



Redsquad CEO: From spare bedroom to buy and build p14

Channel emerges from lockdown to hail team champions p36



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3-12

Industry News

Catch up with the latest news

18

Insight Session

Why long-termism is key to success

22

Comms Vision

Value creation in disruptive times

34

Special Report

Defining the new workplace narrative

40

CEO Interview

Gilder on navigating leadership priorities

46

Comms People

This month's movers and shakers



PE deal cements ANS and UKFast

INFLEXION'S investment in £46m revenue ANS and its subsequent alignment with existing portfolio business UKFast brings together two digital transformation powerhouses with cloud market domination on their agenda.

SPECIAL REPORT

The group plans to hire 100-plus more staff by 2022 and introduce a Digital Academy along with beefed up digital skills apprenticeship schemes.

"Our biggest opportunity is to be a major cloud player, offering a full portfolio to the UK's public sector and mid-market customers," commented ANS CEO Paul Shannon (pictured).

The buyout of ANS majority shareholder Scott Fletcher for a

reported £100m unites ANS's public cloud, DevOps, applications and data specialisms with UKFast's private cloud, hosting and security credentials.

"Future acquisitions are likely at all levels – ANS, UKFast and even potentially group," added Shannon. "However, we won't be distracted from organic growth opportunities."

Inflexion Managing Partner Simon Turner added: "Together, the businesses are poised to accelerate their growth as the

market for cloud and digital services continues to benefit from strong demand."

Paul Nannetti has been appointed Chair of the group. He was most recently CEO of the Cloud Infrastructure Services division at Capgemini.

He commented: "The group will be an incubator of skills and capabilities to help our customers benefit from agile and scalable technologies."

ANS and UKFast will operate under their existing brands.



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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

HIGH pressure scrambles to meet a deadline are clearly not to be recommended. It's a lesson learnt early in the career of magazine producers and many other professions. Planning and preparation is key – but in hindsight I should have been better braced for June 29th.

I moved house: And my buyers naturally wanted to complete before the stamp duty holiday deadline on June 30th. This made the whole process, which normally runs at a snail's pace, a full-on, almost headless rush. Mistakes were made, important documents whizzed through on Special Delivery 'went missing' – three times. An emergency dash to pick up hard copies meant we exchanged late on the 28th for completion the following day. Communication lines were no better than those seen in the fog of war. Our estate agent insisted mid-afternoon on the 29th that the transactions were not 'completed'. Yet somehow word got out that completion had taken place and the chain lurched under its own steam with no proper green flag – fuelled in my case by hearsay between buyer and seller happy to grab keys between themselves.

I expect the same story was repeated across the land as hoards of buyers sought to capitalise on the stamp duty holiday. But many didn't make it, so I should count myself lucky that I got off lightly despite the 11pm email from my solicitor the night before move day wanting another £800.

The whole system was at near breaking point. Hardly professional. And it is a fact that the house moving sector's reputation yet again took a bashing and the fallout from rushed jobs inevitably means more damning online reviews and reputational damage.

We can learn much from this chain of events – which brings me to 2025. We all know about that deadline, but preparations are not where they need to be. Facing the reality of an all-IP future should be a top priority right now if we are to avoid a similar but more impactful meltdown.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

Brown joins August in Integrity360 bid

INDUSTRY big gun Ian Brown has joined forces again with August Equity in a bid to create a leading European cyber security powerhouse following August's investment in Dublin and London based Integrity360.

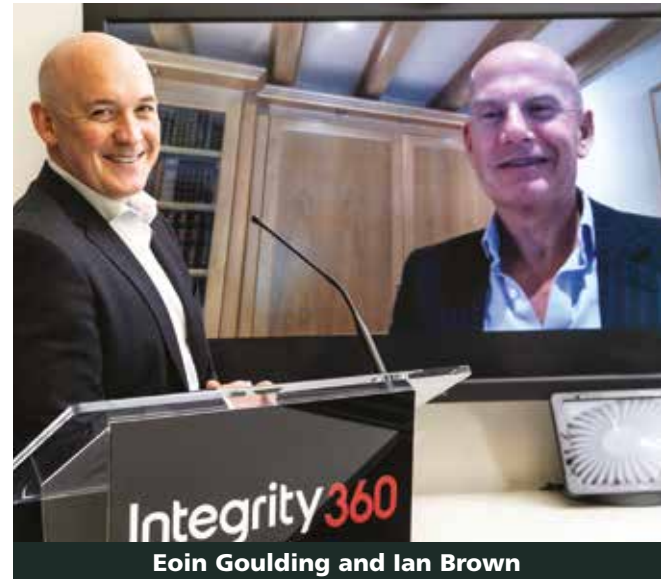
Brown joins Integrity360 as Executive Chairman and is ramping up an aggressive pan-European acquisition strategy alongside founder and CEO Eoin Goulding who is now President of the business.

Also pivotal to achieving their objectives is the expansion of Integrity360's portfolio with a particular emphasis on Managed Detection and Response (MDR) services.

Brown is an established and much lauded entrepreneur and industry veteran and has run technology businesses for over 25 years including SecureData, the cyber security services business acquired by Orange in 2019.

The man at the centre of Integrity360's UK business development operations is Matt Tomlinson, who previously worked at SecureData where he operated in a similar position for almost 20 years.

Brown confirmed that he had 'followed and admired



Eoin Goulding and Ian Brown

Integrity360 for some time'. "Integrity360 already has a strong reputation in the industry and an end-to-end portfolio of services," he stated.

"The market need for such services has never been stronger given the massive digital transformation acceleration within businesses, alongside the rapid evolution of cyber threats."

Goulding added: "Over the past 16 years the company has grown to become a high profile cyber security specialist within Ireland and in the UK.

"Working with August and Ian will continue to bolster our

service capability and expand our reach internationally."

Mehul Patel, who is a Partner at August Equity, commented on the deal: "We are working with Ian, Eoin and the team to accelerate the growth of Integrity360 and build a substantial leadership position across the European market."

Integrity360 started life in 2005 and last year saw 15% revenue growth driven by demand to protect remote work environments and cloud security.

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NEWS ROUNDUP

CMI's acquisition of Cheam-based CSP Brookland Computer Services creates a £13m revenue business with a circa 100 headcount and follows CMI's launch of new security, compliance and support services. The transaction was funded by a combination of growth capital from Panoramic Growth Equity and Boost & Co. CMI MD Ken Roulston said: "The acquisition will create a stronger IT service provider to meet the needs of businesses in the post-pandemic world." Brookland has operated for 25 years and offers a range of hosting services, IT connectivity and support services.

STAFF at Edinburgh-headquartered Commsworld can gain a financial interest in the business following the launch of an Enterprise Management Incentive (EMI) scheme which gives employees the right to acquire share options from a pool set aside by the company for workers. "When we were looking at our options for the future we wanted our people to be able to benefit from our success," commented Chief Executive Steve Langmead. "The EMI scheme is the ideal way forward and we hope all staff will take advantage of it."

PE player buys into ISP Orbital

A MULTI-million pound investment boost for Orbital Internet Group by Mobeus enables the ISP to ramp up its roll out of high bandwidth connectivity in rural regions and fibre infrastructure in local business parks.

Orbital provides wireless, fibre and leased line connectivity, voice services and internet managed services under its Orbital Net (B2B) and Vfast (B2C) brands.

The company has built a sizeable fixed line and wireless telecommunications infrastructure in Kent over 20 years and also focuses on the UK holiday park sector niche.

Orbital recently completed a project for Park Holidays Group, delivering ultrafast Internet connectivity to 14,000 holiday homes.

"Demand for data isn't going anywhere and we have a significant opportunity to leverage our position in Kent," stated CEO Darren Brown. "With this new funding and Mobeus's partnership behind us we can achieve this with pace and agility."

Matt Gordon-Smith, Mobeus Investment Manager, added: "Orbital offers a critical service in a market with considerable demand drivers."

DWS secures Ex-Sage CEO

FORMER Sage CEO Paul Walker has joined Digital Wholesale Solutions (DWS) as an Independent Non-Executive Director. The ambitious channel service provider has also pulled in Damian Sanders, who was a Senior Audit Partner at Deloitte, as an Independent Non-Exec.

DWS demerged from the Daisy Group in January 2021 supported by a strategic partnership with PE firm Inflexion, and these latest appointments complete DWS's Board of Directors ahead of the next growth phase.

As Chief Executive at Sage Group between 1994 and 2010 Walker was one of the longest standing CEOs of a FTSE100 company. He is currently Non-Executive Chairman of Halma and Non-Executive Chairman of Ashtead Group.

Sanders was also a member of Deloitte's North West Leadership Team and has acted as an advisor and a corporate governance specialist to a number of FTSE Boards for over 20 years. He is Independent Non-Executive Director for The Hut Group and Cineworld.

DWS CEO Terry O'Brien said: "I'm privileged to have the counsel of such an experienced team as we drive the business



Terry O'Brien

and our platform and software strategy forwards."

Walker stated: "The market opportunity is tremendous and I will help guide the business."

Sanders added: "I aim to help create a framework to underpin DWS' growth trajectory."

NEWS ROUNDUP

ONE of the fastest cybersecurity companies to achieve a \$1bn valuation has swung its gaze onto the UK and Ireland market following a link up with IT distributor DataSolutions. Orca Security is boosted by a \$210m Series C investment led by Google and is generating 1,000% year-over-year sales growth. Its public cloud security is growing in popularity due to 100% full-stack visibility into AWS, Azure and GCP. Avi Shua, Chief Executive Officer, Orca Security, commented: "After gaining international traction we are now focusing on the UK and Ireland." DataSolutions' security division grew revenues by 7.5m euros in 2020 over the previous year.

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Palatine gets major interest in FourNet

MID-market investor Palatine Private Equity has acquired a majority stake in FourNet which has ramped up a three-year growth rate of almost 55%.

The deal sees YFM Equity Partners and two founding shareholder exit the business.

Manchester-based FourNet also has offices in London and Burton-on-Trent and generates revenues of £38m with a 100-plus headcount.

The company has around 200 customers including 10 Downing Street, the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury and the Bank of England.

FourNet was founded in 2005 by CEO Richard Pennington, Operations Director Frank Jennings, Chief Technology Officer Mike Jervis and Sales Director Steve Tyrrell.

YFM took a minority shareholding in 2017 and the new investment deal signals a period of acquisitions and a sharper focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG).

Pennington said: "The pandemic has been a catalyst for



Richard Pennington

significant change in working practices and our industry over the past 12 months and fresh investment will enable FourNet to meet the changing needs of our customers, many of which are critical to the UK's success following the pandemic, and to build and acquire the capabilities that our customers require."

Andy Strickland, Senior Investment Director at Palatine, added: "We see as significant opportunity for FourNet to strengthen its position as a cloud services supplier to the public sector. Given our track record in the TMT sector and in

IT, cloud and managed services in particular, we will be able to assist management in capitalising on the market opportunity. As part of the strategy we will look at buy-and-build opportunities, but we also see great potential for organic growth.

"We also see a major opportunity to work with management to develop the company's ESG credentials, an area where there is increasing awareness and significance during the public sector procurement process.

"ESG is an integral part of the proposition Palatine brings to the businesses it invests in."

Immediate review of Scottish digital strategy urged by Sime

EXCHANGE Communications CEO Tom Sime has called for an urgent review of Scotland's digital strategy and urged the Scottish Government to invest more in the digital opportunities emerging from coronavirus.

"Now is the time for action in prioritising investment in Scotland's digital strategy to aid private business and the public sector, and to secure a unified communications infrastructure," he said.

"Not only can unified communications address issues of staff wellbeing, digital inclusion and collaboration opportuni-



Tom Sime

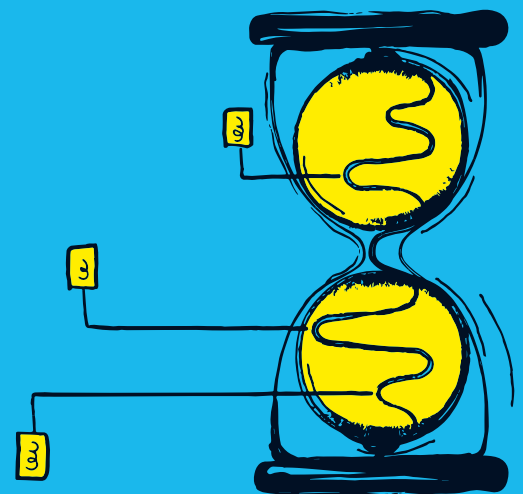
ties, but it will also help realise Scotland's ambition to become a cleaner and greener place.

"Reviewing the country's digital strategy has never been more important. It is essential this is considered across every

part of business to ensure a consistent approach to different working environments, including remote working, supporting energy saving and creating an environment that can make more efficient use of resources."



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NEWS ROUNDUP

FRENCH telecoms Titan Altice has taken a major 12.31% (£2.2bn) stake in BT becoming its largest shareholder. Altice stated that the rationale behind the deal was not to take over BT but invest in the UK's full fibre roll out. It is reported that billionaire Patrick Drahi, who owns Altice, will push for a separation of BT and Openreach. The French tycoon holds a similar sized stake in Deutsche Telekom.

THE unbundling of 201 more exchanges enables Neos Networks to broaden its footprint across south Wales, north east England and Scotland. The move forms part of its expansion programme to have 550 exchanges on-net by the end of the year with capacities of up to 10Gbps and 100Gbps.

WIRELESS Logic has completed a re-capitalisation of the business in a deal that saw majority shareholder Montagu Private Equity and the company's management buyout CVC Growth Partners' minority stake. In the last five months Wireless Logic has done four acquisitions across Europe – Arkessa, Com4, Datamobile and New Line.

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Birch set for Ensono role



Hannah Birch

CLOUD services firm Ensono has pulled in Hannah Birch as General Manager and Deputy Managing Director for the European business.

She joins from Accenture where she led the company's UK technology business for insurance and was a member of the Technology Leadership Team for UK & Ireland.

Birch's career began at BP and she later held leadership positions at Fujitsu Services UK and Computacenter.

Her new remit is to drive Ensono's European growth strategy following investment from new owner KKR and its recent acquisition of cloud native consultancy Amido.

Birch commented: "In a world of technological advancements many organisations still struggle to cut through the noise to identify the technology solutions that are right for them.

"This has increased the pressure on service providers to be trusted partners for enterprise clients, guiding and streamlining the transformation process. I join Ensono to leverage technology and drive transformational change for businesses."

Ensono's MD for Europe Barney Taylor added: "We have momentum and an opportunity to invest and grow in the UK and European markets. Hannah is the right person to drive our growth ambition."

ApaloSIM integrates mobile UC

A SIM-only business solution that enables resellers to provide out-of-the-box mobile integration with existing UC solutions has been rolled out by Apalo.

Called ApaloSIM, the solution does not need an app and is compatible with any IP PBX/SIP compliant platform.

"The technology is for businesses looking to maximise the return on the investment made on their existing systems while also leveraging the productivity and agility benefits of a mobile-first enabled workforce," stated CEO Philippe Matos.

"UC resellers and service providers can more easily tap into business opportunities that until now have often been hard to reach."

Matos noted that ApaloSIM can be white labelled and he also expects to attract the attention of wholesalers and distributors of VoIP hardware.

"At the same time, ApaloSIM lowers the bar to entry of traditional MVNO and MVNE service providers, opening the door to developers of other voice platforms, specialist MVNOs or alternative network providers currently offering fixed voice services and looking to add mobile," he added.

Zen's key Net Zero objective



Paul Stobart

ZEN Internet claims that its pledge to become Net Zero by 2028 sets an unprecedented marker in the broadband provider sector.

The commitment to remove more carbon emissions from the environment than it generates is reflective of Zen's B Corporation certification achieved in August 2020.

The designation shows that Zen balances purpose and profit and fulfils a legal requirement to consider its impact on workers, customers, suppliers, community and the environment.

Zen CEO Paul Stobart stated: "It is important that while we run our business we also strive to make a positive difference to the world, rather than focusing solely on profits.

"Our pledge to be the first broadband provider to reach Net Zero is the logical next step in our journey."

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Redsquid in Triumph buy



Vince Mignacca and Sohin Raithatha

LONDON headquartered Redsquid has secured a foothold in Oxford following the acquisition of Triumph Technologies, its third transaction.

The deal adds £1.5m revenues and boosts Redsquid's expansion strategy as a managed IT technology provider.

The enlarged organisation will provide services to over 850 organisations.

David Muse, Director, Growth Capital at Santander UK (which funded the deal), said: "Triumph Technologies is a strategically important addition to the group, providing new capabilities in the high growth managed IT services sector."

Redsquid founders Sohin Raithatha (CEO) and Vince Mignacca (COO) remain the only shareholders of the business they established 15 years.

Raithatha commented: "We have had a close relationship with Triumph for years and followed its growth journey.

"The pandemic has set cyber crime to new heights and the demand for cyber security technologies has grown.

"Through this acquisition of Triumph Technologies we will become a fully managed service provider and keep up with the demand our customers have for digital transformation."

See page 14 for the full story

Destiny deals create UCaaS powerhouse

THE acquisitions of Sweden-based UCaaS providers Telepo and Soluno by Belgium located Destiny creates a European cloud communications powerhouse with approximately €170m turnover, two million multi-tenant seats and 600 employees in six countries.

The enlarged business hopes to become Europe's primary SME-focused cloud comms provider with Telepo bolstering Destiny's service provider channel and Soluno bringing access to the Nordic market.

"With the support of our investor Apax, Destiny is reaching the next level of its big play to own the European cloud communication space," stated Destiny CEO Daan De Wever.

"Combining forces with Telepo and Soluno gives us owned IP, great partners, talented local teams and ambition to invest in developing our UCaaS platform for SMEs."

Destiny had long been a user of Telepo's platform in the Benelux region. Soluno was also using Telepo's platform.

Rami Houbby, who is General Manager at Telepo, said: "Destiny will standardise on Telepo technology for the group-wide platform."



Daan De Wever

Patrik Sörqvist, CEO of Soluno, added: "By joining the Destiny family our European vision is already a reality and we will transform the European UCaaS market."



PE FIRM Perwyn has acquired a majority stake in JT's IoT division. The new business will remain headquartered in Jersey and build on three years of double growth per annum. There are almost 10 million JT SIMs in active use. Phil Male (pictured above), JT's Chairman, said: "We have grown this business from inception into an entity now worthy of a sale at this scale. This sale not only shows the potential and value of Jersey's digital sector, but also demonstrates that within Jersey we have the talent and funding to enable and build globally successful digital businesses."



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Vodafone adds FTTP & SoGEA

VODAFONE UK's launch of SoGEA and FTTP to the partner channel is reflective of the lockdown enforced shift to remote working, according to Kathy Quashie, Head of Indirect Business at the operator.

"A significant shift to more flexible working styles has called for connectivity that offers more than just a basic service," she stated.

"Businesses are moving away from traditional connectivity products to cloud-based connectivity and collaboration products, requiring more dependability and speed from broadband solutions.

"Vodafone's move to SoGEA and FTTP for our wholesale broadband products ensures we can support the needs of businesses and support the closure plans for ageing telephone and broadband infrastructure for all of our partners."

SoGEA is positioned as a replacement for analogue copper lines and according to Quashie is easy to order, install and fix with minimal disruption to service.

She also pointed out that it has lower in-life running costs than FTTC with the ability to overlay VoIP services.

Big drive for apprentices



Bradley Cowley and Marwan Cuthbert

FLEET-based professional services company Support to Win has embarked on a UC apprenticeship campaign, kicking off with the appointments of Marwan Cuthbert and Bradley Cowley who have taken their first steps towards becoming UC Technicians as part of a Level-3 apprenticeship.

"It's an exciting time for Marwan and Bradley to carve-out successful careers in UC," said CEO Julie Mills. "We're planning for them to be the first of many as we continue to expand and build on our track record of fostering talent.

"Skills, knowledge and, above all, expertise is what Support to Win is all about

and these apprenticeships show our commitment to growing the next generation of experts."

The 18 month apprenticeships run in conjunction with the Institute of Telecoms Professionals (ITP), with Support to Win's sister company Train to Win delivering an industry-specific training programme as part of the package.

"Our UC apprenticeship combines training content with extensive on-the-job mentoring to culminate in a recognised qualification and the opportunity for further progression in the company," added Mills.

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

Digging stats plough ahead

EVIDENCE of a big push in the roll out of the UK's next generation comms infrastructure is clear to see in figures released by LSBUD (Linesearch BeforeUdig) which show there were 1,125,843 searches through its portal by telecoms operators and their contractors in 2020.

LSBUD provides a free online search facility for underground pipes and cables and telecoms searches now account for 36% of all searches made.

According to statistics in LSBUD's Digging up Britain 2021 report there was a 24% increase in the amount of digging work done by the telecoms industry last year. This large increase in activity is likely due to next generation gigabit-capable broadband projects.

Richard Broome, MD at LSBUD, stated: "It's easy to see why the telecoms industry continues to top the charts in terms of searches. I can't see this momentum slowing down."

The Digging up Britain 2021 report also notes that within the 3.1 million searches made last year, 904,120 were performed under the 'initial enquiry' category, 29% of all requests.

"What this shows is that while still able to carry out projects in 2020, the telecoms industry was also looking forward to doing more this year," added Broome. "As Covid-19 restrictions are eased and non-essential projects get up and running again, the level of excavation work will boom, so it is important that each site has been planned accordingly."



Richard Broome



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Kathy Quashie, Head of Indirect Business at Vodafone UK, says, "A significant shift to more flexible working styles has called for connectivity that offers more than just a basic service. Businesses are moving away from traditional

connectivity products to cloud-based connectivity and collaboration products, requiring more dependability and speed from broadband solutions. Vodafone's move to SOGEA and FTTP for our Wholesale Broadband products ensures we can fully support the needs of businesses and support the closure plans for ageing telephone and broadband infrastructure for all of our Partners."

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At Vodafone, we're continuing to expand our broadband portfolio to answer the needs of our customers and transform the future of business. By delivering fearlessly fast fibre and confident connectivity, both SOGEA and FTTP are leading the way on this new frontier.

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Kathy Quashie
Head of Indirect Business at Vodafone UK

SOGEA & FTTP



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KCOM's ICT arm sold off

KCOM has sold its national ICT business to managed services provider Nasstar.

The deal enables KCOM to focus on network expansion and its strategy as a regional provider of full fibre broadband, as well as grow its presence in retail and wholesale markets.

"Our regional wholesale and retail operations in Hull, east Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire will remain part of KCOM and the focus of our business," commented KCOM CEO Dale Raneberg.

"Our team is investing £100m to expand our regional network, through which we are making full fibre broadband available to consumers and businesses in more towns and villages across east Yorkshire and north Lincolnshire."

Nasstar CEO Wayne Churchill added: "Acquiring the national ICT services business of KCOM will form a vital part of Nasstar's growth strategy."

"It will be integrated into the business, adopting new, efficient and scalable systems, and enabling customers to access an enhanced product set."

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

Virgin drives digitalisation

A NEW contracting model for wholesale services (called UltimateFlex) which offers customers anytime cancellation as standard for managed Ethernet, Internet access and high capacity services has been launched by Virgin Media Business.

The move is designed to unlock the potential for greater investment in digital services by removing one of the biggest barriers to ICT spending – namely restrictive contracts and the risk of long-term commitments in the current climate.

In a new study by Virgin Media O2 Business, over a third of IT bosses cited fixed-term contracts as a barrier to operating more flexibly and making bold decisions during the next 18-24 months. And nearly half of those looking for IT support say they're paying for services they don't need.

Nearly all respondents said that investment in new digital services will help their businesses recover from Covid-19. And almost 60% don't think their company is agile enough.

"Lengthy and inflexible contracts are preventing businesses from bouncing back from the pandemic," said Mike Hallam, Director of Fixed Wholesale



Mike Hallam

at Virgin Media O2 Business. "Businesses are crying out for more flexibility, certainty and value to unlock the power of digital technology and bounce back stronger."

"After a bruising year, we're giving partners a leg up with our new model which abolishes upfront fees, provides lifetime price confidence and comes with anytime cancellation."

Virgin Media Business has also removed installation charges as standard on wholesale products as part of UltimateFlex – and ditched excess construction charges.

Virgin Media O2 launched in June 2021 and is a new joint venture between Liberty Global and Telefónica in the UK.

SMEs lack full 2025 strategies

HOW remote workers will fare following the analogue and ISDN switch off remains a mystery to most SMEs, according to research by Spitfire Network Services that found 66% of SMEs are yet to consider the impact of an all-IP network.

"For those businesses that are aware, the focus has been on services delivered to office and static locations," commented Sales Director Dominic Norton.

"However, the upcoming replacement of legacy services will also cause disruption to hybrid and remote workers."

There are already over 200 exchanges that will be in the stop-sell phase by January 2022, pointed out Norton.

"With the pandemic shifting the way businesses operate in terms of remote working, it's concerning to see that these workers could be severely disrupted, yet businesses don't know how and when," he added.

"Clearly there is a long way to go. Again, our message is to take action now and avoid disruption further down the line."

"If you're an organisation that will have people remote working long-term, this is as important to you as it is to office-based companies."

NEWS ROUNDUP

LONDON-based Connect has boosted its contact centre, customer experience and customer service capabilities with the acquisition of ServiceCX, which has particular expertise in Calabrio WEM, ServiceNow CSM and Five9 cloud contact centre. The deal comes less than a year after the addition of virtual agent and speech application specialist ICR Speech Solutions and Services. Connect CEO Adam Young stated: "There's a clear shift in the market towards CRM-centric cloud contact centre, coupled with next generation Workforce Engagement Management. Adding ServiceCX to the Connect family allows us to transform customer environments and deliver returns faster than ever."

ICT businesses with a partner channel can now offer Lease Group's full services range on a white labelled basis. The Hove-based equipment financier runs a vendor finance solution for over 800 equipment and technology suppliers including Westcoast, Vodafone, Data Select, Eurostar Global Electronics and Mdee. The company has now turned its attention further up the supply chain following a revamp of its proposition.



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From spare bedroom to

When companies are open to making acquisitions it tends to be a good time to talk about rapid growth and strategy – Redsquid is no exception. Here, CEO Sohini Raithatha opens up on his expansion plans and strategic thinking following last month's transformational Triumph Technologies transaction.

Redsquid's acquisition of Triumph Technologies sees the creation of a security and IoT focused organisation with a fast growing influence across the UK. The deal is Redsquid's third acquisition and has prompted the firm's biggest strategic shift in terms of market focus, capabilities and opportunity. "This acquisition signifies that we are going down the route of managed services led by cyber security and IoT," stated Raithatha. "It changes our entire business, arms us with a larger team of managed services talent and equips our team with the skills to deliver complex cloud-based projects. This is a significant shift from where Redsquid started 15 years ago and defines what kind of technology we will be delivering in the future."

The deal was supported by Santander UK's Growth Capital Team and according to Raithatha brings 'great vitality to our ambitious buy and build strategy'. "This allows us to expand our technical skills in the Oxford area where we already have an office," he explained. "Our two organisations are aligned when it comes to company culture and the people we have on our teams. Triumph is a perfect extension to the Redsquid brand. In this context and with the



Sohini Raithatha

This acquisition signifies that we are going down the route of managed services, led by cyber security and IoT

benefit of hindsight, the one thing I would have done differently is to raise funds and get investment far sooner. That would have allowed us to accelerate our growth much faster."

Redsquid already had a close relationship with Triumph and kept a close eye on its growth journey. Especially during the pandemic which saw the company grow and get on track for £1.6 million. "The acquisition adds 15 people to our team," said Raithatha. "It will also be

an opportunity to continue their career development in a larger organisation. For the people already at Redsquid this is a huge opportunity to up-skill and develop their careers."

Strong pedigree

Redsquid was established in 2006 by Raithatha and Vince Mignacca. Originally the business operated out of Mignacca's spare bedroom but today they have three offices across London and Oxford. "I have been working in telecoms for as

long as I can remember and 15 years ago we decided to branch out and started a company of our own," commented Raithatha. "We saw a significant gap in the market for a provider that wanted to do more than just sell and provide mobility.

"Over the years Redsquid has been on a great journey, starting from purely telecoms and becoming a technology company offering cyber security and IoT solutions. This has been the biggest transformation. We can now

offer our customers a full package of all the technology a business will need. This year we also went carbon neutral which was a big milestone. We are a purpose led business. Our customers don't simply look for a supplier, they want a partner for the long run that is led by purpose and aligned values. To have a customer aligned purpose is more important than ever. In the UK, businesses account for 80 per cent of total GHG gasses. So it is important to stand up and take responsibility."



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buy and build

According to Raithatha, cyber security and IoT technologies will define how Redsquid looks at the world in the future, along with people power. "The main strands of our growth strategy have been to diversify our product portfolio," he added. "And I reiterate that we continue to nurture the talent density in our business.

"One of our long-term priorities is finding and developing skills because growth and talent goes hand in hand. So we are dedicated to nurturing and developing a winning team. One of the greatest elements of an acquisition is the new

threats. Those solutions will continue to grow.

"We also expect to experience a larger uptake of IoT solutions. For example, with the vaccine roll out we started supplying IoT temperature monitoring sensors to the NHS. This was a new market for us and something we keep seeing a growing need for. And with the roll out of 5G we will see more smart buildings being incorporated in our infrastructure, as well as IoT solutions to track the environment and health in offices. With IoT everything can be automated and organisations get a full

The thing I would have done differently is raise funds and get investment far sooner

people that join us. We have had to change as an organisation to get some wonderful talent on board."

Key growth markets

Raithatha identified his biggest growth areas as connectivity and cyber security with much demand sparked by lockdowns. "Staff are going back to offices so incorporating flexible working policies creates a need for connectivity," he said. "Meanwhile, the roll out of FTTP across the UK is moving ahead rapidly.

"Cyber security threats have also exploded during Covid which is clearly reflected in the conversations we have with our customers. Many are realising their need for cyber security policies to comply with GDPR, keep company data safe and make sure they are as secure as possible against outside

overview whether they are physically on the site or not. It provides a whole new set of opportunities. We have a range of IoT products that are simple to use, last a long time and provide the data needed to continue to optimise processes."

As a company that has successfully embraced the evolving marketplace Raithatha says it is within the scope of like minded channel businesses to also harness change and prosper. "There is a big pool of opportunities out there for resellers like ourselves," he stated.

"Businesses are ready to invest and accelerate growth or bounce back quicker after the pandemic. Furthermore, SMEs want to deal with local organisations that are aligned with their values and who, with technology, can make a real difference to their businesses." ■

Just a minute with Sohini Raithatha...

What do you fear most?

Being bored and not having enough stimulations in the things I do. To lack a purpose in life is something I never want to experience.

What's the biggest risk you have taken?

Starting Redsquid. A new business doesn't just mean taking a risk in leaving your old job and throwing yourself into it. You also make many sacrifices and take risks along the way believing that it will work out and pay off in the end.

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

I have been in IT all my life and can't see myself doing anything else. I do love travelling the world, so I would probably find a way to incorporate that into my job if I wasn't in IT.

Tell us something about yourself we don't know:

Three years ago I travelled across Antarctica and slept out in sub-zero temperatures to raise money for charity. It was an experience and feeling I'll never be able to properly explain. I wish I could do it again.

Your strong points, and what could you work on?

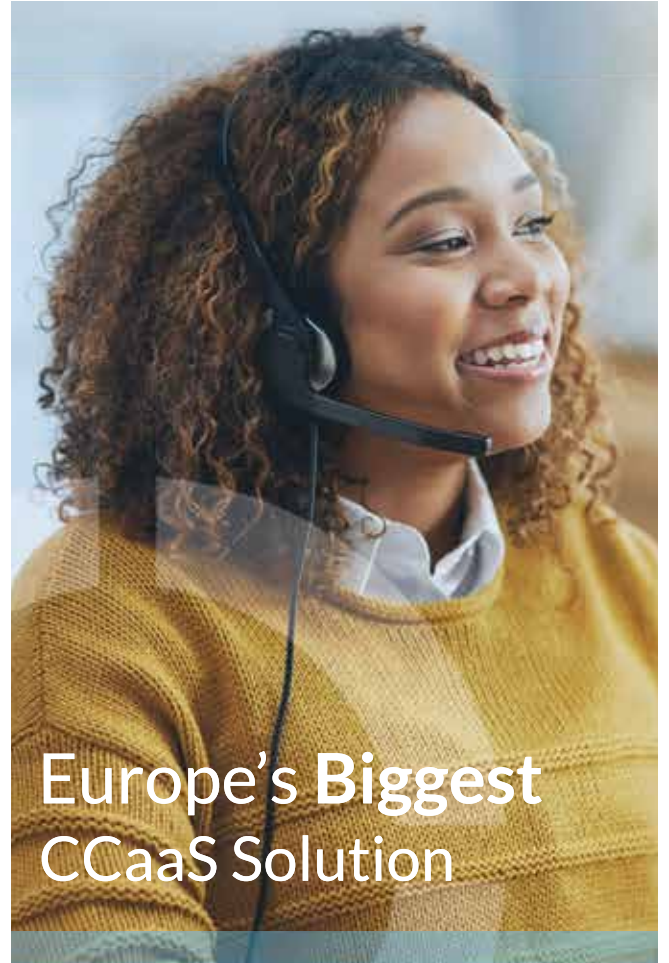
I am resilient, passionate and good at inspiring people. But I continue to work on improving my tolerance and impatience levels. I work at a fast pace and expect the same from people around me.

Best advice you've been given?

You have limited time during the day, how you utilise that against your priorities is up to you. For a sustainable career you need to love what you do and spend your hours the best way possible.

Top tip for resellers: Innovate. It's the one tip that all resellers will have to follow to stay on top in the industry.

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PromptVoice CEO turns

A serious shortcoming exists in the propositions of many comms resellers who don't offer professional recordings, according to PromptVoice CEO Anthony Buxton. Here, he explains why the rise of cloud telephony and streaming audio innovation unite to make this the opposite of a strategic challenge for resellers.

Spellbound by a speech recognition demonstration in 1994, Buxton's future career path was writ large in an instant. The Damascene moment came during the Guinness PLC management training scheme at a technology awareness seminar that showcased the earliest versions of speech recognition and text-to-speech. Buxton was transfixed. "Three weeks later I resigned from a well paid accounting job in a major corporate," he stated. "The roller coaster began! After handing in my notice I sat on a shag pile carpet in a serviced office with nothing more than a phone, pad and pen, making sales calls. My financial background helped me plan and evaluate opportunities, but there is no greater fundamental business skill than sales. Why sales is not held in higher regard than accountancy is a mystery to me."

Within 12 months the new company, SRC, was IBM's biggest distributor of speech recognition in Europe. "I learned more in three months running my own business than six years at Guinness," said Buxton. "After 10 years of gruelling work and £5 million VC investment from 3i I sold the business to Fluency – subsequently bought by Syntellect, then Enghouse."



Anthony Buxton

Selling a phone system without professional recordings is like selling a car without the paint – it works technically but it's not quite ready for use

In 2005 Buxton joined NewVoiceMedia (now part of Vonage) as Business Development Director, selling CCaaS which was a highly innovative concept at the time. Two years later he led a buy-out of a non-core NewVoiceMedia subsidiary, Premier Business Audio, a small but profitable firm that provided recordings (especially Music on Hold) for telephone systems. "The business grew organically and profitably to circa £5

million turnover and 50 staff," explained Buxton. "In 2018 with the rise of UCaaS we foresaw the pressures on our traditional MoH business model that required hardware to be plugged into on-premise PBXs – and PromptVoice was born."

Having sold an in-store radio division the group now turns over £3.5 million, has 35 staff and around 200 voice artists in 50 languages. "Premier Business Audio had a direct

sales model for a professional service, but PromptVoice's concept blended with a channel sales model makes it massively scalable," noted Buxton. "Our mission – intergalactic domination!"

Adding paint

In a nutshell, PromptVoice is a white label channel provider of professional prompt, in-queue and on-hold recordings for telephone systems. "Selling a phone system without

professional recordings is like selling a car without the paint – it works technically but it's not quite ready for use," stated Buxton.

But all too often, opportunity cannot be without challenge, and Buxton noted that telephony sales people often fail to appreciate, let alone sell the value of professional recordings and audio marketing. So PromptVoice needed to sell itself. "We realised how disruptive and powerful PromptVoice needed to be to meet the needs of the channel," added Buxton.

He urges resellers to take their cue not from one dimensional MoH products but all-encompassing as-a-service audio solutions that deliver true value. These are some of the areas where Buxton says PromptVoice is disruptive – streaming audio (think Spotify on Hold), the freemium model with recurring margins, a library of over 10,000 recordings and messages is included free, TTS integrations with Google, Amazon and Microsoft, white label options and audio playlists rather than repeated single music tracks.

"Most resellers can get their minds around selling recordings as a reactive, pay-per-recording proposition. But our freemium model –

up the volume

where all customers get the basic service free and then upgrade themselves – is alien to many. Showing them how this results in far greater lifetime value is taking longer than we expected.”

That said, after an early push to acquire resellers PromptVoice now has a solid base of partners realising incremental revenue streams. “With the benefit of hindsight, February 2020 was not the best time to launch a new service but we have already signed 130 partners despite Covid, and have 1,500-plus end user companies registered,” said Buxton. “We are also in discussion with potential partners in three continents to support international expansion.”

Personalisation

All elements of the contact centre experience are becoming personalised, from IVR menus to agent interaction, but the in-queue experience has remained ‘obstinately un-personalised’, noted Buxton. The capacity to target messages is intensely powerful, he believes, and he called on the channel to clearly articulate these benefits to end users.

“With streaming, PromptVoice can play different targeted messages to each caller in the same queue,” he said. “A utility company we are talking to currently repeats the same five queue messages around 30 million times a year to callers. Imagine how interested the Chief Customer Officer is to play 30 million targeted up-sell messages instead – something that potentially has greater value than the cost of the whole CCaaS

service. Queue time often accounts for 30 per cent or more of the total call duration, yet few companies use this time effectively. We’ve also filed a patent relating to the use of AI to determine what callers should best hear in-queue and on-hold.”

Despite these technical advances, many UCaaS and CCaaS providers are only just beginning to realise the benefits of enabling streaming in-queue and on-hold audio (rather than upload files), observed Buxton. “The move to UCaaS and CCaaS has given service providers and resellers the courage to adopt our as-a-service model,” he added.

“With the hardware and systems integration elements of many UC and CC propositions reducing, one way resellers can add value is to bring together a range of services that constitute a solution procured and provisioned through one source. In this context PromptVoice is a service that can be added to any solution that non-techy decision makers relate to.”

According to Buxton, PromptVoice has secured a global first mover advantage, and relationships with the key UCaaS and CCaaS platforms is vital to maximising the opportunity. “We have big ambitions and architected PromptVoice to be internationally scalable both commercially and technically,” he added. “Long-term partner relationships are key and courting ‘seed’ partners around the world who share our vision is crucial. We look forward to the floodgates opening soon.” ■

Just a minute with Anthony Buxton...

Tell us something about yourself we don't know:

I love pike fishing and I'm colour blind.

Your strengths and what could you work on?:

My strong points are determination and lateral thinking to resolve problems, but I need to work on taking time to have fun.

What possession could you not live without?:

My man cave where I make, paint, sculpt and mend.

Name three ideal dinner guests:

David Attenborough, Micheal McIntyre and my ancestor Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, the slavery abolition movement leader, founder of the RSPCA and prison reformer.

If you weren't in ICT what would you be doing?:

I'd qualify as an architect.

My DT teacher put me off by saying 95 per cent of architects design side extensions to existing houses.

Lessons learned:

People are the only thing that makes business difficult.

So work with people you respect, trust and like.

In hindsight:

I stuck with speech recognition for too long. The better it got, the cheaper it became and now it's virtually free. I should have realised.

Best advice you've been given:

Sleep on difficult decisions.

How do you relax?:

I paint (badly!). I also enjoy clay pigeon shooting and have my eye on the chance of shooting at Gleneagles.

Biggest achievement?:

Starting my first business with nothing but a phone and a shag pile carpet to sit on!

Top tip for resellers:

Improve everything on each touch. You only need to be one per cent better to win 100 per cent of the deal.

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Thinking outside the box



Darrol Stevens and Ollie Benn

Thinking outside of the box is invaluable to business, it's the bedrock of change... you can't reinvent the wheel, but can you make it go faster?

How does that apply to the telco sector, in particular to the stream of resellers we all rely on?

Aren't resellers all doing the same thing at the end of the day, acting as a middleman to provide a service?

What is different about your business?

We have seen a huge increase in acquisitions recently with resellers buying others to change their service offering, some relying on new products, some on price and buying power, others based on their service wrap. Simply put, it's an adoption of new methods and products, it's the only way to change or diversify your offering.

Growth and acquisition are fantastic and exciting for the C-suite and senior management. However, for middle management and their staff it provides an uncertain time. The R word becomes a very real possibility. More often than not it signals change in a negative way with good people exiting a business, quite often because they fear the unknown.

Just because an email is

sent 'en masse' by a CEO, doesn't actually mean that the employees understand a CEO's direction or reasons for change, they may not understand what a new product or acquisition will bring to the business. If the don't buy into this they could feel alienated... they may have been a trusted member of the team for a long time but change will make them feel anxious.

As recruiters we interview all our candidates and when we ask why they want to move on, it's very often because of a change in strategy and direction that hasn't been explained through the ranks.

If you are acquiring a business, think of those that work in the business you are buying. There will be some absolutely amazing staff that will offer you so much in the future, they will be anxious and scared that they will lose their jobs. They will most likely approach recruiters if there is the slightest notion that their roles are at risk.

Thinking outside of the box is great, but you need to win the support of the entire business to embrace your vision for it to work. Don't lose your staff to your competition because you, as a senior member of the team, have not communicated it effectively.

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Long-termism key to UC

The new era of hybrid working requires a deep review of comms solutions designed not only for today but with a long-term strategic outlook. That means more consultancy, more training, more customer education, more integration, as well as analytics, optimising the customer and employee experience and many other considerations – all simply delivered. Against this backdrop, last month's online Comms Dealer Insight Session (held in association with 8x8) sought to unravel the challenges and opportunities facing SMEs and the channel, enabling you to move forward with confidence.

The seismic upheaval of Covid-19 has catalysed a long-awaited, and now irreversible shift in the technology that underpins private and public sector organisations. The focus has switched wholly to cloud telephony, UCaaS, CCaaS and the experiences they deliver to workers and customers. "The amount of trauma that occurred in the market means it will never revert," stated Terry Moore, CEO, Outsource Group. "Even if we get to a point where people are in the office 80 per cent of the time we still need to cater for 100 per cent of their requirements. We still need to drive productivity with reporting and analytics,

and we still need to have compliance with whatever policies exist in the office. We're all going to have to address these challenges for our customers."

Technology upgrades are now almost universally recognised as holding the key to long-term survival, according to Darren Szukalski, Sales Director, 1823 Group.

"Everyone in the last year has seen how technology can enable their business," he stated. "This gives us an opportunity like never before to help educate and inform customers in terms of thinking differently about how they do business and more longer term, rather than day to day. We're seeing



Terry Moore

more openness to a different type of conversation. That's something we're going to harness and make the most of moving forward."

This applies especially to bringing strategic outcomes to the centre of conversations, believes Lucie McSherry, XaaS Sales Manager, Xeretec. "Every engagement we've had with our existing customer base, or new prospects, has been around the outcomes available when moving to cloud telephony," she said.

"It's about helping customers accelerate those decisions. Those making changes at

either migrated the majority of customers we've spoken to during the pandemic to the cloud, or we're still in conversations with them."

Investment

Bitten by Covid's big technology investment bug, SMEs are tipping cash into UCaaS and CCaaS solutions in a bid to live long and prosper. According to Andy Horn, CEO, IntraLan, this signals the next phase of Covid-19 responses. "There's been four phases of the pandemic," he said. "The first being the novelty factor surrounding working from home. The second phase was getting familiar with it. The third phase, or challenge, is that people got a little too



Darren Szukalski



Lucie McSherry

aaS and CCaaS success



Andy Horn

relaxed. Now we're entering into the fourth phase – which is getting into this for the long haul. Now we need to start getting systems and procedures and policies in place. It's also about training and educating and getting people up to speed as quickly as possible."

David Alldritt, Technology and Innovation Director at Highnet, also demonstrates that it is about consultancy, straight talking and partnerships. "We've got an opportunity to talk in more depth with customers, directly and through channel partners, to build those long-term relationships and understand what a digital strategy looks like for them and how we can support that going forward," he stated.



David Alldritt

"There's no doubt that the pandemic has acted as a catalyst and an accelerant for people to think more about their digital strategy. That's good news for the channel."

According to David Smith, Group Marketing Director, Xerotec, unlocking

The pandemic is a catalyst for people to think more about their digital strategy

this opportunity means overcoming a decision making status quo and blocking the potential for reputational damage. "There has been a 'make do' scenario for some time because people don't know whether they're in or out,"

he explained. "Are they hybrid? Are they working from home? Are they in the office? And who knows with the latest announcements in terms of the cases and what is happening?"

"Therefore, one of the things that we're seeing is a degradation in the ability for customers to get hold of organisations on the phone. They're calling mobiles, but you can't rely necessarily on a mobile being answered.

They're calling switchboard numbers, but people aren't always sitting at the end of a piece of plastic on the desk in an empty office.

They're calling call centres and getting 'please bear with us' type messages.

This deteriorating customer satisfaction scenario is

beginning to impact the reputations of businesses."

Time to step up

The channel's magnificent effort to keep Britain working during lockdowns is also at risk of being overshadowed by follow up action that falls short of the mark.

Therefore channel partners are well advised to step up with an educational and consultative agenda that meets a more pressing need.

"Historically, when we were selling cloud telephony it was quite straightforward," commented Shahram Bagherzadeh, Managing Director, Loop Voice & Data. "But since the pandemic it became challenging for us to educate customers about how true UC works. Another



David Smith

area of customer education is about partnering with someone who can provide security and reliability. That's a key message. It would be good to invest more time with the sales team and educate them on how they can tackle the market, the licenses and how to mix and match them."

Observations made by Szukalski suggest that what became apparent early on in the pandemic was the vast difference among SMEs in their IT or technology lifestyle. "We saw huge differences in SMEs' ability to adopt technology to get through that first phase last year," he stated. "Many of our SME customers just weren't that far ahead in embracing

technology, so we had clients with real challenges.

"Moving forward it will be more of a combination of using newer technologies, embracing the more flexible workplace, and how they can get the best out of the office environment when they're actually in the office. A lot of people are using tools to some degree, but are they using them to the full capability? More training is required for management teams within SMEs and also across their whole employee base to benefit from technology."

Ian Walker, Director at Fifteen Group, works with a customer experience consultant to help give the

Continued on page 20



Shahram Bagherzadeh



Ian Walker

Continued from page 19 market what it wants, not just for clients, but for his staff too. "People want flexible working," he said. "They want the ability to be at home some days. The majority are more productive, but for those who are not, the likelihood is that they wouldn't have been productive in the office environment in any case."

"Modern day management empowers teams to take responsibility. Put the guardrails in place, but ultimately people know what their boundaries are. For end users, it's all about asking the right questions. It's the consultative approach."

For Nick Dutton, Managing Director at Call Plan Solutions, there is nothing too radical nor unrecognisable about the sales process today. "It's the customers' requirements that are changing," he commented. "We went back

to basics with our clients to settle them down and give assurances that we work with great vendors, and that we can deploy new products and services quickly. Then we established their basic needs without making too many knee jerk reactions. We've talked about quick fixes, which were absolutely inevitable, but we also looked towards the longer term with the advice and the recommendations that we were giving. It's the considered approach that stands us in good stead."

Key considerations

Dutton's perspective shows that the vital comms of the future requires careful thought right now. This inevitably will involve UCaaS and CCaaS, and the employee and customer experience – all key considerations for SMEs that can now lay their hands on tailored technology and punch above their weight. "Levelling the playing field



Nick Dutton

is a key message for smaller businesses," stated Chris Angus, Senior Director, Commercial Sales, 8x8. "I always ask people to think big and not focus on what they need right now. Technology is cheap enough to drive real investment decisions. So, when I speak to our smaller businesses, I encourage them to think further afield, or to think like an enterprise, and understand what is going to support them for the next five years to ensure the right solution. We're not forcing people to make huge commitments of investment for large periods of time without having a good understanding. Having flexibility is important and the trusted advisor model as a vendor is key. That's a message I like to try and get across."

As has been pointed out, the traditional on site PBX wall is crumbling, while cloud comms and flexibility continue to build a head of steam, despite the challenges. "About a third of our base was on-premise," noted Mark Nelson, Director, Cranberry Communications. "And some of our customers were not making the most of their investment in solutions. Therefore we spent a lot of time explaining how things work."

"Furthermore, many employees would like the option of either working full-time at home or a mixture. Some of the larger companies are struggling now because they've insisted staff must start coming back to the office, and there's been something of a backlash."

Mike O'Donnell, CCO, Opus Technology, also observed that appropriate solutions were already in place, and that it is now a case of driving technology adoption progression across the board. "People just weren't leveraging their solutions," he stated. "Many of us



Chris Angus

were using tools to enable collaboration, but not extensively. The pandemic and rush to home working forced people into making a change. Our industry has been fortunate to be in a space where, although the pandemic has attacked a lot of people hard we can create change. This is positive for the channel. We supported customers with flexible, short-term fixes to enable them to achieve those immediate goals at that moment, now it's about having the capability to make the final step to take that 'operate anywhere' philosophy' forward."

Now that workforces can operate anywhere, analytics has come to the fore and is key to making sure staff are working as they should be, noted Emily Masterton, Regional Vice President, EMEA Channel Sales – Agent, 8x8. "Analytics ensures calls are being handled correctly and going through

to the right people with the right skill sets," she stated. "Customers want simple tools that provide the analytics they need."

"As well as improving the customer experience, more businesses are starting to focus on the employee experience too. They want to retain good staff, and they need to be able to give their top staff the tools they need to do their job effectively and with ease. It's really about focusing on the customer and employee experience."

Match fit

Tragic circumstances accepted, Covid-19 pain could become the channel's gain, but resellers must be up to the job in all aspects and focus on keeping things simple if they are to ride the wave of opportunity. "Customers are looking for that single simplistic user experience with one application you can utilise for everything," added McSherry.



Mark Nelson



Mike O'Donnell

"That's a massive driver. The other driver is around integration with applications like CRM and analytics. You explain the outcomes: Let's forget about cloud and the infrastructure benefits. Let's look at the outcome. Do you want Teams as a native experience? If so, how much do you really want that? Would you pay for it? Do you actually want cell phones? Do you want a hot desking environment? Do you want an all-in-one application or integration with other applications? Do you want full visibility?"

Pursuing this line of questioning can only align a reseller more closely to the end customer, which will inevitably lead to clients leaning into the ICT procurement relationship. "We have all become much more relevant because our customers are more dependent on us," added Moore. "Generally, there is a readiness for customers

to involve partners. Now it's about selecting the right partners and executing investment decisions. Any partners trying to take money off the table or exit are going to have to invest. It's time to stop making excuses about the pandemic and just get on with it."

Alldritt believes that long-term hybrid working will be the most likely outcome, in part driven by people power. "It's easier to recruit people if you can flex to what they want out of their working environment," he commented. "Hybrid working gives you that. Companies that try and impose office only working could be less attractive. This is going to accelerate the move to the cloud. That means single sign on, more integration and analytics. That makes voice just another application. It's this fully integrated, fully meshed system that operates anywhere from the cloud that is the future of the office." ■



Emily Masterton

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Driving value creation in c

In what has been an unprecedented year, Comms Vision 2021 (10th-12th November, Gleneagles Hotel) will chart the next big comms market shifts as we emerge from Covid-19, map the Managed Services Provider competitive landscape, and explore your potential to create customer value, loyalty and sustainability in times of unparalleled market disruption and change.



The then Minister for Implementation Oliver Dowden CBE opening 2018's Comms Vision Convention

Have you considered how much the professional and managed services world will change? Do you have a clear understanding of what will underpin your place in the New Comms Universe – an Age of Hybrid Working, Powerful Digital Alternatives, Data Supremacy, Full Fibre and 5G, the Billowing Public Cloud and Unprecedented Competition? Comms Vision 2021 will provide the clarity you need to gauge where we are now in this truly unprecedented year, where the real value of tech companies will reside in 2025 and beyond,

Comms Vision 2021 will unravel the impacts of Covid-19, the key market trends and technological forces driving industry change and customer value creation – and explore how you can prepare your business for sustainable long-term growth

and the critical role of your organisation's human capital in helping you to achieve your long-term objectives.

The sum of major industry transformations such as the move to all-IP, the national fibre roll out, trends in public cloud infrastructure procurement, the rise of data-defined business models and

the primacy of technologies such as AI – and the march of mega-disruptive alternative providers – is pushing the MSP world into a period of irreversible change. Not to mention the impact of Covid-19. Already, customers are far more exposed to substitute products and services from new suppliers – and users are more demanding of

speed, quality and agility from their service providers. Meanwhile, digitally adept and innovative challengers are emerging in the sector, and resourcing models are being disrupted as major public cloud providers and tech giants continue to gain market share and show great interest in pioneering the wireless connectivity space.

Collision course

Traditional industry players are wide open to forces beyond their control. So much so that the conventional comms channel and its early stage cloud evolution could merely be the precursor to something far bigger – an all-out global revolution in communications driven

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Disruptive times

by Super Disrupters with a strong influence over the future of cloud computing and ICT procurement trends.

These Super Disrupters – Microsoft, Amazon and Google etc – and the traditional comms sector are colliding, therefore Comms Vision 2021 will take a hard look at the evolving Collision Zone and assess the channel's place in an age of ever intensifying competition, business model change and customer value shifts. Against this backdrop we must ask a cardinal question: What will be the channel's true relationship with customers in this massively transformed and data-centric space?

ICT spending goes public in the cloud

Synergy Research estimates that Q4 2020 enterprise spending on cloud infrastructure services exceeded \$37 billion, \$4 billion up on the previous quarter and 35 per cent up on Q4 2019. It has taken just nine quarters for the market to double in size. While Amazon and Microsoft continue to account for over half of the worldwide market, Microsoft gained ground on its larger rival and hit the milestone of achieving a 20 per cent worldwide market share.

"2020 ended with a bang for the cloud market as the sequential jump of \$4 billion from Q3 easily set a new record for cloud providers' incremental revenue growth," said John Dinsdale, a Chief Analyst at Synergy Research Group. "Amazon and Microsoft tend to overshadow the market, with Amazon's share staying at well over 30 per cent and Microsoft growing its share

over 16 quarters. Amazon and Microsoft continue to invest billions of dollars every quarter in expanding their global data centre footprint while at the same time enhancing their cloud service portfolios. These two don't have to spend too much time looking in their rearview mirrors and worrying about the competition."

Market rivalry set to intensify

The dominance of the major cloud providers continues to grow in public cloud where the top five control 80 per cent of the market. However, that is not to say that there aren't some excellent opportunities for other players. "Taking Amazon and Microsoft out of the picture, the remaining market is generating over \$18 billion in quarterly revenues and growing at over 30 per cent per year," added Dinsdale. "Cloud providers that focus on specific regions, services or user groups can target several years of strong growth."

Disrupting tradition and going data-first: Assessing new approaches to business model innovation

To create mechanisms for future value creation we must understand where customer value is moving and how to reposition your organisation to capture that value. Success depends on having a clear view of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. One thing is certain: That

Data is King, and that we will see the rise of data-first solutions providers.

More and more customers expect data analytics services that offer real-time insights. A key question is how these priorities will redefine the professional services model, which must adapt to the demands of customers who value insights gleaned from data harvesting, data control and management. Data generation and capture will prompt new approaches as data becomes core to the value received by customers. Therefore the real value of tech companies rests in a combination of technical and business understanding, IP ownership and the harvesting and management of data.

Maximising data-centric customer value shifts

There is a fundamental shift towards a data-led services approach with a high level of personalisation. Now, it is key to look at what the future has in store as organisations move towards cognitive technologies such as Big Data Analytics, Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing, Artificial Intelligence and Robotic Process Automation. All of which could potentially and over time be packaged without complexity and offered by Super Disrupters as simple Big Button Comms solutions, meaning that smaller service providers may need to operate creatively in niche markets to build value.

Continued on page 24

It takes Vision to be a leader

Comms Vision (10th-12th November 2021, Gleneagles Hotel) is the leading annual leadership forum for CEO, MD and CTO delegates making up the major league of the UK reseller community. Places are limited and by invitation: If you would like to join us this year, please register your interest to attend at www.commsvision.com

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Understand the next generation before investing in them

After 14 years of school, this summer's batch of young people are the most qualified ever. Why then, when you tap into this cohort, are you likely to find so many seemingly ill-equipped to thrive in the world of work?

Time and again I hear companies in our industry struggling with new starters who 'don't get it'.

Not every young person of course, but enough to make you wonder how widespread the issue is.

These are clever people remember; full-grown adults often with a dozen or more A-levels and GCSEs. And yet many can't gel. Worse than that, they struggle to communicate, retain information, follow instructions, even show up to work on time.

It's easy to lay blame and moan about 'kids today'. But companies literally don't know how to address the issue.

More specifically, managers and other staff charged with taking apprentices under their wing can't understand why they don't think or behave like they did in their day.

The gap between the classroom and the workplace is getting wider. That's not your employees' problem, it's yours.

Companies need to understand the environment these youngsters have been brought up in. Not to pander to them, but to create the right pathway into your organisation.

You need to teach skills you've never taught before. Things that should be second nature to an employee – how to listen, have difficult conversations, manage priorities – but aren't.

There's no point getting frustrated; shouting at them is no good. Neither is lowering your expectations to make it OK that they barely deliver any work at all. Your only choice is to address it constructively.



Julie Mills, CEO of Train to Win

The good news is that there's big upside to all this – accessing some exceptional talent and energy from amazing young people. But you have to know how to unlock it, or you're wasting time and energy, and will miss out on the next generation of comms superstars.

There's growing evidence that some millennials are cognitively 'wired' differently, as a product of their environment and experiences.

It's a crude generalisation, but among those opting for technical apprenticeship roles are cases with amplified 'millennial' traits like introvertedness, aversion to social contact, and obsessive interest in games, puzzles and systems. What might be described as non-neurotypical, or even 'on the autistic spectrum'.

Several employers have cottoned-on to the immense value of harnessing these individuals' cognitive abilities.

Their talent programmes are grounded in understanding how each individual sees the world and giving added wellbeing support. Instead of being given donkey work all day, they're treated more like thoroughbred racehorses. And the results can be extraordinary.

It's time to give your existing people the skills to understand the next generation of comms professionals and where they're coming from. Train to Win is targeting support in this critical area – get in touch to learn how your business can benefit.

Continued from page 23



Innovate your way to success in niche industries

Uncovering opportunities where niche sectors can harness technology is one way to differentiate. Therefore Comms Vision will explore the reasons why developing a niche market technology practice today could be key to success. We will see examples of applications and use cases of AI, ML and IoT that get under the skin of specific industry sectors. But remaining relevant in an era of ever expanding choices, and being able to stand your ground by delivering innovation to niche sectors, will likely hinge on leveraging ideas, creativity, insight and personalisation, all from a data-centric standpoint. So define your future at Comms Vision. Innovation by definition means more growth.

Understanding the critical role of human capital strategies in times of change

As business transformation continues to accelerate we must ask whether our talent acquisition plans are keeping pace? Human capital

strategies are playing an ever increasing role in the sustainability of organisations, none more so than in the fast paced ICT sector which also faces a critical skills gap. Investing in human capital, managing people to improve retention and engagement, and maximising the value of your people resources has never been more important, nor challenging.

The key questions to consider are: Do you know your organisation's ability to learn and innovate? Do you understand how talent innovation can improve business performance? Can you identify the 'people factors' that will drive growth and value; and why a range of capabilities, experiences and diverse perspectives is key to embracing fresh opportunities, delivering improved customer experiences and relishing new challenges? Comms Vision will seek to address these complex questions and provide important insights into how you can culturally align people-focused priorities with your own long-term business goals.

It takes Vision to be a leader

Comms Vision (10th-12th November 2021, Gleneagles Hotel) is the leading annual leadership forum for CEO, MD and CTO delegates making up the major league of the UK reseller community. Places are limited and by invitation: If you would like to join us this year, please register your interest to attend at www.commsvision.com

Disruption and opportunity in the connectivity space

Comms Vision will also explore developments in Fibre and 5G and acknowledge the grand satellite projects of Mega Disrupters. For example, SpaceX is to locate Starlink ground stations within Google data centres, enabling the delivery of enterprise applications to virtually any location. The service is expected to be available later this year. SpaceX President and Chief Operating Officer Gwynne Shotwell observed: "Combining Starlink's high-speed, low-latency broadband with Google's infrastructure provides global organisations with the secure and fast connection that modern organisations expect."

Nor is that all: The UK Government's acquisition of satellite network OneWeb provides more food for thought. Is it time to look beyond the boundaries of our immediate experience and view the future from altitude, and ask searching questions? Could the Tech Giants, those truly global brands, utterly transform business communications? Comms Vision will bring clarity to developments in the revolutionary superfast connectivity space, and examine the potential challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Capitalising on ten tech sector shifts

No sector is immune from business model revolutions such as those brought about by Über, Netflix, Amazon and Covid-19. To fully capitalise on what is currently happening in the comms sector it is important to understand the big trends that are driving the potential for big shifts in the channel's tectonic plates.

The Connectivity Shift: Fibre, 5G and the grand satellite projects of Mega Disrupters. What does it all mean?

The Super Disruptor Shift: The influence of tech giants creating market alternatives continues to strengthen.

Customer Value and the Shift to Data: New business models are emerging that prioritise value in data rather than the product or service. Capturing future customer value and making the transition to become data-driven solutions providers is key.

The Digital Procurement Shift: The digitisation of the path to purchase and rise of disruptive retail models have emerged as consumers fully embrace digital. The influence of consumer purchasing behaviour on future business models in the channel is a key determining factor.

The Innovation Shift: Companies are turning to tech-enabled innovation with growth, relevancy and competitiveness their top objectives – and many will seek help from external partners. Is your business Innovation Ready?

The Customer Experience Shift: Value is no longer created in the transaction, but the engagement and interaction.

The Shift from Products to Services: Value is also created in the consultation, the problems solved, and a cloud services-based subscription model. Speed of execution and completeness of action are also key considerations

The Personalisation Shift: The rise of personalisation will attract ICT spend as buyers shift towards customised products and experiences underpinned by AI and other developing and intelligent technologies.

The Generation Z Shift: Collaboration and social networking technology in the workplace is highly valued.

The Shift to Big Button Comms: Could easy to source, deploy and consume business grade ICT services provided by tech Titans eventually turn conventional provision on its head, increasing the threat of disintermediation as end users get more tech and application savvy? ■

Comms Vision 2021 will explore all of these market shifts and more – visit www.commsvision.com

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The boss that thinks big

Former Rackspace solutions boss Simon Crawley-Trice joined Six Degrees in October 2020 as Practice Group Managing Director and last month took over the CEO role. Here, he outlines ambitious plans to create a leading security and professional services focused solution provider business.

The instatement of Crawley-Trice as CEO signals a new phase of expansion for Six Degrees. He superseded David Howson who becomes Chairperson and is already greasing the wheels of a fast growth rolling campaign convoy. Here, he shares insights into his strategy and the determining factors that made the man....

Why did you take the CEO job?

Given my background in cloud managed services, data, application services and professional services, and having worked in various roles at Rackspace on the senior exec team, it seemed a natural step for me. I was running the solutions and services business in EMEA including professional services, application services, cloud services and managing expansion into the Middle East and Europe. I saw a massive opportunity to move to Six Degrees last year. Also, the direction of the market is so exciting.

At the time, Six Degrees was starting to get into public cloud and building out professional services. My broad portfolio let me lean on my experience and replicate what I had done at Rackspace at a slightly smaller organisation where I think there is an opportunity for mid-market customers.



Simon Crawley-Trice

I saw a massive opportunity in moving to Six Degrees last year and the direction of the market is so exciting

What were you appointed to achieve?

I originally joined as Managing Director of the Practice Group. My main job then was to quickly functionalise disparate teams and allow us to work together without siloes. Before I was promoted, this was my primary objective.

Now, in my role as CEO, it's shifting the perception of the business. Many people

see us as a connectivity organisation. However, over the last five years we've expanded into security with the acquisition of CNS and also moved into public cloud services. We are seeing positive traction. We have a strong security, public cloud consultancy and professional services business and are building out our capabilities in these areas, with an aim to promote our security credentials.

What was your first task as Chief Executive and what are your priorities right now?

The first task for me is accelerating our four growth areas. These include our professional services capabilities, our public cloud business, our security consultancy/managed services and our offering around agile working. However, everything we do is grounded in security first.

What is the hardest decision you made?

There are many hard decisions. One that stands out was when I was close to hiring a personal friend into a business. I took a decision to select someone else instead who was slightly stronger. The easy thing would have been to hire my friend (I had worked with them before), but I thought the right thing to do was to make the right business decision even though I felt bad about it. Luckily, we're still good friends today.

Who do you admire most?

Steve Jobs: What he's driven and how successful he's been in transforming his business is something I really admire. Outside of industry, Alan Shearer and Gary Lineker are two sports people I also have huge respect for. The old MD of Rackspace, Darren Norfolk – he has some great leadership attributes. He still coaches me to this day.

What do you fear the most?

I am extremely competitive. Everything I've done I've found a way to win. The thing I fear the most is losing. Anything in life around losing is definitely my biggest fear.

What are your greatest strengths and what could you work on?

My greatest strength is people: You can put me in



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any level in any scenario and I'll make sure people are engaged and that I treat them with respect. This also translates to my family life. I hope my kids see that and learn from me. In terms of weaknesses, it's probably stubbornness. In this role you have to be a bit stubborn! If you're always trying to drive for success you need to make sure you're listening as much as possible. On a couple of occasions, I didn't do this and it's something I sometimes need to work on.

Tell us something about yourself we don't know

My next door neighbour is a Premier League snooker player. I always get beaten. Part of always winning

me back to my childhood. Ian Wright – he would be great fun on a night out. I'm massively into football, having played myself.

Best piece of advice you've been given

Be yourself. For me it's always been crucial to keep your integrity, always being truthful, fair and treating people with respect. Don't pretend to be something you're not because it never plays out well.

Name one thing you couldn't do without in your job

My Executive Assistant, Rosie Hatton! I've worked with her for eight years and the role she plays is absolutely critical.

I'm a huge believer in not leading through fear, instead leading through engaging and connecting with people

requires taking some hits, but playing the best helps me improve my game at an accelerated rate. Getting comprehensively beaten by him is very uncomfortable for me (I have won one frame to date). I'm a big believer that there's always a pattern to finding success in sport. In ten-pin bowling, for example, I struggle to get strikes, but I've figured out a way to consistently get 9s and 1s!

Name three ideal dinner guests

Steve Jobs – I'd love to know more about how he worked and the mechanics of his process, as well as his daily life and drive for innovation. Clint Eastwood – my parents used to watch lots of Westerns so this is a family connection that takes

If I didn't have her support I wouldn't be anywhere close to where I am today.

Give one example of something you've overcome

As a leader you naturally have to overcome difficult obstacles every day. I'm quite solution-oriented so always try to focus on how to move forward and find the best solution.

How would you like to be remembered?

Looking through a family lens, I'd like to be remembered as a loving father and husband – after all, no one wants 'most successful CEO' on their tombstone! I always make sure to check in with myself that I'm doing this. In

business, being known for doing the right things from a people perspective and being successful through that. I'm a huge believer in not leading through fear, instead leading through engaging and connecting with people with the right balance.

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

I'd be a professional sports person. I ran for the county, got onto the UK GB Reserve cross country team, played university hockey for my region, and many more examples! If I had to pick one sport it would be football. It's a team sport and I don't think I could handle a lonelier sport like running.

What's the biggest risk you've taken and why?

A small element of risk is vital or you'll never move forward. I was engaged in a deal a few years back we didn't end up winning, after we had pulled a lot of resources into it and told quite a few people it was going ahead. That was quite impactful and definitely a big risk that unfortunately didn't pay off.

How do you relax?

Tonnes of sport. Walking to de-stress and unwind, as well as taking up cycling. I try to do a three hour road bike session every Sunday.

Top tip for resellers

Make sure you're adding value services to your business. There are too many resellers who just bolt on services because they think they're right without carefully considering whether it's the right decision for the business. Always pick what drives value to your customers and only then resell it. ■



Vendor Assistance – The Key to Vendor Value and Power in Transactions

Following the launch of Knight Transaction Services, part of the Knight Corporate Finance Group of companies, Hayley Brightmore (Director), Jenny Serridge and Erin Berry (Associate Directors) – with combined experience of over 15 years of providing due diligence support to acquirers and investors across the UK, provides their viewpoint on the importance of preparation for a potential transaction: Selling your business or attracting investment can be very time consuming and one of the most stressful events a business owner can experience.

full dry run of the diligence process to looking at a specific area of the business and everything in between. The services provided are for the sole benefit of the seller and are designed to achieve the following:

- Validate the valuation of your business; Identify the strengths and opportunities of your business as areas of focus;
- Proactively address any potential challenges which may arise in a formal diligence process and suggest potential rectifications or mitigations where relevant;



Jenny Serridge, Hayley Brightmore and Erin Berry

Preparation is key. Engaging with professionals at the right stage of a transaction can help to make this process much more efficient and painless and will reduce the strain on your internal resources, allowing you to focus on the operational activities which add value to your business.

With so many options available, it can seem overwhelming and difficult to choose the services you need, the correct time to seek assistance and which advisor to use.

This article focuses on Vendor Assistance services, however for further information on our other related services please visit our Knight Transaction Services website – www.KnightTS.com.

Who?

It is important to pick an advisor who understands your business and is going to provide the services you need rather than rigidly sticking to a prescribed, standardised plan. Given that you will be working closely together and transparency is key, it's also vital that you trust, respect and work well with your advisors!

The ethos of Knight Transaction Services is to offer clients a flexible, bespoke service that delivers on the areas that are important. For owner managers in particular, due diligence can be a daunting and complex process, there is no one size fits all approach. We deliver tailored support and full transparency to guide businesses as they prepare for a transaction.

What?

Vendor Assistance services are wide ranging from undertaking a

- Corroborate the facts, figures and information to be provided in the information memorandum before it is circulated to potential purchasers;
- Highlight (and seek to mitigate) any weaknesses or resource constraints in the finance function; and
- Identify any potential other risks to a successful transaction.

When?

Vendor Assistance services are typically most beneficial when undertaken before marketing the business. This is not to say that value cannot be added after this point but for maximum impact – forearmed is forewarned!

Why?

In short, to ensure you get the maximum valuation for your business! Vendor Assistance services can help to iron out any potential issues that may erode value or cause delays to the sale process, giving you more control over the transaction. Engaging with a vendor Assistance provider can give you the confidence that your business is ready for a formal due diligence process and can provide support and guidance throughout if required.

Although the fees incurred in a transaction process can add up to a significant sum, our advice is that for such a significant event, the experience a Vendor Assistance advisor brings will pay for itself many times over during the course of the transaction.

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We are delighted to announce that the 2021 Comms National Awards is open for entries.

This is the No. 1 awards programme for recognising excellence in the ICT channel and represents a golden opportunity to acknowledge the amazing work you have carried out for customers and channel partners over the course of the last, highly challenging, year.

The awards deadline is August 2nd (just a month away) and the glittering CN Awards gala – recognised as the best night out in the industry – is scheduled to take place fully live once again at The Hilton on Park Lane on October 7th.

Now in their 20th year, the Comms National Awards is the ICT channel's most respected and coveted prize and now's the time to go for 2021 Gold!

Sponsored for the second time this year by

DWS and independently judged by a panel of distinguished industry experts, The Comms National Awards recognises quality across the channel spectrum with awards in both reseller (customer solutions) and vendor (service to the channel) categories.

This year, we will salute the efforts made by channel businesses in the supply of collaborations solutions, which have been so vital during the Covid crisis and also the success of the Altnets, who are helping to connect Britain to high bandwidth full fibre. And, as ever, one individual will be presented with the illustrious Entrepreneur of the Year Award to recognise his or her efforts in growing a highly successful channel business. We will also recognise channel efforts to improve Diversity and Sustainability.

For all the categories see www.cnawards.com



"The Comms National Awards is the UK's leading awards process for the ICT channel and whether companies are winners or finalists, the prestige and PR they can gain from participating is huge. In these challenging times I would urge everyone in the channel to get involved and put their

name into the hat," said Comms Dealer Editorial Director Nigel Sergent.

The CN Awards is the ultimate channel celebration. Be part of it.



DWS PROUD TO HONOUR THE CHANNEL'S BEST OF THE BEST

"This is a fantastic awards process and the awards night itself is always the highlight of the year, bringing together everyone in the Channel for a night of celebration," said Digital Wholesale Solutions Chief Executive Officer, Terry O'Brien.

"The effort entrants put into these awards is exemplary and we know the value our teams place on being shortlisted. Our industry has done some amazing things during the Covid-19 pandemic, keeping the NHS and other key organisations communicating effectively and the CNAs gives Channel companies a wonderful opportunity to reward and recognise

those efforts. I truly hope more organisations than ever will enter this year and show the country what we are made of and what we have achieved during this challenging time.

"We were delighted to sponsor the awards for the first time last year and, although it had to be run virtually, it was still great to see how the industry pulled together to celebrate our achievements. This year we're so looking forward to a fully live event and I'm sure the atmosphere at finals night will be extra special. We can't wait to celebrate and congratulate everyone in the Channel at this very special occasion."

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CATEGORIES

Here is the full range of 2021 categories for resellers, vendors, distributors and services providers. The deadline for entries is August 2nd, 2021.

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BEST SME MANAGED SERVICE CUSTOMER SOLUTION

CONTACT CENTRE CATEGORY

BEST ENTERPRISE CONTACT CENTRE CUSTOMER SOLUTION
BEST SME CONTACT CENTRE CUSTOMER SOLUTION

VENDOR STREAM

SOFTWARE SOLUTION CATEGORY

BEST CALL MANAGEMENT SOLUTION
BEST BILLING SOLUTION

DISTRIBUTION CATEGORY

BEST ICT DISTRIBUTOR (up to £10)
BEST ICT DISTRIBUTOR (above £10m)



UC & COLLABORATION CATEGORY

BEST UC END POINT OR DEVICE
BEST UC HOSTED PLATFORM (up to £10m)
BEST UC HOSTED PLATFORM (above £10m)
BEST UC & COLLABORATION PLATFORM

VENDOR STREAM (cont'd)

INTELLIGENT NETWORK & CONNECTIVITY CATEGORY

BEST NETWORK
BEST ALTNET

SERVICE PROVIDER CATEGORY

BEST WHOLESALE SERVICE PROVIDER (UP TO £10m)
– Fixed/Mobile/Cloud
BEST WHOLESALE SERVICE PROVIDER (ABOVE 10m)
– Fixed/Mobile/Cloud

BUSINESS STREAM

TRANSFORMATION & GROWTH CATEGORY

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AWARD (SME RESELLER)
BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AWARD (ENTERPRISE RESELLER)

CHANNEL SUPPORT CATEGORY

BEST CHANNEL SUPPORT SERVICE (maintenance, finance, marketing etc)
BEST CHANNEL PORTAL

BUSINESS INNOVATION CATEGORY

BEST RESELLER INNOVATION AWARD
BEST SUPPLIER INNOVATION AWARD

POSITIVE IMPACT CATEGORY

DIVERSITY AWARD
SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

SPECIAL STREAM

SME RESELLER OF THE YEAR

ENTERPRISE RESELLER OF THE YEAR

COMMS NATIONAL ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

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The big opportunities in

The business case for resellers to add mobile data solutions to their portfolios is watertight and compelling, according to this month's panel of industry experts who also put a spotlight on the untapped opportunities that could exist on your own doorstep.

You would be hard-pressed to find a good reason not to sell mobile data solutions to a receptive market, especially when you consider the demand drivers and additional revenue opportunities that reside under the noses of many resellers. That said, getting it right is vital to success, noted Anton Le Saux, Head of M2M and IoT at Zest4. "Partners and customers are getting burned with large data coverage issues because they have the wrong solution," he stated.

"Many are still using mobile broadband as opposed to Connectivity-as-a-Service (CaaS) with managed IoT mobile data tariffs. Mobile broadband offers no security, no visibility of data usage, no control of the SIM estate, no fixed IP, limited access to larger data bundles, exaggerated costs and only

single network options. Many mobile data solutions are better suited to IoT tariffs and we are seeing more of a requirement for IoT solutions which combat these issues."

Le Saux explained that CaaS solutions using IoT tariffs give partners and end customers access to more sophisticated management tools, visibility of the whole SIM estate in one portal regardless of network and the ability to connect directly into the networks for real-time management of SIMs. "True IoT tariffs do not rely on CDR delivery and have a real-time view of usage to better manage the estate," he added. "We see significant growth in dedicated IoT channels, but the challenge in the UC partner channel is immaturity in understanding the solutions. The key to fixing this challenge is to offer the right support to switch partners on,



Anton Le Saux

help them to uncover that first big opportunity and realise that better margins and functionality are available to them."

eSIM revolution

Another big trend and growth area pointed out by Le Saux is eSIMs, which he claims is changing the landscape. "eSIMs can access multiple networks on the same SIM and offer in-country roaming capabilities," he added. "The ability to push a profile to the SIM offers greater flexibility and choice to everyone in the chain. The biggest opportunity that will bring the fastest returns for partners is to revisit MBB bases, review the use cases and usage profiles and work with an

IoT provider to help switch them out to IoT solutions."

Andrew Dickinson, CEO at Jola, noted that the catch-all for the new wave of mobile data opportunities is IoT, and that mobile data forms only part of IoT projects. "Roll outs are complex and usage and ARPU are low," he said. "Instead, think of situations that need a constant two-way data flow where fixed line is difficult: Patient records in ambulances, road signs, in-store franchises, fixed line backup, retail signage, car parks, buses, trains, taxis, yachts etc. This is where the volume meets the value.

"Experienced resellers recognise a high margin recurring revenue stream when they see one and

we started to sign up new partners at an average of 20-30 a month. Last year when they couldn't get fixed line installed many Jola resellers pivoted into 4G. With our help, every single one found an opportunity in their existing base of customers. One of our customers doubled their turnover from one Jola eSIM deal."

Matt Dykes, COO at Abzorb, highlighted that the pandemic has also driven demand for mobile communications and resellers would be wise to capitalise on this opportunity by identifying openings in key verticals, understanding their issues and aligning their objectives and strategy with technology requirements. In this context he has observed a growing requirement for more capacity in mobile broadband over the past year.

"The pandemic made businesses realise they need to invest in a mobile solution to facilitate a remote workforce," stated Dykes. "Home broadband often isn't reliable and robust enough to conduct work over. This has led to a rise in customers asking for more resilient mobile broadband. If resellers don't sell mobile, then they will miss out on a market opportunity."

Dykes has also witnessed an increase in demand



Andrew Dickinson



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for mobile data from the public sector, particularly in healthcare and education where always-on is vital. "The key is to discover the problems customers face and to work closely with them to understand what technology will assist in solving those problems and help them meet their objectives," he added.

According to Dykes, selling mobile can be complex and he works hard to 'dispel those myths'. "This is key in the technology world which is overcrowded by different products, solutions and offerings, so much so that resellers and customers often don't understand them. We want to bring clarity to a noisy marketplace," he added.

For Cloudcell Managing Director Kevin Boyle the opportunities are crystal clear, in part due to competition between MNOs and the availability of unlimited data SIMs which has made mobile broadband an affordable alternative to fixed line services. "This has taken away the unpredictable nature of mobile data charges which in turn has removed one of the main barriers for the



Kevin Boyle

adoption of mobile data connectivity for businesses," he stated. "This means we can offer partners a viable alternative when fixed line services offer poor performance or the cost of deployment is prohibitive."

Rising demand

As the performance of mobile networks continues to improve with the introduction of better 4G, LTEA (4G advanced) and 5G, the demand for more bandwidth will only increase. "The flexibility of mobile connectivity solutions means they should be considered not just as an alternative to fixed line when costs are prohibitive, but also considered alongside fixed line services as a primary service," added Boyle.

"This allows resellers to deploy quickly and therefore enable the up-sale of OTT services which can generate revenue straight away."

Boyle believes that the biggest mobile data related opportunity is 5G and its ability to deliver a 100 Mbps service as a minimum at cost, enabling Cloudcell to undercut existing fibre products. "The availability of 5G will allow us to be in direct competition with LL/FTTP on a cost and performance basis," he added. "The availability of 5G equipment is becoming more prevalent but ensuring it's fit for purpose requires exhaustive testing in different scenarios with different levels of 5G coverage. This is not a quick process but it's vital as the quality of our products is of paramount importance."

Another top priority for Boyle is educating the channel about the benefits of mobile – such as flexibility, speed of deployment and resilience. "Resellers should make mobile a key connectivity product and use it to enable the up-sale of other services to customers who could not be targeted due to poor or expensive fixed line services," he stated.



Matt Dykes

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At Candio, our partners are just as important as the end users utilising our Web Listings or Website Optimiser white-labelled digital services. From the first conversation, through the onboarding process, to even the aftercare once your customer locations are onboarded, the Candio team will always be on hand to deliver the best possible service to your business.

In just under a year, we have successfully onboarded over 45,000 customer locations onto the Web Listings and Website Optimiser platforms. Along the way, we've won some exciting new partners who have generously shared some fantastic comments about the services and the team.

David Munro, Head of Product at HighNet:

"The team at Candio have been fantastic since day one, helping us to fully understand the product and where the value lies for the end customer."

Onboarding as a partner was a painless process that made taking the product to market simple. It's clear they have a good understanding of the market and in particular, working with telecom companies and reaching their customer base."

Malek Rahimi, Managing Director at BDR Group:

"The Candio team have helped us increase our recurring revenues and deliver a great product to our customers."

Online presence is more important now than ever before. Helping our customers to be found online and managing their presence is a perfect

service for BDR. Getting onboard is simple and we were up and running in no time. Candio makes delivering digital services under the BDR brand a no-brainer."

Malcolm Holland, Group Service Director at Southern Communications:

"Web Listings has been received by our customers as an exceptional value-added product that adds tangible benefit and clearly this had made a huge difference to our bottom line so all in all, this has been a real win-win."

Thank you so much to the team for working with us and we are looking forward to the continued relationship moving forward."

Ralph Gilbert, Co-Founder and Managing Director at Focus Group:

"Candio has been a great addition to our portfolio and helped us to continue to build our recurring revenue."

We were able to take this offer to our customers during lockdown last year for a free-of-charge period, at a time when they needed it most. It's a win-win for us and for our customers."

We believe Candio represents an exceptional opportunity for resellers looking to increase their recurring revenue and deliver tangible digital transformation for their customers.

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Thinking like a start-up

Today's fast evolving and innovative ICT market calls for a disruptive approach. Here, David Owen, Managing Director of Intercity Technology's Comms Division (who has 15 years experience working in start-up cultures) explores how a start-up mentality and thinking outside the box can provide a strategic advantage.

The transformation of Intercity Technology began in 2019 and has proved a game-changer in terms of developing a start-up mindset. It started with a restructure of the business to bring a sharper focus across three divisions – Communications, Cloud and Security and Managed Services. "This provided the focus at a leadership level and resulted in significant transformations across sales, marketing, product teams and more," said Owen. "This pivotal move put us in a better position to respond to emerging market opportunities, build capabilities around them and deliver seamless solutions to our customers. We're now an agile, forward thinking and strategic organisation – all traits you associate with a start-up."

The biggest challenges in creating and modelling a start-up culture in an established company include

being able to step outside from the corporate machine and see things through a new entrepreneurial lens.

"Firstly, communication needs to be much more open and transparent than usual to create a start-up culture, and it needs to start from the top," added Owen. "It's not the Board and everyone else – that's not how it works. "Secondly, make sure you have dedicated resources in place rather than shared ones to ensure you have the right people with skills to get the job done. For example, how can shared resources operate in the corporate machine one minute and then jump into a DevOps environment the next. It simply doesn't make sense.

"Finally, there needs to be a level of autonomy for senior members of the start-up organisation to own their division or area of the business. Often in corporate organisations there's a rigid approval process so it's vital when creating and modelling



David Owen

a start-up culture to give colleagues the freedom and flexibility to do their jobs."

In addition, customers are constantly looking for ways to buy as-a-service or from a single supplier so, once you understand your strategy make sure you have the

that businesses with a strong identity and clear strategy generate and deliver between 60 per cent to 200 per cent higher returns to shareholders. "This is because everyone within the organisation, from top to bottom, understands the message and business goals,"

We're now an agile, forward thinking and strategic organisation – all traits you associate with a start-up

right partners in place to make buying from you as easy as possible, advised Owen. "A good strategy is nothing without the ability to execute," he added. "Get the right people in place, have a relentless focus on good execution and make sure you have the feedback loops in place if a change of course is needed."

Owen cited a recent survey by McKinsey which found

maggie reacting to any opportunity just because it will bring in early revenues," he commented. "Lurching from one opportunity to the next can lead you away from the vision and mission and, before you know it, you have a hard-to-repeat business which holds you back when it comes to scaling up. Ultimately, it's a fine balance but for those who get it right the benefits come back ten-fold."

According to Owen, a good start-up culture needs to be collaborative and people orientated. "You can't create a good culture without an open-minded, collaborative business approach," he commented. "Put your people first and make them feel like they own the business. If each and every member of the team lives and breathes the business – its vision, values and journey – you're far more likely to succeed and create a thriving culture."

Owen has observed a significant number of start-ups and tech innovators enter the market over the course of the pandemic, resulting in a plethora of new technologies. "With the acceleration of innovation, these disruptors have created a more fragmented and competitive marketplace," he added.

"Therefore, one of the main questions is how to stitch together these technologies to deliver a seamless customer experience while transitioning to the as-a-service model. Only when agility and customer-focused value propositions go hand in hand will a company be able to create repeatable revenue streams, so it's business critical to get this right." ■



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Campaigns that work

Creating a tailored content marketing plan is now a dominant priority for ICT resellers and all campaign strategies would be wholly beneficial if planned according to the principles advanced by Gamma Head Of Marketing Lauren McManus.



Lauren McManus

It is generally understood that today's buyers complete 90 per cent of their decision making process before making contact, meaning that, ultimately, there is only one option for marketers – to create content that is relevant, insightful and engaging. And, with only around two seconds to make an impression when you engage customers online, there is little time to make that all-important positive brand impact and stimulate interest. It follows that content needs to be relevant and tailored to an audience to be effective, otherwise your targets will simply and quickly switch off. The good news is that developing a tailored content marketing plan needn't be onerous. Here's five approaches that will help you succeed...

Why develop marketing plans?

To be agile in a changing world and truly understand customer needs is crucial. The key to achieving this lies in effective marketing planning and the ability to speak directly to your customer. During the pandemic many businesses have either

replanned, become reactive or stopped marketing completely. But the last 12 months have taught us that thriving organisations will not only take the time to regularly nurture marketing strategies but also ensure that content is tailored to the needs of their customers.

The most important step – know your customer

Understanding customer needs and challenges is a great starting point when defining your audience. Knowing where and when they are consuming content will help you determine what and how you communicate with them. It's also a good idea to build up a picture of what they value and what motivates them. Once you understand your customers and what makes them tick, you can tailor your content to help maximise results.

Where to begin?

Many successful new businesses enjoy longevity because they conduct regular market research to understand their target market and their competitors. A great way to gain valuable insight is to speak to your own customers. It

doesn't need to be a costly exercise. A survey or social media poll can help you understand the challenges your customers face, enabling you to uncover new opportunities and develop content that resonates.

The next step is to build some customer personas or profiles. Customers who find your product or service appealing often share similar characteristics such as age, location, gender, income

Even the simplest of personal touches will build stronger customer connections and drive conversions

and occupation. Creating customer profiles helps uncover those shared traits. This will help you fine-tune and tailor your content throughout the customer journey. If you've already built customer profiles, it's a good idea to update them to make sure there hasn't been a fundamental shift in customer behaviour due to the events of the last 12 months. For example, if you have been streaming

events digitally how will your customers feel about returning to live events when they are allowed?

Know what you want to achieve

Goals can include customer volume, market share, revenue or growth. For example, how will you report funding ROI success back to vendors? Clearly defining your success metrics is a fundamental part of your marketing

planning and will help to drive your tailored content.

Personalisation

Marketers are increasingly personalising approaches to tailor content. From adding the customer name to mass emails to customising whole homepages, even the simplest of personal touches will build stronger customer connections and drive conversions. To find ways to personalise the

experience, start by mapping out your customer journey and aligning your content to it. Bringing together the on and off-line worlds and intercepting at the right point could be a great start. For instance, a customer searching online is offered a demo at the right time in their journey. Chatbots can be a great way to introduce this sort of experience.

Maximising the reach of your content

Tailoring your message consistently through different communication mediums while keeping to the same key message can maximise your content. But, in today's fast moving world you need to make sure that you are displaying high on search engines for the text and voice terms that your customers are searching on. According to experts, content must be specifically optimised for voice. It needs to be more direct and conversational so that it will accurately sync with search queries.

Ready-made tailored content at your fingertips

Where possible channel partners should leverage their relationships with upstream providers to gain greater marketing support. For example, Gamma's channel partners use Accelerate, an online portal to customise the library of white label material developed by marketing experts. Features such as email marketing, automated social media posting, website banners and automated lead nurture all help to boost lead generation and increase sales. A personalised step-by-step marketing planning guide helps put partners on the road to generating effective content marketing strategies. ■



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Understanding the new

Lockdown easing has turned the page on a new chapter in workplace safety, culture and the employee experience, according to our expert panel.

Kate Brunning, Director of People, Virtual1



Kate Brunning

How to put safety first is a challenge facing many organisations. How are you approaching this issue?

Our main challenge is around peoples' mindset. It's a long time since our people have left the safety of their homes to come to the office. It's going to take time for them to feel safe and adapt to change in terms of a commute. Therefore, taking a slow approach to ease our people back is the only way forward.

What practical steps have you taken to ensure Covid-safe environments?

We have spent months on making our office spaces Covid-safe. Our Office Manager has worked tirelessly on this. We have all the measures you would expect – social distancing, limiting the number of people we allow into the office, Covid testing, desk booking and additional cleaning etc.

How important are Covid-19 protection policies when recruiting talent?

Safety is hugely important, but in all the hiring we have done throughout this pandemic it's not a question that is often raised from potential new recruits. They seem to be seeking flexibility and career progression over safety. Having said that, we are mindful that our current staff are equally important and have distributed a booklet on our Covid-19 policies and processes.

How far does workplace flexibility help or hinder an employer's duty of care?

I can't see how offering flexibility would hinder our duty of care. We now need to focus on ensuring our people are taking adequate breaks and annual leave to avoid burn out. We have a duty of care to ensure this happens. It's easy to just continue to

work from your holiday destination now – we want to avoid that at all costs.

If new job titles were to emerge from Covid-19, what do you think they should be and why?

The tech industry is going to see an uptick in home broadband products for remote employees so it would have to be job titles aligned to that. Perhaps CHBO – Chief Home Broadband Officer! On a serious note, hybrid working represents a significant opportunity for the tech sector.

Will flexible working bring an end to office politics?

Office politics is set to stay and a key focal point for teams will be to equip managers with tools to tackle keyboard warriors early on. Hybrid working creates a new set of challenges especially in terms of inclusivity. We have learned new ways to communicate effectively with our people which we will continue to do.

I still believe corporate culture is critical to success. We are keen to go for a hybrid working model, we have proven we can work effectively at home but it was our human interactions and connections with one another face-to-face that made Virtual1 successful, so that's still important to the company and our culture. Our time in the office is to collaborate and innovate. ■

Kate Wood, Cultural Consultant

What are the main people challenges as we emerge from lockdown?

A significant challenge is ensuring effective communication to support the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of employees. It is important to acknowledge that people may have lost confidence during lockdowns. There is a legal obligation to say where people work, so your contracts may need changing. And any changes to the place of work may have an impact on redundancy and could be

a factor when the furlough scheme ends. This could create issues if a restructure was to take place. Don't open yourself up to risk.

How should business leaders ensure that staff have confidence in Covid safety measures?

Businesses that don't have the correct protection policies in place do not value their employees or customers and should be avoided. To help reduce anxiety, communicate frequently so everyone is clear on what is expected of them and what



Kate Wood



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workplace narrative

they can expect from the business. A weekly covid update will ensure any changes are communicated and not missed.

Provide information on Government guidelines, and make sure you listen openly to concerns and take them seriously. Encourage vaccinations, but always respecting peoples' opinion on this choice. And give employees credible information about

retro fit what you did pre-Covid, get feedback and adapt. Appointing volunteer Culture Teams can help keep people engaged. Train leadership teams on remote management strategy and communication to ensure all teams have a consistent experience.

How far does workplace flexibility help or hinder an employer's duty of care?

As long as managers are continually communicating

The market is wide open with many roles becoming remote

the Covid-19 vaccine and offer resources to assist employees in finding a vaccination location and scheduling an appointment. Also, remind your workforce about free counselling which is often available with EAP programmes. This may support people who are feeling anxious or experienced loss. Most people have had changes to their confidence after 15 months of restrictions. This is something employers need to consider. Building confidence and avoiding self-sabotage as we navigate hybrid working is key.

In terms of the new employee experience, do we need to rethink culture?

We have a chance to reboot culture. In the new hybrid working world, empathy is the key to a great culture. Understanding what your teams want, need and are looking for from work will ensure they feel valued, and your culture will evolve. Ensure that employees don't experience a diminution of their contribution to culture. Don't just try and

with employees and ensuring that their flexible working arrangement is working for them, then this is a positive move for businesses. You may not see your team as regularly (maybe never) and need to be aware of non-verbal cues and changes in behaviour, so you can ascertain if your team are well and if there is any extra support they require. Ensure all leaders are trained.

How will the workplace changes caused by Covid-19 be reflected in job titles?

Hopefully there may be a less hierarchical structure within businesses which may get rid of some of the old job titles. We may see a scenario where people are paid for skills rather than having to attain a leadership position to achieve an increase in salary. The market is wide open with many roles becoming remote, giving people a global platform. Also, Covid-19 will likely increase the adoption of automation and AI, especially in work arenas with high physical proximity. This will change how people work and which roles are in demand. ■

Ayshea Robertson, People & Culture Director, Zen

As lockdown restrictions ease, what is your approach to re-integration?

Although we're emerging from lockdown it is still wise to remain cautious when integrating people back into an office or building. It's very much human nature to revert to old ways of working so raising awareness of the importance of any safety measures that are in place will be critical. Businesses need to ensure they take the right approach to re-integration to ensure that the working environment continues to be safe for their people.

What practical steps have you taken to address these challenges?

Throughout the pandemic we've consistently reviewed our safety measures to ensure their effectiveness. We've followed government guidance on working from home, introduced one-way systems, hygiene facilities, social distancing, restrictions on company travel, restrictions on the number and frequency of visitors to the building, adequate ventilation, and an increased cleaning regime. As lockdown eased we introduced new ways of working, creating hot desks and a booking in system which enables us to control the numbers of people in the building. All of this allows us to maintain social distancing.

For those working from home (in Zen's case a vast majority) we ensured they had the right equipment and set up for home working and DSE and homeworking risk assessments were carried out



Ayshea Robertson

by all. We have never forced anyone back to the office, but at the same time we have facilitated people suffering mental health related issues and those that felt hindered from working at home to be able to safely return to the office. Throughout the pandemic we have had mental health ambassadors to support our people.

How important will Covid-19 protection policies be when seeking to recruit the best talent?

A lot of people will want to see a company that places health and wellbeing at the heart of its people agenda. A company that will proactively deal with the impacts of external factors such as Covid, as well as mental health, flexible working practices and more. Some people may look at how a company has handled the pandemic, in regard to safety measures and how they have treated their people throughout. Everyone wants to feel safe at work, and the pandemic has enabled prospective talent to review how companies handle situations where health and wellbeing is at risk.

Does workplace flexibility ultimately help or hinder an employer's duty of care?

I believe flexibility actually supports an employer's duty of care as it enables people that might be anxious about being in a public place to work from home, for example. If you have the right measures and policies in place, then the option of flexible working can be a real positive for an employer as well as the employee.

Will there be a rebalancing of culture and company values in the new hybrid working world?

Company culture will naturally evolve as we adapt to new ways of working and workplaces become more flexible. This doesn't mean that company values also need to change. But the way people interact and work together will evolve in the new environment. So it is important to ensure that people working remotely also feel connected to the business and values, as well as the evolving culture. This will mean more effort, but it is a necessity when engaging with our people. ■



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CHANNEL CHAMPIONS

1st July 2021, Regents Park, London

Champions all!

Channel celebrates in style in the great outdoors

The inaugural Channel Champions event – the first major ICT channel event after lockdown – was staged alfresco in the grounds of Regents University in Regents Park, London on July 1st and was an inspirational and joyous celebration of channel success and resilience.

The big winners on the day were teams from: Focus Group, who picked

up five awards including Channel Champions Team of the Year; Enreach, who won two awards for Marketing and Sales Support; Mobliti, who won Billing Team and Event Team Awards and Digital Wholesale Solutions who secured trophies in the Sales and Culture team categories.

Awards co-ordinator Nigel Sergent said: "Congratulations must go to all

the winners, but this was a triumphant day for all those who took part and a life affirming celebration of channel accomplishments achieved during a highly challenging time. I would like to thank the judges for their hard work in assessing every entry so diligently, DWS and all our sponsors for helping us stage this event in such challenging circumstances and everyone who attended. It was great to be back!"



ROLL OF HONOUR



Reseller Sales & Account Management Team:
FOCUS GROUP



Reseller Marketing Team:
ENREACH



Reseller Technical Support and Engineering Team:
FOCUS GROUP



Reseller Sales Support Team:
ENREACH



Reseller Executive Leadership Team:
BABBLE



Reseller Billing and Finance Team:
MOBLCITI



Reseller People and Culture Team:
FOCUS GROUP



Vendor/Distributor Sales & Account Management
Team: UNION STREET



Vendor or Distributor Marketing Team:
TELCOSWITCH



Vendor or Distributor Technical Support and
Engineering Team: PROUV



Vendor or Distributor Sales Support Team:
CITYFIBRE



Vendor or Distributor Executive Leadership Team:
GAMMA



Vendor or Distributor People and Culture Team:
VIRTUAL1



Service Provider Sales & Account Management Team:
DIGITAL WHOLESALE SOLUTIONS



Service Provider Marketing Team:
PANGEA



Service Provider Engineering and
Technical Support Team: FIDELITY GROUP



Service Provider Executive Leadership Team:
ZEST4



Service Provider Billing and Finance Team:
CANDIO



Service Provider People & Culture Team:
DIGITAL WHOLESALE SOLUTIONS



Apprentice Champions:
INTERCITY TECHNOLOGY



Event Champions:
MOBLCITI



Charity Champions:
FOCUS GROUP



Channel Champions Team of the Year:
FOCUS GROUP SALES AND ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Fortune favours the brave in f



DAVID ALLDRITH
HIGHNET

“There is plenty of opportunity to be found from PSTN switch-off and from the transition to full-fibre. However, there is no blueprint or ‘one-size fits all’ for resellers looking to adjust their portfolio or even to pivot their entire business model. Infrastructure build and/or network operation are big jumps for the average VAR, and although there are examples of it being done successfully, it does require new skills and significant investment. However, resellers have great opportunities to support their existing customers and to win new business in the role of a trusted guide on the digital transformation journey. We’ve seen coronavirus accelerate the demand for mobility and flexible working, driving businesses to cloud adoption. PSTN switch-off and full fibre are likewise catalysts for further digitalisation. Resellers who can position themselves with the expertise and access to products and services which support digitalisation will be the winners over the next 3-5 years.”

It is not too late for resellers to get involved with full fibre and with industry expertise, knowledgeable contacts and experience managing complex projects, a path exists for resellers to transition into carrier providers.

The Directors of 5G Communications had this in mind when they spun off a fibre unit, PCL Fibre, to capitalise on the planned fibre rollout.

Nathan Francis General Manager at PCL Fibre said: “Many resellers often wait for larger incumbents to provide new connectivity solutions and ultimately enjoy their wholesale offering. Instead of taking this traditional approach, 5G decided that it possessed the skillsets to exploit the growth of fibre and become a major contributor to the growth of fibre deployment in the UK.

“Many infrastructure providers move into selling IT solutions, however, there is really no reason not to do the reverse; become a ‘Carrier Provider’ if you want to advance from a reseller (VAR).”

However, the road from reseller to carrier provider is lined with challenges and outlays. Building and maintenance costs as well as a need for very specific expertise can be a drain on resources that needs a lengthy return on investment.

This begs the question – is the destination worth the turbulent flight it may take to get there. Therefore, we asked our host of industry experts if the full fibre rollout presents an opportunity for resellers to transform into end-to-end providers of telecommunication services, or if resellers would be better off as a guiding partner between business and larger incumbents.



PHILIP LEE
ITS

“One of the key opportunities the fibre rollout presents for resellers is being able to move away from reliance on the incumbent provider. The rollout has created a whole new generation of altnets that are specialists in full fibre. Our business models are built around fibre, and we are building pure fibre using the latest methods and technologies. There is no doubt that the fibre rollout is creating more business opportunities for resellers, as it gives them more choice, control, and agility. Having witnessed this step change, we have been quick to go a step further than traditional indirect models to enable ‘end to end’ by launching our Vantage scheme – partners come to us with a business case for us to build fibre in an area where they have identified demand, giving them an even greater degree of control, effectively owning the customer end to end.”



MIKE KORKIDAKIS
WAVENET

“A plethora of statistics are available regarding the full fibre rollout and its positive impact on the economy. The rollout brings with it an abundance of benefits, and with the combination of connectivity and cloud computing, resellers - especially the ones operating their own networks, can easily move into the end-to-end telecommunication space. Bringing with them their experience of large networking projects opens up the ability to introduce end-to-end communication services for resellers, with the additional benefits of network monitoring as part of their offering resulting in seamless end-to-end stability. The greater freedom the rollout gives will open a whole new opportunity for resellers to offer competitive, future-proof solutions. The quality of services, stability and reputation already offered by carrier providers will make this the next logical transition for resellers.”



Prepare your customers for the
full-fibre future

Fibre but proceed with caution



JOHN IGOE
CITYFIBRE

“The full fibre rollout represents a huge opportunity for partners of all shapes to capitalise on the abundance of businesses who will be looking for improved connectivity to serve their ever-growing bandwidth demands and there are certainly considerable advantages to owning your own network. However, for all the benefits that come with the surge of new full fibre providers, creating far more choice and competition, unless you are of the requisite size and have sufficient volume of orders to share around, it can become difficult to establish strong supplier relationships with each of them, enabling you to benefit from their best levels of operational support and commercials. Therefore aggregators have never been so relevant - being able to take that pain away, using their extensive networks to recommend the right supplier for each individual situation as each carrier has their own benefits and deficiencies that must be managed.”



TREVOR LOVELOCK
BT WHOLESALE

“With several big players already increasing investment in the space, and the potential for significant over-build in certain geographies, anyone contemplating building their own infrastructure should carefully consider the strategy against alternative opportunities for business growth. We’ve seen many new regional operators spring up in recent years, with considerable capital investment in the sector. So, with the right plan and backing, it is feasible for partners to consider – but it could be a high-risk strategy for them. There is still substantial value in reselling and orchestrating an increasingly diverse set of services for customers whose needs continue to evolve and increase as digital transformation across all industries increases in pace. Partners are well placed to leverage the investment others are making in technologies such as full fibre, for instance, so they can monetise the all-IP opportunities – partly generated by the WLR switch-off – without the need to invest in development themselves.”



MATTHEW WORBOYS
GAMMA

“The full fibre rollout is an exciting opportunity for the whole UK communications market. For resellers thinking of transforming into providers, the scope of success in this space can only be evident with significant long-term investments. Resellers should ask themselves how they will transition the voice services lost in the PSTN switch off, and whether they have the necessary resources to move into the provider space. Besides the initial capital outlay and maintenance and development costs, this transformation also requires extensive skillset and human capital. As existing providers keep on moving towards offering fully managed services of telephony, connectivity, IT and security, resellers can indirectly sell it all, pick and choose, or be in full control of it all. They can choose what parts of the jigsaw would be most beneficial to their business. Ultimately, the indirect model is certainly the most risk-averse approach, yet one still full of opportunities.”



RAY O'CONNOR
INDIGO

“The UK government’s commitment to a copper phase out by 2030 and the launch of its Project Gigabit now means FTTH is a very attractive form of access technology and will enhance the role of resellers addressing UK markets. Given the higher than ever penetration of FTTH across the UK, and the predicted explosion of the market to four times that by 2025, there is a huge opportunity for the reseller sector. Resellers, big and small, can offer a far broader reach of services to their clients- local and nationwide. A great example is that of traditional satellite TV retailers. Given the data capacities ‘full fibre’ adds, resellers can add value to their customers by offering full fibre rather than lesser performing access technology such as DSL or satellite”



ALEX MAWSON
DIGITAL WHOLESALE
SOLUTIONS

“The transition to full fibre means that every customer needs to make a buying decision in the years ahead and this presents a unique opportunity for resellers to win business and build long-standing relationships with their customers. Compared to traditional WLR-based broadband, full fibre is easier to order, manage and upgrade, making it an attractive option for resellers, enabling them to deliver a customer’s end-to-end requirements while maintaining control of their supply chain. With the ongoing fibre roll out and the shift to a connectivity-first communications strategy, resellers should now be expanding their portfolio with high-performing, ultra-reliable full fibre broadband which can be used as the foundation for additional services such as IP voice, UC&C, Cloud solutions and networking services, such as SD-WAN.”



ROAN PRATT
ENREACH UK

“Customers are increasingly looking to have all their UC requirements with one single supplier. As such, there are many options for customers on connectivity with FTTP, SOGEA and leased lines and more options to collaborate with Teams and Cloud. The two are very much intertwined and with these increasing options available for their business they are looking to their supplier to understand their requirements and provide the best solution. The opportunity in the reseller space is to be able to provide the best solution for the customer that is delivered right first time and the ongoing support for the customer is best in class. The rollout will only see demand and competition increase.”

Continued on page 41

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Navigating leadership p

Colt Technology Services CEO Keri Gilder shares insights into how she is balancing the execution of leadership and strategy, digital transformation, workforce wellbeing, sustainability and broader industry challenges – all of which impact decision making.

It is clear that the need for strong leadership has perhaps never been more critical – and how leaders differentiate is largely determined by their priorities. “At the moment, employee wellbeing is my priority as a CEO,” stated Gilder. “You need a healthy workforce, mentally and physically, to have a healthy business. We’ve enabled over 60 mental health first aiders over the past year and we’re focused on supporting employees living with disabilities, such as neuro disabilities or dyslexia. We also launched a disability accessibility network. It’s vital that inclusivity and psychological safety exist for everyone to thrive in the culture you build.”

Cultivating partnerships in our industry is also vital. Without the technological ecosystem, true transformation won’t be possible. “Enterprise requirements are continuing to become more complex, and we need to join forces to deliver value that’s greater than the sum of our parts,” she added. “Carriers, data centre operators, cloud service providers, network operators and software developers need to co-build, co-develop and co-create.”

Gilder says that hybrid working means she has a higher responsibility to



Keri Gilder

Authentic leadership means putting the employee at the centre of the business. This is as important as looking after your customers – the two are inextricably linked

create an inclusive culture. “Not being in the office can perpetuate historical difficulties in dealing with silos,” she added. “A big challenge now is making sure there’s no divide between those that go back to working in the office at any

given time, and those who are working somewhere else. As a leader I need to build trust and community with and among my employees. Authentic leadership means putting the employee at the centre of the business. This is as important as looking

after your customers – the two are inextricably linked.”

Open culture

According to Gilder, building an open culture where everyone is able to bring their true selves to work is at the centre of leadership.

“At the same time you need to get right the balance between people, processes and technology,” she added. “The three are needed to future-proof your organisation and there’s a real danger if you neglect any side of the triangle. You need to provide the right tools to employees so they’re able to do their job, and the right processes to make it as easy for them to succeed.”

On a more interpersonal level, one of the biggest risks in leadership is not listening to those around you, believes Gilder. “Listen to your employees, customers and partners and always have an open mind to learn,” she urged. “Only then can you understand your business and in what direction you need to steer it.”

Wherever an organisation’s future pathway may lie, it is certain that connectivity will be essential to remove silos in a hybrid model and facilitate an open culture. “We conducted a study on our own headquarters to understand more about the future connectivity demands of hybrid working,” said Gilder. “We analysed bandwidth usage during pre-Covid months and then during the pandemic when some of our staff were back in the office. We found that with the office at just 60 per cent of our normal employee



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riorities

attendance pre-pandemic, our bandwidth requirements were 50 per cent higher.

“Despite some people returning to the office, the majority of meetings in a hybrid age still have some kind of virtual element that connects to those who are not in the office. The crucial point here is that collaboration tools and apps connecting businesses today are only as good as the network delivering them.”

Cloud boom

The speed at which hybrid cloud has become the cloud model of choice for enterprises is striking, observed Gilder, and she highlighted some interesting implications as the basic multi-cloud model moves

In terms of the technology under Colt’s own roof, Gilder pointed to automation, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence as bringing value to many areas of the organisation. “When it comes to Colt’s network we’re looking at ML and AI to build networks that can reroute to avoid traffic-heavy areas and self-heal, as well as bundling our connectivity with emerging technologies to position us as an enabler of digital services,” she explained. “AI and ML can also improve the customer experience by predicting trends and specifics for customers so we’re one step ahead for them.”

The future also has sustainability at its core, noted Gilder. “For Colt

Listen to your employees, customers and partners and always have an open mind to learn. Only then can you understand your business and the direction to steer it

into a new and more complex phase. “We see that enterprises don’t want 100 per cent of their workloads in one cloud,” she added. “They are going for a mix of public cloud services to run alongside their private cloud.

“Connectivity means physical activity, and Colt will continue to drive fibre infrastructure throughout the world. The business will also keep moving towards software defined networking and ensuring that we’re connecting our customers at the higher levels of the technology stack.”

and for the telco industry, we need to work towards becoming net-zero,” she stated. “Clearly, it’s important for the future of the planet, however it’s also central to us being able to help our customers on their journey. We’ll also be collaborating more. When we look at the ecosystem and all the different elements that come into play to drive digital transformation, it is obvious that we’ll need to be more aligned on APIs and be driving more innovative and seamless solutions for enterprise organisations.” ■

More CEO insights on page ??



ROB DOWNES
9 GROUP

continued from page 39

“The opportunity of the fibre roll-out is becoming more apparent in the buying process for customers. As the market becomes more aware of the choices available, customers are open to discussion around their full comms strategy and are looking for a trusted advisor to support them with their needs. Acquisitions can add new expertise which could equip resellers to make the transition to carrier provider, however this isn’t a viable option for most. A sensible strategy is to play to your existing strengths and to place the customer at the centre of what you do. If you have untapped expertise within your organisation, lean into that more to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Proactively engage with your customers to understand their environment, their strategy and their needs. Educate them on emerging solutions and provide advice and support which fits with their requirements as well as your skills.”



ANTHONY KARIBIAN
bOnline

“The biggest impact of full fibre rollout and the BT switch off will be on small businesses which represent the lion’s share of late adopters still using legacy telecom products. These businesses are more likely to expect end-to-end services with connectivity, VoIP and related services all from a single provider with a single bill. This presents a great opportunity for resellers to bundle connectivity and VoIP and other digital products. However, one must not underestimate the challenges that will be faced by legacy telecoms providers trying to get VoIP right. It will be far easier for VoIP or IT solution providers to add full fibre to their portfolio than the other way around.”



JAMES SHRAGA
FIDELITY GROUP

“Technology will lead the recovery of businesses, as it has enabled companies to remotely trade effectively and efficiently during the pandemic. On that basis, all companies should strive to have the best connectivity they can afford for their teams to work proficiently. Despite 2025 seeming a long way off, it’s always better to get a head start on preparations to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. This will open the opportunity for resellers to convert and future-proof businesses and help partners and customers become informed buyers. With just over two million UK businesses using an ISDN connection and roughly a quarter unaware that the switch-off is happening (source: TalkTalk), resellers can help reduce overheads in this financially challenging period and transform businesses into digital enterprises as a ‘one stop shop’ for IT and telecom services.”



OLIVER HELM
FULL FIBRE

“With copper switch-off a closer reality, the opportunity for resellers to grow a sticky customer base on fibre is significant - and with more wholesale providers in the marketplace there are great opportunities to do this where the incumbents have traditionally maintained a strong foothold. Access to these services at a layer-2 level is easier now too, providing opportunities to add enhanced, higher margin, services. But building networks and selling over them are two very different, specialised, activities. Transforming to integrated is not easy to scale. Network builders specialise in scaling complex 24/7 engineering activities, with long ROIs, and provide access to services for resellers to leverage. Selling and supporting great quality connectivity is also a highly skilled activity, generally with a shorter ROI and underlying business model. Resellers and network builders are better placed to work together, focusing on their specialties to scale quickly.”

Top CEOs share strategies

Emerging from lockdown with clarity of direction is key – so is turning change to an advantage. Here, influential CEOs give us the inside track on their plans.

Phil Race, CEO, Adept Technologies



Phil Race

What are your current priorities?

It's been a tough year but we're returning to the office, we're getting out to see prospects, customers and each other and our business is gaining momentum. Our focus is on helping customers be agile, take advantage of innovation and reduce costs, while also looking after our staff who have achieved so much during challenging times. We will continue our crusade to integrate Adept. We have a programme called Project Fusion that seeks to place all parts of our business on the same platform to improve customer service and gain operational insight.

Your biggest leadership challenges at this time?

Training is key: There is no end of change, whether it's business model change, technology change, teaching and diagnosing in different ways or working with remote teams from diverse backgrounds. To help navigate change we need to develop understanding, knowledge and skills.

Training is continuous and undertaken in many ways. We are implementing a new HR platform to help us measure this activity.

Where have you witnessed leadership pitfalls?

I have seen so many companies expect help, support and service on a pro-bono basis in an emergency. But insurance should be purchased up front – security software, resilient networking, performant platforms, 24x7 support and staff training. A proper review of the IT landscape and appropriate investment to mitigate risks is so worth it.

Your biggest opportunity?

We have set up an Adept Consulting team with a focus on security and the cloud. This team can deliver Cloud Readiness Assessments and Security Risk Assessments which reflects where we see demands as organisations take advantage of zero footprint technology, the freedom that brings, but also the needs of an environment that needs protection. ■

Shaun Lynn, CEO, Agilitas

What's top of mind for you right now?

Employee welfare. Agilitas is monitoring its employee welfare and engagement closely and looking for ways to make people feel more connected, including giving them the ability to return to the office and team environments as and when they feel safe to do so. Another priority is sustainability and environmental impact. There is a growing need for a circular and sustainable supply chain which puts environmental impact at its heart. We are in the process of launching our Sustainability Pledge that is focused around the planet, people and partners. Sustainability challenges pretty much everything

that we do, the full cradle to grave life cycle of our products and services as well as how we interact with our customers and technology.

What do you identify as the biggest leadership pitfall?

Chasing profit. For example, we saw a rush to buy laptops during the transition to home working. A number of companies hiked the prices and effectively held their customers to ransom in some cases. It's easy to forget that customers always have a choice. Those companies that take a longer-term approach, invest in their workforce and create long-term value driven customer relationships based on honesty, trust and transparency will emerge far stronger.

Your greatest opportunity?

Outsourcing is very much the direction of the IT and comms market for the foreseeable future. Customers want the ability to flex services and resources up and down and move away from a rigid cost environment.

Where do you see Agilitas in three years time?

The business will be approaching its 35th year by then and the indicators are that the direction of travel will be a very exciting one. As a supply chain and services aggregator, I would expect us to double in size over that period from a revenue perspective, increase profits threefold and increase our global footprint from delivering services in 70 countries to 100-plus. Even more importantly, I believe the business will be fully carbon neutral with a 100 per cent sustainable operating model.

How would you like the ICT sector to change and why?

We need to change our industry and its perceptions to recognise that success isn't just about sales volume, P&Ls or balance sheet strength, it's about the people we employ, the families our businesses support and the essential services that are delivered off the backbone of our infrastructures. Everyone of us deserves a pat on the back for surviving and making a positive contribution to society during demanding and tough times. ■



Shaun Lynn



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es, priorities and insights

Steve Langmead, CEO, Commsworld



Steve Langmead

What do you see as your biggest opportunity at this time?

The run up to the legacy PSTN network switch-off in 2025. Some businesses have still not planned for this eventuality, which they really need to prepare for now. Commsworld's preparation has been ongoing for more than 12 months and we have the products that will support our customers during this change.

Your primary and current leadership challenges?

The main challenge is making sure that we qualify major new projects and opportunities appropriately, and focus on the business that will create and foster a win-win working relationship with our customers.

What trends are you tracking that interest you most?

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a move to hybrid working, so businesses need connectivity solutions that cater for that. In addition, Commsworld has identified further trends focused on the role technology and

connectivity can play in tackling the attainment gap in education, digital poverty, the smart delivery of services and climate change. For instance – delivering high speed connectivity to residents in affordable housing throughout the UK would result in a step change in the ability to deliver and improve services digitally.

What do you see as the main leadership pitfalls at this time?

The biggest pitfall is when business leaders take their eye off the ball when it comes to focusing on the areas where they can add the most value to their customers.

Where do you see Commsworld in three years time?

Our objective is to expand our footprint across the UK through organic and inorganic growth, and enhance our customer offerings. We aim to achieve this by continuing to win new large secure business. The portfolio we currently offer is also likely to include ISP consumer services. ■

Pete Tomlinson, CEO, Windsor Telecom

What are your current priorities and why?

After an unprecedented 18 months, UK businesses have loads going on and are still coping with much uncertainty. So now, more than ever, they need the right help and advice together with straightforward solutions that will make the fastest positive impact and difference to their businesses and enable them to prioritise. Helping our customers do that continues to be our priority.

Your biggest leadership challenges and how are you addressing them?

We've grown the team by about 20 per cent in the last year and continue to do so. Recruiting passionate people, with the right experience, aspirations and culture is tough. However, it is something we can't compromise on. On the flipside, we have increased our focus on developing the team and it's great to see how they've responded and accelerated their development and careers.

Which new technology areas are on your radar screen?

As someone who's just gone from four old copper phone lines in my home office giving 6Mb between them to a single new 900Mb fibre service I know first-hand that the right connectivity is a game changer. With virtually all comms now delivered as over-the-top services, a proper connectivity infrastructure and software defined networking is key. However, with so many new providers and technologies emerging it's an area where customers

are increasingly confused and need decent advice.

What do you see as the biggest leadership pitfalls at this time?

Business leaders are under pressure to conform to many different trends – some may be good and will stick around, others maybe not. Sometimes it's right not to follow fashion and to stay true to your values. We all need to ensure that we do the right stuff for the bigger picture and longer-term success, not just a short-term knee-jerk reaction for popularity and LinkedIn likes.

Your biggest opportunity?

I've talked about the convergence of software, comms and IT, even prior to the pandemic. Being a business that was traditionally known for one product line it's been gratifying to see customers embrace

our new wider portfolio. It's a reminder that if we continue to deliver an exceptional experience to customers they'll want to do more business with us.

What trends are you tracking in the market that interest you most?

Customers are increasingly looking for bespoke, or at least tailored, implementations and are far less accepting of rigid systems and poor user interfaces. They want sensible customisations and implementation support built around their business needs.

Where do you see Windsor Telecom in 2025?

We're all about making technology easy and enjoyable, so the success of our company is simply linked to doing that for as many businesses as we can. ■

Continued on page 44



Pete Tomlinson



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Stewart Smythe, CEO, Ascent

What's top of your to-do list right now?

My number one priority is to ensure Ascent is primed and geared for the huge opportunity we are seeing as the world emerges from the straightjacket of the last 12 months. Our customers' horizons have changed, creating new digital priorities, and to satisfy the surge in demand we're building out our teams with talented people in diverse locations who are looking for new working dynamics, a challenge and flexibility. The nature of our work has always been attractive to curious technical minds, but the breadth and depth of the customer engagements we're seeing now is magnetic and I'm fully invested in making Ascent the European destination employer for data and software talent.

What are your main leadership challenges?

Running a business across multiple European locations over a long period of time where you can't physically get together has created challenges, and opportunities, around leadership visibility and cultural development. It sounds obvious but we overcome these challenges by making sure everything our leadership teams do is focused on making our

front line colleagues' jobs easier and gives them more control over how, when and where they work – which we know in turn will empower them to do their best work for our customers.

What are the biggest leadership pitfalls at this time?

Right now it's really easy for leaders to be distracted by intellectual challenges as markets start the long road to recovery – what's going to change next, by when, what will it mean, how do I create or manage impact etc. For me, that line of thinking just takes you further away from the customers who need you now and the critical task of equipping your teams to deliver for them.

Your most exciting opportunity?

There has never been a better time to be in the data and software industry. Our biggest opportunity is working with customers to help shape projects that directly enable them to do something new, or do something better. We're broadening out our service lines at the moment, adding complementary shorter scope 'test the water' engagements that give customers the opportunity to prove value early and

better inform transformative programmes of work.

We're also enhancing our support and management services that extend our relationships with customers, when they need us to help them in the longer term.

What market trends interest you most and why?

There is a massive shift in data-led programmes and business strategies in comparison to a few years ago. Data as a first-class consideration is now completely mainstream – embraced by boards as fundamental to business planning and development. How we build and deliver our solutions against this backdrop and proving the link to business value is by far the most interesting aspect of our work at Ascent.

Which new technologies are on your radar screen?

Digital Twins is a concept that I think will have a growing impact over the next couple of years. This idea sits right at the intersection of software and data and has the potential to drive huge amounts of value into almost all industries. The concept is creating a real-time digital duplicate of a real world system so you can make very rapid, granular changes and see the result in real-time. This is critical for all kinds of progress – from increasing the capacity of our rail network and modernising the electricity grid right through to making offices more comfortable and efficient.

Where do you see Ascent in three years time?

Pushing the boundaries of what a data-driven, software-enabled set of capabilities can do for the trading side of our customers' businesses, and supporting them as they build the digital muscle that helps them deliver on their core purpose.



Stewart Smythe

Frank words



Frank Dick OBE, coach to the coaches and a renowned business motivator, has worked with winning sports teams and individuals across the planet, including the England Rugby and UK Olympics teams, Daley Thompson, Boris Becker, Justin Rose and many more. Here, he gives us some pearls of wisdom on leading and managing change.

Moving forward, there's been a lot of speculation on what normal will look like. But I believe the new normal in our lives is already with us. In an arena of change and uncertainty, the key skill to master is agility – to become adaptable, flexible and versatile in finding new ways to win. It is important to learn to be comfortable in leading change and being led through change.

The innovator will always have detractors. And whether you lead change or are being affected by it, there are seven main reasons why change makes people uncomfortable. Taking each of these in turn, I have suggested a response for each:

Irritation: Being nudged from the comfort of 'the normal'.
Response: Get comfortable with the exercise of disruptive thinking.

Sense of Loss: Perhaps colleagues moving out or into different roles.
Response: You're about to write a new chapter in your life journey. Look forwards,

not backwards, and help your colleagues to do just that.

Weakening of self-esteem:

You feel like a small cog in a big wheel.
Response: Being better at being you is what counts. It's your performance that makes you a winner. Whatever challenges of change you may face, step up and step in.

Disillusionment:

Will things ever improve?
Response: Life is not like the predictable merry go round. It's more like a scary big dipper with twists and turns and hair-raising dips and spins. Be comfortable with that.

Stress:

Usually caused by change disorientation.
Response: Winning the game of change is often only a matter of adapting and adjusting fast. This can be taught.

Doubt:

Questioning competence and loyalty of the organisation.
Response: While we are the organisation's responsibility, the organisation is ours. Let's live up to that.

Fear:

Change is scary.
Response: Start with controlling the controllables and work on the things that you can change and make them work for you. Get rid of the negative 'what ifs' and start looking at the 'why not's'. There's always a way to win over there. Just find it.

For more information on Frank Dick's motivational programmes please visit www.frankdick.co.uk



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Vapour adds five



Vapour's incoming quintet

CLOUD firm Vapour's headcount received a boost with the onboarding of five new recruits. Dan Needham joins from Cloud Technology Solutions (CTS) as Business Development Manager and Mark Taylor assumes the same title bringing experience from a varied sales background. Sales Support Co-ordinator Becky Pritchard also joins the commercial team. On the technical side, David Parsons has been brought in as a Solutions Engineer; and former military serviceman Ronnie Paton enters Vapour as a Cloud UC Engineer.

The hires coincide with Vapour's relocation to Heritage Exchange – a converted textiles mill on the outskirts of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. Head of Transformation and Operations Carol McGrotty said: "Our plan is to expand to become a £7 million business by the end of our 2021 financial year, and people will prove crucial to this."

CEO Tim Mercer added: "We've worked hard to select talented individuals who care as much about busting jargon as our existing team. And we recorded as much monthly recurring revenue in Q1 of 2021 as we did in the first half of 2020, double the amount we achieved in the second half of last year. There are three product launches on the horizon too, so we need to be ready for the next chapter of growth."

Also on the move...

IT MANAGED services provider Mode Solutions has pulled in Clinton Groome as Chief Operations Officer. He brings 20-plus years experience in the outsourcing and in-house service



Clinton Groome

delivery sector and joins from Conne3t where he was VP of Operations for five years. "Clinton's understanding of business process and systems as well as running large teams of technical and support personnel will be highly valuable to our M&A strategy, as well as integrating multiple acquisitions," stated CEO Alex Tupman. Chairman Richard Cottrell added: "With Alex as CEO and now with the appointment of Clinton as COO, both of whom have a well-established working relationship, we have a senior team focused on delivering our business growth strategy."

COMMSWORLD'S biggest ever recruitment drive sees 12 new appointments across all areas of the business including the instatement of Dan Jackson who joins as Business Development Director, bringing 35 years experience including stints at Redcentric, Intrinsic/Maintel, NG Bailey and Dimension Data. Another director level appointment sees Dave McCann take the Alliances Director position. Chief Executive Steve Langmead commented: "These appointments underline our commitment to investing in our future as we expand to meet growing demand."

FORMER Tollring sales chief Carl Boraman has joined SiPalto as Sales Director with a brief to drive growth in channel and direct VoIP markets. He brings 20 years industry experience to the role. SiPalto founder Ahmed Murad commented: "I've known Carl for a number of years and knew he would be a great fit at SiPalto. We share the same vision and goals. Carl's already made headway in a short space of time."



Lisa Herbert

INFINITY Group's Lisa Herbert has been promoted to the MD position following an 18 month stint as sales chief. She has 20 years experience in management, sales and consulting and worked as Chief Operations Officer for a Microsoft Partner in South Africa before joining Infinity Group in January 2020. Herbert said: "To have the opportunity to bring some of the work ethic, resilience and learnings gained during my career in South Africa to the entire company has been the highlight of my immigration success."

Darby to lead Pulsant's sales

ROB Darby's instatement as Pulsant's Director of Channel Sales comes as the cloud provider builds its edge and multi-cloud capabilities for the channel following a link up with Zayo. Darby joins from IT services provider



Rob Darby

CommsCare where he was Sales Director then Commercial Director. Darby is tasked with spearheading Pulsant's channel proposition which is boosted by an £8m investment into its edge infrastructure, connecting 10 UK data centres using Zayo's fibre network.

"The rapid growth in IoT and connected devices is significantly increasing data volumes, driving a need for edge computing, high capacity, low latency networks and multi-cloud strategies," stated Darby. "Through Pulsant's colocation services, channel organisations can expand the multi-cloud services they take to market and prime themselves for incipient edge opportunities."

Mgt team revamp strengthens Timico



David Jones

A REVAMP of Timico's senior management team sees Chief People Officer David Jones promoted to MD of Corporate and SMB with a remit to drive organic sales growth of 10 per cent over two years. His pre-Timico experience includes stints at Travis Perkins, Daisy Group and Vodafone. Timico also appointed Jon Portlock as Customer Solutions Director who joins from Exponential-e where he was Head of Cloud Services. These appointments follow the promotion of Strategy and Marketing Director Andrew Vize to the Executive Board as CMO. CEO Neil Muller said: "A number of strategic changes will advance our position and increase market share. Fundamental to driving this strategy is not only being agile but having the right talent."

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