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channel growth  
strategy p12

Look who won  
this year's Channel  
Champions Awards! p30



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### Comms People

This month's  
movers and shakers



# IoT powerhouse swoops on Jola

JOLA'S strong year-on-year channel performance in the mobile data space is set to be supercharged following its acquisition by IoT giant Wireless Logic, a deal that also promises to pump up partner propositions.

#### SPECIAL REPORT

The acquisition, which saw BGF exit, enables Wireless Logic to leverage Jola's routes to market as its channel brand and according to Jola CEO Andrew Dickinson (pictured), who has no plans to move on, the deal significantly reinforces the value of mobile data.

"By being part of a large group our partners will be supported to win much bigger deals from the networks direct-

ly," stated Dickinson. "Also, only around 20% of resellers currently sell mobile data but by 2025 every UK reseller will need it in their portfolio. It's the only practical solution to replace millions of PSTN lines in the next few years."

He noted that Jola's 1,000-plus partners will see little change in the short-term but in time will gain access to product innovations across the group and see benefits from more extensive supplier relationships.

"Over time global solutions may be added to Jola's Mobile Manager portal to enhance our global multi-network proposition," added Dickinson.

Wireless Logic CEO Oliver Tucker commented: "Jola will strengthen and focus the group's routes to market in the UK and beyond, paving the way for further business growth."

Jola's revenues increased by 80% during the past 12 months and EBITDA doubled.

See page 16 for the full story

THE NETWORK FOR  
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2<sup>ND</sup>-4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

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## EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

THE reference I am about to make is wholly apolitical – a simple observation that may be worth a moment's reflection.

We regularly touch on leadership matters in this magazine. In fact most of the content provides insight

into many of the channel's leaders and their leadership strategies and approaches – all of whom without exception strike me as better prospects to lead the country than the current in-fighting options and their opposition figurehead, who seems to be struggling to come up with any credible new and exciting ideas worth an outing. At least the boxers in the ring have something to argue about.

Those TV debates where Tory leader wannabes went hammer and tong against each other carried the tinge of a low grade row, with potential PMs dragged down by a combination of circumstance and self-centred ambition. Could you imagine business leaders behaving this way in the board room? Staff would waste no time in fleeing the sinking ship.

In contrast, the channel's leaders are shining lights, beacons for what is possible in the UK, and magnets for an electorate that wants to exist within a people and customer-first framework. It is too often said that the comms industry is poor on service, but every single leader we have profiled in this magazine for as long as I can remember puts customers at the heart of their business, which can only ensure long-term success and loyalty. I'm of a mind to pop a few copies of Comms Dealer into Parliament, with a cover note reading 'All hail the channel's leaders! This is how you do it'.

**Stuart Gilroy, Editor**

- KNIGHT Corporate Finance co-founder and Director Adam Zoldan unravels the implications of new legislation linked to national security risks on certain M&A deals in the UK comms channel (p32).
- IT'S crunch time for cookies so marketers are advised to prepare for a wave of fresh thinking and changes in consumer behaviour (p34).

# Mills boosts compliancy



Alastair Mills

KERV'S FCA regulated compliance services have received a significant boost with the acquisition of the comms compliance business of TDS Global Holdings.

The practice saw 20% growth during the last financial year and has bigger expectations for the current period.

The deal adds approximately £10m, taking Kerv's revenues to over £60m and staff numbers to 500-plus.

Kerv provides compliance services to 50% of the top UK banks with 140,000 channels of compliance recording and more than three billion captured calls under management globally.

"As we approach our second anniversary, this acquisition is another milestone in the development of the group,"

commented Kerv Executive Chair Alastair Mills.

"With the compliance world relatively slow to migrate to the cloud, this is a transformation that is happening at pace and Kerv is well placed to capitalise on this market trend."

Brad Gorton (who was CEO of the acquired company), MD of the new Kerv Communications Compliance Practice, said: "This is an opportunity to build on our global cloud capabilities, to extend our digital services and to accelerate investment in automation, monitoring and proprietary technology."

Kerv plans to retain all staff in the practice and invest in building its global presence.

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## NEWS ROUNDUP

ORGANISATIONAL changes at Softcat will see Chief Exec' Graeme Watt move to the Non-Executive Chair of the Board role and current CFO Graham Charlton become CEO. The changes will come into effect in August next year when Chairman Martin Hellowell steps down. Watt, who joined Softcat in 2018, said: "This succession is well planned and thought through to make sure that the performance of the company will be continued into the future."

ERICSSON is poised to grow its mobile network business and expand into enterprise following the completion of its acquisition of Vonage. The deal adds CPaaS, UCaaS and CCaaS capabilities to Ericsson's kit bag.

WHOLESALE full fibre provider ITS Technology Group and network provider Virtual1 have combined their network reach, making it easier for channel partners to provide gigabit-capable connectivity services to businesses. Toni Whitney, Altnet Partnership Manager, Virtual1, said: "ITS currently operates in towns and cities across Britain that have high business premise concentration. This gives direct access to over 200,000 more businesses."

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NEWS ROUNDUP

TANGO Networks' channel partners can access business mobile services on the EE network following a link up with BT Wholesale. The Tango Extend MVNO service incorporates fixed-mobile convergence technologies and creates a business line by integrating any mobile device into a firm's UC platform. Andrew Bale, Tango Networks' Executive VP, said: "Tango Extend is a mobile network built for business and designed to be controlled by businesses."

FIBRE provider Glide Group has acquired 100% of the shares of Velocity1 from Quintain. Glide will also operate Quintain's fibre optic network throughout Wembley Park and provide broadband services to the 85 acre estate.

CONTACT centre business IPI has gone a step further in its Best Companies to Work for designation secured in 2021, this year securing a three-star rating, the highest accreditation. IPI launched a number of new initiatives including a company Wellness Day focusing on educating staff on mental and physical wellbeing. Learning and development are also high on the agenda with monthly workshops and 'skill pill' sessions.

## Node4 set to beef up MS ability

NODE4'S Microsoft cloud capabilities and public sector footprint have expanded following its acquisition of IT managed services business Risual.

Node4, backed by Providence Equity Partners, plans to create a Microsoft Centre of Excellence and the deal builds on Node4's acquisition of TNP in July 2021.

Risual employs 170 staff in the UK and has been a Microsoft Expert for 17 years, particularly on Azure.

Node4 CEO Andrew Gilbert commented: "With complementary Microsoft skill sets, Node4 and Risual are suited to deliver the change that matters for clients and the transformation outcomes they need."

Risual's co-founders, Alun Rogers and Rich Proud remain in place alongside their management team.



Andrew Gilbert

# Deal displays rise of MSPs



Prakash Panjwani

VECTOR Capital has acquired majority ownership of WatchGuard Technologies in a deal that underscores the high value placed on cybersecurity MSPs.

"WatchGuard is positioned to take advantage of two major market forces – the rise of the MSP as the dominant and fastest growing source of cybersecurity, and the maturation of platform-based security offerings that enable clients to embrace SASE and XDR functionality," said Vector Capital MD Sandy Gill.

The investment builds on an existing relationship between Vector Capital and WatchGuard and enables the security firm to build on capabilities across cloud transformation, secure access service edge (SASE), extended detection and response (XDR), managed detection and response (MDR) and innovation

in security automation and simplification for MSPs.

WatchGuard Technologies CEO Prakash Panjwani added: "Vector Capital is familiar with the company, employees, partners and our vision."

NEWS ROUNDUP

THALES' capabilities in the field of Customer Identity and Access Management (CIAM) have been boosted following the acquisition of OneWelcome in a 100m euro deal. The Netherlands located business has 100-plus employees and is witnessing over 30% year-on-year growth. Philippe Vallée, who is the Executive Vice-President, Digital Identity and Security at Thales, commented: "As we see a rapid increase in the amount of data, cloud migrations and new compliance mandates, it's essential to offer secure, adaptive and convenient solutions that help customers to classify, protect and control the access to their sensitive data."

## comms dealer

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

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

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

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

Business Development Manager: Heather Miles  
hmiles@bpl-business.com 07519 790 297

Production: Frank Voeten  
fvoeten@bpl-business.com

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# IT biz acquires and rebrands



Phil Smith, Ruth Hall and Mark Allen

MANCHESTER-based MSP Everything Tech has been acquired by Boost&Co backed Managed IT Services Group (MITSG). Its brand will become the group's moniker and its office the national headquarters.

The deal is MITSG's fourth since May 2021 and brings the group's headcount to 100, which is likely to rise in line with the firm's 'aggressive' expansion strategy.

Chief Financial Officer, Mark Allen, said: "The acquisition of Everything Tech provides another part of the jigsaw

that will enable us to bring our vision to reality. The brand is a genuine fit for our portfolio."

Everything Tech MD Ruth Hall added: "Over recent years we have been approached several times to sell the business, however those buyers were never aligned with our core ethos and culture.

"MITSG shares our values and believes in the brand we've built over the past 12 years."

MITSG is headed up by Allen, who was formerly GCI CFO, and COO Phil Smith, also from GCI.

## NEWS ROUNDUP

NORTH-east headquartered Razorblue has seen its biggest year of growth yet, notching up 2021-22 revenues of £12m, up 48% compared to last year's 32% growth. The MSP says it is on track to hit £20m by 2023 and now employs more than 150 people. CEO Dan Kitchen said: "We have also launched our own digital academy, working with local colleges to help create the IT networking, development and security skills we urgently need in our industry."

CONNEXIN'S fibre expansion across Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire has been significantly boosted with the acquisition of local ISP Pure Broadband, adding over 15,000 new customers and increasing its headcount to almost 150. The deal follows Connexin's acquisition of Wisper Broadband, also located in Hull. Connexin CEO Furqan Alamgi said: "The acquisitions of Wisper and Pure Broadband, along with the roll out of our own 10Gbps capable full fibre network, demonstrates our commitment to the region and investment into the local economy."

# Infinigate eyes cyber lead with Nuvias security deal

SECURITY VAD Infinigate has set out plans to build a pan-European cyber 'powerhouse' generating 1.4bn euros by 2023 following its acquisition of Nuvias Group's Cyber Security and Secure Networking business.

The deal, which does not include Nuvias UC, is expected to close in Q4 this year.

Nuvias Group was founded by Rigby Private Equity in 2015. The PE firm retains the UC business and becomes a shareholder in Infinigate Group.

Infinigate stated that it intends to continue to grow annually by more than 20%.



Klaus Schlichtherle

Its CEO, Klaus Schlichtherle, said: "We will have a stronger geographical footprint, especially in the core markets in Europe where we will have a strong position in 18 countries.

"Our complementary vendor portfolios will create an opportunity for growth."

Nuvias Group CEO Simon England added: "Combining our assets will take the business and teams into the next phase of growth and expansion."

The acquisition will beef up the presence of Infinigate Group particularly in the UK, France, Benelux and Nordics territories, as well as covering southern Europe and entering the market in eastern Europe.

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NEWS ROUNDUP

THE growth of business analytics is reflected in figures released by Tollring that show it monitors over 8.4 million cloud endpoints globally across its cloud business analytics portfolio, call recording and telecoms fraud protection services. The company has expanded its business with customer growth exceeding 50% across Europe and APAC within the past year. CEO Tony Martino stated: "Every business no matter how large or small is looking at data to drive their decisions. These insights not only allow stakeholders to understand their customer and employee experience, but also provides the evidence to continuously improve customer retention strategies."

TELCO professionals in the UK are the most optimistic about four day working weeks, with just 17% believing it is 'unrealistic', according to a survey by research from ClickUp. Natasha Wallace, International People Operations Partner, ClickUp, said: "Certain sectors and careers are better suited than others, but many of the reasons holding businesses back can be addressed with adjustments to how they work and which tools they use."

# DNA speeds up projects



Julie Mills

A NEW project management and acceleration service introduced by Support to Win will become the cornerstone of organic growth and scale up activity via M&A for comms providers, says CEO Julie Mills.

"The on-demand solution, called DNA (Discover, Normalise, Automate), is designed to speed up the completion of implementations, migrations and consolidations that require high engineering resources and extended timelines – and dictate the success of M&A investment cases," said Mills.

She noted that the solution is already proven in mid-to-large scale projects in the public sector and is suitable for any project above 100 seats, including cloud/hosted telephony, UCaaS and CCaaS projects.

Cavell Group Director Matt Townend observed: "Integration challenges with consolidations and migrations have always created commercial obstacles which is why the market needs to complete its shift to SaaS-based automated toolsets that can speed up projects."

"M&A activity in the comms industry is also reliant on large-scale consolidation projects going to plan."

Mills added: "We see pent-up demand for speed and accuracy in integration projects, regardless of technology."

She explained that DNA's automation capabilities hasten estate management and sell-side M&A due diligence; while new customer acquisition is eased by reducing and accelerating pre-sales implementation planning.

# IoT giant acquires Mobius

FAST expanding IoT connectivity platform provider Wireless Logic followed up its acquisition of Jola (see page 16) last month with the purchase of MVNO Mobius Networks for an undisclosed sum.

This latest deal gives Wireless Logic a stronger presence in the public sector.

Wireless Logic CEO Oliver Tucker commented: "The IoT and M2M operations market is growing rapidly and Mobius has developed a strategic position to capitalise on this growth."

Leicestershire-based Mobius began its commercial life in 2004 as a distributor of Vodafone's M2M Data SIMs for local government and smart cities. It went on to expand to other global operators and a broader set of sectors including critical national infrastructure, healthcare and retail.

Commenting on the deal Mobius Networks MD Douglas Gilmour stated: "Mobius's approach to data security in particular verticals fits with Wireless Logic and will generate new opportunities across the globe."

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# Virtual1 extends GTT link



Neil Wilson

VIRTUAL1 partners have access to a range of international connectivity options following an expansion of its partnership with GTT Communications.

The deal sees Virtual1 leverage GTT's global Tier 1 IP network in over 260 cities on six continents. Virtual1 will offer two versions of DIA – wires only or with managed CPE, along with primary and failover configuration on these services, which are provided with IP addresses and local in-country Internet breakout.

A range of port speed options will be available from 100Mbps to 100Gbps.

"The growth of SD-WAN, combined with the expansion of our end customers into international markets, has driven demand for centrally managed international connectivity," said Neil Wilson, Product Strategy Director, Virtual1. "Partnering with GTT will help us meet that demand."

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NEWS ROUNDUP

**BABBLE'S** buy and build campaign continues at pace with the acquisitions of Wakefield-based Yorkshire Telecom (including its subsidiary Biscuit IT) and Basildon located mobile services provider ADSI. Yorkshire Telecom MD Phill Burke and ADSI CEO Adrian Spreadborough remain in a consultancy capacity. The deals take Babble's transaction tally to 19 since 2018. Babble CEO Matt Parker stated: "Yorkshire Telecom's and Biscuit IT's specialism of comms and cyber and ADSI's mobile platform are areas we can add value." Babble now has a presence across Scotland, the north west, Yorkshire, north east, the midlands, the south and London.

**GAMMA** has forged a partnership with Watford-based IoT connectivity provider CSL, which has a base of 1.5 million live connections across Europe. The company is also enabling upgrades of PSTN and ISDN solutions to 4G. The deal means CSL can provide its customers with Gamma's solutions. An early release is CSL's router and SIMs with new unlimited data bundles, useful for installations that require high usage of 4G data and fixed IP.

# Giganet set for channel



Paul North

FERN Trading backed Giganet has entered the channel market for the first time with a business FTTP proposition targeted at SMEs over the CityFibre and Openreach networks.

The ISP plans to launch more business FTTP and Ethernet products for telecoms resellers, MSPs and ISPs in due course.

Giganet is itself a fast expanding full fibre network builder supported by a £250m investment from Fern Trading.

Giganet Head of Channel Paul North said: "We're not held back by legacy revenues, systems or technology. Giganet won't be offering any copper-based services, we're full

fibre all the way and leading with a partner programme that's focused on the rapidly expanding FTTP opportunity."

Giganet promises a range of product and service models alongside support for fibre focused sales and marketing campaigns. "We're here to disrupt the industry," added North.

Since its investment Giganet's headcount has increased from 23 to 170 and the firm has onboarded more than 30 partners across the business to support design, build, technology and support services.

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# Cloud biz snared by IT expert

TOTAL Computers has bolstered its IT solutions and services capabilities with the acquisition of cloud business OverBright, adding £5m-plus revenue. Total has witnessed 30% year-on-year growth driven in part by its managed services business, with group turnover reaching circa £91m.

Total MD Aidan Groom said: "It's more apparent than ever before that our customers want IT partners that can work with them at a high level, informing their IT strategy, aligning it with business goals and providing them with the technical expertise to design, implement and manage it. The OverBright acquisition means that we can do all that."

The deal includes equity and a long-term role in Total's leadership team for OverBright owner Kevin Goodall.



Aidan Groom

NEWS ROUNDUP



TALKTALK CEO Tristia Harrison (pictured above) has been awarded an honorary degree from the University of Salford in recognition of her contribution to enhancing digital skills in the community and for spearheading initiatives that encourage women to work in the technology sector. Harrison said: "Our work with Salford University has created invaluable relationships between TalkTalk and students, academics and key stakeholders in Salford, to create a neighbourhood of talent and opportunity."

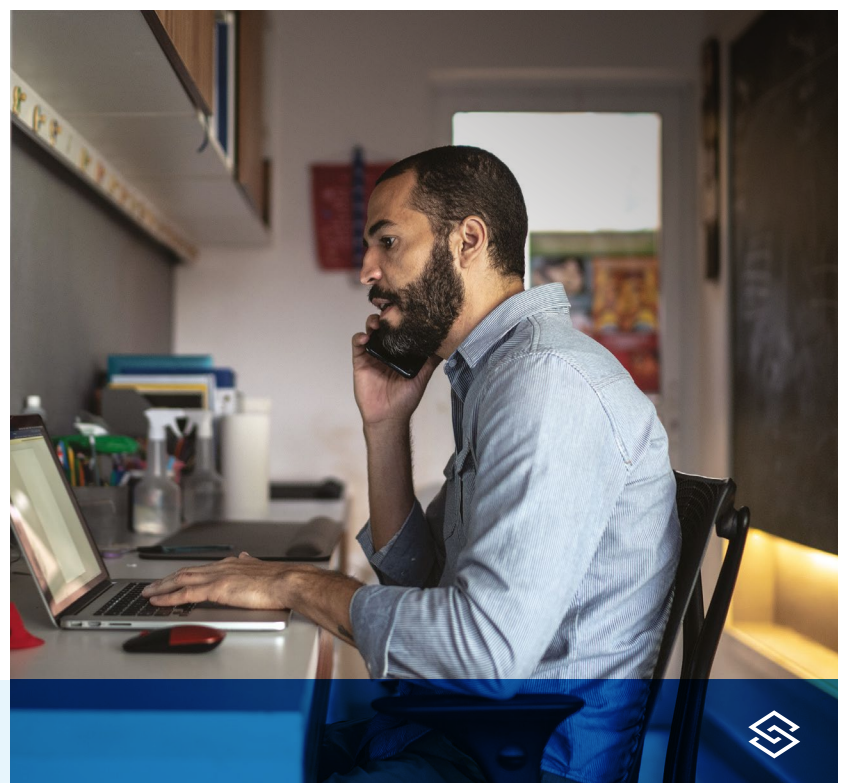
BOXXE claims to have scooped one of this year's largest public sector Microsoft contracts, a £291m three-year deal to manage the MoD's Microsoft Enterprise Licensing agreement.



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## Is working together the best way forward for the reseller channel? KCOM's Mike Higginson thinks so

I find myself in the unusual position of writing this piece knowing that by the time that you, the loyal subscribers of Comms Dealer magazine read this, I will have stepped away from my role in KCOM Wholesale to confront the mighty challenge of the golf course (and wife's job list) for the rest of the Summer.

course, is endemic in the telecoms industry as well, especially at the Carrier level.

How does this benefit the channel? Co-opetition is a key facilitator, enabling rival businesses to grow and flourish. Researchers emphasise a number of benefits arising from co-opetition, for example, stimulation



Mike Higginson  
KCOM Head of Wholesale Sales and Marketing

The parting is entirely amicable – and it has been an amazing experience. A company steeped in a century of tradition, boldly re-inventing itself as a serious player in the fibre Alt-Net world, wrestling (in a positive way) with the dynamics of having both regulated and unregulated network areas, selling into both residential and business marketplaces as both a retailer and wholesaler!

of innovation, development of technology, market diversification and the creation of new products.

All of these, of course, encourage and drive competition, which is the fusion fuel of the market as a whole. It creates healthy interaction at a wholesale level (remember 'symbiosis' from your GCSE biology days?) and provides the platform for the channel to flourish.

Managing this in a principled and totally compliant way as a proactive wholesaler got me thinking about what it means to be a serious provider of fibre broadband and leased line services to the UK reseller channel, in what are increasingly challenging times.

So (and going back to point about 'what it means'), there is tremendous responsibility on those of us that wholesale and serve the reseller channel - regulation, compliance, protecting our customers information, offering quality products and services, encouraging competition, and never cutting corners. After all 'doing things properly' in these uncertain times is truly something to hold onto.

It actually all boils down to two forces, both interrelated and both essential to a healthy market: Firstly, Competition (of course!), and then Co-opetition.

And so, with the golf course beckoning, I'll leave all of you who will be logging back in on Monday for another week of delivering your services to customers up and down the country and wish you 'Good Selling'!

Co-opetition was first defined (apparently!) by Ray Noorda, the former CEO of Novell inc. in 1992 to describe a common phenomenon in the computer industry: cooperation between competitors, which, of

# Think Net Zero

## Zen CEO Paul Stobart urges channel companies to work hand in hand on achieving Net Zero.



Paul Stobart

Being people and environment-first has become Zen's hallmark. So it's no surprise that the company has been making annual environmental commitments since 2008 when it first achieved ISO14001 certification. Its current focus is to align to the Net Zero standard as set out by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Prior to the SBTi launching its standard in October last year there was no 'guidebook'. So every business had a slightly different interpretation of what Net Zero meant, leading to inconsistency and confusion. "The more that businesses conform to this global standard, the more we will all be able to act in concert to reduce carbon emissions," stated Stobart.

"However, we can't reduce our Scope 3 emissions, those that relate to the entirety of our supply chain, unless the rest of our supply chain does the same. This means we need to work collaboratively, openly and transparently."

**Collective responsibility**  
Zen's Environmental Steering Group, which Stobart co-Chairs, co-ordinates all environmental initiatives including the Net Zero strategy. "Its successful delivery is a collective responsibility," added Stobart. "It is only when environmental thinking becomes part of an organisation's culture that success can be assured."

"This will help identify areas for improvement and a plan for future action. Normally, the biggest area for progress is power consumption, so address questions such as the following: How can we reduce our power consumption in our facilities? Can we afford to buy green energy? How do we encourage our people to co-own responsibility for reducing power consumption? Are there capital investments we can afford that will enable us to deliver the same output but consume less power?"

For those businesses yet to get going on Net Zero initiatives Stobart says that establishing current levels of carbon emissions, those incurred by the business and the supply chain upstream and downstream, is a good place to start. "Take a step back and evaluate your current emissions," he said.

"Once you have established your current carbon footprint you have a benchmark from which to measure progress. The next major challenge is to achieve cross-industry collaboration. We all need to work together if we are to achieve emission reductions across the entirety of our supply chains."

As part of its alignment with the SBTi standard Zen has proposed short-term and long-term science-based commitments. Once these are approved the company will make them public to ensure transparency and accountability. Zen is therefore keen to drive further Net Zero action with suppliers and partners and is wedded to the belief that success can only be achieved through proactive cross-industry collaboration.

"We can reduce our Scope 1 and 2 emissions and have measures in place to do this," explained Stobart.



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# How We Helped Comms Dealer Stay Connected

Comms Dealer are the leading comms and convergence channel publication in the UK.

With 25 years serving the channel, Comms Dealer keeps its readers up to date on the latest news and developments, as well as thought provoking opinion pieces on new technologies and opportunities in the comms sector.

## Overview

After a sustained period of growth and development, Comms Dealer had outgrown their old offices and were moving to a new space in the heart of Uxbridge town centre.

Having found the fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) connectivity at the old premises a little too slow at times, the business was looking forward to enjoying full fibre (FF) into the new office.

Part of Comms Dealer's growth over the last five years has been as a result of an increased focus on digital content creation, and as such, having a super-fast, high-quality connection had become essential.

Sadly, far from the high-speed connectivity utopia they had hoped for, the new office proved to have a broadband connection far inferior to their old one.

With the prospect of poor connectivity compromising their future growth, Comms Dealer contacted the Cloudcell Technologies team for help.

## The challenge

With their new office located in a town centre that had recently seen redevelopment, the assumption had been that a full fibre solution would be available, but this was not the case.

Following tests, the speeds experienced in the new office were found to be much slower than those Comms Dealer were working with in their current premises, which they were soon slated to leave.

The new office building was also listed, meaning that many areas were under conservation, limiting what work could be undertaken.

With the moving date nearing, a solution that would not only meet Comms Dealer's requirement for increased bandwidth and speed, but could also be installed with limited impact on the building, was needed.

## The solution

With time ticking down, Cloudcell visited the new office and ran a series of extensive tests to determine the best solution.

This meant testing connections across all available network carriers to see what speeds could be achieved, as well as a site survey to determine the best place for the antennae. Finding speeds above what had been expected, it was established that the best solution would be a 4G connection.

**“ 4G installation was swift and easy for us and we moved into the new office with no loss of connection to the outside world from day one. Cloudcell were on hand to work at user level to ensure all devices were connected. ”**

- Mike O'Brien  
Comms Dealer Managing Director

A few weeks following the initial set up, Cloudcell were even able to offer Comms Dealer a 5G solution which would provide even greater speeds and lower latency that would help with future growth in their bandwidth usage.

## Why this solution?

For Cloudcell Technologies, the client's requirements are at the heart of what they do.

After initial testing, although 5G was available in the area, a 4G solution was found to provide the most reliable connection and the speeds needed for Comms Dealer's increased production of online content.

After some improvements in the technology available, Cloudcell returned to Comms Dealer and offered a 5G solution that would offer greater speeds and reliability, as well as lower latency.

As Comms Dealer's bandwidth usage was only going to increase as they continue to grow and develop their digital creation output, the new 5G solution was going to provide a better service.



If you'd like to learn more about how we can help your customers with their connectivity, or you'd like to become a Cloudcell Reseller, contact us today on **03330 049 444**, email [hello@cloudcelltechnologies.co.uk](mailto:hello@cloudcelltechnologies.co.uk)

# Lewis on GoTo's channel g

**A greater emphasis on collaboration and remote working has positioned GoTo to lead the way for solutions that deliver on the wider business strategy and appeal to channel partners serving small and medium-sized enterprises, according to GoTo General Manager for EMEA Sion Lewis.**

**L**ewis defines himself as a working class lad who 'broke into' business leadership, proving that it's what you do and how you do it that counts most in life - a tenet he also applies to GoTo's *modus operandi*. "I hit some roadblocks at the beginning but execution and commitment ultimately spoke louder than my education or background," he stated.

That said, Lewis' entrance into the IT sector was less a well practiced and determined plan than accident. "I went to university to study philosophy and my best friend told me it wouldn't make me any money," added Lewis. "I then decided to change paths and study business at the University of Hull where the only available business course was in Business Information Systems. At the time I didn't know what IT or Information Systems were but it was a means for me to study business."

The course included a year working in industry and for Lewis this meant a job working for Grand Metropolitan as an analyst. "I quickly learned that I was no good as an analyst but I was good at talking with people, so my first employer moved me into a solution consulting role. Ultimately, I ended up carrying a quota and the rest is history."

Lewis' journey towards self-discovery and self-determination echoes GoTo's brand name which came to life in February this year – the launch also represented a crystallisation of purpose and direction. The business was previously known as LogMeln and was established in 2003 in Hungary. The founders set out to develop software that allowed them to log in to a computer across the city from a desktop at home, avoiding an otherwise unnecessary commute. "Through innovation and acquisitions over the years we've expanded to



Sion Lewis

## **We have big ambitions to grow the percentage of revenue secured through our channel, particularly in Europe**

do much more, offering businesses small or large the ability to fully collaborate and support their teams seamlessly from anywhere," explained Lewis. "We aim to be the go-to solution."

### **Strategic launch**

The rebrand was accompanied by the launch of a simplified product portfolio with a single application and two flagship products – an IT management and support product called GoTo Resolve, and GoTo Connect joined the UCaaS product portfolio. The company actually acquired its first iteration of the GoTo family of products from Citrix

in 2017. The move diversified its portfolio with the addition of the GoTo communications product suite and products such as GoTo Meeting, GoTo Training and GoTo Webinar. The combination of these products and (the then) LogMeln's cloud-based connectivity proposition catalysed the billion dollar business we see today.

"Our rebrand tied it all together by simplifying our product suite. It also gave us the chance to consolidate these products into one unified application and admin system, which was a critical need for our customers," stated Lewis.

Like many other organisations, another major milestone for GoTo was the Covid-19 pandemic and the decision to be remote-first, with no obligation for employees to ever return to any of its offices around the world. "Working from anywhere is in our DNA," commented Lewis. "During this time small to mid-sized businesses were suddenly desperate for tools that would allow them to operate from anywhere. The world changed in March 2020 and will never be the same again. We aren't going back to five days a week, 9-5 in the office. There is a new baseline and

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# growth strategy

expectation that employees should have the option to work from anywhere."

GoTo itself has over 3,000 employees globally, nearly 800,000 customers, more than one billion people joining meetings, classes and webinars through its UCC products, and half a billion connections on the company's remote access and support tools. And, as mentioned, more than \$1 billion annual revenue.

So rebranding a business of this scale was no small decision and reflects a strong belief in the proposition. In another sign of strength, soon after the rebrand, GoTo rolled out its new GoTo Partner Network which enhanced the existing programme to include a greater global focus and more ways for the expanding ecosystem of partners to bring in more customers and increase revenue.

## Channel ambitions

The company also instated UCaaS channel veteran Michael Day as channel chief. "We have big ambitions to grow the percentage of revenue secured through our channel, particularly in Europe," commented Lewis. "Small to mid-sized businesses prefer working with trusted partners and we want to be the go-to recommendation for all SMB remote working needs."

According to Lewis, the key to a great company is always listening and evolving. That includes paying close attention to the economic environment. "We are entering a time of economic downturn and need to look at how we can help businesses be

most efficient with their resources," added Lewis.

A study by GoTo found that 95 per cent of businesses plan to consolidate their tools this year after signing up for everything they thought they needed during the work from home scramble. No surprise then that GoTo is most focused on strengthening its unified capabilities between communications and IT management and support products. This includes the acquisition last month of Miradore, a Mobile Device Management cloud solution built specifically for SMBs, allowing IT teams to manage end users across iOS, Android, Windows and MacOS. "We identified a need and decided the quickest route to solving the end point management gap was to acquire a solution that is already developed and tested," said Lewis.

Keeping an eye out for external opportunities such as acquisitions is a key aspect of GoTo's expansion strategy, but Lewis says the biggest opportunity resides within the firm's existing target audience – small to mid-sized businesses. "Many of our competitors compete to serve the best known, biggest ticket enterprises," he explained. "This leaves growing businesses with few options, either a product that is too complicated and expensive for their needs or far too simple. Small and medium-sized enterprises make up 99 per cent of all businesses in the EU and account for more than half of Europe's GDP (according to the European Commission). SMBs power the global economy, yet are incredibly under-served. We cater to this need." ■

## Just a minute with Sion Lewis...

**Role model:** My father: He always put his family first while managing his career and making us laugh. I try to balance my life in the same way.

**What talent do you wish you had?** Not learning other languages is my biggest regret.

**Your biggest fear?** Aside from a decline in the health of my family, my biggest fear is failure. I can't even accommodate it. This fear helps keep me motivated.

**Your main strength and what could you work on?**

My strengths are creating a dynamic environment where the individuals are pulling together for the team. My weakness is impatience, which I work on every day.

**Three ideal dinner guests:** Ricky Gervais to make me laugh, Jurgen Klopp to tell me about what really happens with the Liverpool team behind closed doors, and award winning sommelier Vincent Gasnier to bring us excellent wine.

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know:** It is my only claim to fame: I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with 25 of my former colleagues and it was a life changing experience.

**How would you like to be remembered?** As making people laugh. It is important to bring laughter into every part of your life, including business and at home. My wife, boys and I are in hysterics most nights.

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

Teaching, which is what I'll be doing when I finish in IT.

**How do you relax?** Playing golf and watching sport, especially Liverpool FC.

**Top tip for resellers:** Customers should be at the heart of everything you do.

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# PIA and 5G Densification

**M**obile network operators (MNOs) are currently upgrading cell site technology, antennas, and backhaul transmission links on their macro sites. This is adequate to meet the demand 5G users are currently driving, but it's not enough to enable 5G to reach its full potential, for this, "densification" is required. Irrespective of the "G", mobile operators focus first on macro layer "coverage" and then on "capacity", the latter only possible by the deployment of thousands of small cells, a process now referred to as densification but previously referred to as infill.

The 5G spectrum acquired by the UK MNOs to be used by small cells is in the 3.4Ghz and 3.6Ghz bands. These are much higher frequencies than those used for 3G and 4G infill, this is good and bad, it's good because higher frequencies support the ultra-fast speeds and ultra-low latencies that characterise 5G, but it's bad, because they don't propagate far, or pass through buildings well. This means that for 5G to fulfil its true potential, it's got to be relatively easy and cheap for MNOs to deploy the thousands of new small cells required to get closer to users and connected "things" such as Autonomous Vehicles.

To make it easier for site providers and MNOs and to densify, the government has reformed planning laws in England which helps with deployment, but it doesn't really deal with the connectivity requirements of the new sites.

To minimise cost and disruption, it's now accepted practice for "small cells" to be deployed on existing structures such as lighting columns, CCTV poles and signage. Whilst these donor sites may already have mains power, they certainly don't have the data connections required for 5G.

It was always envisaged that synergies with the deployment of "fixed" full fibre networks would be



Irrespective of the "G", mobile operators focus first on macro layer "coverage" and then on "capacity", the latter only possible by the deployment of thousands of small cells, a process now referred to as densification but previously referred to as infill.

Alex Williamson –  
Head of Business Development at NGA

exploited for mobile, but that doesn't appear to be the case. In the race to connect homes and businesses, Alt-Net ISPs have not built enough fibre nodes to subsequently make connecting "street furniture" simple and cheap. This means there could still be a significant barrier to densification, however, wholesale fibre infrastructure providers like Nextgenaccess are utilising their PIA licences to build within Openreach's ducts and chambers to address this converged fixed and mobile requirement.

The Openreach duct and joint box infrastructure is extensive, and never far from donor street furniture. Nextgenaccess has developed a minimally disruptive method of tracking from it to each structure and Nextgenaccess also provides point to point uncontended dark fibre connections back from each small cell to its control node, typically co-located with datacentres or BT Exchanges.

Only by leveraging the full fibre infrastructure deployed to connect homes and businesses, is it possible to provide the technically and commercially viable connections required to enable densification.

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# New Ofcom contract rule

On June 17th this year a new set of Ofcom rules came into effect requiring customers of telecoms services, including broadband, mobile and landline services, to be provided with 'short and simple' contract details as well as a summary of their contract before signing up to a new deal.



Marcus Andreen

(ofcom.org.uk), makes it clear that if you are looking to implement a price increase it is not enough, for example, to have told the customer that there will be a Consumer Price Index related increase every 12 months.

The contract information must provide an example of how the current rate of inflation would affect the price at the time when the price increase takes place. If a communications provider fails to provide that level of detail in the contract information the price increase will not be enforceable against the customer.

These new rules will affect every single communications provider in the UK and their importance cannot be overstated. To help resellers understand and act on the new rulings UCaaS specialist Voiceflex staged a webinar last month during which the company's lawyer Marcus Andreen answered the following questions posed by Chief Commercial Officer Paul Taylor, and also from delegates among the 150-plus channel business representatives that attended the educational session. Here's a summary of the Q&A session...

## What changes came into effect on June 17th?

Firstly, there are some new requirements to provide customers with both a contract information document and, separately, a contract summary. The other major change relates to contract modification. This is where the service provider is looking to make a change to its contract with the customer.

## Who do the changes apply to?

These new conditions apply to all providers of communication services. There are some minor exceptions but fundamentally any business providing communications services in the UK. From a customer perspective, in broad terms the contract information and contract summary requirements apply to all business customers with 10 or fewer personnel. The contract modification changes apply to all customers.

## What if you are a dealer or agent for a service provider?

These rules will not apply to you, because legally you are not the provider of the communication services.

## What are the new contract information document requirements?

The first of the documents that the service provider needs to provide is the pre-contractual information, such as a description of

the services, price and price increases, duration of the commitment and termination/renewal terms. The template for the contract information document can be found at the Annex to Condition C1 of the Ofcom General Conditions of Entitlement (pp 31–36).

pages it should comprise. It is possible for a prospective customer to provide their consent to waive their right to receive a contract summary, but it's unlikely that many customers would do so. In practice, this is additional documentation that communications

## These new conditions apply to all providers of communication services

The document needs to be provided in a durable medium, in a clear and comprehensible manner. So, we're talking plain English and something that the prospective customer can cut out and keep. Ofcom will accept a download, but the link must make it clear that customers should keep a copy.

## What should a contract summary look like?

The contract summary requirements are very prescriptive, including the font size and the number of

providers will need to include in their pre-sales process. Be aware that if you don't provide the contract summary, then that is likely to make the final contract unenforceable against the customer. The template for the contract summary can be found here: [www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2019/2243/annex](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2019/2243/annex)

## Are there other elements to consider, such as price increases?

Yes. Ofcom's guidance in Annex 11: Revised guidance on GC C1 contract requirements June 2022

## What changes do partners have to make to their terms and conditions due to the new contract information and contract summary requirements?

None, because these are all pre-contract requirements. Service providers need to update their pre-sales process and documentation before they enter into a contract, but the terms of the contract itself will not need to be amended.

## Can you outline the Ofcom changes to contract modification?

This is where a provider is looking to make changes to the terms of their contract with a customer. The new rules are quite detailed, but in summary, a provider needs to give the customer at least one month's notice of any change to the contract terms, and unless the change is exclusively to the benefit of the customer and solely of an administrative nature, the customer has an automatic right to terminate that contract within that one-month period. Not only does the one-month notification



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# s explained

to the customer of the change need to be clear and comprehensive and presented in a durable medium, it must also clearly confirm the customer's right to terminate during the one-month period.

## Can an auto-renewal still take place on organisation with more than 10 employees?

For large customers, yes. For customers with up to 10 personnel, the service provider must obtain the customer's Express Consent prior to each renewal. Express Consent is defined by Ofcom as consent obtained 'in a manner which has enabled the Customer to make an informed choice'.

## If a customer is on a 36-month contract because they have 15 employees, would the contract have to reduce to 24 months if they went down to eight employees?

The commitment period in the existing contract would not need to reduce to 24 months, but the 24-month limit would apply to any future contracts with that customer.

## What happens if you have a 30-day rolling contract? Surely you don't need to keep providing the information every 30 days?

Although the General Conditions are not clear on this point, in its Guidance Ofcom refers to a contract with a 30-day termination notice period as not having a commitment period. My view therefore is that Ofcom would regard a 30-day termination notice period as falling outside the commitment period rules.

## Most people in the comms industry sign customers

## on a 36-month contract, so it is detrimental if resellers have to purchase the equipment with the customer paying over 24 months to own it. Can resellers include a waiver in their contracts for companies with less than 10 employees, so they agree to not be bound by a 24-month maximum term?

The short answer is yes. The 24-month commitment period limit applies to all small business customers, unless a customer has 'expressly agreed otherwise'. Ofcom does not specify what the customer's express agreement should look like in this context, but to reduce the risk of challenge service providers may, for example, want to include separate language in the customer signature box with a tick box. Also, note that the 24-month limit does not apply to Instalment Contracts for Physical Connections or Machine-to-Machine Transmission Services (as defined in the General Conditions).

### COMMENT:

Paul Taylor, Chief Commercial Officer, Voiceflex:



Paul Taylor

the company starts with 15 employees and reduces to 9 during the term. You must send a pre-contract to advise potential customers. If your supplier only supplies a 36-term agreement, you will need a break clause or change providers. Secondly, selling hardware is going to be more expensive as the maximum term will be 24 months and most suppliers offer 12 or 36. When competing for business, providers should make sure the customer is aware of the Ofcom regulations before, or it will cause problems, and could make you look uncompetitive.

## In summary, what should comms providers do now to make sure they comply with these new Ofcom rulings?

They need to get their heads around section C1 of Ofcom's General Conditions, including contract modifications, commitment periods, auto renewal and other changes that have been brought in since last December, and ensure their customer Ts&Cs are compliant. I imagine for many businesses that will be an arduous and dull task, but it's very much doable. Other businesses may have more complex sales models, product mixes etc, in which case they may need to take advice.

It must be stated that while the Voiceflex webinar and this article highlight some of the key changes made to the Ofcom General Conditions, the changes are extensive and complex and the information provided is not intended to be exhaustive, nor does it constitute legal advice.

Marcus Andreen can be contacted at [marcus@marcusandreen.com](mailto:marcus@marcusandreen.com)

## Energy deals keep River flowing well

Full based River UK started off its commercial life as a telecoms reseller but has evolved into a full business services organisation offering a wide range of telecoms products, security, next generation print solutions and, significantly, energy which it added to its portfolio five years ago. We caught up with Managing Director Ash Hunter to find out how the group's energy offerings have progressed under the River Energy brand alongside long-term partner Fidelity Energy.



Ash Hunter

### What sold you on becoming a Fidelity Energy partner?

We had a good relationship Fidelity Energy managing director John Haw from his previous life in telecoms and he put forward a very compelling reason to explore the opportunities in energy.

### How did you find Fidelity Energy's onboarding process and management systems?

On boarding was simple, guided initially by John and Sales Director Sean Dixon. We quickly felt comfortable and confident selling the products. The portal provides a great tool to draw marketing content from and quoting was easy. It enabled us to hit the ground running very quickly and I think we did our first deal within days of onboarding.

### What extra support have you received such as extra training, support on deals, marketing help etc.

We've enjoyed several roadshows which keep the topical and relevant aspects of the industry at the forefront of our minds and our pitch. Fidelity's bi-monthly market report is full of factual content which we can use to manage and maintain existing clients. We also use it as a sales tool as it gives us great credibility in the market.

### How has your business been impacted by the pandemic and how has energy played a role?

Out of chaos comes opportunity and when the market was at its lowest in May 2020, we secured some of our biggest energy deals to date. Fidelity didn't stop providing support and intelligence and it allowed us to secure some fantastic deals for clients which they are now very grateful for!

### Can you give us an example of how an energy deal has led to more client business?

We recently installed a new telephone system for a client which led to not only the energy brokering contract, but a full LED light deployment and CCTV system. Our simple aim is for our clients to buy energy and telecoms from us allowing us to add real value to our service proposition and build long lasting relationships.

### How has your energy offering progressed since you first partnered and how do you see it progressing in the future?

Our offering has progressed beyond recognition. We now have a fully-fledged dedicated energy company which is now a critical revenue stream for us across the group. We have seen customer numbers swell, churn reduce, and opportunities aplenty. For example, we have extended our energy offering to include not just brokering but also a broad range of renewables products such as LED's, solar, battery storage and CHP solutions.

### Is there anything else you like to wish to mention?

Yes. Fidelity Energy are really partner focused. Having already enjoyed a long-term relationship with some of their directors, it's been great to meet the entire team and become part of Fidelity's own journey. We've enjoyed some great social events too, which is a real bonus.

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# Jola eyes bigger deals

**Jola's acquisition by Wireless Logic follows an impressive performance, with revenues surging by 80 per cent during the past 12 months and a doubling of EBITDA. Here, Jola CEO Andrew Dickinson shares insights into how the transaction supercharges his formula for growth in the ever expanding mobile data marketplace.**



Andrew Dickinson

**T**he acquisition, which saw BGF exit, enables Wireless Logic to leverage Jola's routes to market as its channel brand. The deal also met the requirements of the Jola leadership team. "It was important that Jola remained an independently run company focusing on the UK channel," stated Dickinson. "I have no plans to move on, nor has our strategy changed. The entire Jola team is incentivised and committed to driving growth. We're planning to build our partner base and help key partners win lucrative mobile data deals. Every reseller or MSP has at least one significant IoT/M2M opportunity in their existing base of customers, and mobile data aggregators like Jola are helping to find and win them."

Jola's 1,000-plus partners will see little change in the short-term but over time they will gain access to product innovations across the group and see benefits

from more extensive supplier relationships. Wireless Logic also has a broader pure IoT proposition including a wider range of devices and device management capabilities.

"Our partners will be supported to win much larger deals from the networks directly," added Dickinson.

Jola was founded in 2014 with an experienced team and a tried and tested strategy that proved successful at Griffin, which built a channel of over 700 resellers, generated annual revenues of more than £20 million and had a team of over 130 employees. "After Griffin was sold in 2012 it seemed inevitable that we would work together again," said Dickinson.

Jola started out as a channel supplier specialising in Internet connectivity and hosted telephony. But when the networks allowed it to sell 4G products the team realised that the biggest opportunity for the channel

## Our partners will be supported to win larger deals from the networks directly

was in mobile data, so it developed Mobile Manager. "We built our own global eSIM MVNO providing IoT and mobile data solutions to MSPs, ISPs, IT support companies and telecoms resellers," stated Dickinson.

### High value

He noted that the financial markets value mobile data EBITDA at a higher multiple than fibre and broadband, and he says the acquisition should be seen as reinforcing the value of mobile data. "With 4G+ download speeds of around 300Mb/s available to 90-plus per cent of the population, mobile data is a credible alternative to fixed line as well as having a great 100 per cent SLA and back-up story," he said. "It's also the only practical solution to replace millions of PSTN lines in the next few years.

Only around 20 per cent of resellers sell mobile data but by 2025 every reseller in the UK will need it in their portfolio. As is always the case with disruptive technological change, early movers win more market share and ring-fence their customers from competitors."

According to Dickinson, mobile data is a critical part of the PSTN/ISDN replacement portfolio and he says resellers cannot 100 per cent address the needs of their customers without a channel-only mobile data aggregator. "Being part of the Wireless Logic Group strengthens our hand in this respect," he emphasised.

Partners bidding to win mobile data opportunities for M2M and IoT solutions such as 4G SIMs in tablets in

the public sector or Multinet SIMs in smart water meters are being asked specific questions about their portal, observed Dickinson. "End users want to know how real-time the data is and the extent of automation in the portal," he said. "They do not want multiple supplier portals to deal with. They want the ability to order a range of technologies from multiple network operators in a single portal. They want direct access to activate SIMs, add bolt-ons and share data across accounts. They need access for their end users to be able to monitor usage in real-time. Suppliers that can offer real-time, automated portals are better placed to win the deals."

Demand for M2M and IoT is on the up and end users need more than the MNOs can offer them directly, reiterated Dickinson, which translates into a significant opportunity for companies like Jola to innovate with solutions managed in a real-time portal, and designed to meet the specific needs of M2M and IoT solutions in multiple vertical markets globally. "Via the Wireless Logic Group we will have access to relationships and new solutions that will enable channel partners in these areas," added Dickinson.

"With more than eight million IoT subscriptions active in 165 countries and direct partnerships with 48 mobile networks, Wireless Logic provides reach into more than 750 networks across the globe and delivers value throughout the IoT connectivity chain. Over time global solutions may be added to Mobile Manager to enhance our global multinet proposition." ■

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# On course for leadership

Having spent over 30 years in the telecoms industry and now running a highly successful £200 million-plus turnover company, you could say there isn't much Dave McGinn doesn't know about business. Yet despite his experience, the Daisy Communications CEO is still on a mission to be the best he can be for his people by pushing personal and educational boundaries.

**W**e meet McGinn in a Liverpool Street bistro in London, not far from the inner London suburb where he was born and raised, en route to the latest educational trip he hopes will lead to the MBA he aims to achieve later this year. The reason for embarking on his latest challenge is simple, as he explains: "I left school with ambition but few qualifications, but I have been smart enough to succeed. I believe I can be smarter."

McGinn was a carpenter and joiner by trade but never embarked on the artisan career he trained for and now doesn't even pick up a saw or set square at home to take on some DIY. "It goes back to a realisation I had about the value of time

management and reward," he added. "I believe that in giving other people the opportunity to do a job it means I'll get less stressed, and I can probably contribute more doing my job while they do theirs. That's what keeps the world going round."

McGinn's entrepreneurial career started back in 1999 when he joined Anglia Telecom Centres as Sales Director, a business that was sold multiple times before the company finished up in the hands of Matt Riley's Daisy Group, and McGinn was present throughout this period. "I was the only Director who went through five iterations of the same business but was always cognisant of our aims and goals, the need to change in line with new owners, and most of all our people," he



Dave McGinn

**I was the only Director who went through five iterations of the same business but was always cognisant of our aims and goals, the need to change and importantly our people**

commented. "I am adaptable to change, and one thing I am incredible proud of is how long those people stayed and continued to meet our aims. For that I will be eternally thankful."

**Fresh challenge**

The purchase and integration of Fone Logistics 12 years ago, quickly followed by

MoCo Distribution, saw Daisy Distribution evolve and grow rapidly, but another change was coming for McGinn.

"We had created something special at that time, but six years ago Matt asked me to come up north and run Daisy Communications, his direct business," he said. "I was reticent because distribution was going well

and I was enjoying our channel relationships. It was a challenge but I took it on because I can help bring great people together, form a cohesive unit, get rid of noise and demystify things. That's what we did."

Since then McGinn has overseen some ambitious acquisitions in the last



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# excellence

12 months, having acquired Premier Choice, Communicate Better and latterly XLN Group. With a £200m-plus turnover and nearly 900 employees, Daisy Communications is now Britain's second biggest SME comms provider. So how does McGinn manage the integration of businesses with invariably different visions, objectives and cultures? "First of all, very carefully,"

## No merger is the same, and just because something was done one way doesn't mean it can't be done differently

he added. "No merger is the same, and just because something was done one way doesn't mean it can't be done differently."

McGinn is clearly an ICT industry player at the top of his game, but he wants more. "I truly believe I've got the best job because of the people around me. I've got supportive investors, I've got supportive teams throughout the organisation and because of them we're doing amazing things," he said.

And this, he says, is why he took on the MBA challenge. "I need to be the best person I can be for the people in my business," explained McGinn. "That's the reason I put in for the MBA, which is a tough challenge when you're not used to studying. Of course,

### Just a minute with Dave McGinn...

**Role model:** The Queen. I admire her work effort, which is amazing.

**Your biggest fear?** Failing the MBA.

**Your main strength?** Uniting teams to build something greater.

**Three ideal dinner guests:** Nelson Mandela, he inspired the world; Rosa Parks, for sitting down for what she believed in; and Mahatma Gandhi for standing up for what he believed.

**In hindsight:** I should have done the MBA earlier in my career.

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know:** I once completely stripped a car engine apart, put it back together using a Haynes manual – and it still worked.

**How do you relax when not working?** Spending time with the family.

**How would you like to be remembered?** As being an all-round, nice person.

**Lessons learnt:** It is better to get one per cent of a hundred people than 100 per cent of yourself.

**Best advice you have been given?** Attitudes are contagious. Is yours worth catching?

**What possession could you not live without?** Mobile phone.

**Top tip for resellers:** Our industry is continually evolving, therefore resellers need to ensure they have an environment that enables them to embrace change.

there's stuff you already know but there's a lot you don't. It's about understanding different ways of seeing things and bringing them to life. I'm hoping that I'm a better person now than I was when I began the course." ■



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# Pillow talks up big chann

**Voip Unlimited Managing Director Mark Pillow – a former avionics engineer – discusses spreading his wings in comms, putting value back into propositions, connectivity successes and shortfalls – and he gives the megaphone to his declared intention to become the one-stop-shop for the channel.**

**P**illow's background is in military and civil avionics. And after flying around the world fixing aircraft he decided to move into flight simulators. He headed up a project to ensure all IT and avionics systems were Y2K bug-proof then got more involved with airline IT systems. The airline group he worked for also owned a F1 team, so Pillow got involved with F1 trackside and factory IT logistics too.

"I went off on my own to support various airline projects post 9/11," explained Pillow. "The airlines were some of the first to embrace VoIP – and spotting a gap in the market I set up Voip Unlimited in 2006 so that non-aviation businesses could capitalise on what was, at the time, a niche technology. Looking back, I have always had 'one foot in the future', predicting the broad changes we've experienced, especially in the last decade. I'm no visionary, but I've

got a good track record of recognising market shifts before most of the market."

His vision is for Poole-based Voip Unlimited to become the channel's one-stop-shop for everything voice and anything connectivity related. To advance his ambition he is gearing up to launch an end-to-end solution to the channel called Voxone. "We also want to better educate the industry, especially around voice quality and connectivity," added Pillow. "Our private voice network produces the best MOS scores we've seen, and we want to teach everyone about what that means and the benefits of a genuine high quality voice service.

"Furthermore, the last few years have proven just how important a robust Disaster Recovery plan can be. There may not be another pandemic, but whatever the future holds businesses need to have backup plans, so we're working hard to



Mark Pillow

## Voip Unlimited will be the one-stop voice and data shop for the channel. That's the goal

make those preparations more commercially focused, dependable and repeatable."

### Key investment

More recently Voip Unlimited has invested heavily in its data centre infrastructure, also evolving its systems and software to reduce operational and end user costs. "This is where a lot of our in-house development team's time goes," commented Pillow.

Having developed a robust voice network for its own customers Voip Unlimited then focused on wholesale partners, looking at how to stand out from the crowd, how to support partners better and become a one-stop-shop. A big part of this effort is partner education on the support that is available to them in areas like sales, marketing, project delivery etc. Another focus area is margin protection,

especially with end users being price sensitive.

"Voip Unlimited will be the one-stop voice and data shop for the channel," stated Pillow. "That's the goal, and we'll get there by innovating faster than our competitors, bringing new products to the market and providing a better experience for partners."

Having a value added proposition that can evolve



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# el ambitions

with the market, and is well supported, is key to success, believes Pillow. "A challenge for many is putting value back into the proposition," he added. "Why should end users invest more in our services than another provider? Who is racing to offer the lowest price? It's about translating the difference between a telecoms supermarket and a delicatessen to the average business customer at a time when budgets are tight and they need convincing to invest. Creating stronger relationships between end users and their suppliers is also key,

## We need the right technologies at the foundation of our nation's infrastructure and a plan to make sure everyone can take advantage of it

so we ask what more we can do to help resellers create stickier customers. Once those questions are answered the economic issues will be transcended."

Among the new technology areas blipping on Pillow's radar screen is 5G which he is convinced will be transformational. "5G's ability to handle capacity in high volume areas is a game changer," he stated. "As the UK's bandwidth demands and the need for low latency data transfer in real-time – for things like IoT and VR – continue to grow, 5G will be a great enabler."

That said, Pillow also noted that connectivity in general still has a way to go in its maturity. "The convergence of voice and data has only just started, and there is still optimisation around areas such as simultaneously sending data through fibre at different wavelengths," said Pillow. "This could go a long way in reducing bottlenecks and the number of roads being dug-up."

The industry also hasn't properly addressed the remote areas that don't have decent broadband, let alone fibre, observed Pillow. "Yes, there are altnets in

certain areas, but there are still a lot of people outside of those areas," he added. "Hopefully, that's where satellite services like Starlink can provide a genuine benefit with far less investment required.

We just need the right technologies at the foundation of our nation's infrastructure and a realistic plan to

make sure everyone can take advantage of it."

Just as Britain's digital infrastructure will ultimately underpin the services economy and drive future prosperity, all those aspiring to be successful in the ICT provider space have a responsibility to lay the foundations for their own success – and Pillow sees the future as his biggest opportunity. "I was once referred to, by someone senior in the sector, as the 'sleeping dragon of the industry'," he stated. "If that's the case, the dragon is stirring!" ■

### Just a minute with Mark Pillow...

**Role model:** Alan Turing. A technological innovator who never cared what people thought and did his own thing.

**Your biggest fear?** Jellyfish and sea snakes.

**Your main strength and what could you work on?** My biggest strength is determination. But being autistic, I do feel uncomfortable at large public events where there are big crowds. I have challenged myself more and more, so maybe that will change!

**Three ideal dinner guests:** Alan Turing; Sean Lock, such a funny guy; and Steve Jobs who for a period lived in Bill Gates' shadow but never gave up.

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know:** I enjoy making costume jewellery. It's a creative outlet, and I'm not sure where it started!

**One example of something you have overcome:** Living with autism. There was a point where I decided to embrace (what I call) my superpowers and celebrate them, rather than hide them away because that also empowers others in similar positions to do the same. I'm very glad I did.

**If you weren't in ICT what would you be doing?** An Imagineer for Disney, developing its crazy futuristic technology, whether that was for parks, games like flight simulators or Machine Learning tools.

**How do you relax?** Working with my hands, whether that's fixing broken things or creating something new.

**Top tip for resellers:** Put service above price and don't devalue your team by dropping margins just to get the sale. Don't make solutions too complicated, always keep it simple.

## The Cloud Communications Market and the Opportunity Ahead

As a Software as a Service provider, Evolve IP provides solutions that cater to our partner's needs, utilising the best-of-breed technologies. But how can we say we're industry leaders without doing the work to understand the technology and the users that benefit from it? The fact is, we can't and as a service provider, we have a duty to our partners to know what's happening in the market and foresee any big changes in demand.

not one size fits all, allows our partners to support their customers simply and effectively.

The market is saturated with an abundance of competitors offering similar services. Our partners can provide a simple, powerful, agile cloud communication solution. With the total addressable market in the UK projected to grow by £810m by 2025 - now is the time to improve your offering.



"We have a duty to our partners to know what's happening in the market and foresee any big changes in demand."

Paul Harrison  
Managing Director EMEA - Evolve IP

Working with Cavell Group, we conducted research into the cloud communications industry up until 2025. The industry insight we have gained from this report confirmed that the work we were doing and the solution we now offer are what is expected of providers - giving us some positive insights into the opportunities ahead for our resellers.

All this work is allowing us to effectively support our partners by enabling them in meeting their customer requirements. Evolve IP offers two industry-leading video collaboration solutions, Evolve Anywhere with Microsoft Teams & Evolve Anywhere with Webex. Both of which work effectively at any scale and can integrate with multiple solutions, creating a communications strategy suitable for a business of any size.

At Evolve IP we can offer our resellers flexibility, competitive prices, and an abundance of integrations within the collaboration solution, to help win this business that is available to them. Having a business model that is

Industry Insight: Highlights

- It is estimated that around 13.5M users in the UK SME sector alone have yet to adopt hosted UC

- By 2025, a projected 80% of users working for companies with 0-9 employees will be actively using cloud communication software

- Approximately 67.8% of future users in the UK market have yet to onboard

Understanding where the market is going is half the battle and Evolve IP believes that we should understand these trends in order to best support our partners. There is a lot more information, data, and research around this topic that we want to be able to share with you.

**Register for a webinar with Cavell Group and Evolve IP, joined by Matt Townsend, CEO of Cavell Group on Wednesday 28th September at 11:00 am [GMT].**

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# Stone Group commits to Net Zero

**Stone Group's Head of Sustainability Sheryl Moore shares insights into how the pioneering business plans to achieve its ambitious Net Zero ambition.**

**S**tone Group's 2030 Net Zero target is reflective of a growing urgency for businesses to engage with and reduce their carbon impact. Here, Moore takes us through Stone's sustainability journey step by step, and explains how it is building a pathway towards Net Zero...

#### **What are Stone's organisational building blocks for Net Zero transformation?**

We developed a carbon reduction plan that identifies the stages and milestones to achieve this target. Net Zero transformation can be achieved by reducing and eliminating the 3 scopes of carbon emissions. Scope 1 and Scope 2 are directly under your control such as energy costs and fleet fuel costs. These are the easiest ones to tackle first as you have more influence such as buying different types of fuel or reducing mileage. Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions that occur in your company's value chain.

#### **How did Stone start its Net Zero journey?**

You need to start with a vision and consider how your business impacts society and the environment. You need to consider the product and service lifecycle because

sustainability impacts at every stage. This includes reviewing all operations and activities. From this review we have set a challenging but achievable target of being Net Zero by 2030.

Energy usage is a great starting point. Can you save on usage? Is the property as insulated as possible? Are you using renewable energy as this has one of the biggest impacts on carbon emissions? Stone converted to a renewable energy tariff and is looking at installing solar panels which will also support our fleet of hybrid and electrical vehicles. We plan to switch to electric vehicles for all our company car fleet.

#### **What are the challenges involved in setting a realistic Net Zero target?**

There is still a lot of confusion on carbon and inflated promises through greenwashing. It all starts with data and awareness. We have been working hard to identify our carbon footprint and have engaged with The Carbon Literacy Organisation which provided training for our employees, raising awareness of carbon impact. This has helped us generate a personal plan impacting our home activities and also supporting our company's carbon reduction



Sheryl Moore

## **We evaluate suppliers' sustainable goals and achievements and have worked on several initiatives to support joint aims**

plan. We already have ISO 14001 which is a useful framework to support carbon reduction aims.

#### **What is your strategy to reduce e-waste?**

End user computing contributes directly and indirectly to 2.5 per cent of global emissions, and it is estimated that in 2021 the world generated 57 million tonnes of e-waste. These are significant figures, but every company can play its part to help reduce these statistics. We created a sustainability

framework, called Making a Digital Difference, which helps us address a number of sustainable issues, not just carbon emissions but also a circular economy. This enables us to support customers not only by delivering new products but also by collecting and refurbishing surplus and redundant devices saving on landfill and saving on manufacturing energy.

We are working with customers so that they gain an understanding of full

life cycle costing including looking after equipment through maintenance and repair, and buying refurbished products which will save on raw materials including mining which also has a massive negative impact on the environment.

We saw the advantage several years ago not only to offer a recycling and refurbishment service but to support customers from initial design and installation to reduce overall running costs, and therefore reduce the



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# Net Zero by 2030

impact on the environment. This takes into account the full lifecycle of IT equipment from design to disposal, offering a sustainable solution at each stage.

## How have you embedded a net zero mindset into company strategy?

Our business values include sustainability and we encourage a sustainability mindset that drives the

## We encourage a sustainability mindset that drives the consideration of the environment with every decision

consideration of the environment with every decision. This can be down to the individual having Teams calls rather than driving to different destinations, using local suppliers to reduce transportation costs, to waste segregation that ensures food waste is identified and collected rather than going into landfill. Other great things have been happening such as reviewing all our packaging and moving to more environmentally friendly alternatives such as paper tape, non-bleached packaging and the use of paper rather than plastic.

## Are you, or do you plan to drive Net Zero action with suppliers and partners?

We work with a range of suppliers from large plc to local ones. We also produce Stone products as well as selling devices from the likes of HP and Acer. We are working together to reduce the carbon impact during the lifecycle covering all stages including manufacturing,

packaging, configuring, distribution and recycling. We evaluate suppliers' sustainable goals and achievements and have worked on several initiatives to support joint aims such as a reduction in packaging, improved logistics and reducing energy running costs.

We have also joined a group called Techies Go Green which is a movement of IT

and tech-oriented companies committed to decarbonising their business, working together and sharing best practice on how we can all tackle global warming.

## What next for your Net Zero strategy?

We have set a challenging target of Net Zero by 2030 which is now incorporated in our Making a Digital Difference sustainability framework, which includes environmental and social topics. This sets out 10 pillars for action. We have not jumped to offsetting. To be really sustainable is to reduce the consumption of energy and production of greenhouse gasses to the minimum.

We are working with the National Forest to help transform 200 square miles of derelict and damaged land caused by centuries of coal mining and other heavy industry in the midlands. We are also working with Ecologi on a tree planting

initiative that is shared with our customers. Through our three year sustainability framework we are also supporting other Sustainability Development Goals (SDG), including a formal certificate on our reduction of carbon by achieving PAS2060 accreditation.

## What are the three most important elements of a Net Zero transformation strategy?

Confidence and the integrity of data to reliably indicate your environmental impact. Identify through each of your activities that generate carbon emissions, and break it down in stages to tackle the biggest impact first and set some targets. Raise awareness with colleagues, customers and the supply chain of your targets and plans.

## For those businesses yet to get going on sustainability, what first steps should they take?

Look at the energy consumption of property and vehicles. Reduce energy waste and then look for renewable energy sources. Learning more about sustainability and the UN sustainability goals is a useful reference point. And speak to your local business chamber of commerce or trade body as there is support through business networks, many of which are free and provide access to grants that support your journey.

You don't have to be a sustainable professional to make a difference. But having sustainability as a mindset makes you consider your actions and options. The Carbon Literacy Project estimates that small changes can make a difference of five to 15 per cent carbon saving per person.

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# Driving for Net Zero

## Gamma's Environmental Data Manager Callum Lydon shares key insights into how the channel giant is addressing Net Zero challenges and opportunities.

**G**amma assesses and develops its ESG ambitions as a matter of course and it has three clear goals in its Net Zero agenda. "The first is reducing our internal carbon emissions through five key reduction periods with the aim of lowering our direct emissions by 90 per cent by 2030," explained Lydon. "The second involves seeking to have our Net Zero plans ratified by external accreditation; and thirdly to maintain our carbon neutral status in the interim period to achieving Net Zero."

Earlier this year Gamma announced its commitment to move from a Carbon Neutral business to become a carbon Net Zero organisation by 2042, supporting both the Paris Treaty's aims to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C globally and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action.

"In early 2022 we also committed to set near and long-term company-wide emission reductions in line with the Science-Based Target initiative (SBTi) and we will seek validation of our target within the 24 month SBTi timeframe," said Lydon. "Through the SBTi we have also signed up to the Business Ambition for 1.5°C

campaign, as well as the UN's Race to Zero campaign."

Lydon also noted that it is important to bear in mind regulatory changes. "In the UK and across Europe, more frequently than ever before, businesses are being asked to disclose their emissions, their gender pay gap and similar data around important environmental and social issues," he said. "Business leaders have to make sure they don't trip up when such requests are made, which is why understanding the organisation's environmental and social impact is important to the whole process."

But many businesses, in particular smaller ones, will look at Net Zero perhaps not knowing where to start and with a sense of trepidation around the greenwashing issue, observed Lydon. "Building a green supply chain can also seem challenging," he added. "On top of that, some businesses might be concerned about the costs involved in implementing an effective sustainability strategy. However, there are plenty of statistics that show the predicted cost savings and commercial gains for those businesses that cut their carbon footprints. We can't pretend that the



Callum Lydon

### There are plenty of statistics that show the predicted cost savings and commercial gains for those businesses that cut their carbon footprints

process won't require any expenditure, but in the long-term it will save business costs, and most importantly preserve our planet. Our advice is to just start somewhere and if budget is an issue, start small and don't be afraid to make mistakes."

#### Understand the data

It is important for organisations to first understand the data behind their carbon emissions and waste. This includes energy and fuel consumption – which can be recorded through meter readings or

walk-around surveys – but also aspects like biodiversity. "Once that first phase is completed businesses can start to understand their environmental impact profile and develop targeted plans," stated Lydon.

To give firms a leg up Gamma has shared a business sustainability starter pack on its social media channel. This is composed of five steps to kickstart the journey to Net Zero in a simple and cost-effective way. "The first step is to baseline emissions in order to unlock the business'

unique environmental impact profile," added Lydon. "Our second step involves measuring energy and fuel consumption. Businesses can identify key emissions sources by undertaking a screening, and measure consumption through meter readings and/or invoices.

"Third, a business should try to convert their energy data into estimated carbon emissions. Make use of free, online carbon calculators or obtain Government carbon conversion factors if you want to be even more accurate. This will then allow them to identify their key emission sources (for example, electricity). Finally, they can use these insights to implement affordable measures like switch off campaigns and digital clean-ups before tackling larger scale initiatives like moving to 100 per cent renewable energy."

Gamma's green ambition includes working with suppliers to reduce supply chain emissions, a dominant contributor to Scope 3 indirect emissions. "Our confidence around achieving this is high," commented Lydon. "We already know that two thirds of our suppliers have an understanding of their environmental impact and have quantified their emissions. And around half of our key suppliers respond to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), so we know that we have suppliers who are engaged and up for the joint challenge. We also believe that market changes and public perception will prompt more companies to take positive action on carbon Net Zero and develop their own emissions reduction plans." ■





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THERE'S STILL TIME TO GET THE RECOGNITION YOU DESERVE  
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The Comms National Awards, widely recognised as the UK ICT Channel's top awards event, returns to the glitzy Hilton on Park Lane, London on 13th October 2022.

And the good news is, we have extended the entry deadline to August 15th so there's still time to go for gold!

Now in its 21st year, the Comms National Awards is the ICT channel's most respected and coveted awards process, recognising the success of UK resellers and the suppliers who support them in providing top class solutions to public and private sector business customers.

Sponsored for the third this year by DWS and independently judged by a panel of distinguished industry experts, the process rewards quality

across the channel spectrum with awards in both reseller (customer solutions) and vendor (service to the channel) categories.

As ever, the entertainment at the CNA finalists' night will be top notch. Last year, Strictly Come Dancing star Anton Du Beke added some ballroom glamour to the event, and who could forget the 2018 event, when Spandau Ballet legend Tony Hadley provided a 'Gold' curtain raiser, and BBC News at Ten lynchpin Huw Edwards was the consummate awards host.

Previous presenters have included Patrick Kielty, Rufus Hound, Hugh Dennis, Stephen K Amos, Michael McIntyre, Marcus Brigstocke, Vernon Kay, Gabby Logan, Stephen Mangan and James Nesbitt, so guests can be assured the entertainment will be top drawer.

All these ingredients add up to the Comms National Awards being acknowledged as the evening the channel assembles in style to recognise success and network with industry friends and colleagues.

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

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

For all the categories see [www.cnawards.com](http://www.cnawards.com)

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"The Comms National Awards is a fantastic awards process and the awards night itself is always the highlight of the year, bringing together everyone in the ICT industry for a night of celebration," said Digital Wholesale Solutions Chief Executive Officer, Terry O'Brien (pictured).

"The effort entrants put into these awards is always exemplary and we know the value our teams place on

being shortlisted. Our industry has done some amazing things during another challenging year and the CNAs gives channel companies a wonderful opportunity to reward and recognise those efforts.

"I sincerely hope more ICT organisations than ever will enter this year and show the country what we are made of and what we have achieved. And my message to entrants is put some feeling into

it. What the judges love to hear is how much people care about their business, love what they do and enjoy it with a real passion. If that can come through in an entry it can make all the difference.

"The finals night is one of the premier evenings in our industry and we're delighted to be headline sponsor again and we look forward to celebrating with colleagues, friends and partners."

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# SPONSORS LINE UP TO REWARD WINNERS ...



"As well as being one of the highlights of the year, the Comms National Awards are the industry's most prestigious

and hotly contested awards, recognising excellence across the ICT channel. We are proud to once again be supporting the event as a hospitality sponsor. On behalf of Inform Billing, I would like to wish all entrants the very best of luck and look forward to coming together on what is always a fantastic night!"

**Ellie Allseybrook**  
Business Development  
Director, Inform Billing



"CNA sets the gold standard for awards in the ICT channel. In our work, we see the exceptional talent,

effort and creativity that represents everything that is great about our sector and it's important to recognise and celebrate this success. We are proud once again, to be sponsoring the Entrepreneur of the Year Award at this year's CNAs and look forward to congratulating all the finalists."

**Adam Zoldan,**  
Director  
Knight Corporate Finance



"We are very excited to be attending this year's CNAs and are super proud to be sponsoring the Best Managed

Services Awards in the reseller category. This is always such a fantastic night, celebrating and recognising everyone who works so hard to make the channel great. Best of luck and well done to all the finalists!"

**Jon Dailey**  
Channel Director  
NFON UK



"Pragma is delighted to be category sponsor at this year's Comms National Awards. The event is one of the most

highly anticipated nights in the industry calendar, and we're excited to see what the latest innovations and success stories others in the channel have achieved in the last year. Best of luck to all the finalists and we're looking forward to congratulating them on the night."

**Will Morey**  
Director and Co-Founder  
Pragma Group



"We are again delighted to sponsor the Connectivity category at the 2022 CNAs. Connectivity underpins

the success of Digital Britain, and we are proud to be supporting this critical transformation by enabling a seamless fibre wholesale model with our Fibre Café. We look forward to a great night celebrating the amazing achievements and innovation in the channel."

**Wail Sabbagh**  
Director  
Strategic Imperatives



"TelcoSwitch is delighted to be sponsoring this year's CNAs. The Comms National Awards are one of the

most highly anticipated events in our industry's calendar, and as a business serving the channel, we're especially looking forward to seeing how resellers have evolved over the past year. Good luck to everybody taking part, and we'll see you on the night!"

**Russell Lux**  
Founder & CEO  
TelcoSwitch



"This year's CNAs is perhaps the most highly anticipated ever. Union Street is delighted to sponsor the Vertical

Market Customer Solution award once again and we're looking forward to hearing about the innovative ways in which resellers have positively impacted their customers' businesses. On behalf of all of us at Union Street, I would like to wish the best of luck to all finalists."

**Vincent Disneur**  
Managing Director  
Union Street



"We are delighted to be sponsoring the Distribution Category at the Comms National Awards,

the event of the year. These awards recognise the commitment and successes of the Channel, and we look forward to celebrating the achievements of all finalists. We wish everyone the very best of luck and see you in October."

**Paul Taylor**  
Sales & Marketing Director  
Voiceflex

To book your place at the CN Awards finals night go to [www.cnawards.com](http://www.cnawards.com)

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# How to set and achieve your

## Putting sustainability at the heart of day-to-day business practice is key to a low carbon future, according to Helen Boggs, Marketing and Communications Manager, Agilitas.

The first step in Agilitas' Net Zero transformation journey involved a root and branch assessment of its green status and situation. The business is already fairly sustainable as its whole model is built on repairing, reworking and reusing tech. "We've been doing this for over 30 years, so we're starting from a good place," stated Boggs. "That being said, we still recognised that we had a long way to go to be a Net Zero business. We evaluated our current operations and collated our metrics so that we had a well-established starting point. Our team then put together a pledge which outlined the sustainability goals we aim to achieve and a timeline for when we planned to achieve them. This shows commitment to our partners, as well as giving us accountability on our mission."

At the outset Agilitas looked at offsetting measures and

partnered with Ecologi to begin reducing carbon emissions by planting trees. "Reducing the amount of carbon you produce is always going to be the preference over offsetting, but it's unrealistic to suddenly switch to a true Net Zero business overnight," added Boggs. "Your staff need to get to work, and in our case, we ship technology hardware around the world using complex supply chains. Offsetting provides a quick-start solution to start making an impact on the environment instantly, but it should not be the sole strategy for achieving a carbon neutral operation."

### Robust benchmarking

The next step was to subscribe to a more robust and industry recognised benchmarking service. "Although we had been collecting statistics for a number of years, it's a little like marking your own homework," said Boggs. "So to have verified figures that

### Top tip for green starters...

**Do not think that you have to be at Net Zero by tomorrow. By setting unrealistic goals you are more likely to associate the word sustainable with negativity and this will create the wrong company culture. Start small and get your teams involved as much as possible.**



Helen Boggs

## The more you can immerse yourself in sustainability, the quicker you'll pick up ideas and you'll be surprised at how quickly your efforts will come along

our partners can be confident in was important to us. We subscribed to ecoVadis which has given us a score and a forward plan to make meaningful improvements."

Agilitas has been tracking its Scope 1 and 2 emissions for a number of years, which Boggs says is relatively straightforward to do. But tracking Scope 3 emissions is a lot more challenging

as it involves measuring emissions from the complete value chain – including suppliers, investments and transportation. "There is a lot to consider and it's quite daunting to know where to start," commented Boggs. "The most important thing to do is start the conversation. Speak with every customer, supplier and partner that you can to find out what each of them is doing.

There is a lot we can all learn from each other.

"The next step is to build a more robust sustainable procurement policy. This will run across every department – from ordering stationery and office supplies, to our couriers and logistics partners. Everyone within our organisation will have a part to play and actively work with suppliers to



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# our green goals

ensure our supply chain is as sustainable as possible.”

Agilitas is using ecoVadis to record and benchmark progress and to give more guidance on the next steps to make the biggest impact. “Even if a lot of the information exists already in our organisation it can be dispersed across the company in lots of different formats,”

sustainability initiatives, Boggs also believes that Agilitas will only be truly sustainable if it's embedded in company culture. “We have a green team that meets monthly to discuss and implement various initiatives within the organisation,” she explained. “These can be quite small things such as providing wildflower seeds or organising company litter

involved. This way new members of the team are instantly aligned with Agilitas' sustainability values. “Each department is also responsible for developing its own sustainability KPI and can choose its own objective that they want to work towards, reporting their results to the rest of the company each month,” noted Boggs. “It's kept fairly light-hearted so it becomes more about positivity and changing mindsets rather than becoming another task on the to-do list. However, it is a way to get everyone thinking about sustainability and working together to achieve it.”

## By setting unrealistic goals you are more likely to associate the word sustainable with negativity and this will create the wrong company culture

said Boggs. “Collating everything and presenting it for assessment is no quick task. However, if you get into good habits of how to create and store policies it makes things much easier and helps with compliance further down the line.”

While it's important to have a passionate leader driving

picks. Our aim is to always be quite visible, meaning sustainability initiatives just become a part of everyday life at Agilitas.”

### Rewriting recruitment

The company is also rewriting its onboarding process to include information about sustainability practices and how employees can get

What next for Agilitas' Net Zero strategy? “We've done quite a lot of work surrounding our own operation, so the next step for us is to work more with our suppliers and build a more robust sustainable procurement policy,” explained Boggs. “This will run across every department – from ordering stationery and office supplies to our couriers and logistics partners. Everyone within our organisation will have a part to play and actively work with suppliers to ensure our supply chain is as sustainable as possible. Even if you are quite far into your sustainability journey you can still pick up new ideas from others and, importantly, share what has worked and hasn't worked in your organisation so that others can implement successful strategies.

“Typically, businesses keep their strategies close to their chests and it can feel a little unnatural talking about them so openly with external parties. But sustainability is definitely better together and collaboration is key.” ■

## Three steps to Net Zero success

**Tracking:** Start by recording as much as possible to track your progress. Free tools from the Carbon Trust Calculator can be a good place to start but there are also lots of more sophisticated paid tools that are worth looking into including ecoVadis, CDP and G17eco. But even if you start by putting figures in a basic spreadsheet, it gives you something to benchmark and improve on.

**Collaboration:** Whether this is with colleagues, customers and partners or attending seminars or workshops, the more you can immerse yourself in sustainability, the quicker you'll pick up ideas and you'll be surprised at how quickly your efforts will come along.

**Action:** Talking and devising strategies are all good, but without action they are meaningless. Even if you start small, when you begin putting sustainability practices in place, seeing your efforts will help drive further action in the future.

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# CHANNEL CHAMPIONS

7<sup>th</sup> July 2022, Regents Park

## Champions celebrate in the sun!



**C**ongratulations to the winners of this year's Comms Dealer Channel Champions Awards, held as a celebratory summer garden party on July 7th with the awards ceremony staged in an open marquee and hosted by TV presenter Mark Durden-Smith (pictured).

The event recognises the often-unseen teams in channel organisations across the business and management spectrum including sales, marketing, technical, sales support,

finance, executive leadership and culture. There were also special awards to recognise excellence in event management, apprentice schemes and charity work.

Comms Dealer Editorial Director and Awards Co-ordinator Nigel Sergent enthused: "We had a 20% increase in entries this year, underlining the resilience of businesses in the channel which have bounced back from the Covid-19 pandemic."

The first award of the

afternoon was presented to Wildix, which collected the Channel Champions Team Spirit Award for its all-embracing support of staff in war-torn Ukraine.

"What Wildix achieved in evacuating their Odesa based teams to safety in Italy was astonishing and they thoroughly deserved to be recognised," added Sergent.

Wildix UK Channel Manager Ian Rowan commented: "This means a lot to all of us at Wildix. Winning this

award is not about the workplace. It's about the people and these people continue to show resolve and strength beyond imagination each and every day."

Special praise went to Pangea and CityFibre, who scooped a trio of awards, and young apprentice Bailey Odling-Thomas, whose sterling work since joining KSM Telecom helped the Hayling Island based company secure the Best Apprentice Scheme Award against stiff competition.





# Roll of Honour



Reseller Sales & Account Management Team (sponsored by TalkTalk Wholesale) – CLOUD VOICE & DATA



Reseller Marketing Team (sponsored by Voiceflex) – FOCUS GROUP



Reseller Technical Support & Engineering Team (sponsored by Virtual1) – FOURNET



Reseller Sales Support Team – FIDELITY GROUP



Reseller Executive Leadership Team (sponsored by NFON) – ICE COMMS



Reseller Billing & Finance Team (sponsored by Union Street) – NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS GROUP



Reseller People & Culture Team (sponsored by Gamma) – PRESTIGE TELECOM GROUP



Vendor/Distributor Sales & Account Management Team – GAMMA



Vendor/Distributor Marketing Team – CITYFIBRE



Vendor/Distributor Technical Support and Engineering Team – PRODU COMMUNICATIONS



Vendor/Service Provider Sales Support Team – DIGITAL WHOLESALE SOLUTIONSE



Vendor/Distributor Executive Leadership Team – VOIP UNLIMITED



Vendor/Distributor People & Culture Team – CITYFIBRE



Service Provider Sales & Account Management Team (sponsored by TalkTalk Wholesale) – PANGEA



Service Provider Marketing Team – PANGEA



Service Provider Engineering and Technical Support Team (sponsored by Virtual1) – IPNETIX



Service Provider Executive Leadership Team (sponsored by NFON) – PANGEA



Service Provider Billing & Finance Team (sponsored by Union Street) – ZEST4



Service Provider People & Culture Team (sponsored by Gamma) – GIACOM



Apprentice Champions (sponsored by Evolve IP) – KSM TELECOM



Event Champions (sponsored by Evolve IP) – VIRTUAL1



Charity Champions (sponsored by Evolve IP) – START COMMS



Channel Champions Team of the Year (sponsored by Digital Wholesale Solutions) – CITY FIBRE PEOPLE & CULTURE TEAM



Channel Champions Team Spirit Award (sponsored by Comms Dealer) – WILDIX

# New Act delays deals

**Knight Corporate Finance co-founder and Director Adam Zoldan unravels the implications of new legislation linked to national security risks on certain M&A deals in the UK comms channel.**

In a market where we continue to see a huge volume of deal activity, we are also witnessing significant delays building up due to a new piece of legislation designed to protect the national security of the UK. The National Security and Investment Act 2021 (the Act) has a scope which is likely to become a major consideration for many deals involving comms providers, IT service providers, MSPs, ISPs, hosters, cloud service providers, data centres and technical specialists across the whole spectrum of the UK channel.

The Act allows the Government to scrutinise and intervene in certain acquisitions made by anyone, including businesses and investors, which could harm the UK's national security. Subject to certain criteria, you are legally required to tell the Government about acquisitions that are involved in 17 sensitive or key sectors of the economy (known as a mandatory notification). Failure to comply may result in turnover-based fines, criminal liability and the risk of transactions being void.

The key sectors are wide ranging and include robotics, military and quantum technologies. However, there are a number of areas that are pertinent to the channel and invariably will now be a factor that any acquirer will include as part of the acquisition process. Currently, the four areas that most commonly apply to the IT and comms channel are communications, data infrastructure, critical suppliers to Government and suppliers to the emergency services. It is early days for the Act and the guidance is ambiguous in places, but there are some clear limitations that hopefully will exclude your deal from the scope of the Act.

Within the communications area, if the target company has a turnover less than £50 million then it is outside the scope. Fortunately, this covers the majority of deal activity in this sector. However, as the channel converges across industry sectors you need to consider all areas that may be relevant to you. For example, data infrastructure deals with physical or virtualised infrastructure



Adam Zoldan

## It is early days for the Act, but we are seeing it become a factor in all of our deals

used for the storing, processing or transmitting of data in digital form will come under scrutiny.

This area, while separate from 'communications' could pick up data centres (physical or virtualised), ISPs and comms providers including resellers that operate network infrastructure within the scope of the act. The definition is relatively wide and can include companies that have no infrastructure but provide technical services or administrative access to data infrastructure where a public sector customer is involved.

If you clear these obstacles, the final two areas to check involve your customer base.

In terms of being a 'critical supplier to the Government', unless you require listX accreditation, process or store information classed as 'secret' or have your employees vetted at a Security Check (SC) level you are unlikely to fall into the scope of the Act. However, if you provide services to the emergency services the scope is relatively wide and includes aspects of infrastructure, voice and data communications. This means that comms providers may fall into the scope of the Act even where the deal size is small.

### Implications for comms providers

For anyone involved in, or considering a deal, whether as an investment,

an acquisition or an exit, preparation is key. It's worth taking the time to understand the Government guidance to ascertain whether there is a risk of your deal (which can involve any and all changes to the shareholders) falling into the scope of the act.

For the vast majority of deals, the worst case scenario should be no more than a delay. The Government has a maximum of 30 working days to clear a deal notified under the mandatory notification, but it can extend this to investigate further. It is important to understand that while your business may fall within the scope, it is the acquirer that will come under scrutiny rather than you or your business, although you would clearly need to assist the buyer with their enquiries and the preparation of any such notification.

It is very early days for the Act, but we are seeing it become a factor in all of our deals. We are seeing legal opinion showing some variance as legal advisers can interpret the guidance differently. Currently, we have no clear visibility of how long the process will actually take as it is too early for any feedback on the process. However, we suspect that hundreds of deals will have been submitted so far this year alone.

Hopefully in time the process will become simpler and the guidance clearer, but for now it is important for all parties considering a deal to factor this Act into their timetables. And if there is a risk of falling into the scope, to ensure that the acquiring party makes their submissions early, particularly if time is of the essence. ■



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# New era for marketing

**It's crunch time for cookies so marketers are advised to prepare for a wave of fresh thinking and changes in consumer behaviour, writes Cloud Business Marketing Director Louise Abbey.**

It's not breaking news that Google is stopping the use of third party cookies on Chrome. Firefox and Safari blocked them in 2013, while Apple and Microsoft have also removed access to identifiers on their platforms. But Google is the biggest player by far with Chrome accounting for over half of all global web traffic, so its planned changes will have the biggest impact. Regardless of your position on third party cookies, they'll soon be a thing of the past. History tells us that this will in turn affect consumer behaviour and the way we do business online, and that's something that excites us. Google will begin phasing out cookies in H2 2024, creating an opportunity for fresh thinking. There's no doubt that a new wave of creative marketing methods is on the way.

Here's how to get ahead of the curve:

**Be experimental:** This word features heavily in our marketing strategy for the year. In fact, we've set ourselves an objective to test at least one new lead generation source every month. With the pace of change in customer behaviour, marketing

demands continuous fresh thinking. We run marketing as an innovation function. We test and measure new methodologies all the time.

**Care:** This isn't a shiny new idea, but it matters. When your customers understand that you listen and really care about their business they are much more likely to be open to sharing their real challenges. This openness creates trust. Prove to your customers that you aren't just looking for gaps to sell into. Demonstrate that you care about their business and want to help them to achieve their goals with your support. Make this a genuine part of your business culture otherwise it'll fall flat.

**Search engine optimisation still matters:** When you really understand what your ideal customer is looking for it becomes easy to sell to them. This is where we're spending the majority of our time. We're blessed with a searchable brand name and domain that's attracting just shy of one million visitors, but our job is to make sure those visitors are interested in what we have to offer. Having a clear and methodical approach to SEO allows you to attract more of the right



Louise Abbey

**Google phasing out cookies creates an opportunity for fresh thinking. There's no doubt that a new wave of creative marketing methods is on the way**

people to your website. If you don't have the right skills in your team, invest in training or outsource it to a digital marketing expert. A surface level understanding won't do.

**Really get to know your customers:** Our mantra is to direct efforts based on facts and data, not gut feel. We have clear customer focused objectives and KPIs that we track weekly. That data dictates our decisions every day, it's not just a tick in a box. But data only tells part of the story. Get your marketing team to spend time with customers and encourage honest conversations about their needs, and

their experience with your brand. Ask to piggyback onto sales meetings, demos and onboarding sessions. It may seem like obvious advice, but is this happening in your business today?

**The art of copywriting isn't dead:** There's a lot of poor written content out there. With brands working hard to make their messaging simple and quick to read, some are going too far and forget that their target audience has an assumed level of understanding. Finding good copywriters is tough, especially if your marketing team is made up of a lot of junior people. But they are out there and

they are worth their weight in gold. Copywriting is now the number one skill I look for when hiring.

**Artificial Intelligence in copywriting has moved on:** AI will play a big role in the future of marketing. These days, it isn't just a website churning out an article based on a few keywords. AI can be used to make subtle but important improvements, like adding humanity to your messaging. Chase bank has led the way on this. Tools like Wordtune and Jasper are a good place to start. In the meantime, we'll continue to create our own written content, until the machines take over. ■



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# Apprentice army helping



It is well documented that the growing skills gap in the workforce has the potential to slow the UK's recovery post Covid-19.

With competition for candidates at an all-time high and employers penning contracts that will keep their valuable skilled workers in place for the foreseeable future, recruiters cannot rely on the luxury of hiring the complete package.

The channel must instead look to a young workforce that is showing an increasing interest in the technology sector.

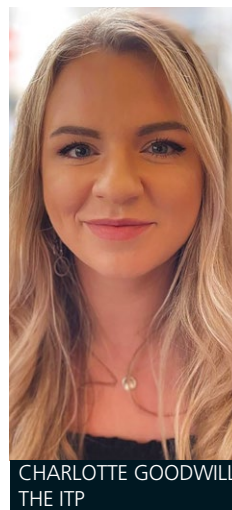
To build a framework for success we asked our industry experts how they are getting the right people through the door, what strategies they are employing to skill up apprentices and how they are setting young people up for long careers in the industry.

Photo by Mizuno K



JAMES BUTLER  
CLOUD BUSINESS

"Our apprentice scheme gives ambitious people of all ages an opportunity to begin their career in IT –that's something that really excites us. The real reward for us is that we get to spot and nurture emerging skills in the digital and data space. Our apprentices are here to learn from us, but we know we can learn a lot from them too. We provide training and hands-on experience to develop talent. We give our apprentices meaningful work with a real focus on the human aspect of technology; that's something that's difficult to learn until you're in the right environment. It's no secret that the job market is becoming much more competitive for employers. We manage all our recruitment in-house, to help us attract people who fit our culture. Supporting existing team members to upskill and fulfil their ambitions has always been important to us."



CHARLOTTE GOODWILL  
THE ITP

"The Institute of Telecoms Professionals apprenticeship scheme was set up in 2013 specifically to tackle the skills shortage which was an issue as far back as then. Since then, we have refined our recruitment strategy, and in recent years have focused on challenging perceptions around careers in our sector. We've found that hiring based on personality, rather than skills is a great way to get the right people through the door. IT and tech jobs shouldn't be pigeon-holed. We're recruiting young people into roles without entry requirements, which we have found has encouraged diversity. 36% of our apprentice intake this year has been female, and we are determined to increase this stat. We've supported our apprentices in many ways, but one which works well is setting them up with a mentor to support and guide them as they work their way up the career ladder."



MICHAEL J THORNTON  
KSM TELECOM

"Taking on an apprentice is not about adding an employee to your team at a cheaper cost and then getting them to be the office gopher. An apprentice is an investment in youth, their education, their future and the development of you and your business, and it must be viewed in a professional way. Picking the right apprenticeship provider is vital. Make sure they have a pathway planner who will work closely with your apprentice throughout their time with you. This is critical and means they have external support. Also, invest in external training for your apprentice. Our IT and Infrastructure Technician completed training programmes with Microsoft, WebEx, Hosted Voice, network infrastructure and much more. KSM Telecom's apprentice, Bailey Odling-Thomas, gained a distinction and was nominated for Apprentice of the Year nationally and his efforts were recognised when KSM Telecom won the Channel Champions award for its apprenticeship programme."



CAMILLA KARM  
REDSQUID

"Last summer we restarted our apprentice programme at RedSquid, because we wanted to make a difference to young adults and help them start a career in tech in a difficult job market. We have since hired seven across four different departments, and now develop them so they can continue their careers within RedSquid and make sure we have the workforce we will need in the future. To make sure they become successful we have launched personalised development programmes based on their personal interest. As they develop and become more equipped, we review the plan to make sure that they, and RedSquid, can continue to grow together. Finally, it is important for us that they all feel like they have a valued voice, and they can contribute as we grow. To make sure they do, we hold 'Apprentice Days' where they can utilise their creativity and work together as a team."



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# channel fight skills gaps



CHRIS MORRISEY  
LILY COMMS

"Apprentices have always played a vital part in the recruitment process at Lily; however, it is more important now than ever as finding younger employees can be extremely challenging in a saturated high-tech area like Leeds. Offering apprenticeship schemes helps combat this as it opens a door into the industry, whilst also providing training and personal career development. We concentrate on a 'what's in it for them' approach, showing potential candidates the benefits they will receive when joining our company, including access to our in-house training portal, which we find appeals strongly to the Gen Z and Millennial target audience. Developing people in all levels of their career is important to us and apprentices are no exception and something that has proved successful for us, with many of our past apprentices now working in higher-level, full-time roles."



CHRISTINA PENDLETON  
INTERCITY

"In response to the skills shortage, Intercity is committed to nurturing the workforce of tomorrow, with apprentices now making up 6% of our team. Our apprenticeship scheme has a multifaceted approach, with on-the-job training, specialist training from learning providers, and sessions with other businesses, such as Jaguar Land Rover, to offer insight into other industries. Apprentices are also invited to sit in on Operational Board Meetings to gain exposure to senior leaders and are given the opportunity to present key learnings to our Board. Wherever possible, we try to promote internally. Our apprenticeship programme has transformed our recruitment processes, as we now have a fantastic talent pool who are ready for promotion upon course completion. Offering an excellent work life helps maintain our staff and attract fresh talent, and we were delighted to be recognised as one of the Best Telecoms Company to Work for in Q1 and Q2."



ROB STEVENS  
JOLA

"Jola has offered several apprenticeships within our Technical Support and Development teams. The apprenticeship scheme enables us to identify talent looking to start their careers in IT. We can recruit and train these employees on Jola-specific technologies along with general IT skills whilst enabling the apprentice to obtain additional qualifications to further their careers. Within my department, we have successfully developed four apprentices who have passed their apprenticeship and are now in full-time employment within the business. The combination of encouraging staff to grow their educational qualifications alongside their practical skillset has worked really well for both Jola and its employees."



KEVIN BOYLE  
CLOUDCELL

"Cloudcell Technologies launched our first apprenticeship scheme in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, recruiting two young apprentices into the business at a time of increased demand for resource. Since then, we've recruited an additional apprentice, making a total of three apprentices in our business at present. We've found the support from the government around apprentice training to be a valuable tool for structuring the recruitment and training process, as well as skills development. We focus on circulating our apprentices through the different sections of our business to ensure they understand all the key functions, including time in the field, working hands-on with our engineering team, to really understand the connectivity products and services we offer. We're really proud of the progress our apprentices have made, and they are a valued part of our business."



DARREN GARLAND  
PROVU

"We began our apprenticeship scheme in early 2015 to support our growing business and develop a new generation of specialist staff. When recruiting, we take a person-first approach. It is important to us that our staff suit our company ethos and are hungry for knowledge. If they get on with the team and want to learn we will provide everything they need in terms of training and mentoring. Our apprentices are encouraged to develop skills that are outside their core apprenticeship. Being a relatively small company, they gain exposure into areas that would not normally be part of an apprenticeship. Depending on the individual's capabilities, we will quickly help our apprentices to advance by giving them responsibility, helping them to develop key skills which go beyond the remit of their course. There is no doubt an overhead to training an apprentice, but it is well worth the time invested."



OLLIE BENN  
NEOCI

"As a recruitment business, Neoci has hired a mix of experienced and non-experienced people to take the business forward. We haven't considered an apprentice scheme before, but it is something we would look at in future. Although the cost of apprenticeships is relatively small, I think it's important that a company can invest the time and effort in training and supporting an apprentice to allow them to fully develop and add value to the business. I have heard of some companies using apprentices as a cheaper hiring option, without being prepared or able to support their growth. Not every business is in the position to offer this, especially if they are a start-up, however if used correctly, the apprenticeship scheme can be hugely beneficial for both employer and employee, offering development and experience to the apprentice and the opportunity for the employer to nurture their own talent."

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# VP for Cunningham



**Annette Cunningham**

TECH Data has appointed Annette Cunningham as VP of Sales for UK&I. She was previously Field and Corporate Sales Director and joined the company in November 2020 having held a number of senior sales leadership positions supporting the channel. Cunningham has worked within the IT industry for more than 30 years.

David Watts, Managing Director and Senior VP for UK&I, said: "Since joining the company Annette has been an asset to our business as an exemplary leader and mentor. She has a great record of partnership and brings a raft of channel experience to her new role."

Cunningham is the fourth female member of the Tech Data UK&I board, joining HR Director Jodie Carrol, Legal Director Sonna Monfared and Group Marketing Director Linda Patterson.

Cunningham added: "I have been given the opportunity to shape and develop the important relationships between Tech Data and all its customers across the UK and Ireland."

## Also on the move...

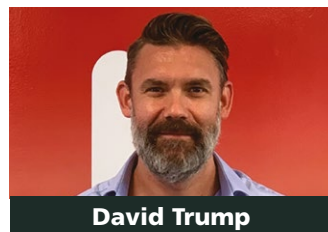
NEOS Networks has pulled in Tim Passingham as Non-Executive Chair. His prior exec roles include stints at BT, Colt Technology Services and Level 3 Communications (Lumen). CEO Colin Sempill stated: "Tim will help drive momentum as we support the UK Government's levelling up plans to meet its ambitions for a Gigabit Britain." Passingham is also Chairman of Cambridge Management Consulting, Chairman of the IoT pollution reduction technology business Iknaia, Co-Founder and Non-Executive Director of sustainability consultancy Edenseven, a Non-Executive Director of The Carrier Club, a Non-Executive Director of Lightning Fibre, and Global Ambassador for Telecoms Sans Frontières (TSF), a charity that provides comms for global disaster relief.



**Tim Passingham**

WESTCON UK&I Sales Director John Nolan has taken the reins as MD following Antony Byford's move to Vice President of the newly formed Cloud & Collaboration business division. Westcon-Comstor CEO David Grant said: "John has been part of our UK&I team since 2005, working his way up the ladder in impressive fashion. He's been a great support to Antony and they've worked brilliantly together growing the Westcon UK&I business over 50% in the past four years." Nolan added: "I've witnessed major shifts in technology adoption and the impacts on the channel during my 17 year tenure at Westcon-Comstor. Today, the role of a distributor is even more critical as we help partners identify growth opportunities, expand their skills and ultimately build revenues."

SPEARHEADING BOM IT's new security services division is incoming Cyber Security Solutions Director David Trump. He said: "I have been working in technology for the past 15 years, from BT Global Services supporting some of the biggest multinational organisations and Government departments, to more recently, Phoenix Datacom, supplying customers with tools to help secure their infrastructures. At BOM IT Solutions I'll be able to shape the security division to my vision." Trump plans to assess the company's vendor base to determine whether they 'still have relevance in the ever-changing security world'. He will focus especially on hybrid technologies that scale across multiple on-site and cloud platforms.



**David Trump**



**John Nolan**

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