

# Channel leaders supporting

**T**his month's Kaleidoscope will look at how channel organisations are navigating widespread cost increases.

Whilst the cost-of-living crisis affects consumer's ability to spend going into Q4, higher inflation and energy prices will affect balance sheets and put pressure on business costs.

A letter to former Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng signed by 300 companies last month detailed that 70% of businesses have seen their prices more than double since June, with 30% of companies having seen increases of over 400%.

Organisations are also under pressure to support staff who need help with their cost of living.

We asked a selection of channel leaders how their organisations would be affected, and what they were doing to support both customers and staff over the coming months.



DAVID WARDELL  
EVOKE

"Despite unprecedented cost increases, businesses do seem to be holding up well under these new pressures. To fight back, many companies are looking for improved flexible working and system integrations to increase working efficiencies. Fortunately, this is keeping us very busy with a strong order book and a healthy pipeline. Many employees have returned to the office; however, this has come with the added burdens of increased costs for travel, lunch and even a bit of socialising. With such pressure on home budgets, many colleagues are worried about how they can continue to make ends meet. Here at Evoke, our management team have been considering what the best supportive actions might look like, especially as cost pressures are in so many areas. We concluded that the best course would be to act at the most money-sensitive time of year. So, all our employees will be getting year-end bonuses this December."



EMILY VANDERVELL-THOMAS  
ONECOM PARTNERS

"Rising fuel prices and utility cost increases have all contributed to inflationary pressure, which has led to a cost-of-living increase that has impacted us all personally. These changes have similar effects on business costs, however our priorities remain the same as we focus on supporting our people and partners. So far, partners haven't tightened their belts and in Q3 we had our highest sales quarter for the year. The forecast for Q4 is also promising despite the annual network freezes in December as customers want to have new tech installed for the new year. To aid staff, we have been working hard to create a range of initiatives and measures which could yield a £170+ monthly reduction in costs for an average family. We are offering independent financial planning and advice from a team of external advisors, who are on hand to discuss individual circumstances free of charge."



DARREN GARLAND  
PROVU

"Like everyone, we have been impacted by the increased costs of energy. The fluctuations in currency exchange, however, are the largest impacting factor for us. Many of the goods we sell are imported which has resulted in numerous price changes already. Our focus now is to make our systems smarter to deal with these changes, making it simpler to keep our customers up to date. Business has still been strong, but it has been quieter than we had forecasted. There seems to be some reluctance to sealing the larger projects. From the conversations we're having, this is largely due to the uncertainty in the economic climate. We expect no real change to this in Q4. Back in May, we put in place a company-wide policy to increase everyone's wage in line with the rate of inflation at a minimum of 7%. For us, it was important that we acknowledged the increased cost of living and did what we could to support our staff."



JAMES FINUCANE  
INTERCITY

"As energy prices continue to soar, we've found that businesses that manage their infrastructure in-house are particularly feeling the sting due to vital heating and cooling costs. Our Tier 3 data centres are helping customers negate some of the impacts of rising prices, in addition to improving their data reliability and security. Companies are under pressure to re-evaluate their strategies on property, infrastructure, technologies and people. Most businesses recognise that working with an experienced partner to invest in infrastructure and services can deliver better results than simply standing still, which has meant we've seen customers wanting to engage with us and review how they can leverage technology to deliver operational benefits and cost reductions. We've also put together a package of support for employees as they navigate the cost of living, this includes an interest-free loan up to £1,500, a companywide £250 cost of living support and financial wellbeing workshops."



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# g teams through cost hikes



MARK PILLOW  
VOIP UNLIMITED

"Like all businesses, we've been exploring measures to mitigate the current economic conditions and energy crisis. Thankfully, we're fully prepared for energy brown/blackouts, acting as a 'disaster recovery role model' for our customers, with an onsite backup generator ready to provide us with uninterrupted power to ensure reliable back-office operations. Our staff are all part of the VoIP Unlimited family, so at minimum, we pay our staff the living wage and they know the door is always open to discuss individual challenges. We'll always be there for our 'family' for any cost-of-living concerns. Looking to our customers, we've noticed the retail and hospitality sectors especially are tightening their belts before winter (understandably given predicted energy costs), and we're being as flexible as possible with those customers. Though we're seeing other sectors, like manufacturing and green energy expanding significantly, which at least is a silver lining to all this uncertainty!"



JOHN DOWBIGGIN  
X.COMM

"To mitigate passing on rising energy costs to end users, we've expedited planned upgrades within our data centre environments. After profiling the workload on various network, storage and computing elements, optimisations were found allowing us to streamline our systems and lower energy consumption while improving performance. Many of the optimisations centred around our SAN systems. After years of use and incremental storage growth, multiple SAN units had been added to our environment. Each unit possesses a (relatively) large energy footprint (direct power and cooling costs). Consolidation into a smaller number of modern SAN units utilising the latest technology and caching achieved a considerable energy footprint reduction. Further reductions were made by examining workloads on various servers. We found many servers were under-utilised. Consolidation allowed us to put several servers into standby, reducing our power requirement while still maintaining resiliency and growth. Overall, we've achieved power usage reductions of circa 50%."



CHERIE HOWLETT  
JOLA

"The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact. Employees are worried about putting on their heating when working from home, and the rising costs of fuel travelling to the office. Many businesses are worried about how they will carry on with much higher energy bills. However, in a crisis, there is also opportunity. The opportunity for employers to react to challenges faced by employees by offering cycle-to-work schemes and cost-of-living bonuses. Demand for products such as mobile data is increasing as companies look to implement technology as a way of cutting costs. For example, councils are implementing smart street lighting and smart bin collections. Demand for smart meters is high, which creates mobile data opportunities for trusted channel partners to provide and manage. As companies look to cut costs, smart device-as-a-service solutions become more attractive with no upfront hardware costs and the ability to upgrade or switch devices as required."



MIKE VAN BUNNENS  
COMMS365

"Chip shortages caused by Covid have delayed hardware procurement across all industries with availability not balancing out until mid-2023 at the earliest. By ensuring we're forward purchasing and managing our own inventory, we're mitigating that risk for partners. Energy price rises are increasing the cost of running datacentres, and we're working with partners to continually review our requirements. Without doubt, our partners will see some customers giving new projects a second review. With so much uncertainty, decision-makers will naturally be more cautious about signing off large expenditure on projects. Fortunately, given the inherent ability of IoT solutions to help reduce costs and carbon footprint in many areas, some project rollouts may find themselves accelerating. Our robust IoT solutions help resellers become even more invaluable by supporting this fast deployment requirement. Back in March, we started providing all staff with additional monthly payments to help with the increased cost of living."



IAN ROWAN  
WILDIX

"The energy crisis is one that will impact many businesses this winter, costs have risen and unlike domestic energy costs, there is no cap on the cost increase so energy costs could be exponentially higher than previous years. As a business, we had to think about how to be smarter with the energy we are using. A very simple exercise we completed was having an EPC check completed on our building, just like we do when we sell a house. This check highlighted some very easy wins we could make from an energy saving perspective, such as LED and motion sensor lighting. This also highlighted some more expensive improvements that we made such as upgrading our old boiler with a more energy efficient unit. After we did this for the office, we repeated the exercise for all remote workers, ensuring that those people not in the office were as energy efficient as those in the office."



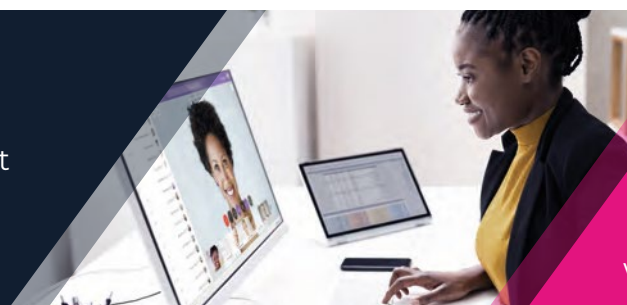
SOHINI RATHATHA  
REDSQUID

"With the current state of the threat landscape, we are seeing our customers divert their budgets onto IT and security technologies, which have taken priority over other projects. The market is very similar to what we saw during the pandemic, where organisations failing to invest in their infrastructure, security and customer experience are the ones that fall behind the competition in the long term. Internally, we are trying to support our team through the coming months. We are investing in their mental health, and we have started different initiatives such as training our entire management team and providing expert support for those who need it, from an external partner. At the same time, we are once again optimizing our office space to make it a welcoming area for our team where they enjoy spending their days and at the same time save on bills at home."

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