or cloud orientated.

"We have enabled them to close opportunities where a lack of resilient, scalable and cost-effective bandwidth was a barrier to sales," stated Davies.

Another priority is to drive increased awareness of broadband bonding and its benefits. "There is still an expectation that high speed broadband will be available to all, but that is not the case," commented Davies. "For those have-nots, other technologies will need to be deployed and broadband bonding plays an important role, ensuring fast broadband is available to businesses that increasingly depend upon it."

Davies realised early in his career that businesses would come to depend on technology. His first exposure to the comms sector was working for an insurance company. He was shown an early version of an application that had the potential to

replace a significant number of office positions. Fearing the worst, he jumped ship and found a junior network infrastructure role, and has never looked back. In these formative years Davies was also influenced during a period of employment by a serial entrepreneur.

"I saw how innovative products, great support and added value for the reseller channel were the foundations of a successful business," said Davies. "I always try to emulate the partnership ethos, hard work and focus that made an impression on me. Since then I have been fortunate to work both as an end user and in the industry during exciting, fast growth times. The constant change and evolution in our sector is a real motivation."

Just a minute with Philip Davies...

Name one thing you could not do without in your job: Suppliers and partners

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

Name three ideal dinner guests: Richard Branson, he's inspirational; Leonardo da Vinci for his creativity and vision; and Donald Campbell for his single minded approach to record breaking

What do you fear the most? Whatever the challenge I face it

Top tip: Impartial and honest advice today can lead to an order tomorrow

How would you like to be remembered? As someone trustworthy who always did his best

How do you relax? Radio controlled models, cycling and live music



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Continued from page 29 telcos to do this without major investment in personnel. Our partners look for a company to not only provide the services they don't have, but also to be an integral part of their customer engagement and growth plans."

Juniper Bridge is an outsource provider to the industry supplying customer support software, 24x7 support services and device logistics solutions to more than 80 telecoms and IT businesses. The firm has also witnessed a growing requirement to create flexible support models, and for the delivery of enhanced customer support technologies where cost of ownership is too high for a service provider.

Resellers wanting to get to grips with new technology approach Juniper Bridge for discussions that are becoming increasingly collaborative and partnership focused. "Clients approach us for a diverse set of reasons," said Simon Johnson, Commercial Director. "Scalability and flexibility are of course key considerations, but they are also looking for tangible value adds for their own propositions. As a result, we spend a lot of time developing our systems to deliver solutions

There is more demand for cloud-based products, IT desktop and support for network monitoring systems

that, ironically for us at least, seek to reduce the customer support cycle. The trick is about creating a continuously improving relationship with a client and to openly look at process and system integration."

Changing support model

Historically, Juniper Bridge's revenues have mostly been driven by outsourced technical support contracts which are still growing, but resellers' support requirements are changing as they move to converged technologies. "There is more demand for cloud-based products (particularly hosted PBX and Wi-Fi), IT desktop (Microsoft 365) and support for network monitoring systems (for example, proactive fibre circuit and leased line monitoring)," noted Johnson.

"Revenue has doubled in the last 12 months following growth in sales of our technical support software which has been complemented by a number of large CPE logistics wins. We have invested in R&D and in our CloudKeeper technology. The software provides a full technical back office solution that unifies with multiple technologies, carriers and technical support models, including our own. Our CloudKeeper portal has developed beyond recognition over the last two years and we are constantly bringing on new enhancements."

Link Connect is a network and IT hosting company based in Hampshire. It uses outsourcing to bring flexibility to its customer support model. Operations Manager James Smith said: "We use an outsourced provider for our front of house which gives us a true lights-on first line support capability with readily available agents to answer our calls. They follow our processes, ensuring the customer receives a consistent high standard of service."

This enables Link Connect's tier 2 technical team to focus on serious incidents and put customers' change requests, security matters and managed services before line issues and other time consuming tasks that 'just need doing'. "Offering legacy ISP services with our managed services means we have volume calls and faults that require carrier management," added Smith. "Our outsource partner takes this pain away, looking after our products like leased lines, VoIP, Wi-Fi, DSL and email.

"This is not without some risk to the customer support model, and shows why outsourcing must be viewed as a partnership. Choosing a partner with the right support tools and flexibility to their approach is key." ■



Simon Johnson

Revenue has doubled in the last 12 months following growth in sales of our technical support software.



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Tollring chief makes big

The result of Tollring's astute partnering strategy is that Managing Director Tony Martino has gathered ever more cards to his pack and become a player on a wider stage.

Martino arrived in the UK from Australia in 1994 after completing a computer systems engineering degree. He spotted an advert in the Evening Standard for a technical service's role with the fledgling Tollring and got the job. Its CEO and founder, Chris Mennie, had a big influence on Martino. "Tollring was founded on technical knowhow and we gelled from the outset," he said. "My technical perspective was a great fit with Chris' sales expertise. Working at Tollring has been

the best job I've had. In fact, it's the only job I've had."

Mennie left the company in 2002 when Martino led a management buyout and took over as Managing Director. "My Italian origins mean that I'm passionate and family is very important," said Martino. "This includes my Tollring family. Everyone has a part to play wherever they sit in the company. As the business grows this will become more challenging but I'll do my best to ensure we don't lose the family ethos."

Tollring is a well-established software developer specialising in telecoms management, billing and call recording solutions, delivered on-premise or via the cloud. The firm's product suites are all developed in-house and Martino prioritises high levels of re-investment into product development and infrastructure.

Headquartered in Uxbridge and with offices in the USA, Australia and India, Tollring has 35 staff and year-on-year profits driven by incremental organic growth since 2010. Partnerships with Samsung, Mitel and BroadSoft extend Tollring's global reach. And



Tony Martino

its solutions are delivered through 850-plus channel partners including ICT resellers, SIs, SPs, BPOs and phone manufacturers. Almost 6,000 companies across the UK, Europe, USA and Australia depend on Tollring's solutions that report on an estimated 470,000 business phone lines and telecoms devices. "Investment in staff, product development and marketing is on the increase," said Martino. "We are currently experiencing incredible growth and we expect this to continue over the next two to three years."

Strategic planning

Managing growth involves meticulous professional judgment. It must balance the requirement for seamless efficiency against uninterrupted service levels for new and existing partners across the world. "We will take what we've learnt in the

UK and replicate it in global markets, but managing this growth is currently our main challenge," added Martino. "It is far more challenging than we first thought. As our brand gains better recognition we need to be efficient as we expand into new partnerships around the world. The big question is how best to service our new partners. Our solution is to recruit good people while ensuring our products and services are designed to be easy to support. This means empowering our partners to become true experts and helping them to take our products to market."

Tollring's products revolve around what the firm is good at – telecoms analytics. The potency of analytics lies not just in the bulk gathering of data but in how that data is used. "This is a broad area and we are constantly

looking at how we can evolve our proposition and build on our current product set," said Martino. "The focus is always on data collection and bringing valuable insights for our clients."

Other areas of development are Tollring's call recording technology and bringing fraud management solutions to market. "Our partners have fed us their requirements," he explained. "Fraud continues to be a real problem, particularly around the adoption of SIP and the cloud. We are developing some advanced fraud monitoring capabilities along with the ability for resellers to quickly provision our services to their customers. Our overall approach is to develop and market products that are aligned to a specific technology and then white label them. This in-skin approach has proved hugely

Key achievements

- ISO 9001 certified since 2009
- Gained certification to international standard ISO/IEC 27001 for Information Security Management in 2015
- 2015: Computing magazine's Data Visualisation of the Year Award and CNA's Best Call Management Solution
- 2013 and 2014: European IT and Software Excellence Awards for Big Data, Business Intelligence and Analytics Solution of the Year

strides across the world

successful with Samsung and we are now mirroring that with Mitel and its channel to take our products global."

Martino's white label strategy enables Tollring to develop long-standing partnerships, and the 10 year relationship with Samsung is a testament to Tollring's ability to keep its products relevant to the market. "The latest ICS Online solution enables us to repeat this approach in a simpler way and offer our white label solution to all of our resellers," stated Martino. "In turn, they can offer our services under their own brand. They can differentiate their offer by avoiding me-too products and ultimately have more engaged conversations with customers that don't revolve around price."

Tollring has been having such conversations from the outset. In the early 90s, with three staff working in Piccadilly, Tollring delivered telecoms billing solutions to its London-based clients. While these were not sophisticated by today's standards they were cutting edge at the time. "For the old techies like me, our applications were written in DOS and connected to a PBX system with a RS 232 serial cable," recalled Martino. "On the back of this we provided some innovative telephony billing applications. This was during the rise of serviced offices and we successfully delivered billing and communications management tools for these new office facilities."

The extent of Tollring's commitment to lasting relationships is revealed in the values that have guided its partnering policy for over 22

years. Tollring was selected as a software applications partner for Samsung Business Communications in September 2004, providing a white labelled version of the iCall Suite. This was a significant milestone for Tollring and a turning point for the business. "Samsung has remained a long-standing partner," added Martino. "The success of our Samsung relationship helped to define our strategy on how we take our products to market and we have since mirrored this relationship with other partners."

The OEM partnership with Samsung expanded to Europe in 2005 and in 2011 to Australia. Two years later Tollring formed an OEM partnership with Samsung Telecommunications America. In 2011, a partnership was formed with the sole UK distributor for Ericsson-LG, Pragma Distribution, to provide integrated call management, contact centre and call recording solutions for the iPECS PBX range.

In another significant move Tollring linked up with BroadSoft in September 2014 and joined the BroadSoft Xtended Developer Programme to introduce iCS insight to the BroadSoft Marketplace. The OEM agreement with Mitel followed in April 2015 under which Tollring delivers cloud analytics on the MiCloud hosted telephony platform. "Mitel has recognised how important Business Intelligence (BI) is for its customers so will provide iCS Online to its channel partners as a white labelled solution," commented Martino.

Modern technology is eroding business models

once seen as pillars of the comms industry, prompting companies such as Tollring to shift tactics and adapt to survive. The chemistry of comms is in constant flux, and the adoption of SIP and the move to the cloud has had a major impact on Tollring. "We've been able to capitalise on these developments, for example, with our cloud-based call recording IP that is fully owned by Tollring," explained Martino. "The evolution of BI also had an influence on how we have developed. One of our core

We will take what we've learnt in the UK and replicate it in global markets

skills is the management and presentation of data in real-time to our clients. So the fact that BI is a key driver for businesses is a big factor in our growth and success."

According to Gartner a CIO's top three priorities are BI and analytics, followed by the cloud and mobile. "We are aligned with these priorities as we work to ensure our analytics are available on any device at any time," said Martino. "The key is not just telecoms but unified communications. We are looking to offer some new cloud and UC services such as Skype for Business analytics that will have a strong partner focus."

End users are also investing heavily in sophisticated

CRM systems and a priority for Martino is to ensure Tollring's analytics can be accessed by them. "We will be enhancing our APIs and making them more accessible and available," he added. "We will evolve our products so that customers can extract and consume our analytics as easily as possible but not necessarily via our own systems."

Also in the pipeline is a new version of ICS Online and Desktop planned to launch in March. "We've made significant enhancements around the user experience and updated the portal so partners can better utilise our services," said Martino. "The new products will help partners to understand their customers better and will give them greater insight into how customers are consuming their services. In June we will also introduce the fourth iteration of the IC360 telecoms and expense management solution within the reseller space. This has a strong end customer proposition so resellers can look at all telecoms expenses within an estate and see how customers are using their services.

"And while there are excellent billing providers in the market, we are also looking to partner with these providers to enhance the offering that partners can take to their customers. The key focus is consolidated billing and utilisation of services to ensure our partners and their customers have a full understanding of their entire telecoms infrastructure."

Tollring's analytics and BI services help resellers to stay relevant by enabling

customers to measure efficiencies from their transformational projects. "We urge partners to understand our product portfolio," noted Martino. "I'd like those in the channel who have known us for many years to see our products with fresh eyes and fully consider the huge range of opportunities that are now available to them. We have secured access to new markets, now we need to ensure that our audiences are informed and understand what we have to offer." ■

Just a minute with Tony Martino...

Role model: Steve Jobs: What a legacy he left. I like his ambition, determination, ideas and ability to bring vision to life

Name one thing you could not do without in your job: My glasses

What possession could you not live without? My kitchen knife that I keep extremely sharp

What talent do you wish you had? To ski. I tried once but it was a disaster

What do you fear the most? Failure, not just in business but also in everything

Three ideal dinner guests? Richard Branson, a great businessman but a little off the wall; Mohammed Ali, a legend; and my wife!

Your greatest strengths and what you could improve on? I'm good at creating a strong team and have the right technical skills. But I'm rubbish at delegating

Tell us something about yourself we don't know? I won a competition at High School for having the sexiest legs



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Global 4 thrives on IP

Not for nothing was Horsham-based Global 4 Communications crowned NEC's Best Reseller in EMEA for 2015. Here, Managing Director Nigel Barnett reveals the firm's winning growth strategy.

It didn't take long for Barnett to get his foot in the door and feel comfortably at home in the comms industry having secured a number of early estate agency contracts. The first deal snowballed and proved to be a turning point for Global 4, which was established in 1998. "We secured an order for five telephone systems at an estate agent in Kent," explained Barnett. "The agent was then purchased by a large group with 150 offices. The group wanted to repeat the model we had rolled out so we supplied it with systems. Within 12 months it bought another group of companies with 350 sites. Within six months of that acquisition we had rolled out NEC telephony to the entire group including lines and calls."

Global 4's influence on the High Street has grown significantly. "We have many High Street chains as customers, with roughly eight locations in every High Street taking our services," stated Barnett. "As well as reviewing their monthly expenditure we offer IP services using our recently launched NEC 3C solution. IP is an interesting subject, but what a steep learning

curve. The investment is now showing a terrific return. We are also 'playing' in the mobile arena and this will be driven forward in 2016."

Fishing for tiddlers has never floated Barnett's boat, but landing an order from the Unipart Group for 268 telephone systems while sitting at home negotiating the contract is right up his street, and showed that his business ethics were paying dividends in the early days. Now 62, Barnett started selling when he was 18. "I had several different businesses, predominantly selling photocopiers like many of us in those days," he recalled. "I was fortunate and able to secure the sale of two businesses that allowed me to take a few years off."

He wanted to move away from previous business models that relied on many sales people and telesales selling on savings. So after a period of careful consideration he established Global 4 with Rob Whyte-Venables (Service Director) and Jenny Fright (Administration Director) now retired. "Our philosophy was based on selling one system to a company that had many other opportunities," he stated. "Setting our sights



Nigel Barnett

on tough targets and high quality customers meant we weren't able to hit the ground running. Lots of the bigger customers don't really want to deal with people who work out of their bedroom, even if it was rather large.

"Now, with a payroll of around 100 people, systems and procedures are a never ending daily challenge. We have always outsourced our billing but as we evolve we have new requirements in reporting and discipline that now involve internal developers and marketing people. This brings a whole new cast to the stage."

Offsetting challenges

Growth in the telecoms market has always been difficult, particularly as the cost of calls keeps dropping. Yet despite the challenges Global 4 continues to grow year-on-year. Three years ago the company branched out of B2B and entered the residential market for broadband and calls with Home Telecom. "Our turnover for 2015/16

will be around £16 million and we are looking for substantial growth next year," added Barnett.

"We have around 1,300 customers and more than 10,000 sites which all have telephony installed. Over the last three years we have complemented our range by adding data and MPLS circuits. These have countered the reduction in call costs and helped increase the business steadily with more than 2,000 circuits in place. We wanted a client base with future opportunities, so the choice was: Do we have 350 individual customers ringing us, or one person responsible for 350 branches? With the second option it's all about service and when someone rings, sort it."

That is exactly what Global 4 did when it threw a lifeline to a prominent estate agency group after its telephony supplier went out of business, terminating their contract with just six weeks notice and little support. Global 4 installed 100 lines, 400 extensions and

broadband to seven brands in 45 locations, with three days to spare. "This shows what can be done with design, planning and implementation from a great team of people," said Barnett.

Global 4 also set up the latest NEC 3C IP solution in two exclusive London data centres with support from Gamma and Voiceflex. Meanwhile, the introduction of IP gives the firm circa 80,000 extensions to upgrade. Barnett is currently rolling out projects for 10,000 IP extensions with over 2,000 already installed and a completion of the balance planned for the end of 2016. "Up to a couple of years ago Global 4 was a lifestyle business and I am fortunate to have brought up five children, four of them work for the company," added Barnett. "It would be any father's dream to see their family on a daily basis, but when they can actually sell and create business opportunities you sit back and say, 'we haven't done that bad'."

Just a minute with Nigel Barnett...

- Role model:** People who have built up empires from nothing
- Name three ideal dinner guests:** Alan Sugar, Peter Jones and Amanda Holden
- What do you fear the most?** Rejection
- Your strengths and weaknesses:** I can look at any set of figures and instantly put my finger on the challenge. I forget to praise people when they do well
- What talent do you wish you had?** To understand music and play an instrument



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*** Email Distribution (1st January 2014 to 31 December 2014, Average Distribution 14,499)

Time to get personal

Insight and personalisation will be the hot customer engagement topic in 2016, according to Martin Taylor, Director and co-founder of Content Guru.

The digital economy has empowered customers like never before. They have greater choice, more financial options and more opportunities to upgrade, downgrade and swap. They are also more aware of their options and more likely to churn if they get a better offer. "Today's consumers also have much higher service expectations," said Taylor. "They are more demanding and less tolerant of delay, with the expectation that they are going to receive instant access to information wherever they are, whenever the time, and over whichever communications channels they use. Good service is no longer just about satisfying isolated consumer requests. It's about the whole customer journey and knowing individuals, their desires, preferences and wherever possible their future intentions."

While this business transformation has been driven by higher consumer expectations, it has also been enabled by technology and changes in the way organisations view their service processes. "When the first call centres emerged the key objective of operators was to improve call handling efficiency and standardise service delivery," added Taylor.

"Success was measured by average handle time, service level, cost reduction, customer satisfaction and other limited metrics.

"By the early 2000s the first truly focused customer contact centres emerged. They often handled multiple customer contact channels with a much greater focus on workforce planning, service quality, first contact resolution and other quality metrics. But tomorrow's customer engagement hubs will improve the customer journey by connecting contacts with agents suited to their personalities and requirements."

According to Taylor such hubs will also ensure customers can converse seamlessly across preferred multiple channels with no loss in service quality; and enable organisations to develop effective campaign strategies (giving customers what they want when they need it); and be fully compliant with industry regulations.

"Future customer engagement hubs will also track unstructured demand using sophisticated real-time and historical reporting," added Taylor. "And provide value added services such as integrated secure payments over the phone; while supporting machine-



Martin Taylor

to-machine interactions and recognising the value of employee engagement and customer feedback."

He also underlined the importance of understanding what matters most to customers. "Every time we make contact with an organisation we leave a footprint of information," he said. "That information is collected across multiple channels. The information that can be gleaned from these interactions might relate to who we are, what we like, what we don't like, what products and services we own and rent, and what we're interested in buying in the future."

Smart hubs

Smart organisations are now using their customer engagement hubs not only to collect and collate this information but also to gain insights that enable them to deliver proactive services. "On recognising that a customer has regularly purchased a particular grocery product, for example, online retailers are promoting other products

they think the consumer may like," added Taylor. "Tourism companies are identifying customers that fit a particular profile to promote holidays. Other organisations are targeting particular points on the customer journey to deliver a high value personalised service."

Cloud platforms allow organisations to monitor activities and behaviours from the moment customers first land on their websites, through the buying and registration stages, to the time customers contact them – via phone, email, web chat, SMS or social media. "Many cloud services also provide advanced analytics and reporting capabilities which, when combined with past purchase histories, customer feedback and data from knowledge bases, ensure that customer journeys are both optimised and personalised," stated Taylor.

To illustrate his point Taylor cited National Rail Enquiries (NRE) which uses cloud communication services to deliver personalised travel

information to customers enquiring via SMS. The TrainTracker Text service interprets journey information provided by customers to interrogate NRE's Live Departure Board and Online Journey Planner systems and automatically sends back texts containing real-time travel information, as well as calculate the optimal route between stations. The service has several personalisation features and handles thousands of enquiries every day with an accuracy rate of 95-plus per cent.

In another example, UK Power Networks (UKPN) also uses personalisation to deliver information to customers. "When customers call in the event of a power outage they are asked to enter their postcode into an IVR service," explained Taylor. "Armed with this information the cloud platform interrogates UKPN's electricity monitoring systems and identifies relevant information about power status in their precise location. This information is then read back to customers over the phone using text-to-speech technology."

Key to these successful implementations is the use of self-service technology to deliver high volume personalised (or mass personalisation) services, and the use of cloud services to leverage information from multiple front and back office systems to create intelligent, customer friendly experiences. Taylor added: "By taking advantage of cloud contact centre services resellers can put together product packages that resolve more queries first time and deliver more personalised experiences at every step of the customer journey." ■

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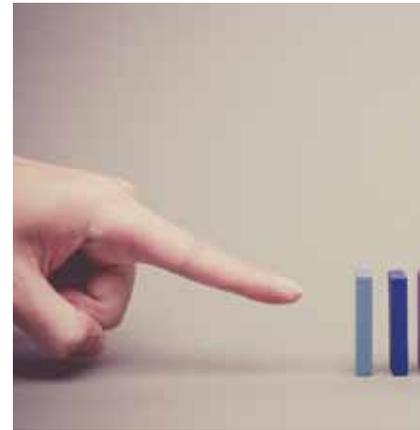
STUART DAVIS
TOTAL

“ As a channel, we are very good at selling connectivity, but it's what we sell on top that counts - and adds value. Cloud based services, whether Hosted PBX, Data Backup or even Office 365, all represent an opportunity to provide that value and tie the customer in, resulting in lower churn and higher margins. Owning the connection is one thing, the real opportunity comes from owning the delivery of services over that. I believe 2016 will also see IoT (M2M, H2M etc) gaining significant traction within the channel, with high forecast growth rates in connected devices. Again, we need to ensure we consider the proposition over and above physical enablers, by focussing on customer education, management platforms and service wrap. ”



CHARLES AYLWIN
8x8

“ Over the last year in some parts of the channel, the commoditisation of standard service offerings has seen prices driven down in a market crowded with near identical offerings. Making the most of mobility will be a key challenge for both vendors and the Channel in 2016. Having a truly viable cloud-based unified communications system for mobile devices means that for 'mobility' in 2016 buyers will be able to read 'agility' and 'flexibility' and this will be a game changer. Resellers have tapped into the 'analytics' trend and will continue to monetise it. Analytics have given customers the ability to optimise the way they run their businesses by unlocking the intelligence within their call and UC data flows. ”



So another year begins and as we sit bloated and hungover from all the festive reveling it's time for our annual trawl around the channel to assess what major players think will disrupt the way we develop and conduct our business dealings in the year ahead.

Our channel 'predictors' suggest cloud communications will continue to gain traction, The Internet of Things will create more opportunities and the demand for more agile, informative mobile working will increase at a pace. Ergo, Social Media will become part of a digitally transformed ecosystem, shaping customer experiences whilst real-time and content marketing will become more sophisticated and portable.

Another trend on their radar is big data and analytics which will be even bigger in the year ahead. In line with that view, the clever folk at Application Intelligence giant CAST predict "even cleverer data insights are possible thanks to super clever software that analyses every micro moment of every smartphone and web session".

Business analyst Brian Solis goes even further suggesting "marketers



DAVE MCGINN
DAISY DISTRIBUTION

“ It is inevitable that next year we will see more IT service providers and telcos becoming much more aligned, and it is this coming together of providers that will drive solutions like mobile over Wi-Fi to the fore in 2016. Owning the infrastructure at network level, effectively means that they own the complete journey from the 4G network to the Wi-Fi network, and so they are able to provide end users with a much more seamless experience. We will also begin to see a guise of quad-play action in the business market next year, which has been so successful in the consumer market. There will be a strong focus on product penetration with connectivity acting as the core enabler. ”



HENRY WEST
ECLIPSE

“ The buzz words of 2015 were IoT and Big Data and while 2016 will undoubtedly get us closer to a fully connected world, I don't think the real financial benefits will hit the channel until later. More immediate opportunities for us all lies in the changing of perceptions of small and medium businesses towards collaboration and making sure they can access their applications and data anywhere, anytime. Connectivity and hosting underpin both, but please understand the battleground for differentiation has shifted from the technology to the managed service experience. ”



DARREN FARNENDEN
ENTANET

“ Based on our experiences, over the past couple of years especially, we expect the boom in the adoption of Ethernet services to continue and drive business uptake of dedicated connectivity. As more companies adopt cloud based solutions and hosted applications, their reliance on connectivity will only increase. The opportunity for the channel is to explain the benefits of using guaranteed solutions such as leased lines, EFM and GEA, either as standalone connections or as part of a private virtual network where data needs to be shared across the organisation. Pricing competitiveness and the continuing emergence of new technologies and variants is a hugely attractive proposition for many businesses and fantastic news for the channel. ”



ARON TEACHER
FIDELITY GROUP

“ Perhaps the biggest short term growth opportunity for the channel is the growth in hosted opportunities in terms of improved customer experience, customer development and retention as well as critical margin improvement in the face of static or declining fixed line revenues. The disruptive threat to traditional telephone systems is cumulative, encompassing a reduction to the capital expenditure for the customer, lower operating costs of the technology and a reduction to the local servicing costs for the supplier. In the longer term, the Internet of Things (IoT) will provide the platform for huge disruptive technologies in the channel. Huge development in mobile data (and in ways in which it is consumed) is predicted to meet this requirement. ”

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PAUL BARNETT
ICUK

“ Adoption rates of VoIP will be one of the industry's biggest opportunities in 2016, and also a significant weakness if customer expectations are not met in terms of quality, reliability and in cost savings. Alongside this, we can expect to see greater acceptance of Cloud concepts which will inevitably push demand for next generation broadband delivery to be stepped up, and the realisation that Ethernet adoption is now a necessity, not a luxury, for a growing number of SMEs. ”



TOM MAXWELL
NIMANS

“ There are many opportunities for resellers to capitalise on in 2016. For some they will have to wrestle with how to migrate their bases from a steady recurring revenue to a new business model. There are still a lot of resellers with typical lines and calls based businesses and with the continued impact of the Cloud, times are changing. Some have had safe robust revenue for over 20 years, but they need to make a leap of faith by locking in and upgrading their customers before potentially someone else does. On-premise or off-premise is another interesting question. The PBX arena will continue to come under threat as hosted gathers pace. ”

will be able to analyse in-store experiences, footfall, visits online, visits through apps, frequency of visits, behaviors and transactions, brand affinities, favorite products, demographics, location, loyalty program utilisation, service quality, queue and abandonment, capacity planning and resource utilisation”.

These 'Beacons' will provide businesses with endless opportunities to collect massive amounts of untapped data, such as customer dwell time at a particular location within a specified time and date range, busiest hours throughout the day or week, the number of people who walk by a location each day, etc. Retailers can then make improvements to products, staff allocation in various departments and services, and so on.

Interestingly however, CAST analysts envisage that “the clear choice to cloudify everything could get a bit murky as legacy apps and brittle architecture fail to hold up to the demands in the Cloud. To solve cloud performance, reliability and stability issues, business will simply move apps back on premise.”

It's all enough to reach for the Alka Seltzer. Cheers!



MARK SAUNDERS
NINE GROUP

“ Everyone in marketing talks about Big Data, but I am advocate of Small Data – the recognition that most of us do not work for blue chip organisations with massive budgets for data collection, analysis, algorithms and aggravation. However, if we strive to collect the key contact and headline data from our customers at every touch point and then use it wisely to segment, engage and inform, then we will build the close relationships that we all crave, become trusted and hence grow revenue and margin. It may lack glamour, but doing the basics well is something that many organisations fail to grasp, so by embracing this, you can be strangely disruptive, while making your own business stand out and succeed. ”



JAMES EMM
OAK

“ Hosted telephony is gaining traction in the true SME space although reseller views on its profitability for the channel vary greatly. This is also an opportunity for Oak, however, as we partner with resellers on rental models (on-demand) and we also look forward to partnering with PABX manufacturers on their emerging hosted platforms. We also (gratefully) receive enquiries from hosted providers when call-recording requirements are very specialised. 2016 will be a year of evolution, not revolution! ”



GUY MILLER
TALK TALK BUSINESS

“ As always our fantastically innovative industry poses both real challenges and real opportunities in the coming year. The channel should be focussed on the growth of major players in the SIP trunking market and must embrace the change like never before. The 2025 date set by BT is the date the last person has their lights switched off, not the date everyone needs to act and actively migrate both their own client base to SIP. Targeting clients who haven't been switched over yet will be the only way to secure these revenues going forwards. The channel should also closely observe the actions of Microsoft and Google who have ambitions in this space and could gain significant market share very quickly. ”



JAMES HICKMAN
VIRTUAL1

“ Rather than one big change, we envisage smaller advances bringing opportunities and challenges in equal measure. These will include: increased automation, as initiatives like SDN and NFV mature and a broader range of virtualized and pay-as-you-go products materialize; things like firewalls and load-balancers will be software devices in the Cloud available via a portal, once hardware vendors make their licensing work in a new model; mobile and fixed telephony will work more seamlessly as hardware vendors feel less threatened by the mobile operators; the IPv4 market will accelerate as address space gets scarcer and the value of those assets increases as a result; new standards regarding identity management will emerge from IoT whilst privacy and integration issues get shaken out. ”

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Put your hardworking teams in the limelight

Acknowledging the success of your hardworking sales and marketing teams should never be underestimated and the opportunity to give them the recognition they deserve has come round again.

We are delighted to announce that the Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards 2016 is open for entries!

Now in its fifth year, the Awards will once again give ICT Channel businesses a unique opportunity to acknowledge the skill, determination and success of their sales and marketing awards.

Specifically aimed at teams rather than individuals, the Comms Dealer Sales and Marketing awards will once again be fully supported by Eclipse – who take up their position as lead sponsor for the third year running.

Pete Tomlinson, Director of Sales, Marketing and Product at Eclipse, part of the KCOM Group, said: "These awards celebrate the enormous contribution our sales and marketing teams make in creating value, both in our own business and for our customers. At a time when we are seeing the most successful channel players reshaping their organisations from being product centric into putting relationships at the very heart of what they do,

it's time for our sales and marketing teams to come to the fore. We are now not just evangelists, but also educators for a whole new way of working.

"I am a passionate supporter of this awards process because it gives us all the chance to recognise and reward our teams who spend their time making life easier and better for our customers. Their collective hard work, positivity and pride are what make the channel such a privilege to be a part of."

Perfect platform

Taking place on May 5th 2016, the Awards finalist ceremony returns to the stunning ballroom at the refurbished Park Lane Hotel in London's West End, which provides the perfect platform to celebrate in style.

So why should you enter your teams? Nigel Sergent, Editorial Director at Comms Dealer, summarised the benefits of participation: "As a magazine we always applaud the success of resellers, vendors and distributors operating in the ICT channel and these

awards gives companies a unique opportunity to achieve industry wide recognition and widen their status with customers and partners alike. Any company that wants to be recognised as a serious channel player should take the opportunity to put their sales and marketing teams in the limelight and this is it!"

The 2015 awards were staged at the lavish Café De Paris in London, hosted by popular TV presenter Chris Hollins. One of the stand out winners was Berry Telecom who secured a Best Reseller Sales Team Award and the coveted Overall Sales Team of the Year Award.

Managing Director Simon Langford was thrilled with his team's success: "The awards have given Berry confirmation that its sales strategy and service levels are recognised as leading by our own high performing industry. We're now able to more easily quantify and communicate to our customers, and prospective customers, the level of performance and service Berry provides. Here's to the awards in 2016!"



Pete Tomlinson, Director of Sales, Marketing and Product at Eclipse.

With a full range of supplier and reseller awards up for grabs, competition for places in the final shortlist will be as stiff as ever. Here are the categories:

Reseller Categories

- Reseller Sales Team of the Year (businesses up to £2.5m turnover)
- Reseller Sales Team of the Year (businesses £2.5m- £7.5m turnover)
- Reseller Sales Team of the Year (businesses over £7.5m turnover)
- Best Marketing Campaign

Distributor Category

- Channel Account Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Campaign of the Year

Vendor Category

- Channel Account Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Campaign of the Year

Service Provider Category

- Channel Account Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Campaign of the Year

Best Channel Marketing/PR agency

Overall Sales Team of the Year

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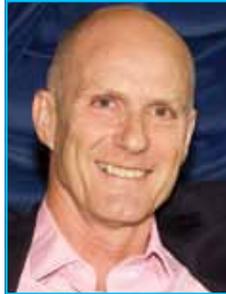
LAST YEAR'S WINNERS OUTLINE THE BENEFITS...



TOM METCALFE
CHANNEL TELECOM

"Having been recognised as Service Provider Marketing Team of the Year 2015 was a terrific accomplishment and something we are incredibly proud of. We

always try to be as innovative and creative as possible with our marketing and for those efforts to be acknowledge is enormously gratifying. The CDSA's are a fantastic event with the award taking pride of place in our office."



DUNCAN WILKINSON
TMS

"TMS were delighted to win the coveted Marketing Team of the Year Award. We had worked hard to create a dynamic team that could deliver innovative

and effective marketing messages. The award was hugely uplifting to the whole of the TMS workforce, giving us a real boost in confidence going forward and established more credibility for TMS with the channel community at large."



JOHN BIRD
EXERTIS

"We're were delighted to win the Best Distributor Channel Account Team of the Year award for the second successive year. This 'seal of approval' from industry

experts is the perfect tool in our sales 'tool kit' to validate the solutions we build for our resellers, new and existing alike; new resellers are comforted by the fact they are partnering with an award winning supplier."



PAUL TAYLOR
VOICEFLEX

"The Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards is one of the highlight events of the channel and we are very proud to be a winner of the 2015 awards. It is important

that we continue to recognise the hard work and achievements of staff and celebrate their accomplishments. It is always a pleasure to share success and network with colleagues at an enjoyable and entertaining event. "



ALAN SHRAGA
FIDELITY GROUP

"Being awarded account team of the year at the 2015 Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards 2015, reflects the hard work and high standards of customer

service the Fidelity team achieve every day. This accolade has given Fidelity an edge in winning business and attracting new Channel Partners who will only accept the best."



CHRIS GOODMAN
FOCUS

"Winning the Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards in 2015 was a great accomplishment. The award is a fantastic way to demonstrate to both aspirational

salespeople and established performers, that Focus Group is a business offering a platform to achieve great things both individually and as part of a successful team. It makes people want to work for you, and that is priceless!"



WILL MOREY
PRAGMA

"The Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards are a great reference point for the whole industry on who the leaders are in the channel at a vendor, distributor and reseller level. The event is a

fantastic opportunity to celebrate the hard work and investment in building some of the most innovative businesses in the UK. We look forward to being part of the awards again this year."



GARETH PRITCHARD
UNION STREET

"At Union Street we put a lot of thought into developing marketing campaigns and content that are of interest to the channel community and that get Union Street noticed. To have these

efforts recognised and rewarded at the prestigious Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards was a very proud moment for our marketing team, and indeed for everyone at Union Street."



TOM O'HAGAN
VIRTUAL 1

"Our success in winning industry awards is a gauge against the targets we set ourselves; Winning Vendor Channel Account Team of the Year was a great boost to our whole team. We know that if we

continue to win awards, then we are doing the right things – and our partners know that we are still at the cutting edge and worthy of their trust."



SIMON LONGFORD BERRY TELECOM

The Berry Telecom team were thrilled to receive the 'Sales Team of the Year Awards' for its revenue category and as overall winners. The awards have given Berry confirmation that its sales strategy and service levels are recognised as leading by our own high performing industry. We can now more easily quantify and communicate to our customers, and prospective customers, the level of performance and service Berry provides."

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Top considerations for suc

The question is, which leadership values and qualities will come to the fore this year. Here, seasoned channel leaders address today's leadership priorities, challenges, pitfalls and opportunities, and discuss leadership models that will successfully address the pressing issues.

There was a time when leadership was about leading from the front and pulling the rest of the business along with you, but that's no longer the case, according to Martin St. Quinton, Non-Executive Chairman, Annodata. "You can't be an expert at everything and it's a big mistake to assume that you have all the right answers and fail to get input from the other stakeholders in your business, not least sales people on the front line speaking to clients day-in day-out," he commented. "If anyone is going to have a feel for the market and the 'mood music' it's them. Successful business leaders recognise that. They are good listeners and communicators, which ultimately helps them to make informed and considered decisions."

Every reseller comes from a different place and will have their own challenges to overcome. But something that no business leader in the channel can ignore is cloud computing, believes St. Quinton. "You need to work out what the opportunities and challenges that cloud presents are and how you are going to respond to them," he added. "Few, if any, resellers are going to be untouched by the cloud revolution. You either embrace it, no matter how taxing a process that may be, or have the rug pulled out from under you by a competitor that has beaten you to it and siphoned off your client base."

In such an environment it's doubly important to have a clear vision of where you want the company to

go and to communicate that clearly and effectively throughout the entire business. "It's the only way to get results and get everyone moving towards the same goal," said St. Quinton. "Give all your key staff a stake in your business."

Good leadership skills take years to develop and what it means to be a good leader can change. "Anyone can make decisions, but it's ultimately about good judgement," said St. Quinton. "To have good judgement you've got to develop the skills and experience to understand what you're dealing with. Leadership is as much about knowing when to take risks and drive change as much as it is about knowing when to sit back and maintain the status quo."

A key priority for business leaders in the channel is maintaining focus, pointed out Elsa Chen, CEO, Entanet. "In the technology sector the greatest challenge for any leader is to not be distracted by noises about the 'next big thing'," she said. "The best leaders know when and how to maintain focus."

Another challenge is the balance between leading change and developing employees. It's a typical trait of business leaders to lead change, but this poses the challenge of bringing people on board and developing their capabilities to make the



Elsa Chen

It is so easy to become a numbers driven leader. Numbers are of course important, but never forget that people are an asset. Listen to your staff, value and invest in them.

change happen. "The third key challenge is cash and investment," added Chen. "Investment needs to be made continually to address the ever-changing conditions in our industry. This can be for new technology, new systems, new skills or simply more staff."

"The market is fiercely competitive, margins are tight and growth is challenging, so it is easy to become a numbers driven leader and forget that what actually makes a great business is its people. Numbers are of course important, but never forget that people are an asset. Listen to your staff, value and invest in them."

The most important goal a reseller business leader needs to accomplish this year is to create a three year plan, according to Chen. "The market is getting tougher and many businesses are already under pressure to make significant investments to keep themselves in the game," she said. "If you haven't engaged in long-term strategic thinking and financial modelling, do so now. This will help to maintain the focus and prevent unnecessary distractions."

The most important qualities of an impeccable leader are integrity, communication and commitment, believes Chen.



Martin St. Quinton

You can't be an expert at everything and it's a big mistake to assume that you have all the right answers.



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Successful leadership in 2016

"Often you need people to just trust your instinct, your decisions and you as a person," she commented. "People will only over deliver if they respect you. That respect needs to be built on the high moral standards that you practice in both your professional and personal life. Demonstrate how important the end goal is by showing your commitment even more at challenging times. If you don't believe in yourself, who will?"

The biggest leadership blunder is not recognising and rewarding high performers, while turning a blind eye to under-performers, observed Lee Shorten, a leadership consultant and executive coach. "Managers are too often created because they have been employed the longest or they are technically the smartest, rather than being strong leaders," he said. "This creates the exact opposite of an environment that breeds great leaders, who in turn build great companies."

As well as constructing a strong managerial framework, building equity value while keeping the focus on day-to-day operational activities is also a priority for most businesses, especially in the consolidating ICT market. "The focus should also be on moving away from product specialists towards customer ownership," said Shorten. "Customers expect more from their suppliers. They want partners as they transition their businesses."

Shorten believes people can become great leaders if they have the right attitude and the right environment. His three most important facets



Bob Falconer

Business leaders need to find their place in a world where customers increasingly want to buy all of their comms, often including the IT, from one supplier.

of leadership are rhythm, balance and discipline. Shorten advises leaders to establish predictable rhythms within their organisations, so people know what is expected of them weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually. "Talk to your teams to ensure they are on track. Listen to them, they often know what they're doing," he said.

In terms of balance, Shorten pointed out the required balance between short-term revenue, mid-term pipeline and long-term value. "There is a balance between expecting hard work from staff and supporting them, between servicing customers and delivering efficiency, between having enough resource and delivering enough profit," he added. "There should be a continual review of these balances."

Commenting on his third imperative, discipline, Shorten said: "Business owners and managers often know what needs to be fixed, what is working well and who is not. Having the discipline to execute

on these is almost always the difference between successful businesses and unsuccessful ones."

Good leadership is often about guiding, encouraging and nurturing from behind, not just leading from the front, according to Gamma's CEO Bob Falconer. "But the most important task a reseller business leader needs to do this year is to find their place in a world where customers increasingly want to buy all of their comms, often including the IT, from one supplier who can deliver well and integrate it together," he said.

The biggest failure point of business leadership in today's market is believing in yourself too much, says Falconer. "Self-confidence is important, but the problem can be closed ears, not challenging yourself constantly and adjusting your strategy continuously. An ability to see the bigger picture and how the parts interact is important, along with having a clear differentiating strategy that can, with confidence and back-up data, lead to sustainable growth."

Finding, motivating, developing and keeping high quality people, particularly in the technical area, and developing a culture of innovation is a tall order for business leaders. Darren Hilton, Director of Partner Services at Timico, and who spent seven years in the military where leadership skills and teamwork are paramount, said: "To enjoy the luxury of a high performing team you have the challenge of recruiting and keeping skilled staff who will follow the direction that the leader wants to take the business in," he said.

"Failure as a leader is when people are not prepared to follow you. Finding people who are not prepared to accept the ordinary and who want to innovate and make a difference is a challenge. Striving to make your business stand out among its competitors is key, and by focusing on the creativity of your staff, encouraging them to feed ideas into the business and ploughing cash back into the company for R&D is key to the culture of innovation."

New generations are entering the workplace and their expectations are higher, their communication styles are different and social media is their primary means of communication, noted Hilton. "Their desire for progression is higher and faster," he added. "You have to adjust your pace to accommodate them and engage them in the right way to achieve the purpose you've set as a leader. Strong leaders have the ability to encourage people to follow them. They are clear about their purpose and where they want to go."

According to Hilton, a top priority for resellers this year is taking advantage of the current growth period in the market. "Sell more, adopt some of the newer technologies like hosted UC, look at the future and assess how ready you are for the competitive landscape of the next few years," he commented. "There will be more demand for customised products and tailoring to meet the needs of customers. Business leaders need breadth of experience, knowledge and capability so they can accommodate the variety of challenges ahead.

"Have a clear purpose for your organisation. Develop a specific direction for the business so that all the people know their part to play in delivering the service. That, combined with hiring great people, should equate to a high performing team. And be flexible and adaptable. Regardless of how good your strategy is, no plan survives first contact with the customer. Be prepared to bend and flex to the customer's requirements. ■



Darren Hilton

Develop a direction for the business so that all the people know their part to play in delivering the service.

Unify's big break in jails

The role of technology as a driver for business transformation is well understood. Not so well known is how ICT can help put lives that have gone off the rails back on track, according to Eddie Bird and Adam Esposito, joint Managing Directors of Unify Business Solutions, who illustrate how rehabilitation within prisons can be greatly enhanced by communications technology.

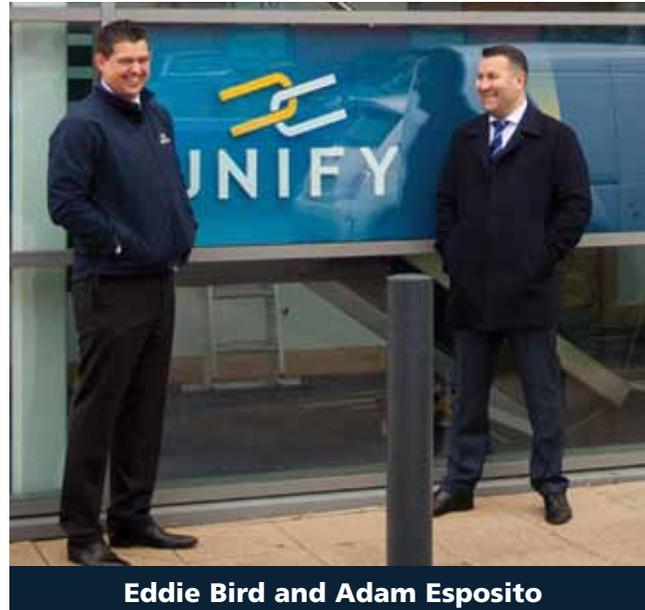
An early contract win soon after Chesterfield-based Unify Business Solutions was established in 2003 set the company on the path to becoming a global player in the prison sector. It all changed when the joint MDs signed up HMP Doncaster, which is still a customer. "That initial link with the custodial sector led us to work with a number of prisons in the UK, Channel Islands and New Zealand," commented Bird. "We have developed our own in-cell technology that aids the shift in focus to rehabilitation within the prison environment. Being able to contact friends and family in a safe and secure way can help support the reduction of reoffending."

Unify Business Solutions' technology also provides high level speech analysis which can quickly and easily identify calls of interest and provide intelligence to prison service staff. The company recently deployed such in-cell technology for the newly built Auckland South

Correctional Facility. "As we'd successfully provided technology for prisons in the UK and the Channel Islands it didn't seem like too much of a challenge to do it on the other side of the world," added Esposito. "We carry out some of the work remotely and have good contacts which ensures everything runs smoothly. We also have the support of a local company called Baycom."

Unify claims two prison sector firsts: Providing the first in-cell phones in the UK and again in the southern hemisphere. "We could have focused on just doing telecoms and IT for business, but we had the foresight to employ our own software development team and develop our own products," added Bird. "We're looking at other areas globally where we can work with the prison sector and have increased the number of people in our development team to support the needs of each prison."

Unify has developed its own bespoke phone system



Eddie Bird and Adam Esposito

which reduces violence and cuts reoffending within the prison system. Bespoke PIN systems offer the facility to dial predefined numbers, along with call monitoring and recording, system lockdown and the ability to place time restrictions on calls. It is targeted at prisons, detention centres, immigration centres, nursing homes, hospitals and anywhere where a secure telephone system is required.

Offence reduction

"The ability for residents or prisoners to be able to call predetermined numbers for family, friends or support groups creates the incentive to not reoffend and reduces the lack of privacy," stated Bird. "When placed in the cell it removes queues for wing phones and therefore the flashpoints that can cause bullying and violence."

Unify's Call Control System (UCCS) is a secure platform that polices all calls made to the outside world. Calls can be monitored and controlled, and recorded calls can be played back on demand.

The UCCS includes an integrated reporting system as well as adjustable call rates so that prisoners can be billed different tariffs. Furthermore, Unify offers its own mobile detection system which solves the problem of unauthorised mobile phones in secure environments. "The Unify Mobile Detection System (UMDS) is completely covert and because it detects rather than blocks it means that it does not present any legal considerations," added Esposito.

Unify Business Solutions is pressing ahead with opportunities in Asia Pacific and plans are under way to start work in Western Australia. Business partner Serco currently runs two prisons in the region including Acacia Prison, a medium security facility accommodating approximately 1,500 male prisoners. Unify is working with Serco to provide business plans to Acacia Prison which will highlight the benefits of in-cell telephony and 'make a difference on the inside'.

Bird's first links to 'down under' were forged at the age of 21 when he went to Australia and by chance got a job selling mobile phones. Returning to the UK he secured a position with a Cellnet mobile dealer and Siemens partner, where he first met future business partner Esposito who was working for a datacoms company that supplied the mobile dealer. "We went for a Little Chef together and our friendship was cemented over an Olympic Breakfast," stated Bird.

"The idea of forming our own company came about after we both faced redundancy. Initially, the business started out with just the two of us but now we have a team of engineers, a software development team as well as sales, marketing and finance. Our expansion is reflected in the company turnover which was £270k in the first year and is now over £4 million. We're looking at getting to £10 million over the next three years."

Deals of importance won by Unify also include supplying comms and IT systems for London Cycle Hire, Rosebys and Ronseal. They are all likely to be long-term clients. "The businesses we work with, no matter how big or small, tend to stick with us for the long-term which is a testament to our support team," said Esposito. "We'll continue to grow the business and prison services sides of the company. We employ a hard working team who have a wide range of product knowledge and provide excellent customer service. It's not all serious. There's plenty of banter and lively discussions to keep everyone entertained." ■

Now's the time to register for the networking event of the summer!



THE date has been set and registrations are now open for the UK's leading channel networking and thought leadership event for resellers addressing SME business markets.

Margin in Voice & Data will return to the Forest of Arden in the West Midlands on June 9th 2016 giving resellers a 'once a year' opportunity to engage with their peers, meet potential new partners and truly understand the transformational technological trends affecting ICT service provision in the UK.

Unlike a traditional exhibition based format, MIVaD is limited to pre-registered, qualified attendees so no time is wasted talking to people you don't want to and vice versa! The event is based around a managed programme of pre-scheduled 1-2-1 meetings and is supported by an educational seminar programme, workshops and an evening dinner including complimentary overnight stay for delegates.



The long established MIVaD model is already proven in enabling vendors and resellers to establish new business partnerships or re-invigorate those with old friends.

This year Margin in Voice & Data's conference programme will take reseller delegates along new income avenues helping them to benefit from joined up managed service provision, Cloud Communications and the Internet of Things.

Topics to be debated and discussed will include:

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- Energy Management – Smart meters, Smartphone energy control
- Machine-to-Machine (M2M) – Monitoring and control,



Industrial automation,

- Logistics, Smart Grid, Smart cities, Health, Defence etc.

Route 2: Merchant Services

- Card payment services
- On-line payment services
- Intelligent Terminals (M2M)
- Fraud prevention

Route 3: Recurring revenues

- M2M – making money while you sleep
- Web RTc – monetising the power of the Internet with Business apps and VideoCloud communications – the Licence to make money!
- Mobile Data – security, back up, MDM (Mobile Service Management), productivity suites, custom apps.

WHAT DELEGATES SAY ABOUT MARGIN IN VOICE & DATA

Thank you very much for yet another superb event.

The speakers were excellent and it was great to make old and new connections. We've come away with new energies and ideas, so thank you to you and your team.

CLAIRE MADDOX – EUROLINK

Thanks for a very useful and enjoyable event I have followed up with some contacts and will be developing the work with them in due course.

TERRY LOCKWOOD – PARAVAIL

We have avoided this sort of event in the past as we thought it would be a waste of time, MiVaD was informative, and entertaining and very efficiently run. We have already chosen a partner to work with that will increase our profits significantly.

DON MOORE – TELECOM RESOURCE

Many thanks for an excellent event yesterday. I found the content very thought stimulating and it was good to meet contacts and friends old and new.

STEVE HAYDN – GREEN TELECOM

A big thank you to you and your team for another successful Margin in Voice and Data event. Without doubt the best show in town.

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Tom Kelly joins ONI



Tom Kelly

FORMER Logicalis Managing Director Tom Kelly has joined Luton-based IT firm ONI as a Non-Executive member of the board. He boasts 30 years industry experience and has held senior management positions in a variety of organisations including a ten year stint as Managing Director for Logicalis between 2003 and 2013 when he oversaw the business' transformation into one of the UK's largest Cisco and IBM managed services partners. Kelly is also Chair of the ICT Sector Panel for the Welsh Government and advisor to several other public sectors.

ONI CEO Mark Collins said: "Tom is a widely recognised leader within the channel and adds invaluable strength and experience to our board. We can already see how Tom can help accelerate our ambitious plans to grow and gain market share. As the technology market evolves and people transition to the cloud, IT is increasingly

seen as a vital, strategic component of any organisation. This is ONI's area of expertise. We work closely with our customers to ensure they are able to capitalise on their existing investment in on-premise solutions and leverage the advantages of cloud technologies when it makes most sense."

Kelly added: "ONI has established its credentials as a provider of physical and virtual cloud infrastructure, enabling it to make a significant investment in its Luton-based data centre facilities. These new facilities have laid the foundation to grow sales in managed services and solutions to both existing and new customers. However, the investment has not just been in the platform, it's also been in the people. ONI is better placed than ever to offer genuine value and quality services to its clients."

Also on the move...



Phil Brown

PHIL Brown is to lead the commercial business units and IT reseller base for B2B and VAD solutions at Exertis following his promotion to Sales and Commercial Director for IT. He previously operated as B2B Sales Director

following a stint as Commercial and Marketing Director. Prior to Exertis he worked in sales and general management roles at ASUS, Samsung Electronics and Computer 2000. Managing Director Paul Bryan said: "Phil has already demonstrated his skills and attributes. This is an important next step in our evolution as we enhance our focus in the market." Brown added: "This position will enable me to help develop the Exertis proposition."

VENUS Business Communications has expanded its provisioning team with the appointment of Denise Parlour as Provisioning Manager in charge of a



Denise Parlour

growing team that coordinates orders for fibre optic leased lines. She brings 23 years experience in IT provisioning and joins Venus from a blue chip pharmaceutical company where she implemented and managed internal

network systems across 20,000 users worldwide. Brian Iddon, Venus Director, commented: "Orders have tripled over the last six months, and as demand increases Denise will draw on her extensive experience to lead the provisioning team."

West moves to CSP team



Emily West

EMILY West has been welcomed to Tech Data's Microsoft cloud solutions team as newly appointed Business Development Executive. She will manage the growing number of enquiries from resellers about becoming a Microsoft

Cloud Solution Provider (CSP). West previously worked in the Microsoft licensing team supporting resellers on Office 365 and other solutions.

Mark Whittle, Microsoft Business Manager, said: "More end users are asking about Office 365, Azure and other cloud options. We've seen a steady rise in the number of reseller enquiries and adding Emily to the team will help us manage that increase. As more businesses look at cloud options in earnest it's important for resellers to be prepared to field customer enquiries. We will continue to work closely with Microsoft on advancing CSP and bringing more partners on board."

SOCIETE Generale Equipment Finance (SGEF) has formed an Office Equipment division spearheaded by Simon Rodway, Head of Office Equipment Channel. He will be based at the firm's Richmond office and his remit is to set up and develop SGEF's position in this market sector with both dealers and manufacturers of office and telecoms equipment.

Node4 gets sales leader

NODE4 has appointed John MacMillan to the newly created role of Sales Director, reporting to Business Development Director Paul Bryce. He



John MacMillan

brings 15 years sales and senior management experience and a proven ability to drive growth in the IT sector having secured major deals in previous roles at Azzurri and Daisy Group.

MacMillan will lead a team of 30-plus sales, pre-sales and account managers to focus on growing revenues within the enterprise mid-market and verticals including the public sector. He said: "I can see a clear opportunity to take Node4 to the next level with its combination of technical expertise and solutions. I'm looking forward to building a highly focused and ambitious team."

Bryce added: "We have purpose built our service offering to meet the market need for an agile IT partner. John will be instrumental in driving our next phase of growth."

MDS bolstered by CEO Bunney

GARY Bunney has been appointed CEO of MDS, a provider of real-time charging, billing and customer management solutions. He brings almost 20 years



Gary Bunney

experience in sales, operations and development, and is credited with turning small real-time revenue management businesses into £100 million turnover organisations. Bunney has also worked with large operators including BT, Vodafone Group and Telefonica O2.

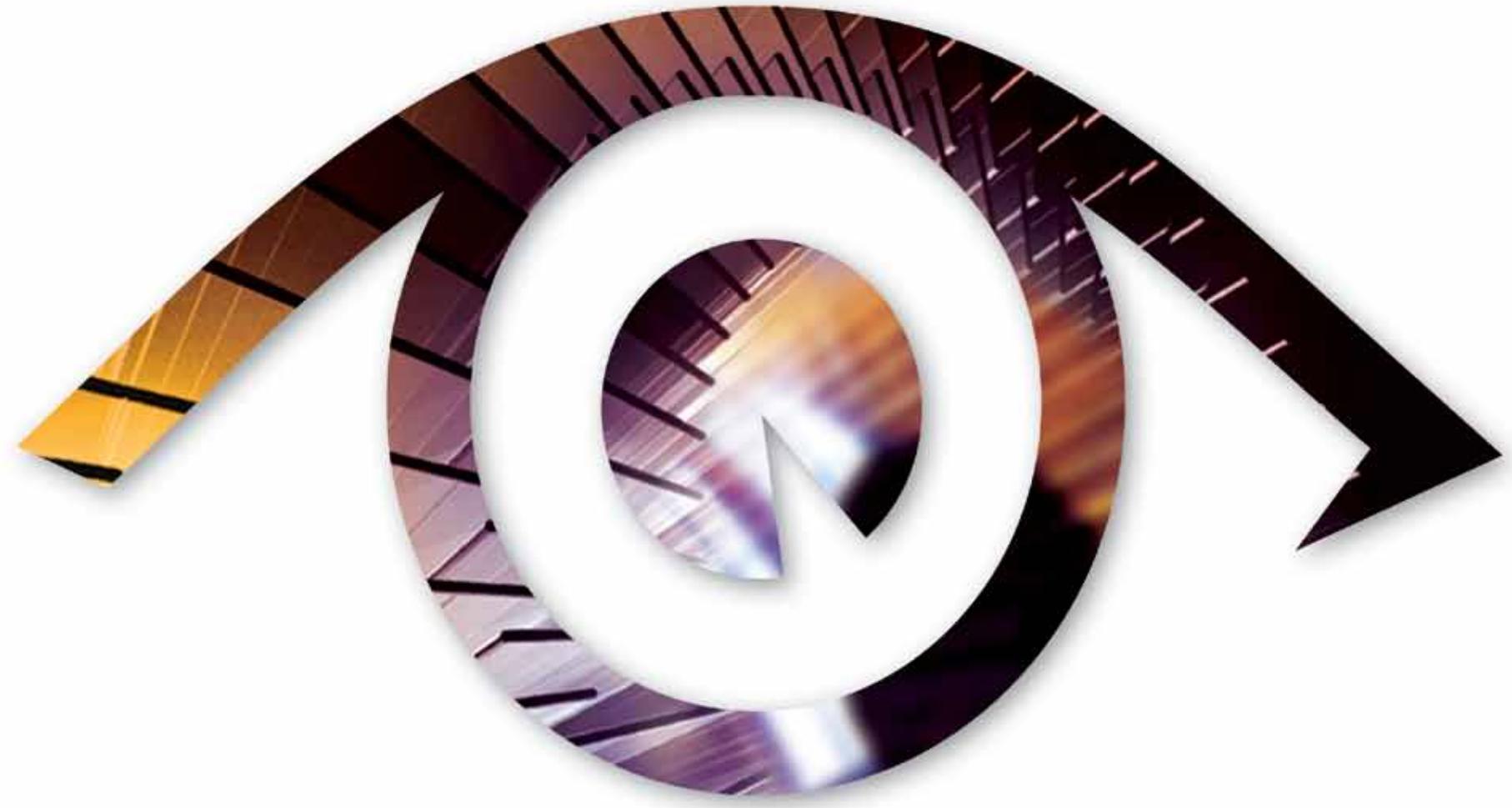
"With its fully managed cloud-based real-time charging, billing and customer management solution, MDS is helping its customers meet the changing requirements of today's digital enterprise," he commented. "I'm excited by the great opportunity we have to expand on the excellent work MDS has already done in helping its customers win in an increasingly competitive market."

MDS' customers include BT, TalkTalk Business, eir, ACN and Telefonica O2.



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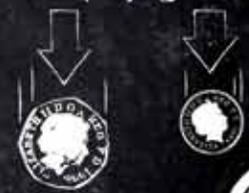
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