



Harris remains
bullish post-SIPHON
acquisition p26

Maker of world
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Vision delegates p32



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BEST WHOLESALE SERVICE PROVIDER 2016



Zen rolls out NGN post-Huawei deal

ZEN Internet has secured a multi-million partnership with Chinese networking giant Huawei to roll out a new Next Generation Network across the UK.

SPECIAL REPORT

Announcing the news at Zen's annual partner conference in London on November 24th, CEO Richard Tang (pictured with Shi Weiliang, UK MD for Huawei Enterprise Business) told Zen resellers and dealers: "This continues our journey from an ISP to a carrier. It's great news for the channel and great news for the industry."

Named Project Plexus, Zen's network investment will see its number of PoPs in BT exchange-

es rise from 270 to over 400 in the next few months, and expand Zen's on-net reach to more than 500,000 postcodes, covering nearly every corner of the UK.

Jon Bauer, Zen's Technical Director for Network and Infrastructure, said: "With Huawei we're creating a carrier-grade network that will, for channel partners, mean a more dynamic and flexible portfolio of products and services, alongside greater resilience and performance. It means a network that

will, with Huawei equipment at its core, make partner businesses more competitive now and in the future.

"We will be able to grow capacity faster and more cheaply than our competitors, adding extra services and emerging technologies to our portfolio whenever the demand arises.

"In the short-term Zen's network investment will mean major performance efficiencies, much better fault tolerance and more cost-effective solutions."

Continued on page 3

3-23

Industry News
Catch up with events in comms

24

Business Profile
Avaya banks on Boyer in mid-market

28

Interview
Equinix expands EMEA footprint

30

Company Focus
Sennheiser's very own 'Rolls Royce'

40

Business Profile
Dadds picks up the FCS baton

44

Comms People
This month's movers and shakers

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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

THE Ofcom-Openreach merry dance continues, and the sequence of announcements on November 29th seem more than a coincidence. Ofcom pressed the button for legal separation, and as fate would have it, BT then announced plans to move

Openreach further towards fulfilling Ofcom's call for greater independence, transparency and service improvements, blasting the wind out of the watchdog's bluster.

BT announced the appointment of its first Chairman for the local fixed network business, Mike McTighe, a former Ofcom exec of some eight years who will help to create an Openreach board. The appointment invokes the tenet, keep your friends close, and your enemies closer.

November's announcements raise more questions: There is a lack of communication between Ofcom and BT. The regulator appears to have been in the dark about BT's plans to make Openreach more 'independent'. Had normal channels of communication been engaged, there would have been no requirement to hijack a headline or two.

Despite its bluster, Ofcom did not act from a position of strength. The official statement reveals its push for legal separation as a half-hearted act. Inviting BT to make friends, the Ofcom announcement said, 'We remain open to BT bridging the gap between its proposal and what is required to address our strong competition concerns'. And again, 'We remain open to further voluntary proposals from BT that address these outstanding concerns'.

Coincidentally, BT then announced a new Openreach board to 'ensure that Openreach treats all customers equally while investing in better service, broader coverage and faster speed broadband'. And BT's Chairman Sir Michael Rake confirmed that move should help to bring about a 'fair regulatory settlement'. Is this all a case of coordinated media hoo-ha? Rather than take a Churchillian stance in forcing legal separation, Ofcom merely prompted BT to show its hand, and gain the upper hand.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

Bamboo forges ties with Vodafone UK

BAMBOO Technology Group has joined forces with Vodafone UK in a move that sees the company incorporate the operator's fixed and mobile converged network into its enterprise portfolio alongside international roaming services and the ability to self-provision Vodafone services directly, as well as manage the billing of those services.

Bamboo MD Lorrin White said: "In recent years our focus has been on expanding and improving our supply chain to offer strength, choice and flexibility, and our partnership with Vodafone allows us to significantly boost our offering.

"Having these capabilities will support both our own growth plans and those of our customers as we provide the bandwidth and communications infrastructure services they



Lorrin White

require to support and transform their operations."

Gary Hill, Head of Vodafone UK's Independent Service Provider Channel, added: "We are seeing a wave of transformation in the enterprise market as businesses absorb digital technologies into their opera-

tions to increase mobility and customer responsiveness.

"As organisations evolve new ways of working the need to keep staff connected regardless of their location has never been greater.

"We are working closely with customers and our partners to support the delivery of agile infrastructure, expanded network connectivity and total communications solutions."

In summing up the enterprise demand for agile connectivity, Nick McQuire, VP for Enterprise at industry analyst CCS Insight, said: "The opportunity for enterprise mobility services is sky rocketing, growing 40% annually according to our estimate, driven by new digital service models and the pressure to innovate across areas such as workforce management and customer engagement.

"Mobile network data demands are also accelerating as employees continue to demand mobile working and more and more organisations look to digitise workflows as part of their digital transformation strategies."

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

Continued from page 1

Included among those channel services will be: hosted VoIP in partnership with Vanilla IP (giving resellers the chance to rebrand the Uboss management platform); 500Mbps and 1Gbps Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC); G.fast (ultra-fast broadband over copper from the cabinet) from January 17th; a 25-day turn-

around service for wireless 1Gb wireless Ethernet in association with Metronet; traditional calls and lines alongside connectivity and provisioning management specialist Imperatives; 100mg Ethernet in London covering 20,000 postcodes (which Zen claims will be 35% cheaper than alternatives); and a 3G mobile broadband back up service.



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COMMENT: TRICKY TIMES AHEAD



Richard Carter

THE next 12 months are likely to be more challenging for resellers, with higher import prices due to a plunging pound already biting and creating a potential market slow down.

Brexit is of course being blamed for all of the uncertainty, but the very prospect of the UK leaving the EU seems up in the air itself due to legal challenges and political posturing. Over the other side of the Atlantic is just as unpredictable with

a new President preparing to enter the White House.

Despite all this there's still plenty to be positive about in the comms channel so there's no reason to panic too much.

SIP and Skype For Business end points will grow strongly next year with more focus around functionality rather than just being a simple device. Skype for Business will continue to accelerate particularly in the enterprise space where functionality and integration will be important factors. Here at Nimans we've invested heavily in a new auto provisioning service to help resellers maximise market opportunities.

Hosted will also gain further traction but traditional system sales will remain in very good shape too. In terms of Brexit and exchange rates the recent falling pound will result in some higher prices which won't make things any easier for the majority of consumers and businesses alike. But exports and home produced products will benefit as a result, even if foreign holidays won't.

John Timpson, owner of Timpson the shoe repair retailer, said on BBC Question Time last month, "whatever happens in the months ahead you will still be successful if you continue to give a great service". Wise words indeed. Merry Christmas!

Richard Carter, Group Sales and Business Development Director, Nimans

AdEPT pounces on UC specialist CAT

ADEPT TELECOM has acquired CAT Communications, the Wiltshire based provider of unified comms, Avaya IP telephony, hosted IP solutions and managed services.

Evolution Capital (UK) Limited acted as exclusive corporate finance advisors for the deal.

AdEPT paid £1.05m less the net debt of CAT at completion and will pay between £200 and £950K more based on performance going forward.

CAT was established by Penny Lawrence and Craig Land in 2004. Based in Pewsey, Wiltshire, CAT is a well-established UK-based specialist provider of complex unified communications, managed service solutions and specialist inbound call centre management to its customer base across the UK, and further supporting customers with global deployment planning and solutions in Europe.

The support function of the CAT customer base is to be transferred and integrated into AdEPT's existing site in Fleet. CAT has a high level of recurring revenue and offers a well-developed customer base with which it enjoys long term relationships. The board believes that the CAT technical skills and



Ian Fishwick

product set, particularly in relation to Avaya Aura, will complement and enhance AdEPT's existing services already being provided from the Fleet office. The last filed accounts of CAT for the year ended 31 March

2015 reported turnover, operating profit and profit before tax of £1.3m, £0.3m and £0.3m respectively.

AdEPT Chief Executive Ian Fishwick commented: "We are delighted to have acquired CAT which is a business with a strong customer base and recurring revenues. The additional technical skills that CAT provides will strengthen the Avaya Aura proposition that AdEPT offers and will complement the team in Fleet. My thanks to Evolution Capital for all their hard work in finding and closing this opportunity"

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Chess moves to consolidate ICT operation



Chess CEO Dave Pollock cuts the ribbon

CHESS has consolidated its ICT division and instated a new management team. The move builds on its acquisition of IT solutions provider Lanway which has offices in Burnley that have been refurbished and reopened to house new-look Chess ICT.

Other acquired IT service providers including Pinnacle, Parachute IT and PowerC IT join Lanway as part of the single structure.

Former Lanway MD Andrew Henderson leads Chess ICT's sales operation while Tamar Waite, who also came to Chess through the acquisition of Lanway, has been appointed Head of Technical Operations.

Councillor Mark Townsend, leader of the Burnley Council, attended the ribbon cutting ceremony alongside Chess CEO David Pollock.

"We are passionate about delivering technological advantage to our customers," said Pollock. "Together we have the talent and technology needed to deliver truly integrated solutions across enterprise, mobile and cloud environments."

Townsend added: "Chess ICT has exciting growth plans and we are keen to support them. Chess is joining a successful

business community in Burnley, with the latest official figures showing our private sector job growth rate is double that of the north west and national average. We've also just been named the friendliest place in Britain."

The restructure was led by newly appointed COO Steve Cox who joined Chess from the Technology Service Group where he was a main board Director. His first job was to assess the individual businesses and their systems prior to creating a consolidation strategy.

Under the new set up, a team of 50 Chess people based in Burnley, Borehamwood and Queenslie will service over 1,500 current customers with ICT solutions.

Cox said: "My vision was to build a single national IT service provider with a local presence built on the foundations of passionate people delivering quality service.

"My number one goal is to achieve our shared vision and strive to make Chess a great place to be a customer. To do that we have to get our structure, the interaction with our customers and our systems right."

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COMMENT: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS



Alexandra Tempest

THE end of the year is always a great time to dig out the crystal ball and indulge in a bit of future gazing. While predictions don't always come true, some of the biggest trends for the channel in 2017 are already starting to become clear.

This will be the year when Next Generation Voice services move to the front of the mind for most UK businesses. Many are increasingly aware of the 2025 switch-off, but are also seeking out SIP and Hosted Voice for their many other benefits. According to Illume, the

SIP market has been growing by 25% each year, and it's likely 2017 will exceed this.

In 2017, the networks that have seen investment will flourish, while those that have been left untouched will begin to struggle under the weight of increasingly bandwidth-heavy technology. We've seen traffic increase on our network by over 500% over the last seven years, and are expecting new record figures in the years ahead.

Meanwhile, 2017 will see a quiet ultrafast revolution take place with higher capacity Ethernet and new technology being pioneered including G.fast and Dark Fibre.

Finally, the supply chain between Openreach, carrier, reseller and customer will improve with a greater use of robotics and automation to streamline operation and communication processes. As a result, the benchmark for customer expectation will be raised.

Of course the channel can expect to see many other exciting developments in the year ahead – some of which we can't guess at yet; the significance of others may not be felt for some time. No matter what happens, 2017 will give the channel the opportunity to offer more to their customers than ever before.

Alexandra Tempest, Director of Partners, TalkTalk Business

Thirkill hails cyber crime 'strike back'

NEW Government moves to 'strike back' against cyber criminals are welcome but long overdue, according to Adrian Thirkill, CEO of Derby based service provider GCI.

"Cybercrime is a huge and rapidly-growing threat to businesses of all sizes, which makes increasing awareness of cyber security and its importance to local businesses an urgent priority. It's good to see that the Government stands ready to strike back against the hackers with a £1.9bn package of measures to boost our cyber defences."

Thirkill believes that while the £1.9bn package of measures announced by Chancellor Philip Hammond will bolster the UK's cyber defences, criminals are still streets ahead in terms of the technology and methods they use to carry out cyber-attacks.

"Businesses need to take more responsibility for securing their own IT systems and data, rather than burying their heads in the sand and leaving themselves vulnerable to attack," he said.

Hammond warned that outdated computer systems are allowing malicious hackers to target everyone from "companies at board level to individu-



GCI Chief Executive Officer Adrian Thirkill talks to Chancellor Philip Hammond about the Government's renewed focus on cyber security at Microsoft's Future Decoded event.

als in their living rooms". He said that even though Britain is already an acknowledged global leader in cyber security thanks to the Government's investment of more than £860m over the course of the last Parliament, it must now keep up with the scale and pace of emerging threats.

Cybercrime currently costs the global economy about £365bn a year and rising, due to society becoming more vulnerable because of the way in which devices connect.

The new money, which more than doubles the amount set out for a similar strategy in 2011, will be used to improve automated defences to safeguard individuals and businesses, support the cyber security industry and deter attacks from hackers.

The Chancellor made the announcement at the recent Future Decoded event, Microsoft's annual two-day digital business expo, where GCI was a headline sponsor.

"Old legacy IT systems used by many businesses across the UK are becoming increasingly susceptible to cyber criminals, who find them easier to crack than newer networks which have the latest security technologies built in," continued Thirkill.

"Whilst the UK Government and the fledgling National Cyber Security Centre are working towards a cure, the number of symptoms to be addressed seems to be multiplying. GCI's expertise can help businesses to secure their IT perimeters, help mitigate the risk and ensure protection."

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COMMENT: CONSOLIDATE NOW



Vincent Disneur

WHEN working with communication providers to optimise their billing operations, we sometimes find CPs that are invoicing fixed recurring service charges externally from their telecoms billing platform. These include services such as lease lines, maintenance and IT management. Because these service charges are not variable based on consumption of network services, it's possible to raise invoices using accounts, CRM, or other software packages.

The reasons why a CP might bill in this way are varied, although rapid growth,

mergers and acquisitions are common culprits. Billing using multiple systems is time consuming, results in multiple invoices for the customer and limits operational scalability.

Additionally, it's impossible to gain complete visibility of your customers' profitability without first extracting data from the various applications and collating it externally. Occasionally we've found CPs selling services at a loss simply because they haven't had sufficient resources to collate and analyse data from their various billing applications.

In the case of some network services (e.g. lease lines), it also becomes very hard to conduct reconciliation of supplier costs without using a telecoms billing platform to automate the process. Carrier reconciliation allows you to align outward billing to that which is being billed to you by your carrier, ensuring nothing is missed. Trying to conduct reconciliation manually is possible but it's an extremely labour intensive process.

If you're not already doing so, taking the time to consolidate service charges into your telecoms billing platform is well worth doing. It can deliver massive improvements to operational efficiency and, best of all, you can achieve complete continuous visibility of your customers' profitability, maximising your margins without need for intensive manual intervention.

Vincent Disneur, Head of Sales
Union Street Technologies

Sweet move for Sime tric

SIMETRIC Telecom has come to the rescue of UK customers of MVNO Limitless Mobile Limited, which has gone into administration leaving many businesses without EU wide roaming services.

Sime tric can provide a very similar set of MVNO and mobile convergence services and are offering a rapid migration package to former Limitless customers to keep their customer's calls moving.

Gavin Sweet, Managing Director at Sime tric said "It's awful when a great business like Limitless Mobile goes under. While we can't help their UK business stay afloat we would love to help their customers switch to a viable alternative which is why we are offering a rapid migration package. Switching over can even offer



Gavin Sweet

Limitless customers an improved feature set. We really hope we can help service providers and MVNO's out of this hole."

Sime tric's unified telecoms service Mobile-X offers worldwide roaming to all its users as well as advanced functionality on call recording, PBX and Broadsoft integration, along with a host of other enterprise features. Sime tric are offering a rapid migration package to Limitless Mobile users if they agree a move over before Christmas.

Top MSP summit in September

THE sixth annual Managed Services & Hosting Summit-UK will take place at 155 Bishopsgate, London, on 20 September 2017.

Jointly organised by IT Europa and Angel Business Communications, the event will bring leading hardware and software vendors, hosting providers, telecommunications companies, mobile operators and web services providers involved in managed services and hosting together with Managed Service Providers and resellers, integrators and service providers migrating to, or developing their own managed services portfolio and sales of hosted solutions.

"The Managed Services & Hosting Summit provides a unique opportunity for vendors, VARs, integrators and service providers to come together to address the issues and opportunities arising from the surge in customer demand for managed services and hosted delivery models," said Jason Holloway, Director of IT Publishing at Angel Business Communications.

For more information on attending or sponsoring visit www.mshsummit.com

Glacier incentive deal

ICT distributor Exertis has announced the Samsung Glacier Getaway channel incentive.

For a limited period, Exertis' customers can obtain a free MicroSD EVO+ 32GB memory card with every purchase of a Samsung Galaxy S7 or Samsung

Galaxy S7 Edge smartphone.

The Samsung incentive is open to all registered partners selling Samsung smartphones and tablets with the opportunity to win a trip to Iceland based on performance. The incentive runs until January 27th.

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COMMENT: ARTIFICIAL REALITY



James Hickman

“Artificially Intelligent beings will rule us all”.

Not just a Science Fiction author’s prediction, but a one-time concern of Steven Hawking. A future the famed physicist is looking to avoid, with the first step being the recent opening of an Artificial Intelligent (AI) research centre funded by the Leverhulme Trust, at Cambridge University. The Government, conversely, is predicting that UK citizens do not have the skills to fully exploit advances in this area

– perhaps they should speak to Professor Hawking!

In reality, there is limited need for a true AI mechanism in what can, for the most part, be transactional events with the occasional need to bring in an expert to break a complex change down into simpler ones and then enact them in the right order.

One area I do look forward to getting some AI help on though is in the area of diagnostics. When a handful of alarms go red on the Network Operation Centre (NOC) wall-board, being able to quickly identify the source of the issue and apply any triage is the ideal outcome for all. However, this still relies on skilled engineers with a working knowledge of the infrastructure and to assist them we are working on better correlation tools that gather all the alarms and other data to make a ‘best guess’ as to the device or circuit causing the problem. This, along with some focussed diagnostic testing tools run against the devices they know are in the path all helps improve the service we provide to our customers, but we still need a human to review the outputs and use their years of experience to work out what is wrong!

James Hickman, Chief Technical Officer, Virtual 1

Virtual1 puts 10Gb in front

AV firm in limelight for service

VIRTUAL1 partners can now order 10Gb data lines on the company’s IPortal to cope with growing demand from data hungry customers.

The London based data network provider has also fully automated the ordering process for resellers to provide seamless and prompt installations.

“To deliver for our partners, we need to anticipate the market and ensure that we have a product set one step ahead of trends. That is why we have made 10Gb bearer installs business as usual,” said Product and Marketing Manager Neil Wilson.

In June of this year, research was published that shows Global IP traffic will increase nearly threefold over the next 5 years. Overall, IP traffic will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22% from 2015 to 2020.

“Data usage has rocketed since we launched our disruptive London Network two years ago,” continued Wilson. “This is huge growth in data consumption, and we see the reflection of that when looking at our own customer’s base. Of our Partners that have installed 1Gb bearer, 30% of them lived the full



Neil Wilson

bandwidth, planning ahead for the explosion of data, and a further 20% have subsequently increased their bandwidth post install, reacting to the growth of their businesses.”

Wilson said Virtual1 is seeing rising demand for this super-sized bandwidth from a number of sectors namely: digital native businesses whose services often rely on connectivity; education, healthcare or large enterprises who are well ahead with their journey to cloud or hybrid IT infrastructures and have large volumes of data to shift; heavily seasonal ecommerce businesses, where the Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the festive period in general put massive strain on existing infrastructures.

“We believe no other UK network provider is making large bandwidth as easy to provide or as cost effective we treat 10Gb like 1Gb – it’s just business as usual,” added Wilson.

Audio Visual and Video Conferencing specialist Videonations is celebrating a new industry accolade for exceptional levels of customer service.

The fast-growing company has won the EMEA Services Excellence Award 2016 from global innovator of video conferencing technology, Lifesize.

The award follows-on from a major rebranding exercise and enhanced website, which symbolises Videonations’ growing diversity and expanding skills base.

Head of Sales and Operations, Adam Feakins highlighted: “It’s been a successful year with some great client wins, culminating in landing this prestigious award. We’ve built-up a powerful high calibre sales team and developed a strong platform which will allow us to further flourish in 2017.”

Lifesize CEO Craig Malloy commented: “Lifesize is committed to its channel partners and this award exemplifies the strength of our long-term relationship and the mutual success our teams. We look forward to continuing to exceed customer expectations in partnership with Videonations.”

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COMMENT: ADDING MORE VALUE



Pete Tomlinson

WE all know price and value can be very different things; so how can we ensure our customers keep on getting better value, even if the price goes up?

This debate brought in to focus for me by Microsoft's recent announcement that they'll be increasing prices across a broad range of services from the New Year. These will increase by as much as 13% for traditional SPLA licensing and 22% for some of their newer cloud based services, such as Office

365 and Azure.

On the face of it, this should mean these products no longer represent quite such good value; I disagree. The first reason is a straightforward argument that, at least for the Microsoft cloud portfolio, these have evolved significantly over recent years. Office 365 has moved from being little more than a subscription based version of the desktop software into a real business productivity tool.

Now comes the counter argument that this only adds value if customers want and use these new capabilities. That is very true. It is also true that the majority of customers are already only scratching the surface of the full capability these tools offer. However, isn't that the challenge for the Channel?

It's so frustrating to see businesses invest in technology only to see them barely scratch the surface of the opportunity they represent to transform lives of their customers and colleagues. So, the question I'd like to challenge everyone to consider is this – how can we help customers be truly successful in maximising the value achieved from every bit of technology we provide to them? That is surely more important than worrying about a small pricing change.

Pete Tomlinson, Director KCOM

Bullish Riley grabs channel foe AltNet

MATTHEW RILEY's aim to head up the UK's most powerful independent provider of telecommunications services took a major step forward last month when his Daisy Group business cemented a deal to acquire London based rival Alternative Networks for £165m in cash.

The acquisition follows hot on the heels of Daisy's absorption of Damovo and Phoenix IT in the managed services space and is reported to be the 50th acquisition made by Riley. Analysts reckon it will increase the company's size by about a quarter in terms of revenue.

At this stage it is unlikely that any of Alternative's 600 staff will be relocated from their southern stronghold but whether the company's well-known brand will disappear is unclear. Daisy has a stronger image and many observers believe the days of the Alternative Networks brand are numbered.

AIM listed Alternative has been a shining light in the independent telecoms sector since it was founded by James Murray in 1994 and the fact that this was a distressed sale will sadden many in the channel, especially after the company had



Matthew Riley

reported a turnover increase of 9 per cent to £146.8m for the full-year 2015.

According to analyst Philip Carse, analyst at Megabuyte, 2016 has been 'less rosy for the company', with the firm issuing three profit warnings in the last 12 months. The company suffered from a collapse in revenues from roaming as the European Commission slashed rates. Its stock halved in value since peaking at almost 600p in

early 2014, which opened the door for Daisy.

Daisy CEO Neil Muller said: "Having respected Alternative Networks for many years, we look forward to further enhancing our capability and scale across our chosen markets and we believe the combined group will be well positioned to increase its market share further and to continue to be the provider of choice for its customers and partners."

SHORT CALL

CABLE management specialist Chatsworth Products has released Motive Vertical Cable Manager, an integral track system that provides unlimited adjustability and direct-support for cable bundles. The design allows for direct support of cables with optimal airflow through the cable manager, preparing networks for higher wattage in Power over Ethernet (PoE).

Starters on rise

NEWVOICEMEDIA, the UK based provider of inside sales and contact centre technology, has been selected to join 'Silicon Valley Comes to the UK' (SVC2UK), a tech group of the country's 50 fastest growing businesses.

The announcement comes as new figures from London promotion company London and Partners show the extent of tech startups' contribution to the economy over the last decade. Since 2006, there has been a 17 percent rise in the number of jobs created in the sector, compared with

seven percent across all sectors. In London alone that growth stands at 77 percent.

SVC2UK is a not-for-profit volunteer-led series of events that bring together investors, successful serial entrepreneurs, students and alumni to support the ecosystem for entrepreneurs in the UK.

NVM has also been named a winner of Softech International's Leading Experts in Tech Awards for 2016 which showcases the industry's most dynamic firms offering unique and versatile solutions.



Control needed

GAMMA CEO Bob Falconer believes Openreach should be more strictly controlled when it eventually splits from BT which Ofcom has now demanded.

"Legally separating an ineffective monopoly from the mothership still leaves you with an ineffective monopoly," he said. "Stricter targets on performance with material penalties for systemic failure

will need to follow. And the sooner the BT branding is removed from Openreach the better, as this is a silent but significant advantage BT has enjoyed over its competitors.

"We look forward to working with Ofcom, BT and other industry participants to bridge the gulf between the performance of Openreach and the needs of the business market, regardless of its ownership."

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Zen brings in TeleWare hails VanillaIP UC big migration

ZEN Internet is introducing a new BroadSoft-based UC solution to its UK channel following a link-up with cloud services provider VanillaIP.

Zen Channel Partners MD Stephen Warburton said: "The market is moving beyond hosted PBX where you are essentially replicating PBX service from the cloud, to a solution that is more apps-based than device-based. VanillaIP demonstrated the innovation we need."

Zen Internet's customer profile, from SME to corporate mid-market and enterprise, required a solution with scalability and automation.

"A key element in enabling this, and in combining Zen's connectivity and other services, was VanillaIP's Uboss portal," added Warburton.

"One of the challenges for us all is how do we package complex technology solutions in a way that our customers will understand. Uboss lets us do this."

The offering combines BroadSoft cloud PBX, apps and call centre with third party apps such as the Unity suite. Uboss will unify these within a single portal, and provide reporting and self-service for end users.



Stephen Warburton

Underlying the new partnership is Zen's connectivity with an Assured service that supports IP voice traffic only, along with a converged service which supports prioritised IP voice traffic and data.

"The channel needs to move beyond a one bundle fits all approach," stated Warburton. "Customers are embracing cloud in all elements of their business. They are aware of the possibilities and we need to present them solutions that are more tightly aligned with their own requirements."

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

AT MIDNIGHT on 1st November 2016 TeleWare successfully migrated its TeleWare Hosted Service fixed line call recording functions completely onto Microsoft's Azure cloud platform and data centres.

This was made possible after TeleWare made the world's first call completely routed, recorded and analysed through Azure on 13th September 2016.

Calls will now be routed through the TeleWare London data centre and directed onto the Microsoft Azure cloud for recording. All fixed line call recordings will then be passed back into the TeleWare data centres for storage.

Rob Corrigan, CTO, said: "We've gone from an idea to reality and are proud to be driving the industry one more step forward. Migrating onto the cloud will enable TeleWare to offer a service to customers which is scalable and will flex with their demands on a minute-by-minute basis.

"As well as flexibility and other cloud benefits, TeleWare and our customers will be able to take advantage of tools such as machine learning, Power BI, Streaming Analytics and customer experience analytics."



Rob Corrigan

Steve Haworth, CEO, added: "TeleWare was built on fixed line recording products and it's fitting that this is the first product that is completely migrated onto the cloud. We won't be resting on our laurels and will seek out the next innovations.

SHORT CALLS

Pennine has scooped the Solution of the Year award from distie Scansource. The Bury-based business won the title after it created a multi-site solution for an international client. This saw Avaya's IP Office platform being installed at six main UK hubs and a further 20 satellite locations to serve circa 1,000 users.

ITS Technology Group has won a contract with Herefordshire Council to provide a fibre network at Skylon Park, Rotherwas, the region's first high technology-enabled business park. Services will be delivered using FTTP along duct infrastructure already in place.

ADEPT Telecom CEO Ian Fishwick (pictured) has been appointed to represent the comms industry as part of the Cabinet Office SME Panel, a group of business leaders from different industries drawn together to advise the Government on how to make it easier for SMEs to win Public Sector business.



"Over 99% of the UK's 2.5 million businesses are SMEs, defined as businesses with up to 250 employees or £40m sales," stated Fishwick. "Historically it has been difficult for SMEs to deal with the Government, but it hopes that 33% of all Public Sector spend will be with SMEs by 2020. I cannot promise success, but I can guarantee a voice at the top table."

If you have any ideas that you would like to explore with Ian, please email: ian.fishwick@adept-telecom.co.uk

SHORT CALL

G3 Comms has secured Diamond accreditation as part of Avaya's new channel programme, Avaya Edge. G3 was also named a Partner in Customer Excellence and is the only Diamond partner in the UK with this designation. G3 Comms has been the first company to deploy many of Avaya's solutions including Avaya Definity, Aura Contact Centre, G3R and the first UK converged management platform.

Suped-up training Key Exertis buy

TECHNOLOGY services distributor Intelisys Global is already gearing for the UK roll out of its Super9 cloud training programme next June.

Two three-day courses will focus on enabling Global Sales Partners to move from consultative selling towards what the firm claims is a 'new cloud sales methodology'.

Delivered as part of the Intelisys Cloud Services University, the programme is targeted at telecoms agents who operate a recurring revenue

model and VARs with ambitions to further develop their cloud business.

Intelisys said the course is followed by a monthly peer group component and close collaboration with Intelisys' Global Cloud & Complex Bids team.

"With quarterly global cloud revenues fast approaching £5.5bn, getting cloud sales strategies right has clearly never been more important for the channel," commented Stephen Hackett, Intelisys Global's lead in the UK.

EXERTIS has added more technical knowhow and broadened its AV solution portfolio with the acquisition of fellow distributor Medium which specialises in providing projectors, flat panel displays, interactive systems and digital signage.

Exertis MD Gerry O'Keefe commented: "Medium has built strong customer and vendor relationships and its technical expertise will strengthen our ability to implement a full suite of professional AV solutions into the B2B market."

Medium employs 40 staff, has a turnover of £32m and transacts with over 800 AV resellers in the UK.

The company also provides training and education programmes for both its employees and customers, and is a member of InfoComm International.

Ian Sempers, MD, Medium, commented: "The continued convergence of the IT and AV market means we will be in a great position to service a sector that extends beyond traditional AV solutions."



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BT hails new channel unit Aurora's new mobile model

THE indirect channel units at BT and EE have been fully integrated to create a 100-strong business operation spearheaded by a new executive leadership team with Director Steve Rathborne at the helm.

The integrated sales, commercial and service division will deliver fixed and mobile network propositions to SMEs, corporates and the public sector via its growing network of reseller partners.

Prior to heading up the BT Business Partner Channel Rathborne held international and UK leadership roles across sales, product and service management, most recently Sales Director for Small and Medium Enterprises at BT, leading a 1,200 person sales team across direct and indirect channels.

Joining Rathborne is George Sebastian as GM Partner Sales. He was formerly EE's Head of Channel and will be focused on building an integrated sales team to collaborate with BT's channel partners.

Also joining from EE is Nigel Dean, previously the Head of Indirect Business Sales. As GM Business Development he will lead several initiatives to build new business in the channel.



Steve Rathborne

Liz King becomes GM of Partner Experience and will focus on leading the end-to-end lifecycle experience for BT's indirect partners and customers.

Lastly, Andy Kelly becomes Head of Transformation and will lead on the development of future strategy and the execution of the transformation plan.

BT will announce more details about its channel strategy in due course.

AURORA has bolstered its mobile billing credentials with the launch of Virtual Service Provider (VSP), an exclusive mobile service that gives customers direct access to the Vodafone and O2 networks (subject to approval) using their Affinity billing platform.

Aurora MD Derek Watson said: "The advantage of VSP is that you don't need to be a mobile billing expert, Affinity does all the work."

The system enables users to proactively manage customers, highlight usage issues, recommend tariffs and provides straightforward customer management tools.

"The benefits of becoming a VSP also include establishing a new service proposition," added Watson. "Offering flexible contract agreements and 30 day terms that allow the best fit between the network tariff and a customer's profile."

"Customer churn is also an issue when selling mobile, but VSP can reduce this by shifting the emphasis to mobile management rather than competing on price."

"It is also important to stress that in order for any customer to become a VSP partner they must



Derek Watson

use the Affinity billing platform and there are pre-requisites that must be met before agreement from the network.

"However, customers using this service do benefit from genuine mobile margins that they wouldn't have been able to make without the buying power of the VSP channel."

SHORT CALLS

Virtual1's CTO James Hickman has been re-elected as Chairman of the London Central Branch of the British Computer Society. He's been a member of the Society, which represents the IT profession to other professional bodies, the Government, industry and academia, since 1995 and was first elected in 2015.

24 Seven Communications is set to broaden its service offering with a new software upgrade in partnership with HTC. Its national roaming SIM card, Jump, will become compatible with HTC's premium device range with plans to roll out the software to more of the manufacturer's products.



HATS off to Gamma for scooping the Business of Year Award at this year's Thames Valley Business Magazine Awards, held on 17th November at the Madjeski Stadium in Reading and hosted by

Gyles Brandreth. Pam Williams, HR Director at Gamma, commented: "We are fully committed to the Best Companies' model of employee engagement and everyone works hard to continuously improve this. We especially focus on factors such as personal growth and giving back to the community. Gamma has a wonderful, positive culture where 'anything is possible'. Our managers, with support from the HR team, do a great job in recruiting people who believe in Gamma's culture and values."

SHORT CALL

TeleWare has acted to reduce the impact of mobile notspots with Business Anywhere, a UK multi-network SIM that allows customers to switch between networks. It combines a number of TeleWare's products including cloud call recording and instant conferencing. Steve Haworth, CEO, said: "We're doing our part to make sure that businesses can stay connected and continue working wherever they are."

Lily scoops award

YORKSHIRE-based Lily Comms is celebrating an Ericsson-LG first as the only company in the world to win the vendor's Best Partner of the Year award four times on the trot. The award was presented to MD Chris Morrissey and founder Adrian Jackson at the Ericsson-LG Global Partner Conference in Bangkok, Thailand.

Lily Comms was also the only company invited to present to conference delegates.

Morrissey spoke about the success and growth of Lily

Comms and its Strategy for Success (S4S), a blueprint to guide Lily's growth journey.

"It was a great honour to firstly present to the Ericsson-LG GPC delegates and secondly to win Best Partner for the fourth year in a row," he said. "Being the only company to ever do this is a real achievement for everyone involved with Lily Comms."

"Our core company values of performance, passion and integrity, as outlined in our S4S, guide our thinking and doing."

StarLink eyes UK

MIDDLE East and Turkey-based distie StarLink has opened a central London office in a bid to expand across EMEA. It is looking to recruit specialist security resellers.

StarLink's entry into Europe coincides with greater investments in building stronger defences against cyber attacks.

Founded in 2005, StarLink says it is rapidly growing with a presence in 11 countries, and has grown organically at an average rate of 60% year-on-year, and now has a \$145m turnover.

The company sells through a network of over 250 IT security VARs and systems integrators.

Avinash Advani, who is StarLink's SVP Strategic Alliances & International Markets, commented: "Our plan is to drive European expansion by replicating our 'True VAD' business model into the UK, and then progressively cover the rest of Europe over the coming months."

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8x8 kicks off next gen global scheme

8X8 has lifted the lid on the next generation of its international channel programme, Channel 2.0.

The move builds on the support and partner programme launched in the UK earlier this year and is designed to enable 8x8 partners to accelerate growth by taking advantage of the industry shift from product-based on-premises solutions to cloud communications.

8x8 outlined other developments including new partners and customers; the Partner-Connect portal that offers self-service and automation; enhanced sales and technical training and new partner certifications; along with expanded channel enablement offerings.



Vik Verma

As well as new global relationships 8x8 has expanded strategic partnerships into new regions including Avant, CDW and Intelisys into the UK, and Exsel Group into Scotland.

8x8 has experienced steady growth from the channel with 16 of the company's top 25 deals in fiscal 2016 (ended March 31st, 2016) coming through the chan-

nel, which represents a 150%+ increase from fiscal 2015.

In line with growth the 8x8 global channel team has doubled over the past year with employees now in North America, Europe and Australia.

"Legacy systems are unable to keep pace with the evolving needs of today's global and mobile workforce," said Vik Verma, CEO. "Retrofitting traditional on-premises systems to meet these customer requirements is a near impossible task.

"8x8, with our international partners, is driving the transformation from a product-centric to services cloud model, enabling partners and their customers to migrate to a more flexible, cloud services environment."

Jola activates mobile portal

JOLA'S just launched Mobile Manager portal enables partners to order and manage estates of mobile data SIMs, communicating in real-time with the Vodafone 4G network.

"Mobile Manager enables Jola partners to create customers, manage activations and instantly control SIM swaps, bars, ceases, tariff changes and bolt-ons, said Lee Broxson, Sales Director. "It gives partners complete control over their mobile data assets.

"In most cases end users don't want their mobile data SIMs to switch off when they reach capacity, but they also don't want to pay much higher out-of-bundle charges.

"With Mobile Manager, Jola partners can set up alerts to monitor usage limits per cus-



Lee Broxson

tomers. They can then automatically pause the SIM or use our overage protection facility.

"We are seeing orders accelerate as partners understand the need for real-time control over their growing estates of mobile data SIMs."

Mobile Manager is a white label portal with parent-child functionality, meaning that partners can extend functionality to their own customers.

Mobileum pocketed by Audax PE

MOBILEUM has been acquired by Audax Private Equity, a PE firm focused on building middle market companies.

"The partnership places us securely at the centre of an exciting time in the telecom industry," stated Bobby Srinivasan, CEO of Mobileum.

"Analytics enabled back-end systems coupled with conver-

sational engagement solutions will be key catalysts in helping CSPs to compete and reposition themselves in the new digital economy. Those that can best combine these solutions will be the ones who thrive.

"Working with Audax, we expect to be able to significantly increase our M&A activities and continue to help our customers

to optimise revenue and accelerate digital transformation."

Previously known as Roamware, Mobileum was founded in 2001 and has since sold its roaming and analytics solutions to over 600 mobile operator customers worldwide.

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PRS Telecom has snapped up Bucks-based voice and data company DS Chiltern. "This acquisition is an important step in our strategy," stated Paddy Gill (pictured), CEO of PRS Telecom. "DS Chiltern has a well earned reputation for customer retention and PRS will build on this. We will continue to achieve sustainable growth supported by targeted acquisitions and expand our national network. This expansion will be supported by ongoing investment in people, resources and infrastructure."

Mark Wilson, founder of DS Chiltern, added: "It was vital that we found a company that could enhance our services and allow our clients to benefit from additional product and solutions suites."

SHORT CALL

BroadSoft has surpassed 15 million cloud UC lines deployed globally and in the cloud PBX/UCaaS space claims 41% global market share, according to Frost & Sullivan. "BroadSoft believes that the cloud market for new cloud PBX/unified communications will surpass on-premise PBX/unified communication equipment shipments by 2020," said Taher Behbehani, Chief Digital and Marketing Officer.

Marston's seals TTB Ethernet deal

TALKTALK Business has sealed a new three-year Ethernet deal with Marston's Telecoms (a division of Marston's PLC, the pub operator and brewer) to place a significant number of Ethernet circuits in its pubs.

Marston's Telecoms first signed with TalkTalk Business as a managed partner in 2009. Its main requirement was to improve communications between 2,000 pubs and the head office, and provide services such as customer Wi-Fi and Internet-connected gaming.



Rob Derbyshire

TalkTalk Business won Marston's Telecoms entire base in September 2015 and soon afterwards successfully converted its managed estate and telephone infrastructure.



Alexandra Tempest

Marston's Telecoms evolved its technology offering of broadband, Ethernet, hosted VoIP, private WANs, carrier services and managed Wi-Fi to business customers and the wholesale chan-

nel, all delivered over its own carrier-grade MPLS network.

Rob Derbyshire, Head of Telecoms at Marston's Telecoms, said: "Since signing with TalkTalk Business we have grown our business, taking on board new products and opportunities for our 2,000 pubs."

Alexandra Tempest, Director of Partners at TalkTalk Business, added: "TalkTalk Business is always looking at different ways to support its Partners with new products and technology, offering solutions for businesses."



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Tollring joins fight against phone fraud



Tony Martino

TOLLRING is tackling telecom fraud head-on having joined forces with the Internet Telephony Services Providers' Association (ITSPA), the Telecommunications UK Fraud Forum (TUFF) and the Association of Fraud Examiners (AFE).

Fraud and Credit Management are the latest additions to Tollring's iCall Suite analytics platform, delivering an intelligent 'spot and block' capability in real-time on hosted voice and SIP trunking platforms.

The system protects against significant financial losses from fraud attempts and includes credit and spend limit management which prevents customer bill shock, reduce bad debt and decrease customer churn.

Tony Martino, MD of Tollring, stated: "Telecoms fraud costs the industry billions of pounds each year, with the average fraud attack costing the end customer many thousands of pounds, enough sometimes to bankrupt organisations. It's a massive challenge in cloud telephony and these industry organisations are playing a major role in raising awareness.

"We are also helping our service provider partners and their resellers to take a more proactive role so that their end customers are equipped with the

technologies and approaches to combat call fraud, to ensure company policies are enforced and to agree service levels."

He also noted that service providers and resellers can mitigate fraud using iCall Suite's in-built proprietary rules engine which validates the authenticity of each call made.

The real-time Detect Dashboard monitors any fraud rule or credit limit breaches and live notification alerts can be delivered to a mobile via text, email or the dashboard.

KCOM showcases the full set on G-Cloud 8

ENTERPRISE cloud and IT services company KCOM has added its complete spectrum of cloud-based capabilities to the Government's G-Cloud 8 framework, significantly increasing its offering from 36 services to 141.

The move makes a much wider selection of private and public cloud capabilities available as managed services for all public sector organisations in the UK.

"Showcasing our full offering to public sector organisations is

Launch of Sonar 2.0 by Juniper

JUNIPER Bridge has launched Sonar 2.0, configured connectivity monitoring software that manages and monitors any IP device, on any network, anywhere in the world.

Sonar works by utilising an operational dashboard that displays geo locations of client UK and global sites.

Central administrators have visibility and the connectivity status of all live sites in real time, if any of these sites go down, proactive email and SMS alerts are automatically distributed to key personnel, to get these sites up and running as soon as possible.

Sonar can be used for both voice data monitoring and fully scalable allowing for additional sites and employees for monitoring purposes.

Founder Steve Larkin commented: "Sonar is the first piece of software within our new product portfolio. It is a versatile platform that proactively manages the network and customer sites using simple protocols. It not only provides an overview of what's happening but also helps businesses improve performance by analysing data."

a great opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved with access to cloud systems," said Bill Halbert, CEO of KCOM.

"By listing all cloud products on G-Cloud 8, we are making it possible for a wide range of organisations to access advanced technologies that improve day-to-day tasks. With managed services and consulting accompanying all products, public sector organisations will have greater control over their cloud platforms to ensure they are being used effectively."

Cook serves ISO standard

UNION Street Technologies has been certified by BSI for the ISO/IEC 27001 standard in Information Security Management. MD Tony Cook said: "Over the past few years there have been a number of high profile data breaches all over the world.

"These led us to completely re-evaluate our approach to data security. Protecting our partners' data is of critical importance to us and we have an absolute desire to adopt best practice in this area.

"Qualifying for ISO has required us to make some big investments into our security and hardware infrastructure. This included the deployment of new firewalls, multi factor authentication and building a completely new cloud environment to host our solutions.

"We have also appointed a dedicated Standards and Security Officer to continually assess our security processes. Perhaps the biggest investment



Tony Cook

of all was in training our 90 staff on our ISMS processes. Getting all staff involved and training them effectively is absolutely the key to success in this area.

"It won't matter how robust your security processes are if your team are not adhering to them properly."

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JUST weeks after bagging the Best Convergence Distributor accolade at the Comms National Awards Pragma has, for the second time in its four year history, been named Global Partner of the Year by Ericsson-LG at its Partner Conference staged in Bangkok, Thailand. Pragma Marketing Director Will Morey said: "It's a fantastic recognition for Pragma but more so for our partners who have achieved remarkable growth again this year. Five of our partners were also recognised for their achievements at this event."

Pragma MD Tim Brooks enthused: "During 2016 we saw 30% growth in our business and have continued to work with and recruit some outstanding reseller partners. With a cloud proposition tailored to the needs of resellers we expect 2017 to be an even better year."

Pictured: Tim Brooks (left) and Will Morey celebrate their award win despite being narrowly beaten in the Best Dressed competition.

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SSE signs big deal to share infrastructure

SSE Enterprise Telecoms has signed a large scale fixed line network sharing deal with Capita and Udata Infrastructure.

The three-way partnership allows each company to share the physical network assets of the other over the term of the seven year agreement.

For the 300-plus IT and comms service provider customers who use SSE Enterprise Telecoms' national Ethernet connectivity services, the deal will double their SSE service coverage from 250,000 business postcodes to over 500,000.

The agreement shaves two years off SSE's network expansion programme (Project Edge), reduces the cost of network expansion by at least 50%, adding 350 BT Exchanges to the SSE network footprint.

Udata and Capita will see each of their eight regional data centres connected directly and diversely to SSE's national fibre optic network.

Colin Sempill, MD at SSE Enterprise Telecoms, comment-



Colin Sempill

ed: "Network and infrastructure sharing models are commonplace in mobile telephony markets, but unusual on this scale in fixed line telecoms.

"Doubling our service footprint in a relatively short period of time will make us one of the largest fixed line telecoms providers in the UK at a stroke."

Udata MD Béatrice Butsana-sita added: "Connecting our assets together in a way that allows each to share the benefits of the other just made sense.

"Specifically, this will allow us to provide dedicated networking services to enterprise sized clients who need connectivity in all corners of the UK."

Virtual1 opts for Acronis

VIRTUAL1 has selected Acronis Backup Cloud to power its cloud-based back-up solution called 1Backup.

The deal gives Virtual1's customers access to a set of data protection solutions and local support via established channels and relationships.

Acronis Backup Cloud supports physical Windows and Linux, virtual VMware, Hyper-V, Xen, RHEV, KVM, and Oracle VMs, as well as Microsoft Exchange, SQL, SharePoint, Active Directory and mobile devices.

According to estimations by Technavio, the global cloud back-up and recovery software market is predicted to increase at a CAGR of 13% from 2016-2020, making it a \$5.2bn global opportunity by 2020.

"There's huge potential in the UK for cloud back-up services," said Jeff Hart, Senior Sales Director for Northern Europe at Acronis. "There is already good awareness of the benefits of the cloud among businesses in this market, so plenty of opportunities."

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

JDnetworks taps into profitable energy goldmine

AS a privately owned, independent company, Leeds based telecoms broker JDnetworks prides itself on offering completely impartial advice and tailoring the best available package for its customer's individual requirements.

The 'trusted relationships' it has built with customers means that adding Energy to its portfolio of services alongside Fidelity Energy was a 'no brainer' according to Associate Director James Sweatton.

When we read about Fidelity Energy in Comms Dealer, we made a call and within a couple of days we were signed up. It was attractive to us because they offered us an attractive commission structure and set up assistance and on-going support, which was perfect for JD Networks who have never tried the energy market."

Within days the JD directors had set up a separate company JDenergy Ltd (www.jdenergy.uk) and their sales staff now have two discussion points with both old and new customers and Sweatton explained: "We have a good balance of both new and existing customers who we are

offering this service to, we have a telesales team who push both telecoms and energy and on most occasions we try sell both products together.

"We certainly find energy easy to sell, especially to existing customers who we already have a relationship with. We find that the customer just wants a good saving and proactive account management. We find that the majority of customers are happy to change, Unlike telecoms there is only one type of gas and electricity so if they are happy with us then they will switch."

Since becoming a Fidelity Energy partner just under a year ago JD Energy has provided quotes for around 150 businesses and in the past year alone has netted over 20 new customers generating £93k in profit. But this is just the tip of the iceberg according to Sweatton.

"I think the opportunity is massive; it goes hand in hand with our telecoms model as JDnetworks is about reviewing billing and offering reducing costs. Most of the time we ask for energy bills as part of credit checks so offering reduced energy costs is a great way to increase revenue."



“ I think the opportunity is massive; it goes hand in hand with our telecoms model as JDnetworks is about reviewing billing and offering reducing costs. ”

James Sweatton, Associate Director, JDnetworks

SHORT CALL

Exertis has sealed a distribution agreement with SY Electronics, a manufacturer of control systems, video switching and video extension products. Chris Godsvalve, Exertis' AV and Collaboration Business Manager, said: "This partnership strengthens our solutions in digital signage, video wall and collaborative technologies, providing a one stop proposition for our resellers and systems integrators."



CHES'S employment policies and people management ethos have been recognised in the Employer of the Year category at the 2016/17 European Business Awards. The company has been awarded the National Champion Certificate for its ability to inspire and motivate its 500-strong workforce, while supporting their professional and personal growth. Chess Chief Exec' David Pollock said: "The European Business Awards are recognised as the showcase for Europe's most dynamic companies, and we're proud to be recognised at this level."



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NG Bailey's IT arm flexes sales muscle

NG BAILEY'S IT Services division witnessed sales growth of 7.8% for the first half of 2016 (March to October), having secured more than £23m worth of new contracts for its structured cabling, electronic security and DAS (Distributed Antenna Systems) services.

The company has won more than 30 new IT contracts since February and experienced organic growth through contract extensions, bringing sales in the 2016-2017 financial year to £38.8m so far, up nearly 8% on the same period last year.

Bob Dunnett, MD, NG Bailey's IT Services division, commented: "Our focus on positioning ourselves to deliver technical solutions in response



Bob Dunnett

to increasingly complex and demanding project briefs is paying great dividends.

"Clients are increasingly realising the benefits of part-

nering with suppliers like NG Bailey that can deliver tailored and cost-effective solutions.

"The emergence of new technologies has enormous potential to change the way buildings are designed, managed and used.

"We've already seen examples of this in IP security and smart buildings and expect to see further disruption to companies as the IoT and smart cities shake up the market."

NG Bailey IT Services is a subsidiary of NG Bailey group, the independent engineering, IT and facilities services business.

Group-wide results in 2015-2016 showed it tripled operating profit over the previous year to £6m, and increased sales by 12% to £408m.

GreenCity's in buying mode

GREENCITY Solutions, based in Peterborough, has acquired Total Solutions, a move that enables the combined entity to offer businesses a broader set of solutions including telecoms, managed print and software development along with stronger technical support.

Rob Baldacci, Group MD, commented on the deal: "Hot on the heels of our £1.5m investment into Peterborough's connectivity infrastructure, this coming together of two companies opens the local business community up to far greater options when considering their IT and comms solutions."

Jon Hunt, Director of Operations, added: "Merging Total Solutions and GreenCity



Rob Baldacci

makes sense for us and our customers, creating a larger team of technical staff and on-site engineers that enables us to react quicker to customers' needs."

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

Digitalisation – More haste, less speed, says Annodata tech chief

ADOPTING new technologies too fast and without a strategy will disrupt the everyday working functions of a business, causing more harm than good, according to Andrew Smith, Technical Director at Annodata.

"There's a lot of pressure for organisations to keep up with the rapid pace of the digital economy," he said. "Digital transformation is often held up as a nirvana as we hear stories of new digital challengers displacing traditional incumbents.

"However, it can often be difficult for organisations to know where to start on their path to digital transformation.

Organisations must not feel pressured to overhaul everything in their business at once on the path to digital transformation. Care must be taken to ensure that the technology follows the strategy and not the other way around.

"There are great gains to be had by working with multi-

skilled ICT providers. Doing so will deliver true value to businesses, allowing them to react to the requirements of today's digital world. Organisations can reduce the burden of their digital transformation by working with trusted partners.



Andrew Smith



Elitetele.com, said: "To give clear messaging to our customers we have rebranded the division so that all telecoms services and contact points across the group are elitetele.com branded. As a team with great depth of experience in Vodafone, O2 and EE, Qualitel complements our UC and managed IT offering."

QUALITEL has rebranded as elitetele.com mobile and confirmed that it's 'business as usual' for customers as all current account teams and contacts remain in place along with Mike Ridgway at the helm of the division. Elitetele.com acquired Qualitel in April 2014 and the move catalysed Qualitel's fastest growth period which was recognised this summer when it was crowned Platinum Partner of the Year by Vodafone.

Russell Horton (pictured), COO,

DrayTek-Juniper set to Advance further

JUNIPER Bridge has been awarded DrayTek Advanced Network Partner status for its expertise and investment in remote router management.

The company has focused on R&D in DrayTek equipment to optimise the use of SMTP features within Sonar, the configured connectivity software that manages and monitors IP devices (see p20).

This investment enabled Juniper Bridge to launch Sonar 2.0, the new version of the platform that provides the ability to set specific policies by technology or customer type through an active alerting dashboard.

The software also gives visibility of the connectivity status of all client sites in real-time, including bandwidth use and specific LAN user performance. Sonar can be used for both any data connections with any provider and is scalable.

Julian Hubble, Sales Director, DrayTek, commented:

"We have been working with Juniper Bridge for several years and this higher accreditation strengthens our relationship."

Stephen Larkin, founder of Juniper Bridge, commented: "We look forward to harnessing DrayTek's technology for Sonar 2.0."

SHORT CALL

Nimans has extended its Radius headset range with a new two-in-one device that switches from monaural to binaural versions in a few seconds. The Radius Aero adapts to an individual's work environment and is wideband enabled with a two year warranty. Nimans has also launched the Radius 2400 professional office headset that has a ratchet style boom arm with noise cancelling microphone.

Demand for conferences

THE UC team at Exertis has notched up record conferencing sales over the past year following a programme of partner education designed to help resellers attach more conferencing solutions to existing and new UC system installations.

Demand for all kinds of conferencing solutions, from traditional audio conferencing to high end video conferencing and collaboration, reflects the estimations of industry analysts who forecast the global video conferencing market to grow to over \$6bn by 2020.

Michael Thompson, Head of UC Devices, said: "Conferencing is at the heart of modern UC&C solutions. It has to be the centrepiece of any enterprise strategy and there is a growing need to integrate audio and video conferencing devices into the overall comms solution."

Key growth areas include a number of vertical markets



Michael Thompson

including education, where distance or web based learning adopt video as part of the delivery mechanism; healthcare for remote patient monitoring and consultation and media industries where the streaming of interactive events is in ever increasing demand.

Exertis has also witnessed increasing demand for a new breed of products for remote meetings, the personal speaker phone, a portable unit designed for mobile workers who need to attend online meetings 'on the go'.

Busy time in systems

ON-PREMISE system sales at distributor Nimans continue to gain momentum, up 10% year-on-year against an industry decline of 3% in the sub-100 extension segment.

"Everyone is aware that the impact of the cloud and an uncertain economic outlook is biting into the traditional comms space – but not at Nimans," commented Paul Burn, Head of Category Sales.

"As an industry we shouldn't get too obsessed by the cloud verses on-premise scenario.

"The mindset around deployment rather than functionality and solution sales needs rebalancing. Hence we have a PBX portfolio, our own hosted offering and also hybrid solutions."

SHORT CALLS

Exponential-e has unveiled its new SD-WAN offering to help firms stay in control of their IT operations and drive performance. Offered through Cloudnet, Exponential-e's self-service platform connects enterprises to business applications from wherever they are enabling organisations to utilise SD-WAN to separate the data and control layer into two parts. This allows businesses to centrally assign and manage application-aware policies across sites to secure and control all network traffic.

Nimans has taken its Reseller Training Academy on the road for the first time enabling resellers in the midlands and north west to undertake the company's one day Introduction To Telephony course. Learning and Development Officer, Matthew Broadbent, said: "We are looking to expand into other areas such as sales and management training."

Zest4 drives M2M market



Mandy Fazelynia

ZEST4's M2M channel expansion strategy is set to enter a new phase when the firm rolls out a range of end-of-end solutions, kicking off with a vehicle telematics offering that, according to the company, is not currently available to partners via any other UK provider.

Zest4, a long established O2 Joined Up Communications wholesale provider, is working with a number of suppliers to offer resellers straightforward smart vehicle solutions including plug and play devices.

They give fleet management teams and leasing companies full visibility of their vehicles at all times, as well as providing them with real-time data.

Two versions of the solution will be offered – an entry level one that clips onto a car's diagnostics port and can be moved between vehicles, offering real-time vehicle location, trip visualisation, unlimited geofencing, alerts and reports.

Secondly, a more advanced solution gives fleet managers data on mileage, engine diagnostics, driver behaviour, vehicle location, fuel and oil levels, tyre condition, battery status and seat belt engagement.

These developments come just six months after the official launch of Zest4's M2M Partner Programme and a year since the formation of its partnership with M2M specialist Arkessa.

"This real-time data and clearer vehicle visibility offers customers the opportunity to maximise maintenance and servicing schedules, ensure driver comfort and safety and vastly reduce operating costs," said Mandy Fazelynia, Zest4's Operations & Business Development Director.

"The Zest4 team has worked hard over the last 12 months on developing our M2M proposition to give partners something tangible to offer end customers, supported by sales and marketing initiatives."

Anton Le Saux, Zest4's Head of M2M, commented: "Since joining Zest4 back in September I have been speaking to many of our reseller partners and their hunger for M2M solutions is clear to see.

"Our new range of solutions will give them the confidence to take a leap into this complex but lucrative marketplace."



Anton Le Saux



NTA's fourth annual karting event staged at Lakeside Karting Centre in Essex on November 16th also put partners on track for two new initiatives launched by the company – a partner incentive scheme and new bundled £4.75 per seat licence fee including 5,000 free minutes to 01, 02 and 03 numbers and UK mobile networks.

Justin Blaine, Channel Sales Manager, said: "We have successfully sold against the per seat license fee for many years and pushed our flexible simultaneous calls model to the industry. However, we have listened to our partners who asked us for a bundled option. Adding the new per seat licence model to our existing portfolio, running the two models in parallel, is our response."

Blaine also lifted the lid on NTA's latest incentive scheme and explained that 'easily achievable' targets will ensure that a number of winning resellers will fly to Cyprus in May 2017 and stay in a 5-star hotel with activities such as spa days, golf and sailing all included. The incentive runs from 1st December until 30th April.

Avaya banks on Boyer

Avaya's revised go-to-market strategy for Aura Communications Manager could have potentially silenced the vendor's voice in the very market where it wants to make most noise, providing an opportunity for IP Netix to turn up the volume as a staunch Avaya services partner, says Managing Director Kevin Boyer.

The impact of IP Netix's role in Avaya's mid-market campaign is considerable and draws on Boyer's in-depth knowledge of Avaya systems and the channel, all qualities that secured him a Comms National Award in the Best Installer/Maintainer category this year. "I identified a gap in the marketing strategy for the Avaya Aura Communications Manager," he commented. "Even major resellers find it hard to justify the costs of having staff and accreditations to install and maintain Aura.

"At the same time Avaya adopted a channel only sales and maintenance policy for the UK, downsizing and making engineering staff redundant. Consequently there was a gap between Avaya's sales drive for Aura through partners and the channel's ability to offer consultancy, installation and service contracts for such a sophisticated system. I established IP Netix to fill this gap and the business has been a year-on-year success. As the mid-market is evolving into the bottom end of the enterprise market, we have brought

our enterprise delivery skills into that space which has been a great success."

While Avaya's channel revamp went against the grain of its mid-market ambitions it paved the way for IP Netix to become a highly valued partner closely aligned to the vendor's roadmap. Boyer has expanded the company's portfolio to mirror Avaya's kit bag, and he is currently embarking – with much determination – on a mission to address the fast growing mid-market sector with Avaya's IP Office and ACCS products. Boyer has also added data networking (Fabric) skills, video conferencing and workforce optimisation to the IP Netix portfolio, enabling the company to deliver specialist services across the entire Avaya range for business partners.

IP Netix now manages over 300,000 endpoints across multiple platforms in six continents. The business has grown to currently employ 22 people, with engineering teams working on projects that range from single site deployments to fully hosted



Boyer clutches his Comms National Award

Avaya solutions with over 20,000 endpoints. "For us to be successful we need our channel business partners to be successful," added Boyer. "Our channel approach is based on partnership and strategic engagement. Through partnership and early engagement we can bring additional value by helping to qualify, shape, develop and ultimately close opportunities."

Strong pedigree

Boyer hasn't always been working in the comms sector. He undertook a career change from materials handling equipment for Rollertruck with a first foray into the telecoms sector as a sales consultant with Telephone Rentals in 1997. He then joined Shipton Communications selling SDX systems when ISDN2 to the desk was first introduced. And moved to Pink Telecom where he spent over ten years, latterly operating as Commercial Development Manager. In 2006 Boyer left Pink and

started his first successful business, Phase Telecom. As a specialist in consultancy for the Symbian mobile operating system, Boyer worked in particular on the VoIP integration for Symbian.

With IP Netix he has built a multi-million pound company without venture capital or other external investments. Since conception, IP Netix has adopted a 100 per cent channel only sales strategy, an approach that has been endorsed by Avaya UK which recommends the company to the business reseller community as a 'preferred' services partner. "Feedback suggests that our approach is increasingly important to business partners," said Boyer. "Many have suffered negative experiences having introduced a services partner to the end customer only to lose secondary business (support contracts, upgrades etc) to the partner who contracted the end user directly. Therefore, we remain diligent and unwavering in our indirect approach."

Boyer is carefully planning to double the size of the business and recruit more engineering resources in specialist areas. He has already deployed a full management structure including the addition of subject matter experts. IP Netix is also gearing up to move to larger premises that will house a state of the art Avaya portfolio demonstration suite exclusively for the use of partners. "I started IP Netix in the middle of the UK's largest recession," stated Boyer. "At the time people told me I was mad, but it was the best decision I ever made." ■

Just a minute with Kevin Boyer...

Role model: My Grandad: I was brought up by him, he taught me values, always with a sense of humour, yet he saw a life that I hope I never will

What talent do you wish you had? Musicality, I'd love to be able to sing in tune

Your strengths and what could you work on? I have strength of vision and tenacity, but I could work on my patience

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I'm a mean cocktail maker

What do you fear the most? I have no fears, I don't consider fear an option

One example of something you have overcome: The embarrassment of being thrown off my jetski for the first time

Name three ideal dinner guests: My Grandad, Leonardo Da Vinci and Sigmund Freud

Top tip: Customer service should always be the focus

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Harris bullish post-SIPHON

The autumn acquisition of UK-based UC distributor SIPHON Networks by pan-EMEA distribution firm Nuvias Group promised to extend SIPHON's influence in the UK and across the continent. We spoke to SIPHON Managing Director Steve Harris to find out how.

Harris's intention has always been to try and take the SIPHON product portfolio and value proposition into new geographical markets, and he had been looking at executing on this plan throughout 2016 after successfully expanding the business into the Benelux region. "The acquisition by Nuvias enables us to accelerate this and the group provides us access to over 20 potential countries across EMEA where we can look to replicate our success in the UK and Benelux regions," he said. "Nuvias shares the same philosophy, in terms of the focus on how we add value to our channel partners and provides significant scale, expertise and financial backing in enabling us to transfer this value into new areas."

Nuvias has adopted a 'practice' approach within its evolving organisation structure and is looking for these practices to be thought leaders and experts in the key technology focus areas for the Group. SIPHON will be the Unified Communications practice but its partners also have access to the other six practices being built within Nuvias. The Advanced Networking (former Zycko) and Cyber Security (former Wick Hill) practices are also in place and the SIPHON resellers and partners will now gain the opportunity to



Steve Harris

explore further new revenue opportunities from being part of this wider group.

"SIPHON has always had a strong focus on innovation and we have a dedicated team in place whose job is solely about researching and launching new technology areas," added Harris. "We are now also working on our own software development to provide operational support systems for our partners to simplify the deployment and management of cloud services. We have made significant investments in the automation of our internal systems and 70 per cent of our orders today are via our API or web store. We will look to continue this approach to enable us to scale effectively.

"Through a combination of growth in our existing markets and entering new regions we expect to double our revenues over the next three years. We will be fully integrated into Nuvias by this time but the ethos of the Unified Communications practice within Nuvias will be SIPHON and built on the DNA and success we have achieved to date."

Gaining SfB traction

Much of this success derives from SIPHON'S role as a cloud technology enabler for partners, and a growing area is Microsoft's Skype for Business (SfB) which continues to gain traction from large enterprises and public sector organisations. This traction is now being replicated all the way down to the SME with the launch

of the E5 SfB license pack on O365. "The availability of the E5 license and a PSTN calling plan from Microsoft in the UK has resulted in a new and significant peak of interest from end users which is now translating to a business opportunity for a new type of reseller looking to enter the UC market, and who have come from predominantly an IT background," noted Harris.

"These resellers are mostly proficient in delivering the collaboration and messaging (Sharepoint/IM/Exchange) features of SfB and O365 and when you add the growing popularity of MS Dynamics as a CRM and the continuing closer alignment between Dynamics and SfB they are well placed to also deliver the full SfB E5 Communications solution. Certainly there

is also now an increasing interest too from the more traditional voice resellers to have some form of SfB offering in their portfolio."

Resellers can leverage either their own internal engineering skills, SIPHON's skills as a white labelled service or a combination of the two. "We aim to fill in the gaps and enable resellers to sell SfB solutions effectively," added Harris. "We have been deploying cloud UC platforms for seven years and developed some cloud-based software ourselves which help resellers to deploy SfB solutions and handle the ongoing management of SfB hardware and end points."

Microsoft is not new to this space and Live Communications Server (LCS) was first introduced about 10 years ago. SfB is just the latest release in the journey of Microsoft becoming a credible Unified Communications supplier as well as being dominant in IT. Traditional resellers should look to have some form of Microsoft offering alongside their traditional offerings as ultimately their end user customers are likely to be using some form of Microsoft product and the chances are that usage will continue to expand, believes Harris.

"Certainly at the Microsoft World Partner Conference in Toronto this year there was



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ON acquisition

a very clear commitment to working through channel partners, and with its size and scale plus commitment to innovation and R&D Microsoft is bound to exert even more influence in the communications space moving forward."

Video and collaboration

Another priority area is the growth of video and collaboration. "Broadly speaking, we provide resellers and service providers with the same value proposition in video and collaboration that we've been delivering in voice and UC services, which is centred on technology enablement for our channel partners," explained Harris. "Firstly, we have invested in engineering skills and internal systems to ensure we have a strong engineering and technical support capability in video platforms as this is at the centre of everything we do in supporting our partners.

"Secondly we want to make the delivery and support of video and collaboration solutions easy and repeatable as historically deploying room based systems and MCUs has been both cumbersome and expensive. We have developed packages of hardware bundles for various room types from huddle rooms to large meeting rooms that are simple for our partners to sell and package to end users. We also then provide field installation services plus extended warranty and technical support to our partners and we are launching some new cloud-based Video as a Service (VaaS) offerings in the new year to complement our video hardware and engineering services portfolio. "The combination of all of

these items is what powers how we enable our channel partners to sell, deploy and support full packages of end point hardware and peripherals together with a white labelled cloud based VaaS proposition."

It is becoming increasingly clear that users do not see video as a separate application to voice and IT now, and it's important that any room system deployed works well and seamlessly into PC clients for remote and mobile users. "When end users then start to consider applications like desktop sharing and collaboration too, it's clear that video services can no longer be deployed and supported in isolation from other IT and voice platforms," commented Harris.

Repeatable service

"A further key trend driving adoption is the significant reduction in costs in room system and MCU hardware and the availability of cost effective software based VMRs. Our partnering strategy is based upon making video a ubiquitous and repeatable service that can be deployed in volume and at a price that delivers this to down to the SME as well as the large corporates who have traditionally invested in large scale and complex video deployments. Those companies who make video simple to deploy and consume commercially will see significant success and we are working with our vendor partners to bring new VaaS and associated hardware bundles to market to address this."

The popularity of Skype and Facetime demonstrates the potential usage of video as

an application and people now expect to have the same experience in the workplace and want to connect with colleagues who are in rooms and/or on their PCs and mobiles in a seamless and single video call or conference. "This consumerisation of video is driving the emergence of new and innovative video vendors and service providers who are looking to make the technology universally adopted by new cloud-based services and consumption models, and the previous barrier of video services being capital intensive and complex is quickly eroding," observed Harris. "We would expect to see this trend continuing with lower cost hardware emerging and the continued launch of new disruptive cloud video offerings that make video more mainstream and accessible for all types and sizes of end users."

Resellers and SIs will continue to play a major role in the delivery of advanced services like video and collaboration and their value is determined ultimately by how readily they can make complex technology usable within the end user environment, according to Harris. "Video has always been a specialist area, with niche players carving out successful businesses through deploying very complex video 'islands' for end users," commented Harris. "The approach of the SI and reseller today needs to evolve and become more focused, not on integrating video components but on driving video adoption and usage by integrating the video service into existing business processes and making it accessible to all staff and across rooms, desktop and mobile." ■

Life on the Isle of Man

Gary Lamb, Chief Executive Officer at Manx Telecom, is also an accountant (CIMA) and moved to the company in October 2011 as Finance Director. He was promoted to CEO in July 2015. Prior to joining he was a founder Director of Bladon Jets, a manufacturer of innovative gas turbine engines. "I moved to Manx Telecom when it was under private equity ownership," he stated. "I have many years experience working for PE owned businesses so I was well positioned to help Manx Telecom grow and list on the stock market."



Gary Lamb

Originally part of BT, Manx Telecom was acquired by Telefonica in 2006. In June 2010 the company was sold to private equity investor HgCapital, and on 10th February 2014 it started trading on the AIM market of the London Stock Exchange. The company currently has 300 staff and generated revenues of £79.6 million for the year ended 31st December 2015. It provides fixed line voice, broadband and connectivity services for customers, connecting approximately 37,000 homes and 4,000 businesses on the Isle of Man.

Despite increasing competition and regulation on the island, Lamb aims to ensure that Manx Telecom remains the incumbent telecoms operator while growing the company via its global solutions business, Vannin Ventures and Acquisitions. "Our biggest challenge is dealing with the scale and technology

life cycle challenges of a small telecoms operator on an island with a population of 85,000," Lamb added. "We are investing heavily in digital transformation and the development of our people to deliver an improved customer experience. With a shared vision we can achieve so much more. Our biggest opportunity is harnessing the capability of our people."

Regulation is an ongoing challenge for a small island incumbent operator, observed Lamb. "Island specific regulation should ensure the incumbent can continue to invest in the Isle of Man infrastructure," he said.

"Another challenge is the fast pace of technology change. A good example is 5G. We have recently invested £10 million on 4G and will need to invest in 5G within the next five years. This means we have to constantly strive to find the most efficient way of using our cash when we invest in infrastructure and be more creative than most." ■

Equinix set to expand EMEA

Equinix's multi-million UK data centre investment builds on its blockbuster acquisition of Telecity Group early this year and marks a step change in the firm's growth strategy, according to Equinix UK Managing Director Russell Poole.

Equinix's late summer £26 million investment in the second phase expansion of its LD6 International Business Exchange (IBX) data centre in Slough upped its capacity to serve interconnection to connect companies. And in January the company closed the acquisition of European data centre services giant Telecity, delivering fresh challenges to Poole's desk. "Following the acquisition the big priority for me has been around welcoming many new members to our team and integrating the combined business, as well as managing the ongoing growth of our company which continues apace," he said. "It's about making sure we have the right capacity, in the right place, at the right time, with the right profile of service providers to allow our customers to execute their IT strategies. Doubling the size of our data centre in Slough helped us to keep up with customer demand in the UK."

US-based Equinix was established in 1998 by co-founders Jay Adelson and Al Avery, who were both facilities managers at Digital Equipment Corporation. They predicted that data centres as they existed then would not have the capacity to handle all the data created and demanded by technological advancements. They wanted to build a neutral location for

carriers to connect together – almost a Switzerland of the Internet. With this idea in mind, Equinix was born. Since Equinix was founded it has invested over \$13 billion in its data centre platform and grown from a single US location to having a global footprint of 146 data centres in 21 different countries.

"Having established a critical mass of network service providers we were able to secure customers such as Sony, Sprint and AT&T," stated Poole. "Creating a global footprint of data centres has been the company's goal since the beginning, and acquiring Interconnect Exchange Europe in 2007 enabled Equinix to make a big leap into the European market."

This was followed by the acquisition of Switch and Data in 2010, which provided the firm with 34 additional new data centre locations. "Two years later we moved into Jakarta and Dubai, with Amazon Web Services becoming a customer the same year – a major milestone for us," added Poole. "This year we have doubled the size of our business in the EMEA region thanks to the acquisition of Telecity Group. We now have a network of 146 data centres across five continents."

Equinix currently has more than 8,000 customers



Russell Poole

worldwide (including over 140 of the Fortune 500) and approximately 188,000 cross-connects. "The combination of a global footprint combined with direct connectivity means organisations can have their data where they need it, when they need it," commented Poole. "Building on this we are continuing to establish Equinix as the home of the interconnected cloud, which in turn is attracting enterprises that want to adopt hybrid and multi-cloud as their IT architecture of choice."

Equinix currently employs over 5,600 staff and its financial numbers are impressive, with revenues of \$2.73 billion in 2015. Last month the company delivered its 55th consecutive quarter of revenue growth. "We have a great deal of momentum in the major locations in which we operate," added Poole. "What's exciting is that the market is now really getting to grips with the concept of interconnection and the transformation it will bring to the world of business. I have no doubt we will keep pace with the demand we're

seeing and will continue to grow over the coming years."

Equinix enables businesses to be part of an ecosystem in which they can strategically connect with their partners and customers. For example, Equinix claims to be the only data centre company that houses all of the main cloud service providers – Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure and Office 365, Google Cloud Platform, IBM Softlayer and Oracle.

"Equinix can help businesses solve their critical data management needs by creating a multi-cloud solution that can be tailored to the requirements of the business, and which uses the most appropriate service for any task," added Poole. "So an enterprise may come into our facilities to run multiple applications in the cloud – connecting directly to the Google Cloud Platform to run Google Apps at Work and to Microsoft for Office 365 for email."

Equinix is busy identifying ways to expand its global footprint, building on its 20 International Business Exchanges (IBX) data centre expansions last year. "In 2016 Equinix continues to expand the scale and reach of its global platform with 18 announced expansion projects underway," said Poole. "We've also announced new expansions in Dallas, Dublin, Frankfurt,

MEA footprint

Helsinki and Zurich, totalling more than \$100 million of capital expenditure.

"To meet the demands of the rapidly evolving business environment organisations must re-architect their IT infrastructures out to the network edge. We help our customers do this through a proven blueprint we call the Interconnection Oriented Architecture (IOA) which allows businesses to securely connect to whoever they want, whenever and wherever they need it."

Key focus area

A particular area of focus for Equinix is the growth of the cloud. In order to meet the increasing adoption of cloud by enterprise customers, it developed the Equinix Cloud Exchange. "Through Equinix's Cloud Exchange, customers have access to software-defined connections to multiple cloud services from a single physical port, allowing them to access whatever service they need," added Poole. "It really makes us the home of the cloud as it's the only neutral ground where all the major cloud providers can collaborate under one roof."

"Building a large and diverse customer base has had a snowball effect on our business, as the ability for our customers to digitally interact and interconnect with other companies and partners has been a very compelling selling point. The fact that Equinix is continually expanding into new markets makes this offering appealing to companies with a global presence."

According to Poole, the rise of the Internet of Things and its potential to change everyday life is probably the

biggest game-changer on the horizon. "Moving towards a highly connected society will significantly drive up demand for ample data storage," he added. "That's where Equinix comes in. Driverless cars, for example, will require synergy between the cars own systems and real-time information about the road and its surroundings. The volume of data this will create will be astonishing, and will require a reliable and high-capacity data management solution."

For VARs to succeed in today's channel industry it's important they deliver enterprise solutions that are secure, reliable, cost-effective and easy to implement for customers. More specifically, as the hybrid cloud fast becomes the default enterprise IT deployment model, it will be essential for VARs to think about how to best utilise the cloud for customers, believes Poole. "We recently announced a partnership with Arrow Electronics to offer preconfigured hybrid cloud packages," he said. "This will enable resellers and managed service providers to rapidly deploy and implement hybrid cloud solutions for enterprise customers from markets around the globe."

"For us the biggest change has been in the conversations we're having with customers. They're no longer coming to talk to us about data centres, they're talking about interconnection and what the latest IT trends mean for their business. From hybrid clouds to BYOD models, IT trends are now firmly on the C-suite agenda, and we find ourselves at the intersection of these trends. It's a very exciting time." ■

Just a minute with Russell Poole...

Role model: Clive Woodward, an inspirational leader with the courage of his non-conformist convictions

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I spend a lot of time riding a motorbike around a racetrack as fast as I can

What talents do you wish you had? To sing, be as good at rugby as Jonny Wilkinson, and to ride a motorbike like Valentino Rossi

Industry bugbear: From a global perspective I would deregulate every telecoms market

What do you fear the most? Regret

Name three ideal dinner guests: Winston Churchill, Eddie Izzard and Henry Blofeld

One example of something you have overcome: Surviving the dot-com bust

Your greatest strength and what could you improve on? I have the courage and compassion required to be a good leader and I'm a good listener. But not very organised

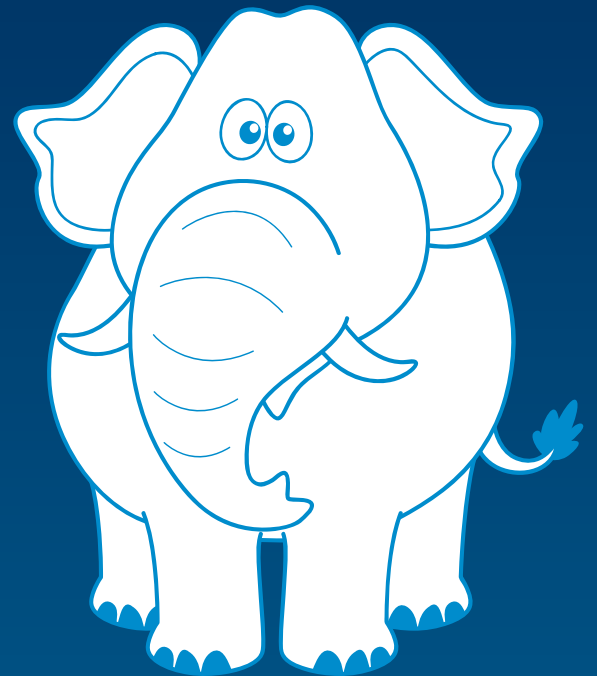
What possession could you not live without? My grandfather's watch and medals. He was in the Welsh Guards and served in the Second World War and he left his watch and medals to me. I treasure them greatly

If you weren't in your current role what would you be doing? Running a charity or something similar

Name one thing you couldn't do without in your job: Not a thing but a person – my PA, Jade. Her tireless hard work (and patience) enables me to do my job well



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Craven drives out 'Rolls Royce'

Headsets can be a lucrative added value sale for comms and IT providers, especially in the contact centre space, but is there customer demand for the 'Rolls Royce', business grade, over ear solution Sennheiser has recently launched? Comms Dealer visited the company's R&D facility in Copenhagen to find out more.

The world of work is changing as unified comms environments mature and open plan offices become the norm, but can customers be persuaded to part with large sums of money to give their 'knowledge workers' the peace and quiet they need to conduct business and tasks more effectively? Sennheiser, aside from its reputation in the business headset sector, is globally renowned for producing high quality headphones for the music industry and the German manufacture is convinced its latest high end MB660 hybrid solution will meet the demand from managers for more productivity and from users for a more comfortable working environment.

For the technically minded, the MB660 fully wireless headset is a highly engineered 'pillow soft' over ear solution that offers a range of impressive features including NoiseGard adaptive ANC (Active Noise Cancelling). This means that unlike standard ANC headsets, the device constantly monitors the background environment for ambient noises and adjusts the level of noise reduction in each headset.

Built into the headset is a three-part digital microphone array that works seamlessly with a suite of Sennheiser's advanced microphone technologies (SpeakFocus

Own-Voice-Detector and WindSafe). Also included is high-quality, stereo audio with CD-quality steaming (aptX technology). To control functions one of the ear cups has a touch pad for ease-of-use. Users simply swipe and tap for call and media control or double tap to activate 'Talk Through' and listen to colleagues or announcements, without removing their headset.

Practically speaking, this all means specially selected workers can work undisturbed in the noisiest of environments, walk around the office if they so wish or even exercise (switching seamlessly from a PBX softphone to mobile) and, as there's no boom microphone, absolutely nothing impedes their conversations. Furthermore, if they want to listen to music to concentrate, they have the best possible sound quality at their disposal and Sennheiser's CapTune App allows customisation of their audio profile for a more personalised sound experience.

The unit has an impressive 30-hour battery life and the package includes Sennheiser's BTD 800 USB dongle, supporting audio only for business security, plus an audio cable which ensures the headset can be used when the battery runs out. When not in use the headset cups cleverly flatten



Jane Craven

out and can be comfortable worn smoothly around the neck and shoulders. It also folds neatly away into a zipper case meaning the unit can be taken home or locked away securely at night – an important factor given the cost!

As you would expect from Sennheiser, exhaustive research and engineering

resources have been invested in the product's development mostly based around fast expanding 'Open Office' cultures which are profoundly affecting work environments, as Jeffrey Saunders, Director at the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies explained: "The accelerating pace of employees' work tempo and the need for collaboration and flexibility

puts many employees out of their comfort zone. Most offices – closed or open – are not designed to face these challenges, leading to unproductive workspaces and disengaged workers, which costs companies money in terms of lost productivity."

According to Sennheiser's own global research, 33 per cent of all offices are

Royce' headset

already using open floor plans. And some companies are going one step further with so called 'activity based working' that uses hot desking and other arrangements. Consequently, employees don't have a fixed desk at their office location at all, instead the office workspace is designed according to daily needs – with areas for concentration, communication and collaboration – enabled by mobile, flexible devices or cloud services.

Unfortunately, open plan offices have gained a bad reputation. They have been cited as the cause for stress, illness, conflicts among the staff and most significantly a lack of concentration – with 69 per cent of all employees dissatisfied with the level of noise at their current workplace. With a per unit retail price tag of £385 the MB660 is pricey, but it has a unique place within these modern business environments according to Sennheiser's Brian Brorsbol, Director of Product Management: "It's not the lowest price point, but when you look at what you get in your hand and the needs you address, I think it is a good price. If you can increase the productivity and well being of your employees, it's a small amount compared to the big picture," he commented.

"This product is not for everybody in an organisation it addresses a specific user profile and their needs in a really good way. It's a highly professional communications product that looks like any other headphone but you don't see what's under the helmet. The business solution is under there and that combination is very unique

The world of work is changing as unified comms environments mature and open plan offices become the norm

and we are the only company with that solution now."

Here in the UK, the MB660 can be acquired via distributors Corporate Telecom, Duplex, Nimans, Tech Data, Westcoast and Westcon, and Sennheiser UK Director of Sales & Marketing Jane Craven reports a positive reaction to the solution. "People have commented that there's nothing else

quite like it in the market. In particular, we've had great feedback about the audio quality and the effectiveness of the adaptive ANC (active noise cancellation)."

As part of Sennheiser UK's reseller programme the company offers detailed training to partners at its Marlow HQ site. "Resellers are also welcome to visit us at any time," said Craven. "We will also visit their premises where we can demonstrate our products, talk more about their benefits and address technical queries to help increase business. We provide full demonstration and training, and can also do demonstrations for end users on reseller's behalf.

"Resellers can apply for special price agreements via thebluespace.co.uk or their Sennheiser distributor. If they introduce us to an opportunity there is an additional Deal Registration margin available to them." ■



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EVENT REVIEW

The revolution in comms has begun and the quest to achieve excellence in business is even more challenging, so we kick off this year's Comms Vision Convention event review by focusing on keynote speaker Dave Alred MBE, the maker of world beaters and driver of performance improvement...

Obligated by some primal urge to think negatively, we default into a cocoon of 'comfort zone' security and our very own behaviour fosters the outcomes we hope to avoid. So says Comms Vision speaker and leading performance coach Dave Alred MBE, who would reform the entire concept of failure and even proposes that human potential has barely been tapped, and is ultimately an unknown quantity.

Alred displays a rare enthusiasm for what is possible and, if it was within his power, he would ban the word 'failure' as it is not in the human interest. "People can perform," he said. "They will always get there in the end. If not there yet, it's not the end."

Alred's approach to performance improvement was clear from the off and he wanted no 'playing safe' from the audience. "Convention does not challenge people, nor does fear of failure. As managers and coaches we can change that," he commented.

Sticking to conventional ways will only reinforce the status quo that is a grim legacy of growing up, noted Alred. And the effects of all this will only be curbed by overturning long held assumptions about personal

development. "Why do kids learn quicker than adults?" he asked. "It's attitude. They are excited when successful, and simply try again when they fail. But adults are hard wired to the idea of failure when not matching their intentions. The human brain goes straight to the consequences of failure before celebrating success.

"We need the enthusiasm of a child. It's never too late to change and grow. If enthused correctly people will do anything. We are not even scratching the surface of human potential. What stops us from succeeding? Convention becomes our sanctuary and attitude protects the status quo. It takes courage to change. So fully consider conventions and assumptions and how they can block the road to progress."

Conventional pitfalls

Nurturing people to defy convention and perform better also challenges business leaders to enable improvement. They should be mindful of the pitfalls of conventional assessment, such as marks out of ten which stifle development. "Such methods create a mental ceiling and even slow down the journey to the top," added Alred. "There should be no limits to what we can do."

Going for success may perform introduce a state of



Dave Alred

Convention doesn't challenge people, nor does fear of failure. As managers and coaches we can change that

vulnerability because change introduces new processes, and when under pressure we may doubt what we can do and unpick procedures that should be second nature. But, believes Alred, harbouring enthusiasm and assumptions of success creates a new level of activity and a positive vibe, which in turn supports learning and development.

One of Alred's tactics when helping companies to

improve their performance is to encourage people to do a seven foot standing long jump. During the process they tip towards a point of no return. This process needs to be ingrained through ongoing practice which enables the act to be done more deliberately. But when the consequence of failure is higher (for example, the same jump but between two buildings), the fear interferes with the process. "The key

is to follow process and stay focused," said Alred.

Above all, he gave an intelligent indication of how to bring discipline into play and fashion a better performing business, rather than default at every turn into a sterile world of self-limiting conventions and assumptions. "Fear of failure keeps people in the comfort zone," commented Alred. "But the Ugly Zone is where it all happens. How can we get into that area? We need to inject more enthusiasm, vibe and excitement into what we do, and create a wow factor that enables us to improve and succeed."

Key points

- Effort is success, there is no such thing as failure
- Any marginal improvement is winning
- Injecting enthusiasm, vibe and excitement into what we do creates a wow factor
- Building self esteem creates commitment
- Start assuming you will succeed and progress
- Defy convention. You'll be in the race, but never win
- Always praise the commitment and attitude before the outcome

About Dave Alred MBE

Dave Alred MBE is a leading performance coach whose achievements include nurturing rugby world cup winner Jonny Wilkinson and helping Luke Donald become the world's top golfer. ■



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Passing the true test of strategy

No business plan goes unchallenged and the true test of any strategy lies in its formation which is a matter of clear adaptive leadership, according to 8x8 commissioned speaker Kevin Uphill, Chairman of business strategist Avondale. He urged delegates to move from management to leadership, map the line of probability, explore parallel sectors, make decisions more collaboratively, and watch and listen with eyes and ears wide open.

Why? Because too many businesses are stripped of proper long-term planning according to Uphill who prescribed a remedy to bring strategy back to the boardroom table. In a keynote address to Comms Vision delegates he praised those leaders who are determined to transform their business and defy 'default' behaviours.

"The market is accelerating and we need to deal with that pace of change through strategy, so leadership is important," he stated. "As leaders, bring the team with you, give staff 'permission' with clear roles and responsibilities. Take time out on business design, always ask why you're better than competitors and articulate that succinctly to customers."

Uphill presented plenty of evidence to show that one form of leadership does better than others - mainly by inserting clear space between day-to-day management activities to create conditions that meet the requirements of true leadership.



Kevin Uphill

From this space will emanate the building blocks needed to construct a viable long-term strategy that delivers a competitive advantage in a fast changing market.

Space to think

"Get into the strategy space," urged Uphill. "Many leaders avoid this move because it's uncomfortable, less certain, hands-off and doesn't feel like work. To take practical leadership steps we must put ourselves aside, listen and watch more carefully, and dedicate more time to competitor analysis. By researching our environment we can overlay the macro and micro picture which helps us to identify the line of probability which in turn determines how we can take advantage."

The market is converging, getting faster and smarter, software is nibbling at margins, and resellers will struggle to bring value if they talk to customers from

a product perspective. They must become idea businesses as opposed to product focused operations, believes Uphill. And with no clear strategy they may struggle to communicate why they are better than the alternatives.

"Look at consultancy models," he added. "What does the customer really want? How are they operating collaboratively? What silos need to be removed to create an overall technology roadmap?"

Uphill also urged delegates to consider whether they need to pursue acquisitions as part of their strategy. "The M&A sector is alive with activity because of general slow growth," he commented. "There are too many businesses offering the same services with diminishing margins. Therefore, acquire companies that together will create disruption, which in turn generates greater shareholder value."

Segments of one override spray & pray

Businesses must offer far more than traditional marketing techniques if they are serious about growth and strategy, according to Comms Vision speaker Allister Frost, founder and Managing Consultant at Wild Orange Media.

If marketing messages are to remain relevant to their target audiences they must extend their influence to the 'segment of one', he told delegates, and this can only be achieved by alleviating historic divisions between marketing and IT departments. "IT needs to understand marketing and see it as an enabler for growth," he stated. "The marketing versus IT divide cannot continue. Data is key to making marketing messages hyper-relevant. This is your big opportunity."

Frost, who has spent 25 years working in big organisations such as Microsoft, now gives a helping hand to companies wanting to evolve in line with how technology is fuelling the customer experience. "It's commonly said that we live in a Digital World where screens are cheap and offer a window into wider realities," he added. But it's not a Digital World, it's Our World and there's no reverse gear. We are irreversibly changed and hyper-informed with more access to information sources than ever before. We become welded to the technology we trust."

Hyper-connected consumers are no longer the underdog. They have to

an extent disempowered businesses by taking control of 'knowledge'. And customers are intolerable to sub-standard service.

"This all means that businesses must improve," added Frost. "Organisations must learn to play the long game, create new marketing messages and build relationships that can be nurtured. Prospects must not be rushed, they should be given information on their terms - helping is the new selling."

The language of marketing is no longer a language of action and hoped-for reaction. It's interactions that count most and this dynamic has driven an evolution in content marketing. And there is a clear danger in hyping blanket messages that should sensibly be more targeted and individualised.

"Marketing is no longer a case of 'spray and pray' to see what sticks," noted Frost. "It should be laser targeted to reach specific people in a short space of time. Marketing is now about talking to an increasingly smaller group of people, and saying the right things to the right people at the right time."

This tech-fuelled reaction to customers should encourage all channel marketers to think differently. "As technology and automation moves us forward, the 'segment of one' has emerged," added Frost. "Personally tailored messages will be key."

Continued on page 34



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Why ignoring change is the biggest destabiliser

For resellers the lesson is stark yet positive: Neglecting the need to change could be the biggest destabiliser of their business, but embracing new models and unconventional approaches will yield massive benefits and be far more transformative in the long-term. "The greatest issue with digitalisation is redefining traditional business models," stated Comms Vision panel debate host John Chapman. "We need to think outside the square, especially with new competitors emerging from left of field."

Resellers should take the lead in two modern-day tech revolutions, in software and computing, noted panelist Alex Tempest, Director of Partners, TalkTalk Business. "Software apps is a huge market," she said. "Some are commoditised, but they are exploding out of innovation and our market is a natural place for software to reside. For example, SDN provides platform innovation and intelligent networks. It enables us to go into networks and bespoke flexible solutions. Key considerations for the channel are partner choice and whether their skill sets allow them to be competitive."

Those resellers still working under the shadow of archaic and time-limited modes of operation will lose out to more nimble forward looking rivals, believes Tempest. "New players challenge conventional thinking, and they tell us how to make our



Comms Vision panelists debate the big industry opportunities and challenges

The greatest issue with digitalisation is redefining traditional business models. We need to think outside the square, especially with new entrants emerging from left of field

industry better," she added. "One example is the future role of robotics. So the channel needs to do some housekeeping and ask whether it trusts the innovation and disruption brought in by new entrants."

"The consumer space is also innovative, and that innovation flows into the B2B market where customers have more to consider. So we take the best of what the consumer market offers. This stretches us as an industry – disruption and innovation are two areas of growth."

The danger for resellers without a whisper of lateral thinking is to become a

forgotten outpost of a crumbling 'old world' of communications. But DRD CEO Dave Dadds offered some golden nuggets of strategic direction. "The market we are moving into is far bigger than the one we're leaving behind," he commented. "It's an exciting future, not in telephony, but software and technology such as analytics."

"We spend time looking at where we are. It used to be a case of focusing on the end product, but we need to go back and assess how we are delivering and supporting services. This means being more introspective, stepping back, ignoring much of the

hype and working out how we can be smarter with APIs for example. The industry is exciting, but we need to get the basics right by reversing our thinking."

The future success of reseller business will also be indicated by their capacity to create market potency based on agility and simplified go-to-market models. "Voice is an application unshackled from telephony," stated David Axam, Head of Hosted, BT Wholesale. "But it's about making that app easy to use and consume. This is key. It's where the value lies. Furthermore, platforms constantly evolving with software updates. That's

'agility' and it's not going away. Partners need to manage this change."

Debate soundbites

"The more people communicate, the more relevant we are as an industry, which underlines the viability of the channel. Our role is to support, educate and train."

David Axam, Head of Hosted, BT Wholesale

"This is the most exciting time to be alive. We have all the tools we need and a wide choice of who we can go to. The big question is where to keep all the money."

Clayton Nash, Head of Products, CityFibre



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Rediscovering creative talent left in the past

Business leaders and staff alike have a vested interest in closing the gap between their near non-existent capacity as adults to think outside the box and their more creative past selves. On the decline of creative genius, Jamie Anderson, academic, author and Comms Vision speaker, noted that our capacity to think creatively plummets from 98 per cent in the up-to-six year age group to next to nothing in fully fledged grown ups. "Just 2 per cent of adults think divergently," he said. "They stand to gain a bigger slice of more complex markets that require new thinking."

The innocence of new borns has been iconised since time immemorial. Less widely lauded is a child's innate capacity to think divergently, a powerful attribute that is all-but quashed by the passage of time and life experiences. According to Anderson, rediscovering our latent fount of creativity is the catch-all salve to today's key strategic challenges.

And his keynote address was a piece of pure inspiration as he examined the audience's capacity for creative thinking with a display of revealing tactics, some interactive, some slightly unnerving (such as sketching a portrait of the person sat next to you), all designed to put some creative oomph back into delegates' businesses.

"What drives linear thinking?" stated Anderson. "Why do we think the way



Jamie Anderson

we do? Education and deeply ingrained habits condition our minds to think in a certain way. Our experience would be valuable in a linear environment, but the world is divergent therefore life experience can create barriers when trying to deliver results. We must be open to lifelong education and create an environment in which creativity is fostered.

"There is a difference between intelligence and creative thinking. The brilliantly intelligent can also be too focused and harbour a narrow field of view. We need liquidity in thinking processes to find many different perspectives, redefine the problem and build it into strategies. It's about sensibility, originality and flexibility.

"In a complex market we must develop business models that are different. It takes time to understand market dynamics and solve complexity, and we need the motivation to learn new skills, be curious about developing markets. Without curiosity we cannot learn. We must question our environments and cultures, take time to reflect, identify our inspirations and boost our creative thinking."

Reasons to join the culture club

For all the challenges that the industry regularly heaps on channel companies, they have one particular strength, their capacity to respond to new circumstances by developing a strong and embedded culture that can be leveraged as a competitive advantage. Lending force to these arguments, Gamma CEO Bob Falconer spoke of institutionalising culture to make it self-maintaining. "You don't shout culture to staff, you do it by example," he stated in a Comms Vision panel debate. "Some big organisations plaster culture posters all over their walls. They think they can create a culture by printing one. Every CEO has a duty to make the workplace great, and a duty to eliminate negativity. People hate tension and politics in the office."

Since prescribing a company culture is impossible, the scale of leadership in its development is easy to measure, and without culture, strategy is immaterial and growth inconceivable. And according to Falconer, we'd be wise to separate the notion of strategy from majestic visions and hard



Bob Falconer states the case for culture

wire it to the less grandiose realm of cunning plans.

"The term 'strategy' is misunderstood," he added. "It means 'plan', and once you have a plan it needs to be continually reviewed. In our business we have to change and adapt. Culture helps us to achieve that."

Protection

The Comms Vision debate on culture and strategy became an encounter with the day to day realities of managing people. While it is clear that culture does not beat strategy, recruitment glitches will certainly defeat culture. "The danger is making recruitment mistakes," said Falconer. "These must be addressed quickly. If the culture is infiltrated it will be destroyed. Disruptive

people affect the whole team and drags them down, so hire well and fire well (in the nicest way). Culture must be protected and institutionalised."

Debate soundbites

"Strategy and culture go hand in hand. We set out a moral compass and take people on the journey with us. Without culture it's a long hard slog."

Roy Shelton, CEO, ITS

"When culture is done properly the Rol is incredible."

Henry Warren, Innovation and Product Development Consultant

"It's critical to have a strong culture. It beats strategy all day long."

David Pollock, CEO, Chess



COMMS resellers already providing value added services are in a prime position to attack the world's fastest growing and most profitable industry – software – according to Comms Vision speaker Hans Peter Bech, author and economist. "Software is creeping into everything and the industry has low barriers to entry," he stated. "But software is situational, its value lies in its context and the volume of services resellers can deliver such as consultancy and operational excellence, creating customer intimacy." >p36



Gamma flexes mobile muscle

Gamma's flexing of mobile muscle reflects a new campaign to give partners the clout they need to disrupt an outdated mobile industry, according to CEO Bob Falconer who delivered a lively presentation on day one of Comms Vision 2016. There is one sure way to take on the mobile market, believes Falconer – give channel partners the power of customer ownership – and in partnership with Three he has done just that. "Over the past 20 years choice has been reduced," he stated. "We've broken the model with credible differentiated services."

Gamma is now a full MVNO having acquired a mobile core and invested millions to provide a converged services proposition. "The reality is that we need control of fixed and mobile networks," added Falconer. "The mobile industry is now vertically integrated which means less choice



Bob Falconer

for the channel and more control for the networks."

Richard Woodward, Chief Financial Officer, Three, told delegates that the business sector was an untapped market for Three and that it entered this space with a challenger mentality offering 'sensible wholesale terms'. "Gamma is a vital part of Three's go to market and has access to our data network," stated Woodward. "We see the business market as ripe for change. Smaller, innovative

challengers have been held back, but with Gamma we are shifting the market."

As Gamma marches deeper into mobile territory with Three by its side Falconer's message to the channel is strong and clear. "We give control to partners in real-time," he said. "Gamma enables partners to be thin MVNOs. We're also developing our own converged Horizon, SIP and mobile product to provide partners with differentiated integrated services." ■



A FRESH wave of technological innovation and a strong push for closer partner relationships has unleashed a new phase of intense activity within BT Wholesale, revealed James Hennah, Managing Director of Fixed and VP of Media and Broadcast.

In a keynote address to Comms Vision delegates Hennah provided insights into the strategies behind BT Wholesale and Ventures, including a drive to broaden and deepen partner relationships, bring together fixed and mobile assets following the EE acquisition, while investing in portals and B2B gateways to integrate closer with the channel

– all happening apace against a backdrop of technological advancements in areas such as G.fast+, 5G, optical services and M2M. "Portal development in hosted comms has driven 200 per cent growth this year," stated Hennah.

Another hot topic, 'killing' telecoms fraud, is also in growth mode following the launch of an intelligent call analysis solution. "And we're seeing growth from the economics of owning and managing platforms, which is a difficult and relentless task," commented Hennah. "BT Wholesale has witnessed significant uptake of hosted Centrex and SIP lines, along with BT's integrated field services proposition."

Top ten ways to remodel as an innovator

Too many CEOs are held hostage by their emotional and financial investment in the status quo, claimed Henry Warren, Innovation and Product Development Consultant, who knows his stuff and worked on the 2008 Barack Obama campaign. In an address to Comms Vision delegates he urged CEOs to bring more innovation into their companies based on his 10 point game plan.

1) The story: Before innovation can be introduced a business must start with a narrative told by the CEO. All businesses will be disrupted at some point and will require the ability to innovate out of disruption based on a 'story'.

2) Leadership: Consider where you prioritise, invest and support.

3) Focus: Put a spotlight on the shape of your innovation portfolio and consider how to allocate resources. It's all about the right balance.

4) Inconceivable: People may not understand innovation, and top of the list here are CFOs. You need to educate them, so always work collaboratively with Finance.

5) Organ rejection: The immune system may attack a foreign body. It's the same within businesses. Share ownership and get people invested in the project.

6) Agility: Agile methods are good at teasing out the next growth opportunity.



Henry Warren

7) Listen: Listen to customers and those around them. The most valuable investment is to listen.

8) Communication: The bigger the company the harder it is to communicate. Creating communities is an art form and may require outside help.

9) Little guys: You will never employ the majority of smart people so partnering is recommended. Be generous with your time, network and resources and the results could be incredible.

10) Teamwork: Identify the entrepreneurs, people who make things happen and bring them together. ■

Visionary viewpoints

"Decision making now sits more with marketing and digital directors. This changes how organisations buy."

Andy Roberts, CEO, Sabio

"At the user level the industry needs to make things simple to create value. From the channel perspective, new portals make services easy to use and far more accessible."

Charles Aylwin, Channel Director, 8x8



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The spectacular setting for Comms Vision



The Scottish theme was a highlight of the event



Delegates voted the content the best ever



Gamma CEO Bob Falconer was as insightful as ever



Renowned sports coach Dave Alred MBE was inspirational



Allister Frost gave a marketing masterclass



The panel debates presented a plethora of views



Professor Jamie Anderson demonstrated incredible creative thinking



Intensive channel business was conducted in the sponsor boardrooms



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"We were thrilled to be named double winners in the 2016 awards. Bringing the whole channel community together, our award success gave the ProVu team the recognition they deserve in front of the whole industry and we look forward to being part of them again in 2017."

Darren Garland, ProVu Communications, Best Distributor Account Team and Best Distributor Marketing Team 2016



"We use the award in all of our collateral and it has helped to elevate us in the minds of clients, potential clients and prospective stakeholders. It has also given our employees a real morale boost, increased confidence in our own abilities and has helped to push our marketing to the next level."

James Waplington, Lily, Best Reseller Marketing Team 2016



"The CDS&M Awards is a great opportunity to celebrate fantastic success and recognise the channel's sales and marketing team. For Entanet, winning both the Channel Marketing Team of the Year and Channel Account Team of the Year this year was the icing on the cake. It was an amazing day!"

Darren Farnden, Entanet, Best Vendor Sales Team and Best Vendor Marketing Team 2016



"The awards help build a sense of pride. These awards remind us to stop and pat ourselves on the back. Our win did stir local PR and increase web traffic. I was stopped by people in shops, even by my son's headmaster, congratulating us on our success. Awards work!"

Shahram Bagherzadeh, Best Small Reseller Sales Team 2016



"Winning Reseller Sales Team of the Year again was a proud moment and being presented with the Overall Large Sales Team of the Year for the second time felt incredible. The affirmation of Focus' market positioning and being an attractive company to work for was a great morale boost"

Chris Goodman, Focus, Best Reseller Sales Team and Best Overall Sales Team 2016



"NSN has enjoyed a fantastic boost to morale and to our marketing programme with partners and customers alike. Our partners have been energised by this and incorporating the award logo in all of our partner marketing confirms our commitment to supporting their sales process every step of the way."

Ryan Kersey, NSN, Best Medium Reseller Sales Team 2016

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Dadds picks up baton

Dadds was named FCS chairman in the summer, taking over from Spitfire founder Jason Orde who had held the role for five years. As well as overseeing the organisation's funding, Dadds is committed to making sure member telecoms and IT business are well represented when legal or regulatory issues arise and leading the charge when Ofcom needs reminding of the channel's influence and importance. It's a role he enjoys, and he has the experience to fulfil the tasks it demands, having been active in the telecoms industry for three decades.

Apart from his time as a toolmaking apprentice and a short two-year stint at BT, Dadds has always been his own boss. DRD Communications, the business he set up in the late eighties is now the trading company behind the UK distribution and reseller business VanillaIP and the international brand Uboss.com. He also ran a serviced office business under the DRD umbrella which was sold in 2005, creating the financial boost he needed to fulfil his ambitions in the cloud space.

"We could see the promise of the changes in connectivity and the options that might open up. Our organisation has totally transitioned from the PBX sales and installation company we started in 1986. Today, with the emergence of the cloud, and the API-driven environment we are in, all our businesses are in the software development business at some level."

The DRD group is expected to hit a £6million plus turnover this year with all revenues coming from the Cloud 'on



Dave Dadds

As well as running his highly successful hosted platform business Vanilla IP, Dave Dadds is now chairman of industry watchdog the Federation of Communications Services and in these turbulent times hopes for a membership surge in 2017.

demand' sector, which Dadds puts down to the team he has built since taking his leap of faith into the Cloud a decade ago.

"I have an amazing team both here in the UK and in India. Although we are known in the Industry for providing HPX services via our Broadsoft relationship, the biggest factor in our UK and International success is Uboss our application and service delivery platform. Without this it would be much more difficult to add real value for our partners."

So how and why did Dadds decide to get heavily involved with FCS?

"For me the industry needs a central voice that can communicate with the regulator Ofcom, government departments and diverse groups associated with the communications industry in one way or another. Unless you are one of the very big telcos or mobile operators

you just can't afford the overhead of a regulatory, compliance and legal team. FCS makes these elements available to its members.

"FCS has always been about providing a resource and a voice to ensure members' needs are clearly explained and fully understood by Ofcom and policy-makers. At its simplest, it provides a means of pooling the channel's resources and best-practice. And it ensures that we spend the money only once, between us, rather than individually re-inventing the wheel."

In answer to the Monty Pythonesque 'what has the FCS ever done for us' question Dadds is forthright.

"Well, to go from the sublime to the 'cor blimey', remember when Openreach started retrospectively billing comms providers for five years of 'special phone book entries'? FCS went in to bat on behalf of the members,

and saved the industry about £1m on that issue alone.

"Coming more up to date, we now have Ofcom talking about separating Openreach from BT and the DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport), calling for universal (FTTP) Fibre To The Premises and competition at the wholesale level. The FCS championed these causes early."

Dadds argues that the unheard, smaller businesses in the industry that do not have the resources to fight wrongdoing or unwarranted legal claims or push for change, are FCS's key constituents.

"FCS is there for anyone who's in comms. How else do you get heard? You can employ your own corporate affairs people, like BT and Virgin and Sky. Or you can spend hours of executive time getting your opinions heard in the ears that matter. Or you can just grin and bear

whatever comes your way. Or you can throw a few bob into the hat with the rest of us, and pay for FCS to stand up for the channel."

In terms of his FCS leadership role, it looks like chairman Dadds and CEO Chris Pateman will have their hands full in the months ahead.

"The key issues we see for the sector going forward are fibre roll out for all, Fixed Line Number Porting, Toll Fraud and UK National Mobile Roaming along with better wholesale agreements for the channel.

"And of course we want Openreach to be better. We want proper, open wholesale access to mobile. We want customers to understand that responsibility for securing their businesses against fraud doesn't just rest with their suppliers. We want to make sure government doesn't overlook resellers in its rush to give us 5G everywhere and fibre to all premises. And we want a fair and level playing field where the channel can really compete for public sector contracts.

"People see threats from Brexit, threats from 5G, threats from IoT and threats from hosted. FCS sees a hugely dynamic market, full of opportunity for resellers who are fleet of foot and not wedded to a single technology or a single business model. In fact, because FCS's membership already embraces everything from radio spectrum policy and telematics to mobile phone recycling, we already have access to the finest minds in the converging market. So FCS will be an ever more useful resource for the channel in the future." ■

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It's beginning to look a l



Ah, the annual conundrum. Should you organise a Christmas bash or use the money to give employees a festive bonus? Which will be most appreciated by your staff? According to research, in order to make employees feel like they have received reward and recognition, bonuses would need to be close to 7% of salary. Costly yes, but you do get to avoid the embarrassing, end of party, alcohol fuelled 'I love you mate I really do' conversation in the loo or the visit to casualty in the early hours because Dean the 16 stone trainee thought it would be hilarious to photocopy his posterior but it was he who ended up in stitches. Some companies prefer the less costly strategy of buying specific, meaningful gifts for each employee,

but this can be dangerous as you must really know your staff and what's going on in their lives. Giving Joe the avid golfer a round at a top course would be perfect, but presenting arty Lynn in HR with two tickets for Les Miserables might end in tears if nobody tells you she's currently going through a painful divorce! Generally, (and no surprises here) it would seem that most channel companies still prefer a 'proper party' to celebrate the year gone and set the tone for the year ahead, maybe combined with a charitable enterprise which is laudable. Whatever option you choose have a great one. We are fortunate people and have a lot to celebrate...cheers!



TIM HOLWAY
FIDELITY GROUP

“ The Fidelity Group Christmas party is a highlight of the festive season! We all look forward to the opportunity to celebrate the successes of the year gone, show our staff gratitude for their hard work and to strengthen our team dynamic for the year ahead. Our company culture is team-focused and contributes to job satisfaction, higher productivity and more sustained motivation and success in the long term. The team look forward to the fun they will have together unwinding at the end of the year bash, and the stories that will come after! In the end, we work hard, but we play hard too. At Fidelity, we love a party!



DARREN SALISBURY
INFORM BILLING

“ We have expanded our team significantly over the past year and have had several new people join the team in recent weeks. As a result, this year we will be hosting a Christmas party as an opportunity for colleagues to spend time together outside of the office and get to know one another better. It will be within working hours and more informal than previous years, to suit the mix of personality types and because we feel it's important that everyone can attend. Rather than provide bonuses across the board, all pay increases awarded are performance driven as we find this is more motivational in the long-term. We also run a programme of social events throughout the year to welcome and reward colleagues.



LORRIN WHITE
BAMBOO TECHNOLOGY

“ Time to celebrate the season, pay thanks for a successful year or deliver extra reward for a year of commitment to the company cause. Often misconceived as a given, but many businesses are still unable to do this for their teams. At Bamboo, we are lucky; we can follow the trend of saying thank you at a jolly time of the year, so we ask our managers to organise the Christmas dinner, dance and drinks for the whole team and their partners. We aren't into grand gestures of holidays abroad, Christmas hampers or festive financial bonuses – that's simply because we know our team love a good party that they can get to easily, dance like crazy and then collapse from in comfort, with friends.



PETER CROOKS
INVOSYS

“ This year Invosys will be holding a Christmas party for the team. It's party season and time for everyone to let their hair down after a year of hard work. But it's about more than just festive cocktails and dodgy dance moves. At Invosys, our staff are the lifeblood of our business and we have an incredibly tight-knit team where everyone is valued and plays an important role in our success. The "Christmas Do" is a brilliant opportunity to build on this, from the excitement in the build-up, the night itself, to bonding over bacon butties the following day. Teams who don't usually work together have an opportunity to chat to others and you can't beat a night out to help new starters feel at home.



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Not like a Christmas party



CHRIS MORRISEY
LILY COMMS

“ We have two companywide social gatherings every year. One is in the summer to York Racecourse Music Showcase, and the other is the Lily Comms Christmas party. It’s part of our company culture to celebrate our successes, and the end of the year is the perfect time for us all to come together in relaxed surroundings and reflect on what we’ve achieved. It’s an opportunity for everyone to bond and have conversations outside of the work environment. The Christmas party is an integral part of the Lily Comms fabric. It enables us all to look back on what’s been and look forward to what’s to come, together as one big family. ”



PHIL GEE
NIMANS

“ Nimans is one big family and hosts a lavish Christmas party for staff and their partners each year with a free bar, traditional three course meal and entertainment. It’s our Chairman Julian’s way of thanking everyone for their efforts. Even during the tough economic times when many companies were cutting back Julian held a staff party at a top North West hotel. It brings people and different departments together, builds camaraderie and gets everyone in the festive spirit. ”



ADAM BARDSLEY
OAK INNOVATION

“ Coming off the back of our rebrand to Oak Innovation and our new ‘ideas that change everything’ strapline we’ve made 2016 a year of change. After years of traditional turkey and tinsel we asked for feedback and the feeling was to do something different and December is busy enough already. Therefore, we’ve opted for our annual knees up in the New Year. Hopefully the feel good factor that follows will be better for Oak now it doesn’t coincide with the Christmas shutdown. With respect to staff bonuses we recognise the additional costs in December and hence historically this has been the time we have paid the largest bonuses each year. There’s no need to change everything! ”



SIMON CUMMINGS
SQUARE1

“ We will again be hosting our Christmas party at the magnificent Lowry Theatre in Media City, Salford. As a company that supplies IT and networking products to partners not just in the UK but globally, the festive season is a great opportunity to bring all our team together under one roof and celebrate our achievements in the past year. As we’ve been in business for over 25 years we have developed into a close knit family of experienced professionals who continue to support the existing core business and introduce new products such as the Ekahau Wifi site survey, and leading European brands such as the Aethra router range and Borri UPS’s. ”



TOM O'HAGAN
VIRTUAL1

“ Our people are our most valuable commodity, teamwork and collaboration are core to the success of Virtual1. We host regular monthly staff updates that are both business and social events. These culminate in the annual Christmas party and staff awards evening to reward the group for the hard work over the year. We like to channel the seasonal goodwill into fundraising activities too to support our chosen charity partner Restless Development. So as well as the Christmas party, we will also be running a Christmas jumper day; movie night with mulled wine; various competitions and the opportunity to write a Christmas jingle which will be shared on social media to raise further funds. ”



MARK SAUNDERS
NINE WHOLESALE

“ Single venue large party with overnight stay, a small party in town, staff only, or plus ones too? So many variables, even before replacing or augmenting the party with an individual bonus is considered. Our plan is to combine a festive bonus with a large, kick-off black tie party in January, held at a prestige venue with partners in attendance. We intend to set an upbeat tone for the year and take the opportunity to bring all our 150+ staff together in a single location ‘for one night only’. Guests will enjoy fine dining and an array of beverages, plus dancing, prizes and maybe even some mildly unseasonal fireworks to add that final gloss to an undoubtedly memorable occasion. ”

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Ofcom exec joins BT



Mike McTighe

PRESSURE from Ofcom on BT to bring more independence to its Openreach division has prompted the telco to appoint Mike McTighe as the first Chairman of its local fixed network business. He brings substantial regulatory experience having been an Ofcom board member for eight years between 2007 to 2015. BT has pledged to appoint additional independent members to the new Openreach board which will operate from early 2017 and be accountable for setting the strategy and overseeing and managing the performance of Openreach, working with CEO Clive Selley and his management team.

BT Chairman Sir Michael Rake said: "I remain hopeful that this significant move by BT can help to underpin a sustainable, proportionate and fair regulatory settlement that is in the interests of the whole country."

McTighe added: "It is clear that Openreach needs to up its game on service and regain the trust of the people we serve in the industry and across the UK. Clive is making great progress on both

fronts and I look forward to working with him to ensure the UK has the best possible digital infrastructure. I also look forward to meeting with the many service providers who rely on Openreach services or who are keen to use its ducts and poles to build their own networks."

Haining set for Pragma



Neil Haining

NEIL Haining has joined Pragma as Operations Director responsible for technical support, cloud infrastructure, warehouse, inventory, billing, provisioning and order management.

His previous experience includes senior roles at distributors Westcon and Crane. Pragma Managing Director Tim Brooks commented: "The business has grown rapidly over the past few years and 2016 was no exception with 30 per cent growth year on year. Recruiting Neil means we can continue to build and scale the business and keep delivering the service which our partners value and trust."

Haining added: "Pragma has a great team, and working closely with Ericsson-LG in South Korea enables us to keep innovating and supporting our partners."

Also on the move...



Chris Hoard

FORMER Head of Professional Services at Cobweb Chris Hoard has joined Westcoast as Head of Cloud Professional Services, a newly created role. Mark Davies, Cloud Services Director, said: "Chris' brief is to work closely with our partners to supplement and enhance their cloud-based capabilities

and offerings." Hoard added: "Westcoast is the first distie to hit 100,000 CSP seats and I can't wait to start helping the company to grow even faster."

MARTIN Classen has joined Swyx as CTO, replacing Joao Gonzaga who becomes Chief Product Officer (CPO). Classen brings 15-plus years experience



Martin Classen

in the IT and communications sector across a number of industries. Previously he held senior roles at Innotec and NetCologne and joins Swyx from PMCS. helpLine Software Group where he was responsible for group-wide software product

development. "Martin fits very well with Swyx both personally and professionally. Together, we will continue to promote the digitisation of SMEs in the future," commented Dr. Ralf Ebbinghaus, CEO.

Nimans hires for CMO job



Stephen McIntyre

STEPHEN McIntyre has joined Nimans as Group Chief Marketing Officer. He brings 32 years experience as a senior marketer working in a number of strategic roles and

will leverage his knowhow across various disciplines such as digital and print-based communications. He moved from Ultraframe, one of Europe's leading manufacturers of conservatory roofs and extension systems. "I'm looking forward to helping Nimans enhance its reputation in a variety of high profile ways, working with key trading partners as well as the reseller community," stated McIntyre.

Mansell's move

TELEWARE's hire of Lee Mansell as Product Manager increases the firm's focus on developing its Customer Experience Analytics offering and TeleWare Communication Manager (TCM) solutions. Steve Haworth, CEO, said: "Lee has more than 18 years experience in product management and deploying software and we know he's the right person to help us maintain our momentum." Mansell joins from Gamma where he was Product Manager. He previously worked at Intercall as Hosted UC Product Manager and Rocom.

Payne shifts to Timico position



Simon Payne

TIMICO has named Simon Payne as Chief Commercial Officer, a newly created role. He brings over 20 years experience in the ICT industry and joins from Capita where he was Managing Director within the

Capita IT Enterprise Services division, leading the team that provides IT, UC and network solutions and support to local and central government and commercial clients across a variety of sectors. Prior to Capita he spent six years at Damovo, latterly as CEO charged with leading a business turnaround, taking on the role of Managing Director of Daisy Group after successfully negotiating the sale of Damovo UK & Ireland to the group in 2015.

Ben Marnham, CEO, said: "We are poised to enter the next stage in our development. Simon will further drive organic and non-organic growth, bringing with him a strong track record of value creation and sales performance with particular expertise in managed services."

ELITETELE.COM'S ACQUISITION OF NETCENTRIX AND SYSTEMHOST BRINGS EARLY BENEFITS TO CUSTOMERS

Our 13th acquisition since 2008, we acquired NetCentrix and SystemHOST in June broadening our capabilities in cloud-based technologies and helping cement our position as the leading unified communications provider. Our aim for any strategic acquisition is to double the size of the acquired business in 24 months and ensure little or no customer or employee churn. Five months since the NetCentrix and SystemHOST acquisition we are on track to achieve this.

Communication is vital in the early stages of an acquisition for both employees and customers. Elite has worked closely with Phil Scanlon, who was Managing Director, NetCentrix and SystemHOST and is now Commercial Director of IT Services at Elite, to ensure communication has been at the forefront of all activity. He has played a crucial role in helping disseminate the right information to employees and customers alike and gaining their feedback as the acquisition has progressed.



Alex Cliffe
Commercial Director, Elitetele.com

Ensuring our new employees feel comfortable talking to us is the first step to building relationships and trust. Importantly, NetCentrix and SystemHOST's employees report they feel secure and happy which means our employee on-boarding process which encourages friendly discussion and direct access to the senior team is working well. This has enabled us to move ahead with providing the new product suite to our customers earlier than planned.

We are already cross-selling our new IT product suite to our corporate and SME customers, and NetCentrix and SystemHOST customers are benefitting from our unified communications offering. We have also acquired a knowledgeable and highly skilled technical team who are able to support the new product set into our customer base.

We have rapidly overcome some challenges on the way, including some complex technical integration projects which

bring synergies and joined up working. We have overcome these by ensuring project teams are made up of employees from both businesses aiding each other in prioritising workloads and ensuring the teams have a platform for reporting back to the business if they need assistance or guidance.

Most importantly the similarities in our cultures have helped us create a smooth transition, for example in terms of team structure, HR policies, and social networking. In many respects, the businesses reminded us of Elite when we were of a similar size, and this has made integration much simpler. Looking ahead, managing growth will need planning and focus as departments further integrate and sales grow, but that is a good challenge to have.

For further information on Elite's acquisition programme please contact Alex Cliffe on 0844 8758880.

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