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# Fibre plan ushers in Digital Britain

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### SPECIAL REPORT

Thirty seven towns and cities where CityFibre already has fibre spine assets will be primary expansion areas, bringing fibre directly to five million businesses and homes.

The full fibre network will also provide a backbone for mobile operators' existing locations, enabling the roll out of 5G and IoT technology.

The investment follows CityFibre's acquisition in June 2018 by Antin Infrastructure Partners

and West Street Infrastructure Partners (a fund managed by Goldman Sachs), and is expected to generate £85bn in economic benefits and create 5,000 construction jobs.

CityFibre CEO Greg Mesch (*pictured*) said: "This full fibre investment plan enables us to accelerate our roll out and bring to scale a wholesale network that offers ISPs and mobile network operators greater choice and technical capabilities.

"We now need to work together across Government,

Ofcom and industry to create a level playing field that continues to encourage investment from multiple network operators so that full fibre can be delivered as quickly and effectively as possible."

DCMS Secretary of State Jeremy Wright added: "The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review set out our plans to maximise full fibre coverage. Significant investment from new network operators is critical to deliver our ambition for nationwide coverage." > p8

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## Full fibre ushers digital Britain

to expand CityFibre's full fibre network to 2025 target, claims the altnet.

Street Infrastructure Fund managed by (ns), and is expected to cost £85bn in costs and create 5,000 jobs. CEO Greg Mesch said: "This full fibre plan enables us to roll out and bring wholesale network to fibre and mobile networks greater choice capabilities. We need to work with Government,

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## EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

THE fact that resellers stuck on traditional business models risk penalties is starker than ever as Digital Britain comes into view. Turning a blind eye to the impact of unprecedented industry change will undoubtedly damage their future

prospects as the gap between them and their progressive counterparts becomes wider by the day. According to babble cloud CEO Matthew Parker a two tier channel is already well formed as more advanced resellers continue to pursue recurring revenue opportunities, leaving 'tin-shifters' behind. Furthermore, he says, the lower tier offers no value to acquirers and will ultimately sink into the anonymity that comes with inertia (see page 32).

For them, there will be no opportunity, no high growth mode to anticipate, no tough strategic decisions on which opportunities to pursue and which to park for now – which is a question deftly addressed by CAE Technologies as it smashes the £100 million revenue barrier and deftly rides the wave of change (see page 24).

Change needs prime movers, and right on cue the march towards Digital Britain accelerated last month as the UK's full fibre project received a boost with CityFibre outlining a £2.5 billion plan to meet a third of the Government's 2025 target. At the same time and announcing a UK first, Vodafone revealed that it is carrying 5G trial traffic from its site in Salford. All of this just weeks after Vodafone conducted the UK's first holographic call using 5G spectrum from its Manchester office.

These are times when the future direction of the industry, and the UK, is clear and perhaps best epitomised by the rise of smart cities and the revolution in business models they will bring (see pages 28, 44 and 46). Already, the copper network seems as outdated as the telegraph, and amid the maelstrom of this industry upheaval the chief victims will clearly be those unable to keep up, bereft of a means to compete.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

# Investment Forum set to drive growth

COMMS Dealer has launched the ICT Investment Forum to encourage closer ties between investors and aspiring channel business leaders who are seeking ways to secure funding while gaining insights into the M&A process.

Knight Corporate Finance has taken lead sponsorship of the event and through its support of sharing knowledge and best practices the company has reaffirmed its commitment to helping businesses in the channel achieve high growth and build long-term value, ultimately driving comms sector investment and M&A activity.

The event will be held on February 28th 2019 at BAFTA, 195 Piccadilly, London, and facilitated by TV and radio business journalist and presenter Simon Jack.

"The ICT Investment Forum is a platform for leading acquirers, M&A professionals, investors and advisors to share their insights on the key issues for entrepreneurs wanting to take their growth strategy to the next level or prepare for a transaction," commented Comms Dealer MD Mike O'Brien.

"The Forum aims to facilitate investment and dealmaking



Adam Zoldan

and provide a stimulus to M&A growth in the comms sector."

Knight Corporate Finance Director Adam Zoldan has long stressed that it is essential for potential buyers, sellers and investment-seekers to fully understand their options in order to effectively advance through the process.

"The ICT Investment Forum is a fantastic idea and will be a great opportunity for business leaders in the channel to understand and discuss the range of options that are open to them and the type of transactions that are being undertaken by ICT businesses," stated Zoldan.

The agenda will include an overview of comms sector M&A and investment activity, explore how the financing environment is evolving, and through thought leadership ses-

sions and practical examples the Forum will help delegates to make critical evaluations of their own organisation and think more strategically about their future business planning.

The ICT Investment Forum is the second new event for 2019 to be announced by BPL Business Media (publisher of Comms Dealer) and follows the launch of Margin in Mobile which will be held on 21st March next year at the Northampton Marriot Hotel.

Other BPL events include Comms Vision, the Comms National Awards, the Comms Dealer Channel Marketing Forum, Margin in Voice & Data and the Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards.

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COMMENT: WHO IS IN CONTROL?



Richard Carter

THE role of AI is set to grow even deeper next year and it poses some interesting questions about who is controlling who. The thought that machines may be in charge more than humans is a sobering one, from driverless cars and trams to complete business transformation and the associated impact on jobs. There's

no doubt AI is revolutionising the relationship between people and technology like never before.

Unify's new 'workUtopia' blueprint takes an in-depth look at how the world of work is changing based on an environment where everyone can perform at their best and improve productivity – and well-being is as important as profit. It highlights how AI will replace 1.8 million jobs by 2020 but actually create 2.3 million. Google Cloud CEO Diane Greene has warned that AI has triggered 'so many concerns in the world'. However, she also emphasised how AI is solving so many of the world's most pressing problems and is actually 'everybody's biggest opportunity'.

In today's Digital Britain – the focal point of this year's Comms Vision industry gathering – the impact on our industry of AI is still to be fully felt. But it's already playing a positive role in some areas such as contact centres. Powerful text analytics functionality enables sophisticated analysis of emails, chats, social media interactions, reviews, surveys and Net Promoter Scores. With near human-level understanding, software can automatically recognise the positive and negative meanings of phrases and summarises key topics and hidden patterns. In doing so it provides contact centres with a 360-degree view of customer interactions. This can help reduce compliance issues while enhancing customer engagement, customer retention, service standards and productivity.

Looking ahead, 2019 is going to see the influence of AI even more – there's nothing artificial about that.

**Richard Carter, Channel Sales Director, Nimans**

# Voiceflex inks first Unify UK CSP deal

VOICEFLEX has become Unify's first UK Cloud Service Provider in a move that gives the SIP and hosted telephony carrier the 'stand out factor' according to Sales and Marketing Director Paul Taylor.

"The hosted space is crowded with a hundred-plus products in the market," he said. "By launching this application our partners will continue to avoid the me-too environment."

The deal enables Voiceflex to deploy Circuit, Unify's cloud-based collaboration solution and the OpenScape Cloud application to channel partners.

The partnership builds on Voiceflex's 13 year pedigree as a SIP carrier and month-on-month double digit growth in its SIP trunks business.

The link-up also bolsters Voiceflex's addition of a hosted telephony application called Nebula into its portfolio four years ago as a standalone non-UC application.

"I have been monitoring Circuit as a standalone UC application and as a SIP carrier the possibilities are endless, not only for Circuit with OpenScape and Nebula, but also Circuit as the UC app for on-premise solutions," added Taylor.



Paul Taylor

Unify's VP for Channel Sales UK&I Rob Wiles commented: "The hosted telephony space is a race to the bottom in terms of pricing and vendors

are struggling to provide value. This partnership with Voiceflex ensures that together we deliver competitive stand-out collaboration applications." See p30

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# Houbby takes Mitel VP role



**Rami Houbby**

MITEL aims to secure a greater share of the UCaaS and cloud migration market in EMEA and APAC with the appointment of Rami Houbby to the newly created role of Vice President International Cloud Sales.

Houbby brings 25 years industry experience which kicked off with the building of high speed fibre networks for 3Com and Allied Telesis.

He joins Mitel from BroadSoft where he was Vice President of Cloud (EMEA). In a previous

role he was the founding MD of the UK subsidiary of the German group NFON AG.

Houbby, who is based in the UK, reports to Jeremy Butt, Senior Vice President International at Mitel.

"I have been operating in the cloud space for many years, but there has never been a more exciting time to be part of this landscape," said Houbby.

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CHARLBURY-based charity SpecialEffect has received a £375k cash boost from money raised in the Twin Town Challenge 2018 (TTC18), an event founded by STL Communications MD Brendon Cross (pictured). The event, staged in May, featured 100 cars costing less than £500, 400 people in fancy dress and 30 volunteers heading from Blenheim Palace to Witney's twin town of Le Touquet. Previous events were held in 2014 and 2016 and with the 2018 funds the overall amount raised is £800k. Cross, who announced the final fundraise figure last month, said: "TTC18 was fantastic fun but there is a serious reason for staging the event. SpecialEffect will use the money to help more young people with disabilities to play computer games and communicate using eye gaze technology."

## NEWS ROUNDUP

WAVENET Wholesale has added Sky Ethernet to its stable of connectivity providers and to give the new proposition an early boost Wavenet is offering resellers a promo deal on certain Sky orders until November 30th 2018. Sky Ethernet provides 1GB services via more than 2,800 exchanges covering 96% of UK business postcodes.

THE launch of a cloud-based comms and collaboration suite into the UK by Sangoma Technologies marks the expansion of a solution that already boasts over 20,000 downloads per month and hundreds of thousands of business users worldwide. Sangoma Technologies, the provider of on-premises and cloud UC solutions, aims to springboard its Cloud PBXact UCaaS and SIPStation SIP trunking services into the UK by leveraging its existing local facilities.

RED Box has extended its voice capture capability via an integration with Cloud9's cloud-based trader voice communications platform, C9 Trader. Pete Ellis, Chief Product Officer at Red Box, said: "Financial services organisations need a way to capture all communications around a trade so events can be quickly reconstructed if requested by the regulators."

VODAFONE and CityFibre's plan to bring full fibre broadband to one million UK homes and businesses by 2021 has taken a big step forward as customers in Cambridge, Leeds and Southend-on-Sea are now poised to receive gigabit-capable fibre optic broadband. They bring the total number of towns and cities confirmed to receive full fibre deployments to ten, representing over £465m of committed infrastructure investment in the programme by CityFibre to date.



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COMMENT: CHANNEL MATTERS



Nick Powell

THE channel is awash with partner programmes and discount tiering schemes that are often bland and uninspiring. Most seem to be heavily skewed towards new sales for the networks.

In the case of connectivity, many partners have large legacy bases that are now priced significantly above the

market rate. While some partner programmes appear to offer generous discounts for new circuits, it doesn't take a genius to see where the money is coming from to fund them. Circuits out of contract represent significant margin for legacy providers meaning there is currently no reward for loyalty. So, what can be done in terms of creating exciting partner programmes that reward loyalty and encourage healthy, sustainable growth among partners?

It is also important for partners to retain and motivate their people. Staff turnover is expensive and can lead to lost business; but an imaginative partner programme can enable them to create a great place to work and reward employees for their successes. Many channel players are competing for the top talent in their teams as they recognise that to be successful you need to employ the best people – an area often overlooked in partner programmes. How can providers help with this continuous challenge?

Personalised team incentives that reward both in and out of work prove very popular. Access to media content in the office for sporting events or friends and family home entertainment discounts mean that employees see the benefits (and reap the rewards) of their hard work throughout the day. In a partnership each side has their own vested interests, and good partnerships are transparent about those interests. There are no set ways of working with a partner, but what should always be the same is the ethos that suppliers share in the success and therefore should also share in the investment.

**Nick Powell, Sales Director, Sky Business Communications**

# babble bags Arden Group

LONDON-based babble cloud has almost doubled revenues to circa £20m and boosted customer numbers to over 1,200 with the acquisition of Birmingham business Arden Group.

The financials of the deal were not disclosed.

The transaction strengthens babble's capabilities in mobile and IT managed services, builds on its UCaaS and CCaaS proposition, adds a raft of mainly mid-market enterprise customers and brings babble's first location outside London.

The deal is babble's second since being backed by mid-market private equity firm LDC in October 2017, following the earlier acquisition of Direct Response Plus.

babble CEO Matt Parker said: "It's unusual to double the size of a business with a single acquisition, but with our purchase of Arden Group we have done exactly that.

"More importantly, we've significantly strengthened our product portfolio, added real talent to the leadership and management teams and given ourselves a great footprint outside London.

"This feels more like a merger in that we are bringing



Matt Parker

two complementary businesses together as one team."

Nigel Walker, Arden's former MD and majority owner, said: "The two organisations are a good fit, our cultures are aligned and Arden's product portfolio is complementary."

Alex Clark, Investment Director at LDC and member of the babble cloud board, added: "The acquisition will strengthen babble's core proposition as well as extend the business' span across the UK.

"Since partnering with Matt and the team we have been looking to drive scale in what is a competitive market and this second acquisition in our first year of partnership forms part of a wider growth strategy." > p32

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NEWS ROUNDUP

BETA Distribution went into administration on October 15th after 35 years of trading with the loss of 60 jobs. Administrators from Deloitte took control of the £186m turnover business – Beta Distribution Employee Services, Beta Services (UK) and The Content Wall (a company only recently acquired by Beta). Beta Distribution BV in Belgium is not covered by the administration process. Beta made a near £1m profit in 2017 but this year's results have not been released.

CONTENT Guru's sister company Redwood Technologies has been approved for inclusion in a major new UK Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework, meaning that its storm cloud contact centre platform and integration solutions are now available via Digital Outcomes and Specialists 3 (DOS3), under Lot 1 – Digital Outcomes and Lot 2 – Digital Specialists. "Content Guru has 25 years experience in delivering secure services for Government and businesses worldwide, with most group services now available as-a-service through the storm platform," commented the company's co-founder and Deputy CEO Martin Taylor.

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**Continued from front cover**  
 “CityFibre’s investment in 37 towns and cities across the UK will ensure the vast majority of homes and businesses in those areas can access this technology through new fibre networks,” continued Wright.

“Through our Industrial Strategy we’re working with businesses and Ofcom to ensure network competition that supports investment on this scale.”

With Vodafone as its first consumer ISP customer, CityFibre’s fibre-to-the-home builds are currently underway in Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Aberdeen, with construction due to start in Edinburgh,

Stirling, Coventry and Huddersfield before the end of this year, with Cambridge, Leeds and Southend-on-Sea planned shortly afterwards.

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, commented: “This investment in full fibre will enable our people and businesses to succeed while providing the stepping stone for advances in 5G technology.”

Mesch added: “This full fibre investment plan enables us to further accelerate our roll out, catalysing economic growth in regional towns and cities across the country and transforming the UK’s digital future.”

# Taylor takes global stage



Martin Taylor

GLOBAL expansion has emerged as a key theme in Bracknell-based Content Guru’s 2018 story. The company is now operating out of offices in Munich, The Hague, San Jose and Tokyo, with each regional team expanding in numbers throughout the year.

Also in expansion mode is the Munich office with a move to bigger premises last month ahead of plans for a similar upcoming move for the San Jose operation. A recruitment drive is underway in Japan to support the growing popularity of Content Guru’s connect storm platform in Tokyo.

The hiring spree also follows a partnership with Japanese busi-

ness Rakuten Communications, a subsidiary of Rakuten which is HQ’d in the Japanese capital.

“The partnership will see storm cloud contact centre and customer engagement services delivered across Asia-Pac,” stated Deputy CEO Martin Taylor.

“We also launched a new arm of the storm platform in Asia, supported by local in-time-zone support from the new Tokyo-based office.

“The connect storm platform will support the portfolio of storm apps and will target the rapidly growing Japanese cloud contact centre market.”

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# Beresford puts cash in Firstnet

A MULTI-million pound investment in Firstnet Datacentres by new Chairman Jason Beresford is expected to significantly strengthen the company’s local presence in Leeds.

The firm was created in September 2017 when Select Data Centres merged with Firstnet and became Firstnet Group, with the reseller arm, Firstnet Solutions, going into administration in February this year.

Beresford said: “There will always be a role for local service providers and facilities. The cloud and IT services should not always have to be a faceless entity, nor should they be.

“There is also a question of scale and further growth, and I’m confident that Firstnet is already ahead of the curve.”

Firstnet CEO Stephen Leahy added: “Jason coming on board represents a significant step in our strategy of building the largest data centre service provider in the northern digital market.”



Jason Beresford



UNION Street gave partners a sneak preview of its ‘disruptive’ new software at the company’s inaugural conference staged at The Belfry in the West Midlands last month. “We have invested £1.75m into product development over the course of 2018,” said Head of Sales and Marketing Vincent Disneur. “The new product will be a game changer and the opportunities it will create for resellers will be massive. After beta testing we’ll be rolling it out to the entire channel early in 2019.” Following the preview, guests enjoyed golf on The Belfry’s iconic Brabazon Course, luxury spa treatments, wine tasting and a black tie dinner.

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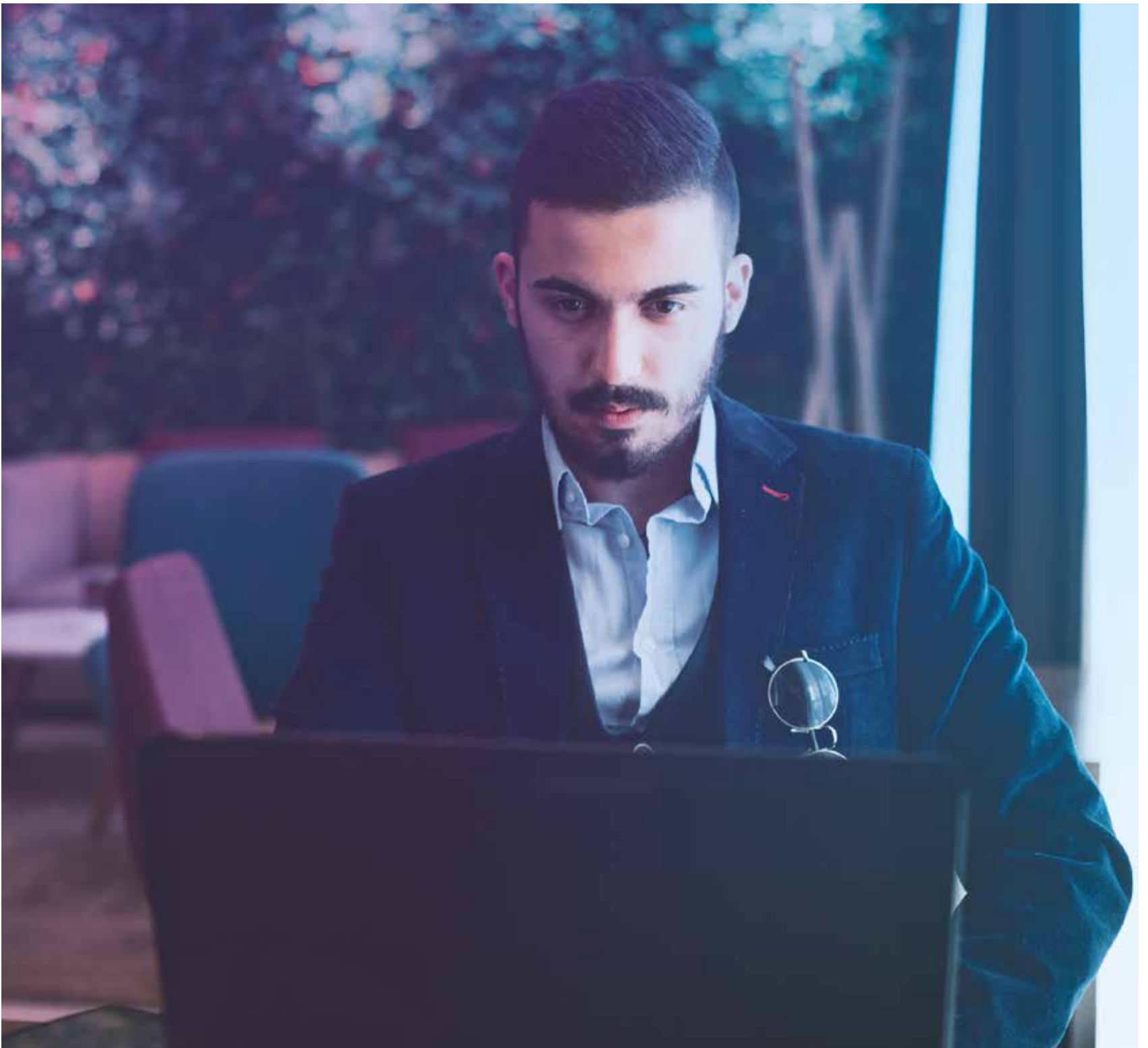
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COMMENT: NUMBER PORTING



Dave Dadds

OFCOM'S General Condition of Entitlement B3 ensures that all subscribers of publicly available telephone services can retain their telephone number when changing to a new provider. The current industry number porting processes for fixed geographic and non-geographic numbers are self-governing with Ofcom

providing a 'light touch' regulatory approach. Porting performance is reasonably sound when CPs follow the industry documented processes, but a problem materialises from the wider stakeholder community who do not necessarily follow these processes and SLAs. Errors impact on the volume of numbers that can be successfully ported, putting the migration capacity under strain. Also, because the process is classified as 'non-mandatory' there is no effective industry governance to enforce these rules. This means porting performance is greatly variable and deficient.

The traditional voice-to-IP transition is already creating new requirements for number portability which will need to be accommodated in a converged industry. BT's move towards total IP will create more pressure on porting processes and the potential for true converged IP fixed and mobile products will create demand for a converged fixed and mobile number portability process architecture.

In its current form, the process of bi-lateral fixed line porting order exchange between CPs is fragile at best and inadequate systems, industry governance and regulatory oversight continue to create challenges. The FCS is keen to create an environment where all CPs participate on an equal and non-discriminatory basis and have the status to develop the number porting system and service which is fit for purpose and for the future.

We believe that the costs of number management, porting and onward routing should not be regarded as a competitive element and must be treated as a pass-through cost as we move to the digital world.

Dave Dadds, Chairman, FCS

# Traversers hired by Exclusive

EXCLUSIVE Group has pulled in ex-Fortinet and RSA executive Andy Traversers as SVP Worldwide Sales & Marketing and announced the departure of COO Barrie Desmond who leaves the distributor at the end of the year.

The appointment of Traversers marks a ramping up of Exclusive's ambition to become the world's biggest specialist VAD in cyber security and cloud transformation with targeted revenues of \$10bn over the next five years.

Traversers brings 25 years IT channel sales experience working for VAD and global vendor organisations.

Previous roles include SVP and VP Sales positions on both sides of the Atlantic for Fortinet, as well as VP EMEA stints at F5 Networks and, most recently, RSA Security.

Exclusive Group CEO Olivier Breittmayer commented: "Following our recent investment from Permira we set ourselves high expectations for executing against our new growth strategy.

"Andy has the skills and experience necessary to contribute to us achieving our goals and understands our culture and



Andy Traversers

values having been in the orbit of Exclusive working with our vendors and channel partners for many years."

Traversers added: "I'm joining at a pivotal time for the business as we commit to exploiting the global opportunities around cyber security and cloud transformation to reach another step-change in growth. The investors and management team have developed a strategy and now it's all about the execution."

Outgoing Desmond commented: "My work here is done. It's time for the next generation of disruptors to take on the challenge of growing the world's largest specialist VAD."

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NEWS ROUNDUP

MANAGED services provider Claranet has amalgamated its cyber security proposition following the integration of acquired companies Sec-1 and NotSoSecure and the launch of a consolidated Cyber Security unit. Claranet UK MD Michel Robert said: "Security is a top priority for a large number of businesses so we have worked hard over the last couple of years to strengthen our offering in this area."

CLOUD-based meetings provider BlueJeans has inked a US distribution agreement with Ingram Micro after working together in EMEA for a year. "Demand for intelligent workplaces is building among businesses of all sizes so we're extending our US portfolio to include BlueJean's one-touch video, audio and web conferencing solutions," said Jeff Yelton, Executive Director, Ingram Micro.

LOGICALIS Group has bolstered its presence 'down under' with the acquisition of CNI, one of Australia's top Microsoft Azure partners. The deal enables Thomas Duryea Logicalis (TDL), the Australian operation, to strengthen its capabilities in hybrid IT services and solutions in Azure public cloud.



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# Mobile spend cap regulation raises concern



Vincent Disneur

UNION Street's Head of Sales & Marketing Vincent Disneur has insisted that comms providers higher up the supply chain should take action to prevent resellers from 'bill shock' following the introduction of new Ofcom regulations which came into force on 1st October.

The legislation on Mobile Bill Limits enables customers to cap their bill but the same empowerment is not extended to resellers who need to ensure there is no overspend.

The new law demands that customers are given an opportunity to limit their bill and resellers will have one month, the length of a typical billing period, before being held accountable for any overspend.

"Although customers may cap their bills, resellers cannot," said Disneur. "Nor do they have the technology to stop customers from using services they can't be charged for, leaving resellers exposed."

Disneur says it is an issue the channel cannot ignore as resellers, who are between a rock and hard place following the introduction of the legislation, risk contravening Ofcom rules and suffering reputational dam-

age if they run counter to what's required of the law.

"Any solution for preventing resellers from suffering bill shock has to come from the supply chain," he stated.

"The mobile industry needs a way for information on customers' limits, taking into account any mark-ups, to flow up the channel with the ultimate responsibility resting with the carrier that has the capability to stop services in flight once a limit is reached."

Disneur has urged resellers to communicate bill limits to their suppliers and secure an agreement that stops them from being held accountable for instances of overspend.

"Carriers and wholesalers need to provide this facility for their resellers and dealers," he said. "Some have done so, though many more have been slow to act and some have remained silent on the matter."

"Any supplier that does not provide this facility for their reseller partners is, arguably, failing to comply with the spirit of the legislation."

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# Pangea links with smart spaces firm

IOT AND connectivity firm Pangea has joined forces with Buddy Platform, the provider of IoT and smart-space cloud solutions, to better manage the use of energy in buildings.

According to figures cited by Pangea 30% of energy used in UK commercial buildings is wasted, 53% of small businesses don't plan for energy usage, and 20% of companies spend over £250k a year on energy.

"It's hard enough for businesses to manage occupant behaviour and deal with rising operational costs, all while trying to meet complex Government policies like ESOS," stated Pangea MD Dan Cunliffe.

"That's where a 'Fitbit for Buildings' comes in. Through a combination of IoT sensors and SIM-enabled IoT connectivity, the device tracks a multitude of energy stats, all on a per-building, floor, desk or device basis.

"Whether electricity and water consumption or temperature and humidity across a single or multiple buildings, operators will have their building's vitals at their fingertips via a real-time dashboard," he added.

In practice the device clips to a surface in a building and communicates with the Buddy



Dan Cunliffe

solution via Pangea's cellular IoT connectivity.

"Businesses can start monitoring energy usage for patterns, stay aware of anomalies and solve problems before they crop up," added Cunliffe.

"They can set efficiency targets, meet Government green standards and stop worrying about being caught out by ridiculous energy bills.

"It's more than a tracker. The data collected helps a building tell a story of where and how

energy is being used and puts businesses back in control."

Buddy Platform MD for Europe Martin Carroll added: "Since launching in Europe we've been encouraged by the uptake of our Buddy Ohm solution across the UK, Ireland, Spain and Italy.

"Our relationship with UK channel partners like Pangea IoT, in particular, enables the rapid distribution of our solutions across all commercial and industrial sectors."

# CapZ service checks usage

A BILL spend management tool launched by West Yorkshire-based Abzorb enables businesses to monitor and control their comms expenditure and prevent 'bill shock'.

The new service, called CapZ, is set up via Abzorb's partner portal and according to the company's founder Steve Beeby CapZ 'puts partners and customers in control'.

"Partners can manage customers' alerts in line with the new bill spend cap legislation," he said. "Usage will be collected in real-time and alerts then sent to customers via text message or email to let them know when they are nearing their monthly limit.

"This gives partners and their customers peace of mind

that spend and data usage is calculated accurately based on RRP and updated hourly.

"Irrespective of the debate on Ofcom regulation, it's important we keep the customer updated on end usage. This should be a shared responsibility across the industry. It is irresponsible for billing providers, that will not bear the burden of financial loss, to try and bypass the regulation and have complacency towards Ofcom."

Abzorb has a network of over 300 partners and has used live webinars to keep them updated on these developments.

The company works with BT, EE, O2 and Vodafone and has twice been named Mobile Distributor of the Year at the Comms National Awards.



Steve Beeby

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# Haw nets top energy deal

NEWS ROUNDUP



HATS off to Gamma for scooping the Company of the Year gong at the AIM Awards (staged at Old Billingsgate, London, 11th October). "These awards look at how companies and individuals harness AIM to power their growth and fulfil their strategy," enthused CEO Andrew Taylor. "This award is a testament to the hard work and dedication shown by Gamma's employees and the support we have received from our channel partners. Our aim is to continue providing innovative and disruptive products to the UK business market." Pictured: Andrew Taylor and Gamma's Chief Financial Officer Andrew Belshaw.



John Haw

FIDELITY Energy and mobile phone retailer Carphone Warehouse Business have signed a partnership agreement that will help mobile resellers add energy sales to their product portfolios.

The two businesses are currently jointly delivering roadshows across the country and have already secured multiple new partners.

"This is the biggest partnership we have ever signed and puts us firmly on the map in the mobile reseller channel," said Fidelity Energy MD John Haw.

"We expect to sign up more than 100 partners over the next few months. So far, we have held launch events at the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, the Carphone Warehouse Business head office in Poole and the Kia Oval."

Haw said the partner portal designed and built by Fidelity Energy's IT guru Howard Richards was fundamental to securing the partnership.

"Our Ambolt portal, along with the B2B online e-commerce platform and ability to support and scale for the rest of Carphone Warehouse Business played its part," he added.

The energy programme will be marketed in the mobile channel under the Business Energy Saver moniker and will be offered as a 'partner perk'.

Carphone Warehouse Business Head of B2B Indirect Sales, Carlos Pestana, commented on the partnership: "It's important that we ensure our partners have the opportunity to earn additional revenue streams from their existing bases."

AN AI LAB created by Atos and Google Cloud aims to boost the development of data analytics, hybrid cloud and digital transformation solutions. The London-based facility opened last month and is available to partners and customers across Europe. The two companies formed a joint business development alliance in April and plan to open labs in Paris and Dallas. UK Digital Minister Margot James said: "The UK is leading the way when it comes to expertise in artificial intelligence, and the new lab will help to develop this exciting area of technology further."

CLOUD security and data protection business Barracuda Networks added more than 200 new customer public cloud deployments per quarter in the last year, including Barracuda CloudGen Firewall and CloudGen WAF solution deployments. Barracuda's customers consumed more than three million PAYG hours annually on Microsoft Azure and AWS combined. Additionally, Barracuda CloudGen Firewall net bookings grew 57% year-over-year for the second quarter fiscal 2019 that ended August 31st 2018. CloudGen Firewall bookings through its MSP business grew 173% over the same period.

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NEWS ROUNDUP

MASERGY has kicked off a partner recruitment campaign in EMEA supported by the expansion of its channel programme in the region. The Global Partner Programme is designed to work with a number of business models including VARs, master and sub-agents, SIs, solution providers and consultants.

WESTCOAST has joined forces with Huawei to support the Chinese giant's push into the mobile B2B market. Eric Yu, Senior B2B Sales, Huawei Technologies, commented: "There's already positive demand and feedback from our B2B customers, so we're growing these strategic relationships with UK resellers alongside Westcoast."

TALKTALK Telecom Group has deployed Infinera's XTM II platform into its metro aggregation network, enabling TalkTalk to deliver enhanced services to both its residential and business customers. The network upgrade is the continuation of a longstanding relationship between both companies and provides TalkTalk with a 20-fold capacity increase to its existing solution, while addressing the challenge of reducing space and power across its estate.

NFON UK has added the full pack of Sennheiser headset and conferencing solutions to its portfolio, extending their agreement in other countries to UK territory. "The ONS predicts that half of the UK's workforce will be working remotely by 2020," said NFON UK MD Myles Leach. "For these workers to be as effective as possible they need the right communication tools and audio equipment." Andy Dinneen, Channel Sales Manager at Sennheiser, added: "The business sector is a strategic priority for Sennheiser and the growth of the cloud telephony market is a huge opportunity for us."

# Gamma's in Netherlands



Andrew Taylor

GAMMA'S acquisition last month of Netherlands telecoms group Dean One extends its international reach and provides a platform to gain a significant share of the growing Netherlands cloud PBX market.

Dean One is a channel-led business focused on products similar to Gamma's portfolio and in its last financial year reported revenues of 15.8m euros with 0.8m euros EBITDA. The organisation employs circa 60 people.

"Gamma management have known the Dean One business for a number of years," said Gamma CEO Andrew Taylor.

"It has a similar product set selling cloud PBX, SIP trunks, data products and mobile to primarily SME businesses via a

network of over 500 channel partners. The market penetration and growth rates in sales of cloud PBX in the Netherlands is similar to that in the UK where Gamma has a track record in driving sustainable growth."

Taylor said Gamma will provide a boost to Dean One's growth prospects as he leverages the acquisition as a conduit for additional products that have been proven in the UK market.

Dean One's co-Chief Executive Klaas Bottema commented: "Gamma is the right home for Dean One. With its support we can grow more quickly and move into markets that we don't currently serve."

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# New security event

COMMS Dealer sister business IT Europa has launched a new channel event focused on the rapidly growing security sector – Channel-Sec 2019 – to be staged 14th March at the Royal Garden Hotel in London.

"Security is a growing concern for organisations of all types across Europe," said IT Europa MD Alan Norman.

"Increasingly, customers are turning to the channel for help in finding solutions that will protect their businesses and deliver real value. Channel-Sec



Alan Norman

2019 provides an opportunity for UK and European channels to come together with distributors and technology providers to explore ways of creating new business opportunities." [www.channel-sec.com](http://www.channel-sec.com)

# Vapour takes aim at Target

CASTLEFORD-based Target Components has partnered with fellow Yorkshire tech firm Vapour Cloud.

Target Components, a £30m turnover business that has been in operation for over 20 years, is a Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, Fujitsu and Lenovo partner, and serves more than 2,000 IT resellers across the UK.

The deal enables Target Components to provide cloud and hybrid services alongside hardware through its enterprise division Servers Plus.

Servers Plus Commercial Director Jago Packer commented: "There are significant advantages associated with the cloud, especially around security and disaster recovery.

"However, we feel the real beauty is the flexibility it offers our customers, the ability to scale up or down as required and pay for what you need, when you need it.

"As a fully managed service cloud can take the headache out of IT infrastructure."

Elland-based Vapour's CEO Tim Mercer commented: "We have seen how partnerships can add bottom line value to our business, our partners' organisations and their clients.

"For example, Vapour Cloud has generated £4m revenue for an existing partner during the past two years, so watch this space for what will be an exciting journey for Target & Servers Plus customers." See p26

# Mobeus offers Ventrica boost

A £9M INVESTMENT boost from Mobeus Equity Partners has put outsourced contact centre business Ventrica on the road to European expansion.

Southend-based Ventrica, which was founded in 2010 by CEO Dino Forte, provides multi-lingual and omni-channel outsourced customer services to global brands.

The company employs over 450 staff and expects the headcount to reach 600 this year.

Ventrica has doubled in size during the last two years by tapping into the growth of e-commerce in sectors such as retail, and supporting customers as they expand their communication channels from the phone to email, social media and webchat.

Danielle Garland, Mobeus Investment Manager, stated: "Ventrica is in the sweet spot for the growing outsourcing contact



Dino Forte

centre market. It is large enough to deliver multilingual and technology solutions to blue-chip clients but small enough to be dynamic, innovative and provide the personalised service its clients require."

Forte added: "We have a significant market opportunity and are winning new customer contracts at an increasing scale and rate. With Mobeus as a partner we are positioned to strengthen our team to support growth while also focusing on our existing clients."



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\*\*\* Distribution of weekly email newsletter (1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017, Average Distribution 20,918)

# Client wins propel NGC to record sales

WAKEFIELD-based NGC Networks secured a greater share of the north west comms market in its latest financial year with a 16% year-on-year hike in revenues to over £6m, prompting an expansion of its HQ office space and the opening of a new office in Greater Manchester earlier this year.

A growing number of client wins has put NGC on standby to add significant numbers to its current 40 headcount.

“Our growth has come across the network services and installations areas of the business. We are also seeing increased demand for our burgeoning business mobiles offering,” said Director Dean Harrop.

“As businesses look to invest in virtualised software and explore the benefits of cloud-based technology, NGC is well placed to deliver solutions that are cost-effective and reliable.”

Also providing a boost to NGC Networks is its partnership with CityFibre to deliver ultrafast full fibre connectivity to local businesses in Wakefield.



**Nikki Guest and Dean Harrop**

“NGC is helping to deliver gigabit Internet speeds to companies in Huddersfield, Leeds, Bradford, York and Hull,” added fellow Director Nikki Guest.

The firm's clients includes Lupton Fawcett, Freeman Grattan Holdings, Harrison Spinks, Timpson, Manning Stainton,

Puma UK, The Car People and Sharp Business Systems. NGC also works with academies, schools and medical centres, and is in the 2018 Northern Tech Top 100 companies.

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## Evolution Capital pulls in Smith to bolster senior advisor team

MID-market boutique TMT M&A advisory firm Evolution Capital has appointed Gary Smith as Senior Corporate Finance Advisor, Business Sales & Divestitures.

“Gary brings significant corporate finance experience including strategy review, M&A and a solid financial understanding of online and technology businesses,” said Evolution Capital MD Nigel Cook.

Prior to his career as an advisor Smith held a number of Director roles with multi-nationals in the digital and technology marketplace with responsibilities



**Gary Smith**

for P&L. Before joining Evolution Capital Smith was MD of an online UK technology company with group revenues exceeding £100m.

“Gary is credited for turning around the business and growing profitability by 750%,”

commented Cook. “He led the three-year value building programme and preparation for disposal, completing the transaction in 2016.”

Smith also brings international experience of both disposals and acquisitions for technology companies in the Asia region where he held the post of Regional Chief Executive with the Saongroup.

He grew Saon's Asia business from two to seven integrated subsidiary companies within five years with revenue growth increasing over 600% during his tenure.

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# THE GAMMA GUIDE TO...

## Mastering your marketing: the importance of building a stronger marketing strategy in the channel

For many channel partners, sales is the key focus. A strong sales strategy is imperative, but a sales pipeline without a marketing plan working alongside it to help ripen the environment for new leads, can become stagnant.

With 2019 rapidly creeping up on us, we want to give channel partners a head start with the new years' marketing plans - focusing on the key top-of-the-funnel aspects of the consumer pathway. Gamma has teamed up with Comms Dealer to give you our top tips on adopting a 'funnel first' sales and marketing strategy and why increasing awareness, interest and engagement should be a key priority for any sales KPIs in 2019 and beyond.

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NEWS ROUNDUP

A WEBINAR hosted by Gamma this month aims to help resellers adopt a 'funnel first' sales and marketing approach. "A strong sales strategy is imperative, but a sales pipeline without a marketing plan working alongside it to help ripen the environment for new leads can become stagnant," said Justin Coombes, Head of Marketing. "With 2019 rapidly creeping up on us we want to give channel partners a head start with the new years' marketing plans, focusing on the key top-of-the-funnel aspects of the consumer pathway."

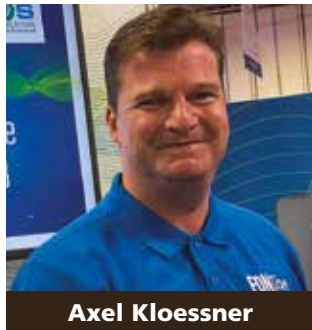
FAST rising cloud subscription revenues caught SAP by surprise, up 39% as cloud continues to push out traditional software faster than expected. SAP's cloud subscription revenue is now 40% larger than software license revenue. The company's Q3 results also showed that customers in the Americas and parts of EMEA were moving quicker than expected to cloud and hybrid models. "Our growth drivers are firing on all cylinders," said CEO Bill McDermott.

# FONtevo set for close ties

PROCESS complexity and the need for standardisation is holding back resellers tied into partnerships with the UK's incumbent telephone systems manufacturers, claims Axel Kloessner, Sales Director for International Business at Auerswald, the German manufacturer aiming to take a chunk of the UK SME market alongside distributor SOS Communications under the FONtevo brand name.

Described as the 'Mercedes' of the telecoms industry, Auerswald is dominant in Europe's German speaking countries claiming 16,000 reseller partnerships and a £20m turnover.

FONtevo aims to recruit UK ICT resellers who want a closer,



Axel Kloessner

more flexible relationship with a manufacturer, as Kloessner explained: "We are not a big joint-stock company and are therefore flexible, agile and we can quickly implement specific solutions with our partners."

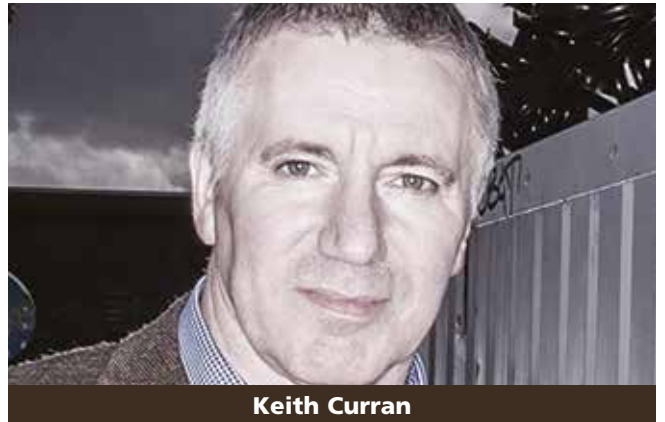
"Decisions at FONtevo are made together with our partners and not just driven by shareholders to increase the stock market value."

"It's about having the right family in place that supports the resellers and end customers, giving them the confidence they have made the right choice."

In partnership with Horsham-based SOS Communications, FONtevo is offering free training and free lead generation programs plus webinars and roadshows as well as brand campaigns for the UK market to promote its cloud and on-premise options.

"Our solutions make the step into the cloud and/or back to PBX with cloud services an easy solution for businesses to understand and be fully supported on," added Kloessner.

# plan.com aids customers on bill limit regs



Keith Curran

PLAN.COM has responded to a new Ofcom rule that came into force last month, that allows mobile users to cap their spending, with the launch of a self-service platform that alerts customers whenever a spending cap is reached and enables them to increase the cap and remove the restrictions, or add bolt-ons that extend their service.

Co-founder Keith Curran said: "The biggest impact that this regulatory change is having is among airtime providers. Capping spending is a huge technical undertaking that impacts every aspect of the services they provide. We responded to the Ofcom regulations by transforming this challenge into an opportunity."

"We've simplified complex regulations and delivered a self-service technology solution that provides our partners and customers with more flexibility, more immediacy and more intuitive technology."

Curran noted that additional charges can be incurred in a number of ways and airtime distributors are being asked to control the whole range of their telephonic and digital services.

"This means that for most service providers the new regulations have a huge cost implication as they have forced large

scale revisions of technical infrastructure, business processes and cashflow," commented Curran. "Business customers need full control over their bills, but they also need a level of flexibility that allows them to control their services and keep them connected."

"Ensuring both requires the application of sophisticated technology. Our new service-specific web pages, called Captive Pages, are triggered automatically or via SMS when a spending cap is reached and a service becomes restricted. Customers then have the option to increase their spending cap and purchase bolt-ons."

Since launch 38% of people who received Captive Pages opted to extend their spending caps and 17% added a bolt-on.

"These actions, which would previously have meant a phone call to customer services or a series of emails, were dealt with instantly and effectively by the customer," added Curran.

"There's no bill shock at the end of the month because the customer controls every limit increase and is alerted before they reach the new limit, as well as when a limit is met."

# Content Guru hires Choudry as global expansion continues

CONTENT Guru has bolted on 20 years of comms sector and leadership experience with the hire of Jay Choudry as Solutions Consultant Director.

Choudry's previous roles include a six year stint as Head of Future Workplace at Vodafone, a position that followed a long spell at Cable&Wireless Worldwide and prior assignments at 2e2 Solutions, Verizon Business UK, Getronics UK and Comparex Networks UK.

He joins Content Guru as the cloud firm continues to make strong advances across global markets including the US



Edward Winfield and Jay Choudry

and Asia-Pac regions, while its presence in Germany and the Netherlands is also growing.

"I'm joining during a strong period of growth in the UK and internationally," said Choudry. "This year has seen some great international developments and

it's an exciting time to work in the contact centre market."

Content Guru's UK Sales Director Edward Winfield commented: "As we continue to build a strong commercial team Jay brings years of experience and expertise to the company."

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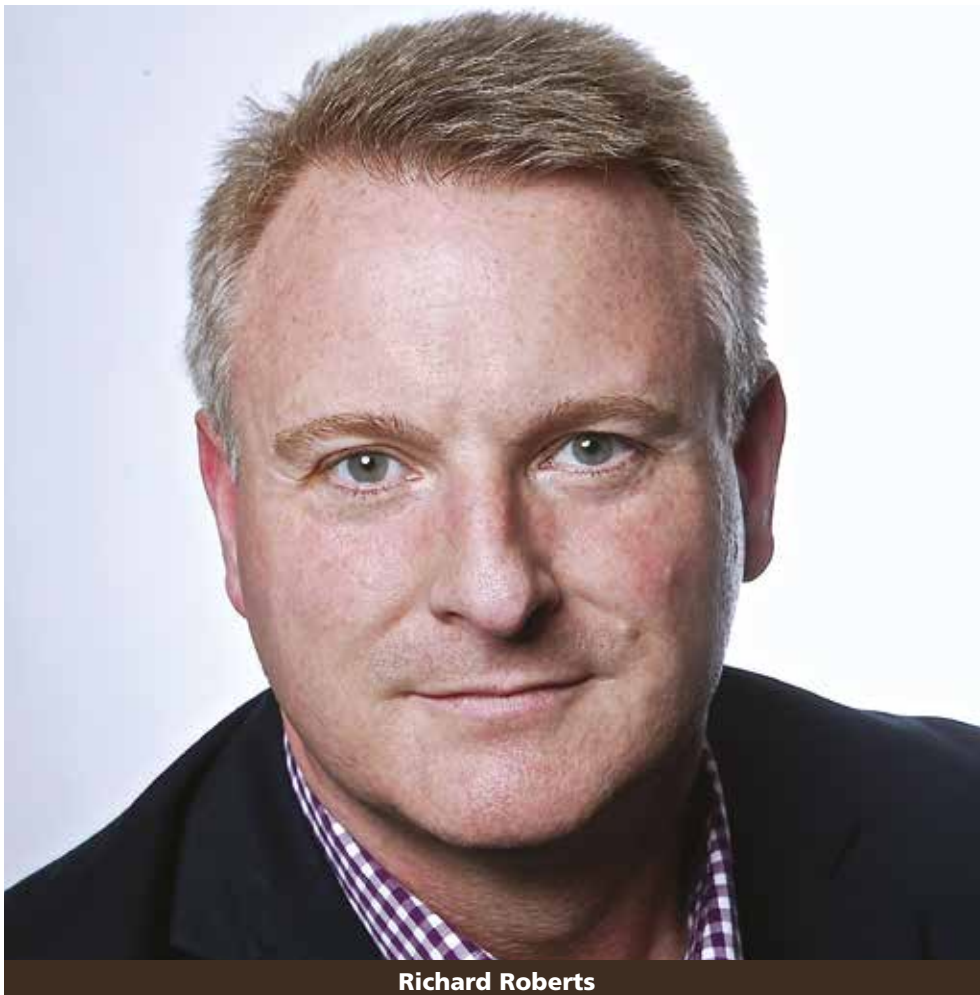
# Richard Roberts: A man w

Richard Roberts' insights into human thought structures and how they relate to technology adoption and sales is a key driver in his collaboration story. Mitel's Vice President for UK, Ireland and South Africa is also acutely aware that the comms industry must put customer service front and centre of all strategic thinking to expose the full potential of the market.

To draw the richest conclusions on where the market is heading an understanding of the human mind will pay great dividends, according to Roberts, who entered the comms industry after studying psychology and linguistics at university. "I have always been fascinated by the role that psychology plays in the design, acceptance and adoption of technology, along with its role in sales," he stated. "Throughout my career my priority has been to enable customers to get the most out of their technology solutions."

Roberts joined Mitel in January this year from Purple where he led the EMEA Sales and Worldwide Channels business, focused on helping customers to monetise their venues and facilities using Wi-Fi analytics. That followed two stints at Cisco where he came to lead the UK&I channel operation along with Cisco's UK&I Commercial (mid-market and SMB) business. Roberts' 20 year career in networking and communications also includes leadership roles at Digital Equipment Company (DEC) and Symbol Technologies.

"I'm using everything I've learnt along the way to help drive forward Mitel's expanded UK, Ireland and South Africa business," commented Roberts. "My priorities are on simplifying Mitel for our partners and



Richard Roberts

## Now, more than ever, our customers need true partnership, borne out of a clear understanding of their business, their priorities and ambitions

customers, promoting an empowered culture with a particular focus on service. Rising customer expectations and digital transformation are driving how both customers and employees want and need to interact with each other. Our customers are

experiencing the challenges that come with these increased demands on a day-to-day basis and we're providing solutions for seamless communications and collaboration that can help them adapt to this environment and grow."

Hardly a day passes without talk of the huge tech shift that's happening across all businesses, and Roberts believes that any such digital transformation project is underpinned by collaboration technology. "You can't unlock the collaborative

power of employees without it," he stated. "We have the opportunity to bring true equality and diversity to business thinking by leveraging the power of communication and collaboration technology to drive inclusion."

Mitel is now one of the biggest UC and collaboration vendors in the world, powering over two billion connections every day. This fact alone, says Roberts, also positions Mitel as a safe haven for businesses at all stages of their cloud journey. "Now, more than ever, our customers need true partnership, borne out of a clear understanding of their business, their priorities and their ambitions," he stated. "Mitel supports customers wherever they may be on their cloud journey, whether they're looking for a public or private cloud solution or are continuing to work with on-site systems."

In September last year Mitel completed its acquisition of ShoreTel. The deal accelerated Mitel's growth, taking it to the number two market share position for UCaaS globally. "Mitel is now able to take customers to the cloud faster with full featured cloud-based communications and applications, while continuing to support and offer future-proof solutions to those who rely on on-site systems," said Roberts. "Our market is at a critical turning point. Digital transformation



# with his mind on comms

is rapidly changing business models in every industry, enabling them to seize new opportunities. We're seeing organisations move more and more applications to the cloud as they strive to increase productivity, enhance customer experience and accelerate their innovation to stay ahead."

Mitel's deal to be acquired by an investor group led by Searchlight Capital Partners in April is a clear reflection of the market as well as Mitel's growth ambitions. "This transaction is an exciting next step in our multi-year transformation that has enabled Mitel to emerge as an industry leader in the largest markets in the world," added Roberts. "As a private company, and with the strategic and capital support of the Searchlight funds, we will have greater flexibility to manage the transition in our market, accelerate our strategy and drive the next phase of success for our customers, partners and employees."

## Grass roots

Mitel was founded in 1973 by Terry Matthews and Michael Cowpland, with the company's original product being silent cordless lawnmowers. However, when the first shipment was lost in shipping and arrived after the summer season had ended Matthews and Cowpland decided to refocus the business and produce a touch-tone receiver just as the market for touch-tone phones began to take hold. Following the success of their new product the founders set about producing further software technology and microprocessors. Mitel has since grown organically and through acquisition. Today

it has more than 70 million end users worldwide, and at the end of last year the company passed the one million subscriber milestone for hosted cloud seats globally, with a presence in more than 100 countries.

"In EMEA we're seeing many companies, both enterprise and mid-market, moving to the cloud," noted Roberts. "They're looking for cloud-capable comms solutions and applications to digitally transform their businesses. Finding a seamless path to the cloud has been a real pain point for many businesses. We're helping our customers overcome these challenges by offering options based on their operating and economic models. We're not about rip and replace. Instead, we offer customers the choice with a range of private and public solutions covering multi-tenant and multi-instance to deliver seamless cloud migration."

Cloud computing breaks down borders, removes barriers, reduces costs and increases productivity. It's also the starting point for embracing new technologies and applications such as chat bots, the IoT, Artificial Intelligence and omni-channel communications, observed Roberts. Now, we have new technologies, and with them the likelihood of an exodus towards a more connected and intelligent world. Which is good news for the channel. "One of the most exciting aspects of the evolving customer landscape is the ability to bring machine-enhanced communications into the experience," said Roberts. "Like data analytics before it, machine learning technologies and AI can help to deliver

a much higher level of personalisation and efficiency to customer transactions and interactions. Coupled with sensors and machine enhanced communications, businesses can now deliver a completely new kind of customer experience with their products and services."

According to research commissioned by Mitel last year businesses value machine-to-people interactions and the promise these hold for positively transforming the customer experience. And as long

**We all need to help businesses grab their opportunity and we'll only do this by becoming more customer centric ourselves**

as resellers can win their customers' trust, and as long as they keep up to speed with technology innovations, customers will always beat on their door. "These new technologies are at the heart of future-proofing customer service and help redefine what we understand the term to mean," stated Roberts. "Giving machines a voice in machine-to-people interactions can be a powerful differentiator as the relationship between businesses and consumers

shifts from transactional to more experiential, and customer experience becomes at least as important as the product or service a company provides.

"Furthermore, as the markets continue to evolve, so does the need for our business and our partners' businesses to adapt. The adoption of cloud solutions is giving rise to a whole new way of doing business – the subscription model. For channel partners who are new to the subscription model – or who perhaps haven't marketed themselves as 'cloud experts' – the shift can be daunting. That's why we're helping our partners shift their business models and processes to take advantage of opportunities afforded by cloud technologies."

The channel faces one of the biggest opportunities in its history, believes Roberts. "Organisations are still making sense of their own cloud strategies and devising their digital transformation plans," he commented. "This makes the consultative role of the channel more important than ever and offers them the chance to become trusted advisors. We live in an age where customers expect real-time service across a variety of platforms. If they don't receive this experience they will not hesitate to look elsewhere.

"Advances in technology have given all businesses an opportunity to succeed, but it comes with challenges. We all need to help organisations grab their opportunity but we'll only do this by being more customer centric ourselves. Communication remains at the heart of all human achievement." ■

## Just a minute with Richard Roberts...

**What do you fear the most?** Complacency

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know:**

I once ran 15 miles barefoot for charity

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

Teaching. I aspire to inspire and enthral, just as I was inspired as a child. It would be a great way to give something back

**Your greatest strengths and what could you improve on?** I have a strong moral compass.

I'm driven to do what's right, but I can show too much urgency to find a fast solution rather than appreciate how important the journey to the solution can be

**What is the biggest risk you have taken?**

Circumstances dictated that I had to set out on my own and leave home at 18. For me it was a big leap into the unknown but I would like to think that it has come good

**Top tip for resellers:** To succeed in the long-term you must understand who you are and know your true value. Don't compromise on this and never apologise for sticking to it

**One example of something you have overcome:**

While presenting on stage the fear of being seen to do it badly used to overwhelm me. But now, through training, different techniques and experience, I'm comfortable presenting

**Best advice you have received:**

Always assume good intent. It puts you on the front foot and allows you to bring the best of yourself to any situation

# How CAE smashed the £

As Justin Harling, CAE Technology Services CEO, charts the company's journey towards becoming a £100 million revenue business this year we see ever more clearly the ongoing growth potential of a long-established IT giant breaking into a gallop.

In its financial year ending June 2018 CAE broke through the £100 million barrier, almost doubling the £56 million generated in 2015. Harling now plans another revenue rise of 20-plus per cent next year. Also trending upwards is CAE's headcount which sits at just over 280 with a forecast of 300 by June 2019. "During the past three years we have been in high growth mode and there is no shortage of opportunity in the market," said Harling. "We are having to look wider to find the most talented sales and technical resource and make sure we have the right systems in place to support our growth."

CAE Technology Services was founded in 1992 and its biggest strategic step-change came in 2004 with its first MBO. This was followed by Angel finance and a restructuring that opened a new front and defined the management and ownership team today. CAE's customer base is circa two thirds commercial and one third public sector and it targets the higher end of mid-market and lower end enterprise. "These customers are experiencing the greatest change with established IT teams under pressure to deliver against a new digital agenda," stated Harling. "It is in this space that partnership and flexibility are the most important factors sought by customers. We now have



Justin Harling

## Customers are experiencing the greatest change with established IT teams under pressure to deliver against a digital agenda

a service led approach that resonates with the digital transformation agenda."

CAE's proposition comprises the key technology areas of networking, data centre and

the digital workspace, all with a security wrap. Each area has a key vendor partner – Cisco, Dell EMC, Microsoft and Palo Alto – with a number of complementary and competitive propositions

to ensure solutions are always available while maintaining a level of vendor independence. "We start with a service led approach to deliver a framework for digital transformation for IT

infrastructure – the move from old to a new style of IT," added Harling. "Some businesses are struggling to implement change and take a defensive stance in terms of trying to protect outdated revenue models. Growth has come from attacking these and exposing situations where providers may not be acting in a customer's best interests. This approach has entailed significant levels of investment across the business."

Harling's main priority is to continue investing in growth where it adds value. The challenge is finding the right balance between the level of investment and current performance. "There is so much we would like to achieve but we can't do it all at once, so we're having to make hard decisions on what to prioritise," he said. "We are not opportunity constrained and our relevance to customers has never been greater. The same applies to vendors. They will need companies like CAE to take solutions to customers effectively. What those solutions are will evolve over time and it is the ability to adapt that is strategically important over the long-term.

"The portfolio will continue to evolve and by introducing greater intelligence through systems and technology we will be able to get our service to an increasing number of customers without the



# 100m barrier

corresponding increase in people. We are committed to a strategy based on creating intimacy and that will always need the very best talent with the right combination of technical and customer service skills. It is the level of intimacy we can create with customers that defines our role with them."

## Investment decisions

While Harling loves to champion the impact of intimacy on positive client relationships, snuggling up to new technologies is not so clear cut. "The scope is huge, so selective investment decisions are required," he commented. "Fear Of Missing Out is not a development strategy so we often have challenging decisions to make. Take the security market: It's moving fastest and there is an exciting number of creative solutions that we would like to integrate into our proposition.

"Data centre management and orchestration is another area that develops quickly with a number of different strands to bring together. That gives us an opportunity to bring the requisite elements together. We also see the rise of software in networks, multi-cloud managed data centres and a play into dev opps for app delivered services. Software is the catalyst for change."

Harling's early interest in IT – first sparked by the purchase of a BBC Micro – was later fuelled by a history degree which included a computing module. A spell in accountancy followed university and the combination of these experiences put Harling on a career path in IT armed

with a rounded experience in both technology and business. He quickly came to believe that a business's sole obligation to customers is to deliver impeccable service, a commitment that continues to sustain CAE. "Customers are better educated and skilled in core infrastructure areas but the need to engage with the wider business around digital capabilities means partner skills are still in demand," he noted. "The theory used to suggest that the money was in the complication but we firmly believe that it should be in the simplification – that way there is shared benefit."

Harling believes growth also comes from getting to know customers better than anyone

## How talent is brought into the industry still isn't good enough. We need more diversity and inclusivity

else and he is shaping his strategy according to that relationship. "It is about fully understanding customers and having the staff, process and systems that means customers love what we do," he said. "This fundamentally means an organic growth strategy that maintains our culture and helps us attract skilled people by enabling them to flourish in the environment we offer. The way talent is brought into the industry still isn't good enough. We need more diversity and inclusivity." ■

### Just a minute with Justin Harling...

**Role model:** I take a small piece from a wide variety of people

**What talent do you wish you had?** Being able to DJ and bake the perfect macaron

**What do you fear the most?** Running out of cash and mushrooms

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know:** I have broken fingers on five separate occasions

**If you weren't in comms what would you be doing?** International book dealer or celebrity baker

**Your greatest strengths and what could you improve on?** I can fuse together creativity with an analytical mind. I could always have more patience

**What is the biggest risk you have taken?** The first MBO was stepping into the unknown in so many different ways

**How do you relax?** Spending time by the sea and reading a book

**Name one thing you couldn't do without in your job:** The Internet

**Name three ideal dinner guests:** Henry VIII, he oversaw one of the greatest periods of change in this country and has been a specialist study area of mine; Stephen Hawking, an extraordinary mind and wicked sense of humour; and Cleopatra, a world defining combination of brains and beauty

**In hindsight:** I would have pushed harder with greater courage at times when there was doubt

**Top tip for resellers:** Listen, whether that's to customers, colleagues, friends or family

## One Connectivity gets energy boost

WORKING together with a company that has the same business ethos is highly important to One Connectivity, which has led to a burgeoning relationship with Fidelity Energy as well as a raft of new business revenues.

Launched in autumn 2013, primarily as a business mobile solutions provider, One Connectivity has added a full range of comms and IT services to meet client demand and a meeting with Fidelity Energy at Comms Dealer's Margin in Voice and Data event this summer has led to the setting up of a new energy division at the Nottinghamshire based company.

"Our Managing Director Paul Stevenson attended the Margin in Voice & Data seminar and was initially attracted to Fidelity's excellent portal. It's user friendly, deals are easy to manage, and it offers good reporting. We also felt Fidelity thinks and works in similar ways to us which was a deal winner," said Director Julia Butts.

One Connectivity has a 'trusted supplier' relationship with its customers and discussions on switching energy supply have been fruitful, as Julia explained: "So far so good! We believe we already have great trust from our existing client base, which is half the battle. We have found that as long as we are clear with what we can supply, explain what they will receive, and at what cost, it is far easier to sell energy services to customers than we had originally anticipated."

Another vital aspect of the partnership One Connectivity enjoys with the Fidelity Energy

team is the advice they provide to help sales people understand the energy business, plus the support they add to land and manage deals.

"Fidelity helped us enormously during the set-up process and we are very confident that we are working alongside a great supplier, not only throughout the early stages, but also in delivering the final product and creating a mutually beneficial partnership between our two businesses," said Julia.

"From the offset we have received full support in preparing quotes and the marketing tools on offer are a great help. Fidelity continue to work alongside us, ensuring we enjoy great success together."

So, what would Julia say to ICT companies that see energy supply as a diversion from their core business?

"That just isn't true. Adding energy to your portfolio is highly beneficial, as your existing clients already have trust in your brand. Although the utilities industry seems over-saturated, only a handful do it very well.

"If you have the drive and determination to succeed with energy, you can't go wrong. We have always believed clients prefer to deal with one company, where possible, to reduce workload, additional sourcing and even paperwork. Adding relevant products and services to your business can only be a good thing.

"Within the first two weeks we had great interest from over 50 clients which speaks for itself," added Julia.



One Connectivity Director Julia Butts

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# GPs on call for video

A new WebRTC app that enables doctors and medics to conduct click-through video consultations with patients will ease the burden on the health sector and provide a boon to recipients of health care services, claims the application's creator.

The service, called TeleDOC, was developed by Elland-based Vapour Cloud and builds on the roll out of its automated GP appointment booking service in August. TeleDOC was launched at Vapour's annual Innovation & Disruption event held on 18th October in Leeds after 12 months of development and a three month beta phase. "TeleDOC will enable GPs and other medical professionals to hold secure, encrypted, recordable, geo-tagged video calls with their patients, wherever they are located, on any device," stated Vapour Cloud CEO Tim Mercer. "With WebRTC technology at the heart of the product the result is the ability to efficiently discuss and diagnose health issues remotely before storing the encrypted video file in a secure vault."

In practice TeleDOC sends the patient a one-time-use SMS or email containing a hyperlink that activates a no-cost video consultation. Just two clicks are required to authorise the camera and enable a 'face-to-face' consultation which removes any difficulties from a patient's conventional visit

to a medical practice, such as physical discomfort, transport issues or having contagious symptoms.

Another boon attributed to TeleDOC is that it puts the GP in touch with their own patients, a big improvement on video consultations with non-local and unfamiliar GP surgeries, which Vapour says happens to patients all too often. "Most people want to speak to their own doctor, not a stranger," added Mercer. "TeleDOC allows them to do this. Furthermore, NHS figures published in 2014 indicate that each missed appointment that year cost in excess of £100 per surgery, therefore TeleDOC also delivers cost savings as well as time saving benefits."

## Simplicity

Mercer noted that TeleDOC has been developed so that it is easy to use no matter the patient's technical literacy. "There is also no need to download and pay for an app," he explained. "This is an SMS-powered service delivered by the surgery. Given the strain being placed on the UK's medical infrastructure it's about time technology eased some of the pressures."



Tim Mercer

Vapour's WebRTC strategy helped to attract £4 million investment from Seneca and forms part of Mercer's long-term aim to become a £15-30 million recurring revenue based organisation. Vapour, which was established in 2013, is on target for £12 million turnover by 2020 and Mercer's growth plan also involves a buy and build campaign alongside the development of further technology innovations and application diversification. "We have six other applications of video consultation technology in beta testing within different sectors," he added. "Watch this space!"

Video conferencing has been in use within the health sector for many years but Mercer believes conventional systems are costly and not generally available to the majority of patients who would benefit from a video-enabled consultation. With his TeleDOC application Mercer claims to have

'democratised' the video channel as a way for health professionals to efficiently discuss and diagnose health issues remotely, and then store encrypted video files in a secure vault.

## Visual cues

"With no username, password or app required the result is maximum ease of use with the appointment carried out in much the same way as a face-to-face scenario," added Mercer. "The video element means doctors have the visual cues that can help to diagnose and advise, and the secure post-appointment storage of the file provides a valuable point of reference further down the line."

TeleDOC uses the SaaS model for monthly licences and is an addition to Vapour's existing WebRTC voice service provided through the company's Höllr platform. "The ability to deliver through our online portal and to make the journey simple is paramount," added

Mercer. "Our vision is that video will play an integral part of the channel strategy over the coming years. We were an early adopter in cloud voice and WebRTC, therefore have a great opportunity to deliver video in the format that businesses really need, with a number of options to suit the specific requirements of different sectors. At this stage, without selling our crown jewels, I can say that we have a group of pharmacies wanting to test the service to discuss repeat prescriptions. We also have a worldwide fitness company that wants to trial the solution for their clients' personal training plans."

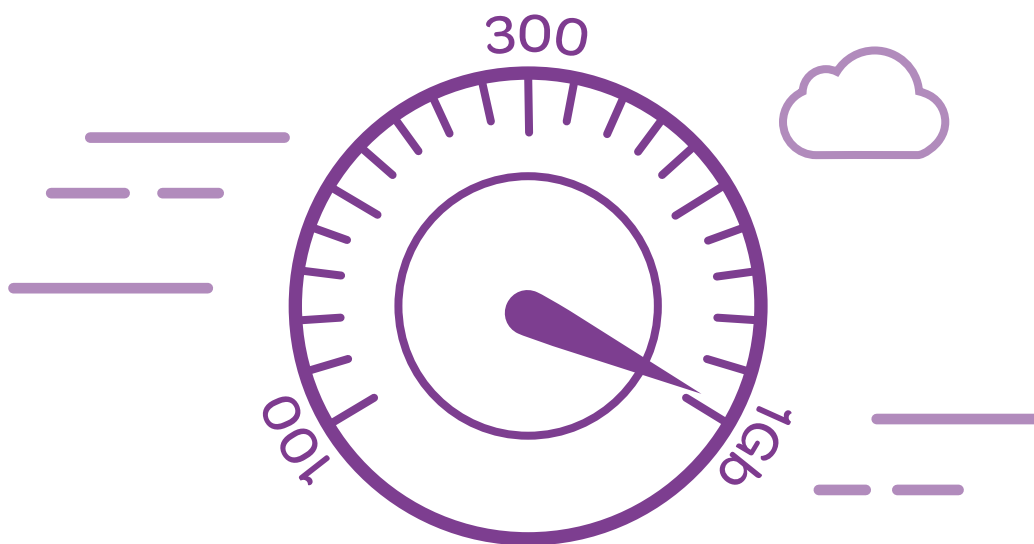
Mercer knows he has to keep Vapour's channel offering innovative and available, and TeleDOC is emblematic of his quest for simplification across the broader portfolio of services, which is appealing to resellers with backgrounds in IT as well as voice. "Our next technology iterations are around our cloud platform and making it simpler to order and upgrade," he stated. "Resellers that don't touch cloud yet, or are only starting to dip their toe in the water, need a partner that understands the whole network, voice and firewall journey, as well as the cloud service. A number of our new partners are in hardware and IT sales so they don't have the technical network background, therefore they work with us."

"The market has shifted and clients are seeking cloud-first solutions. They don't want to work with organisations that just dabble in this complex space. They want to invest in businesses that live and breathe this world, and have done so all along." ■

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# New centres of channel

Stuart Higgins, Head of Smart Cities and IoT at Cisco, urges the channel to wise up and address the smart city market which, he says, is already a land of opportunity for the tech giant.

**T**he smart city market is still relatively new but Cisco and its partners are involved in over 200 smart city projects globally and in the UK, including CityVerve in Manchester and SmartStreet in Newcastle. "City leaders recognise that digital solutions have a critical role to play in helping to deliver the savings necessary to continue providing the many services needed to keep a town or city moving," commented Higgins. "The market is ready for the channel but I'm not sure all of the channel is ready for the market. However, Cisco is working with partners to keep pace with market demand. Every line of business owner within a town or city holds budgets that can be used to deliver smart city solutions. Smart cities are much less about the IT department delivering independent projects and more about the combination of digital solutions and business owners."

Smart cities touch every aspect of a city – from emergency services, health and social care, education, energy, transportation, waste management, parking, safety, security and many others. Whether it's the secure connectivity that transports data from devices and sensors, the storage platform where it is combined and analysed to deliver new insights, or the software and applications which sit on top, the digital infrastructure powers a smart city.

"The real value isn't in the technology, but in the outcomes it enables community leaders to deliver for people that live, work and study in those cities, as well as people who visit them," stated Higgins. "It's also in the insights gained from collecting and combining multiple sets of data, from both the Internet of Things (IoT) and more traditional data sets. That's not to say that technology isn't critical in improving the delivery of services. In fact, digital and smart technology underpins this."

#### Shared vision

The best smart city projects rely on a shared vision and a strategy which incorporates digital as an integral ingredient to success, pointed out Higgins. "Each place is unique, so the local authority leaders are best placed to recognise the most pressing regional challenges," he commented. "Combining representatives from the public and private sector, academic institutions and citizen councils means the broader project can be delivered against shared goals. This is more efficient and ultimately more successful than a project where each individual sector is only representing its own interests. Strong and decisive leadership of the digital vision is critical to the success of these far-reaching programs."

There are a number of options available when it comes to any large-scale project. Some local



Stuart Higgins

## Every line of business owner within a town or city holds budgets that can be used to deliver smart city solutions

authorities want to retain control of the services, while others will be happy to outsource them to service providers. "Concession models are common among existing city services contracts," commented Higgins. "These could be extended to include the digital elements of the service. Most cities are likely to deploy solutions using a combination of all of these approaches."

New partnerships and funding models will be absolutely critical to the success of smart city projects. No single vendor is capable of delivering a smart city solution, so partnerships will become commonplace as smart cities are rolled out far and wide. "Towns and cities are the ultimate brownfield site – most have been around for a long time, have complex infrastructure which has evolved over

decades and many moving parts," added Higgins. "It is this that makes partnerships such a fundamental part of any smart city project."

The projects will likely be on a much larger scale than many technology companies are used to dealing with, so new funding models will also be necessary. "Reduced central and local government investment has meant that many local authorities do

# opportunity

not have the available capital to invest in these services and solutions, so innovative financial and service models are a necessity," noted Higgins. "Cisco works with a number of financial institutions and can provide different answers depending on how the local community want smart solutions to be delivered. Cisco's City Infrastructure Financing Acceleration Programme (CIFAP) addresses the complex area that is smart city finance. New service models will be adopted from other industries including risk-return, 'x' as a service, and pay-as-you-use."

## Connectivity

With smart cities and IoT solutions of any kind secure connectivity is critical, and if you cannot extract data from a device it can never be part of a smart solution. "There are lots of different infrastructure solutions, from wired and Wi-Fi to 5G and low-power wide area networks," explained Higgins. "These will need to be combined to extract the relevant data. Cyber security is also a critical element. If you are going to connect hundreds of thousands of devices to a corporate network you need to ensure that they do not create new problems or introduce new vulnerabilities."

In a well designed smart community an intelligent city platform is required, such as Cisco Kinetic for Cities (CKC). This enables domain-specific data sets to be combined in new ways and used by councils, as well as other stakeholders and third parties to deliver new services or existing services in a more efficient way. Beyond this, more communities are

looking at the role artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning will have in the delivery of citizen services.

"Many current smart city solutions are focused on a single domain such as parking or lighting, for example," said Higgins. "That makes the interplay between layers very challenging. Adopting an architectural, whole-systems approach to addressing its challenges will help a town or city to avoid problems in the future. This approach may require a larger initial investment, but the long-term advantages far outweigh this initial cost."

Anything that helps a community save money, generate new revenues

## The channel increasingly has a role to play in delivering smart city projects

or deliver better, more efficient services can have a positive impact as soon as it is deployed. Smart lighting, parking, waste management, safety, security, transportation and environmental solutions are just a few of the technologies already having a positive impact in cities around the world. "The real opportunity is in a platform that combines these disparate data sets and provides new insights for those delivering services to people that live, work, play or learn in a place," said Higgins. "This all needs to be underpinned by flexible and

secure infrastructure which enables the management of the millions of new devices being connected to a city's existing networks."

The main barrier to smart cities is lack of investment, according to Higgins. Another major challenge is not having a coherent digital strategy which feeds into a broader strategic plan. "Departments need to share data beyond the traditional boundaries of their domain as without this data it will not be possible to deliver on many of the promises of a truly smart community," he said. "Finally, convincing multiple departments to work for the greater good is still a challenge when working across multiple departments in public and private sector organisations."

Smart, secure, broad reaching connectivity is critical for the growth of the smart city market in the UK. Wider adoption of fibre networks and high-speed wireless solutions, such as 5G, will also be a major contributor to the success of smart cities. "Successful smart city deployments will require an architectural approach which eliminates silos and conflicting objects," stated Higgins. "Secure connectivity and smart city platforms will enable smart cities to manage and monetise data, where appropriate, that is generated in and used by people within that place. The channel increasingly has a role to play in delivering smart city projects. This begins with providing candid, informed and independent advice to smart city leaders around what is possible and helping them to design, plan and deliver these solutions." ■

Smart cities in focus – p44

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# Voiceflex in Unify link

The appointment of Voiceflex as Atos' first Unify Cloud Service Provider is a breakthrough for the business and means Sales and Marketing Director Paul Taylor is now on the hunt for resellers ready to embrace the opportunities AI type voice applications present.

**V**ia the tie-up Voiceflex will have access to two cloud offerings from Unify, both of which are built on a monthly recurring revenue model. These will be sold alongside the company's existing Nebula hosted solution. Unify's Circuit collaboration application will deliver digital transformation to organisations of any size and will be able to connect to existing Voiceflex offerings as an upsell for its partners. According to Robert Wiles Unify's VP Channel Sales for UK&I, Circuit will also 'unlock a huge opportunity in the overall team collaboration market' which is predicted to grow in double digits until 2022.

In addition, Openscape Cloud, Unify's UCaaS solution will offer Voiceflex partners a carrier class voice layer. "Openscape Cloud will be wrapped together with Voiceflex's SIP offering," said Wiles. "This makes the joint proposition commercially aggressive, margin rich and simple to order and deploy. Voiceflex partners can access all of this with no hassle, no vendor accreditations, no billing engine requirements

and get on with the business of making money."

Taylor is confident his company's focus and understanding of the cloud and SIP connectivity has given it the edge in helping channel partners address new markets that will open up as simple, fully integrated WebRTC and cloud telephony solutions gain in popularity. "Circuit is not a solution people are going to be phoning resellers about because it moves very, very close to AI," said Taylor. "Channel organisations are going to have to push this application through to the marketplace and they will need to 'get it'.

## Flexibility

"It means, if I wanted to, I could just get my mobile phone and say 'Hey Siri tell Circuit to call so-and-so', and it would call them over the web at no cost. The beauty of it is, if you've got a start-up that says, 'I just need two extensions, and I don't want to talk to the outside world yet, I just want to talk internally', they can download it free of charge. If they then said, 'OK, I want to start talking to the outside world', we just add



Paul Taylor

## Channel organisations are going to have to push this application through to the marketplace and they will need to 'get it'

the voice element on to it. They can download the application on their mobile, onto their PC, anywhere, and you don't need a handset.

"Or, if you want to have a handset, you can. What's more, if you're sitting at home, you've got your trendy office and you've got your little Amazon Dot there, you can actually make and receive telephone calls through that. Imagine the change that will bring in the way resellers go to market?"

Taylor believes the decline in the voice market means resellers will have to add value and start selling collaborative solutions on a subscription model to replace lost revenues. "Unify's

Circuit and OpenScape Cloud applications turn hosted telephony on its head," he commented. "The problem is nowadays that the voice market's decreasing and a lot more organisations are using applications such as Microsoft Teams and Slack for communicating. What Circuit does is take all of these applications and dump them in one particular file so you can actually follow a conversation all the way through.

"Let's say I was working on a solution for a reseller that was looking to actually sell a telephone system. It might be me that was needed, it might be a colleague that was needed, it might be the account manager. I

can actually bring all these people into the Circuit application and then, if I want to do a conference call, I just hit one button. If I want to recall them, I just hit one button. The simplicity is mind blowing."

The appointment of Voiceflex is a departure from Unify's established go-to-market approach which has traditionally been through distribution and select partners, as Wiles explained: "Unify is committed to being a 100 per cent channel business and that strategy requires different indirect models. We have our distribution partners, VAR partners and Tier 1 SI/SP partners. The decision to on-board Voiceflex in this unique manner is to round out our indirect GTM with a partner that is purely focused on cloud, has a significant reach in UK&I and can add value to our portfolio. The CSP model allows Voiceflex to have a predictable commercial model, but rewards investment in skill sets and growth.

"I constantly see hosted telephony as a race to the bottom in terms of price and very much a 'me too' offering. Voiceflex and Unify, together, add back value into this market but with a truly differentiated offer. Our joint proposition isn't another 'hosted telephony' offer. It's designed and built for any size of organisation that needs to undertake digital transformation. Our recently launched 'workUtopia' campaign identifies that the future workplace isn't going to be the same one we know today with AI, Industry 4.0 and The Gig Economy being three examples of how times are changing."





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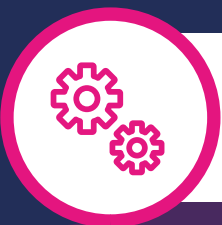
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Adapt to carrier diagnostics for increased efficiency.



Continuous measurement with the ability to evolve and upsell.

# Parker goes full throttle

From the moment babble cloud CEO Matthew Parker gained greater control fast growth was bound to come, and it was an MBO one year ago that enabled him to slip the leash and pull the business together on an ambitious expansion strategy.

In November last year mid-market private equity firm LDC invested in London-based IP Solutions, which later rebranded as babble cloud, and like its name the business has since been utterly transformed by a propitious MBO. "I joined to lead a buy-and-build strategy but the legacy issues that occurred under our previous investor's stewardship were too significant to move forward," stated Parker. "Now the brakes are off. We are seeing double digit organic growth, we've made two acquisitions – DRP and Arden Group (see page 6), the whole company is motivated and we are experiencing a forward momentum that was impossible before."

Following the MBO, and with the obligation to drive growth passed to Parker, his focus on pushing the business forward has become more intense and urgent. "The MBO fired the starting gun on babble and 12 months on we haven't looked back," he said. "Speed of execution is now our top priority. It's every organisation's biggest challenge. I've seen too

many opportunities missed through inertia or lengthy decision making processes. Whether that's driving the acquisition pipeline, changing name or closing a deal. I've never been more motivated to move fast. It's no coincidence that post MBO we saw our biggest ever sales month, record breaking revenue and the emergence of a successful, motivated sales team. The uncertainty has gone, and we can just get things done now. I can see an obvious path to £50 million revenue and we are on our way."

babble employs 75 people and currently generates £20 million revenue with £3 million-plus EBITDA. Bookings growth is double digit and the business has over 1,000 customers on its books. "We focus on industries and markets where we see disruption or transformation," stated Parker. "It means that from the outset the conversation is about value not price. That's why our strapline is 'Some see tools. We see possibilities'. We believe we are already the most successful reseller of CCaaS solutions in the UK and



Matthew Parker

## Speed of execution is our top priority. I've never been more motivated to move fast

we are investing heavily in this market with some fantastic recent wins. We are also starting to verticalise our products and improve the way we package them to appeal to those focus markets.

### Choice matters

"In each major product category our goal is to offer choice, which is not always easy to do because it can be hard to generate economies of scale, but we think it opens us up to customers who may not otherwise choose a reseller so we have a significant

roster of vendor partners with a heavy slant towards more cloud-native vendors."

According to Parker his £50 million revenue target is explicable only by future acquisitions, raw recurring revenues and personal ambition. Having already mobilised that expectation he's pinned his strategy on babble's pivotal move to become a subscription-based business long before the rest of the market, adhering to its decision to remain pure-cloud. "All of our customers are subscription-based," he explained. "Our

non-recurring revenue is a tiny percentage of overall revenues and that makes life easier. It would have been easy for the founders to stick to on-premise in a difficult month but they never blinked."

babble cloud began its commercial life in 2001, founded by Keith Purves and Paul Richards. They teamed up with Andy Lindsell in 2006 and quickly realised the opportunity in becoming a cloud-focused reseller and transitioning towards a subscription-based business.

Continued on page 34



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## Do you want to click with the Channel?

In another industry first, we are delighted to publish an ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation) certificate for Comms-dealer.com showing that between January and December 2017, the website attracted a monthly average of 19,502 unique Browsers.

To click with the ICT channel online and reach this audience, call us on....

**01895 454603**





**Matthew Parker**

## I can see an obvious path to £50 million revenue and we are on our way

**Continued from page 32**

At this turn in babble cloud's history only one thing mattered – the courage to be different. "Organisations that were looking to do something smart and transformative were attracted to us and many of them are still our customers now," stated Parker. "If it wasn't for the founders' conviction and willingness to take a risk babble wouldn't exist today."

The change of identity from IP Solutions to babble cloud was driven by the need for instant recognition in its mid-market target customer segment, and, said Parker, 'Solutions' is an over used meaningless word that he was happy to lose. "We are in essence a conversation company, we help businesses have more effective, more productive, more frequent conversations with their customers," he explained. "It's not babbling, but the point is clear, the name resonates and is memorable. We have a pipeline of potential acquisitions and as the business grows we want to build the brand."

"Being part of the LDC portfolio means funding is a non-issue. It has backed us to execute a buy-and-build

strategy and if we keep doing what we're doing and find the right targets we see no reason why we won't achieve our goals. In three years time our revenues will be £50 million and we'll still be seeing market leading growth and profitability."

**Organic growth**

In addition to acquisitions Parker aims to grow fixed monthly recurring revenues by one per cent every month. He illustrates clearly that babble requires a recurring revenue model to flow continuously, and in this new phase of growth, as in his career to date, he sees himself not as an entrepreneur which you'd expect. "My 'thing' is growing businesses," he added. "My skill is in getting involved with established organisations and making them more successful. My biggest success was in driving Lumesse from a business that was virtually bankrupt to a 500 million euro valuation. In the process I got to do things I'd never dreamed possible – I travelled the world, made long-lasting friendships and enjoyed every minute of the experience."

Nor is he a technologist. "I'm more into commercial trends

and obsessed with building high quality recurring, contracted subscription revenue for cloud-based services – that's what enthral me," commented Parker. "It's depressing how many organisations say their revenues are recurring when they're nothing of the sort; and the challenges of driving organic new logo growth combined with a legacy of poor quality non-recurring revenue leave many organisations behind, creating a two-tier sector. It's not even an acquisition opportunity because even at a low multiple these tier two organisations are hard to justify."

Parker's first impression of the communications sector was not too dissimilar to his assessment of the tier twos he describes above. He was introduced to the industry by an executive search consultant, who was also a friend, with an opportunity to join a mobile phone dealer. "Having spent a good portion of my career running software businesses and sitting on the vendor side of the fence the idea of working for a reseller didn't appeal – with no product to build, thousands of one-man band competitors and an industry characterised by old school tin shifting sales execs," stated Parker.

"Then I realised the issues that were putting me off were in fact the opportunity. It played to my skills in building sales-driven subscription businesses. It's an industry that's going through transformational changes that will leave many companies struggling for growth and looking to exit. Plus, I don't have the stress of building product any more. It's a win-win! The more time I've spent in the industry the more I enjoy it. There's a lot of smart people building solid businesses and everyone has a different story to tell. It's the most interesting sector I have worked in." ■

## Just a minute with Matthew Parker

**Role model**

I worked for a fantastic CEO called Colin Tenwick. He let me build a business within a business and backed me all the way. When I stepped out of line he made sure I knew it and he never expected anything less than the highest standards. I still sometimes ask myself 'What would Colin do?'

**What talent do you wish you had?**

To sing in a way that people want to hear

**What do you fear the most?**

Boredom

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know**

I met the Queen and both of us were wearing a skirt

**Name three ideal dinner guests**

Alex Ferguson, Jim Telfer and Colin Montgomerie

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

I tell myself I only need to be right 51 per cent of the time, so far that's worked but it can make me a bull in a china shop. I sometimes miss hearing the nuances that come with quiet reflection and listening

**How would you like to be remembered?**

As a nice guy

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

My assistant Robyn. She is the beating heart of our organisation

**Best piece of advice you have received?**

Never forget the 'lifesaver' when riding your motorbike

**What possession could you not live without?**

My watch. It was a 30th birthday present from my wife

**Give one example of something you've overcome**

The voice in my head when I was young that said 'you'll never get a high paid job in sales'

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

Selling something to someone somewhere

**What's the biggest risk you have taken and why?**

Doing an MBO at Lumesse: The consequences of it going wrong would have been catastrophic from a family, financial and career perspective

**How do you relax when not working?**

For the past five years I have cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats and I realised this year that it's the point in the year when I'm most relaxed. It's my annual thinking time

**Top business tip for resellers**

As a reseller it's tempting to do and offer everything. Keep it simple and do less. Focus on fewer things and do them better than the competition. Then start with what the customer needs and work backwards from that. Even if the customer doesn't yet know they need it

**In hindsight:**

I'd do almost everything differently

**Industry bugbear**

Ban the use of IT as a way of describing what industry we work in. Talk about business enablement or tools. No-one buys IT





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# Never give up in the battle

American management consultant Peter Drucker, the founder of modern management, said: "Because the purpose of business is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two – and only two – basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results; all the rest are costs."

Few ICT executives or business leader would disagree with that statement, knowing full well their company needs to differentiate to keep winning business in a highly competitive market. But how can you stand out in a sea of me toos? It may seem like a daunting challenge, but it can be accomplished with some smart thinking:

### Hone in on one issue first

You know when something's missing or not quite right. That e-bulletin or advert may look great but it just doesn't have an edge. Be bold, change it. Do something different... off the wall even. Nobody got noticed by being ordinary. It may light the fuse to a big bang that will revolutionise your business.

### Think about specialisation

If you can get good, really good, in a vertical market and come up with a potent or unique value proposition in that sector you'll get a reputation and recommendations and growth will follow.

### Don't think so much about yourself

Entrepreneurs like to build their own personal brand, when it would be more beneficial for their business to promote what they do differently to others. A USP aimed at core customers is far more likely to create new, positive customer engagements.

### If you get knocked down, get up again

Allow yourself to fail as long as you learn from mistakes. Getting really good at something and creating differentiators takes time and effort. So, if you crash and burn along the way, just keep telling your customers you'll do whatever it takes to earn their trust. People can often be more forgiving than you think.

The most successful business people have had failures, but never gave up trying to be different. To quote Steve Jobs: "Half of what separates the successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance."



NICK POWELL  
SKY BUSINESS

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

We offer the UK's largest 1Gb Ethernet available network on a wholesale only basis, offering customers a unique service wrapped into a unique proposition and we don't compete with our customers, directly or indirectly.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

Sky has a track record of delivering innovative products and high-quality service levels. People trust the brand to deliver an excellent connectivity product that's long been missing from the Channel.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Sky continuously strives to be forward thinking and restless. That is how we have driven ongoing innovation, delivering continuous revenue growth and becoming Europe's leading entertainment company. We are limitless by design.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

In this space specifically, it is the launch of a high quality, UK wide, high capacity network into the B2B market. Sky already had a high-quality network asset that we could leverage into this arena.



PAUL HERITAGE  
ENTANET

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

A £2.5bn investment plan expanding our full fibre network to five million premises by 2025. This accelerates delivery of our innovative and highly differentiated connectivity, including blisteringly fast GPON Internet access and unbeatably priced Ethernet services.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

22 years of industry experience and our multi-award-winning reputation for delivering a straightforward and positive customer experience means we offer a truly unique proposition.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

The skills, knowledge and experience of our staff are our secret weapon. Our culture of continuous improvement is recognised by our ISO and IIP certifications and every project that drives the continued development of our products and services includes stakeholders from across the business.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

Aa comprehensive API to give resellers quick and easy access to information on the price and availability of cutting edge Ethernet products through our Ethernet Quoting Tool (EQT).



MARK SAUNDERS  
9 GROUP

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

Our people. At 9, we are aware that customers are now super-informed and vividly conscious of their choices, which underscores the need for our service to be personable and outstanding at all times.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

Promoting the technical or commercial merits of your "me to" product range will achieve very little. At 9, we are fanatical about helping Partners to position and sell what their customers actually need.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Drucker was right, Marketing and Innovation need to produce the results in a successful business. We are fortunate that our teams are heavily aligned with the creative forces in our agency grade marketing department.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

We have been able to create customer-led, compelling visual and narrative to support the growth of our collaboration platform 'eve', alongside the core 9 brand and our new digital marketing offering, 'revvd'.



TOM MAXWELL  
NIMANS

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

We are the largest independent UC distributor in the UK with a legacy of voice expertise, having evolved into the cloud and other technology sectors such as network services.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

Dedicated category specialists working alongside our resellers that are customer facing to help resellers capture more business. We have almost 40 years pedigree with a trusted reputation to do what we say – from pre-sales and fulfilment to post sales including free technical support.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

We actively encourage new ideas as well as best practice as part of a management ethos from the board downwards. We have Investors in People gold status complemented by a set of five company values that includes 'dare to challenge'.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

Our IP end-point management solution 'Compendium' provides a complete service from cradle to grave and takes things to a new level.



## The power to differentiate

Wavenet Wholesale have unified the leading providers under one roof so our Partners don't have to. We are continually strengthening our relationships to offer the latest portfolio of products and services.



# to stand out in the crowd



JUSTIN BLAINE  
NTA

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

99.9% of UK Hosted Telephony providers offer services on a Per Seat cost. We charge on a concurrency of calls instead, meaning our resellers make 80% plus margins.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

In the three years I have been at NTA, we have gained credibility by providing partners with commercially different models, they can then choose what suits them best. We also have a great sales and technical support infrastructure.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

This is how NTA continues to evolve. Regular team meetings include all departments. We brainstorm ideas which generally in turn make it easier for our partners to do business with us.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

The launch of our Las Vegas incentive has been pivotal to a huge upturn in business. It has also had an impact on attracting new partners and focusing our existing ones.



TONY MARTINO  
TOLLRING

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

We totally embed and white-label our fully integrated analytics, call recording and fraud management into partner propositions and their respective platforms, providing rapid go to market support and customised partner programmes, for real differentiation in an increasingly tough marketplace.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

Whether we're working with a Tier 1 carrier or a smaller service provider, our partner-first ethos is central to everything we do.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Real innovation is a combination of vision and reality, which isn't possible without feedback and insight from front line staff in every area of the business.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

We uniquely combine fraud and credit management in one carrier-grade intelligent analytics solution. Using AI, attacks are automatically blocked in real-time and re-occurrence is avoided using machine-learning. We estimate that we currently save our partner/customer community over £800,000 per month in damages.



VINCENT DISNEUR  
UNION STREET

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

Our unique mix of feature rich billing and provisioning applications backed by unrivalled support, training and consultancy services. This combination, along with our commitment to innovative onward development, enables our partners to leverage maximum value from our solutions.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

Our ambition and continual investment of over £1m into R&D each year. We're very proud that aBILlity™ has won seven CNA awards and is now used by over 600 CPs. The ubiquity of our software is perhaps the single biggest endorsement of our credibility.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Absolutely. We actively encourage our teams to try new things and bring ideas to the table. Our development team holds fortnightly sprint review meetings to assess progress.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

Our Mosaix provisioning software is a channel first. It enables wholesalers of connectivity services to create self-serve provisioning portals for their reseller partners.



NEIL WILSON  
VIRTUAL1

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

Making our Software Defined Network directly configurable by the channel, either by Portal or API. No one else is delivering this much empowerment to the Channel in the connectivity market.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

Proof is critical to demonstrating a unique value proposition, we can clearly demonstrate what sets us apart quickly and simply. It is also making sure that your unique value proposition is actually unique in the market, not just what makes you good.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Absolutely, everyone within Virtual1 is empowered to drive change. We operate with an agile methodology to ensure that we can turn innovative ideas into reality quickly and capitalise on the entrepreneurial spirit.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

Software Defined Networking has enabled us to compete with the large incumbent carriers. The automation has levelled the playing field by removing much of the cost of operating a network.



ENZO VISCITO  
INCLARITY

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

Our business is extremely agile and provides our channel with a flexible approach to services and commercials not normally offered by other service providers.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

History is on our side, we have been providing services since 2002. The exceptional uptime across our network together with our above average customer service statistics have provided our channel with a sound proposition to offer to their customers.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Inclarity's organisational structure is geared to allow our exceptional staff to have increased involvement in our decision-making processes. Many of the improvements and changes we make result from feedback from our channel partners and employees.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

As compliance is such a hot topic for our channel's customers, we have been tightening our service features around PCI compliance and we're now offering suppression on our Dubber and Redox call recording services.



JAMES WAPLINGTON  
LILY COMMS

#### WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION?

Our focus is based around preparing our clients for the digital age with leading edge solutions across comms and IT. We believe we are market leaders when it comes to delivering full circle and future proof products and services.

#### WHAT HAS SET YOU ABOVE YOUR COMPETITION?

We have been fortunate enough to have won some prestigious industry awards over the last few years. Most recently we won Best Business Growth at the Comms National Awards. These honours help differentiate us from the competition.

#### DO YOU ENCOURAGE NEW IDEAS IN YOUR BUSINESS?

We're an ideas driven organisation and everyone in our organisation has a part to play. The very best ideas that we implement are rewarded with 5-star luxury incentive trips.

#### WHAT'S YOUR LATEST BIG IDEA?

In the last year we've launched a new IT division and relaunched our mobile division, to become The Home of Digital Transformation.



Data



Cloud



Mobile



Security



Voice

Stay ahead of the curve:

0333 234 9911

wavenetwholesale.com





# THE COMMS NATIONAL AWARDS 2018

## AWARDS ELECTRIFY THE CHANNEL

The stars of the ICT channel were recognised and celebrated at the glittering Comms National Awards (sponsored by 9 Group) hosted by actor and comedian Stephen Mangan on October 11th at The Hilton on Park Lane, London.

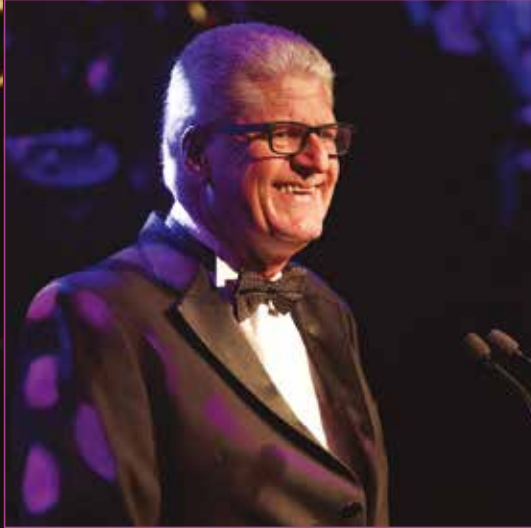
The gala evening showcased the dynamism and ongoing growth of the ICT channel and was the jewel in the crown of a judging process that saw almost 200 entries submitted by over 100 companies.

“The number of entries our judges received this year was astonishing, again breaking all records,” said Awards Co-ordinator Nigel Sergent. “The 12 independent judges had nothing but praise for the quality of entries received, especially in the growth and innovation categories.

“I would like to thank everyone who entered and sponsored the awards and contributed to making it such a celebration of the channel. This truly was a night to remember.”

According to 9 Group’s Marketing Director, Mark Saunders, this year’s Comms National Awards were the best ever. “A brilliant host in Stephen Mangan, an inspiring opening address from 9’s brand ambassador, Maddie Hinch, a richly deserved entrepreneur of the year award win for our CEO, James Palmer and two worthy winners of our customer service awards in Aerial Direct and ICA. Our guests had an unbelievably good time, and this really is the stand out event of the comms calendar. We will be back next year, and I am delighted that 9 will be repeating our sponsorship of this tremendous evening for a record seventh year.”

This year’s hall of fame saw Virtual1, Tollring and swcomms bag a brace of awards with Utilize and swcomms netting Reseller of the Year gongs (see over for the full line up of winners).



Comms Dealer Editorial Director Nigel Sergent lit the touch paper.



The event was a complete sell out.



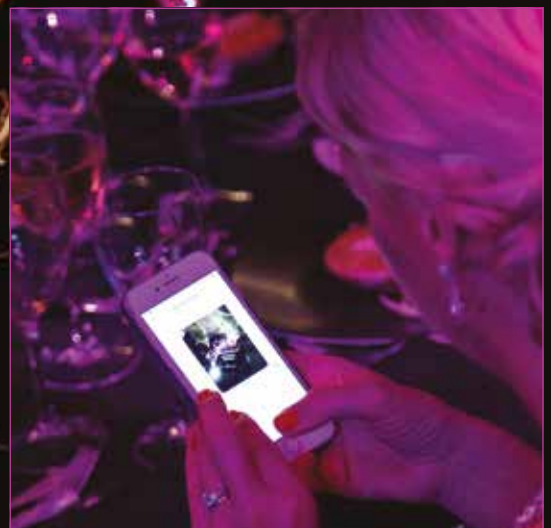
Stephen Mangan was a brilliant host.



9 brand ambassador Maddie Hinch MBE (GB hockey goalkeeper) was a winning presenter.



9 Group CEO James Palmer was named 2018 Entrepreneur of the Year...



...and the news went global in minutes!

### Headline Sponsor



FREE TO PERFORM



### Sponsors







FREE TO PERFORM



Last minute sartorial adjustments!



Look we're on twitter already!



A hug for Entrepreneur of the Year James Palmer.



A good night was had by all!



Tollring await their video interview after securing their double win.



Aerial Direct celebrate their customer service award win.



Cheers to a great event. Amy Mitchell (Tin Can) and Louise Abbey (9 Group).



Fidelity Energy were in sparkling form.



That's a cracker! Oak's James Emm shares a joke.

# PHOTO BOOTH

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## Sponsors







# VENDOR AWARDS

FREE TO PERFORM

## Connectivity Category

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fresh thinking



**BEST NETWORK – Virtual 1**

## Service Provider Category

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**BT wholesale**



**BEST WHOLESALE SERVICE PROVIDER  
(up to £10m t/o) – Jola**



**BEST WHOLESALE SERVICE PROVIDER  
(over £10m t/o) – Daisy Wholesale**

## Telephony Category

Sponsored by  
**iPNetix**  
From Service Provider



**SME TELEPHONY SYSTEM – Ericsson LG**



**BEST ENTERPRISE TELEPHONY SYSTEM  
– 3CX**



**BEST END POINT OR DEVICE – Jabra**



**BEST HOSTED TELEPHONY PLATFORM –  
NTA**

## Application Category

Sponsored by  
**SPITFIRE**  
VOICE • INTERNET • WAN



**BEST CALL MANAGEMENT APPLICATION  
– Tollring**



**BEST BILLING PLATFORM  
– Union Street**



**BEST SECURITY APPLICATION – Tollring**



**BEST PARTNER PORTAL – Virtual 1**

## Distribution Category

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# Call for collaboration on

The Federation of Communications Services' Comms Provider 18 event staged in London last month gave reseller members the chance to get an understanding of how the major protagonists are managing the seismic telecoms infrastructure changes ahead.

**T**he event was predicated on the Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review which has laid out plans for a full fibre broadband network across the UK by 2033 and 5G to the majority of the country by 2027. Funded by a £1.1 billion digital connectivity package and the £400 million Digital Infrastructure Fund, the network is being built by Openreach and altnets such as CityFibre, TalkTalk, Gigaclear and Virgin Media. These organisations are tasked with ultimately sending copper lines to the recycling centres and giving businesses and homes the reliability and performance of fibre to power applications and solutions only dreamed of in the past.

Furthermore, the Government has committed to support private mobile providers with a £200 million testbed fund, as well as additional spectrum, to promote new 5G services to meet the bandwidth demands for big data, IoT, wireless automation and to fill the rural coverage hole. A target has also been set to connect 15 million premises by 2025 and become a world leader in 5G by 2027 (just four per cent of the UK population are currently 5G subscribers, compared to 95 per cent in Portugal). These are ambitious targets and to meet them industry collaboration will be crucial

and comms providers must 'evolve or die' said Raj Kalie CEO of the Government's BDUK project team.

"Our vision is to deliver the world's best digital economy," he said. "This is a pivotal moment in the history of telecoms. You must ask yourself: What does this mean to my business? How do I evolve and help my customers evolve? The PSTN will switch off in 2025, so what does that mean? How will you stay relevant? How will we switch from one network to another? Switchover, switching and switch off need to be thought through and discussed. This is not the Government's role. We will have an oversight but that's all – industry has to lead the process."

Mark Logan, Product Director at Openreach, was equally dogmatic and brutally honest about the task his company has and the challenges comms providers will face in the years ahead. "ISDN, ISDN 2 and ISDN 30 are going," he stated. "Openreach is out of the voice business. Somebody else needs to provide the services now. To hit the targets, we must move 44,000 lines a week assuming we start now. That's a monster of a challenge. We cannot do it ourselves – it has to be a collective."

Logan also pointed out that the switchover will not be



Mark Logan speaking at Comms Provider 18

## Openreach is out of the voice business. Somebody else needs to provide the services

passive and there will have to be a forced migration towards the end of the process that will dramatically affect 16 million homes and businesses. "In the new world – when we make the switch – everything will flow through the data hub," commented Logan. "You will need new phones and extensions and faxes and door entry systems will not work. We need to cover emergency back-up.

It will not be a simple thing for a massive number of homes and businesses."

### Transitional options

Logan did stress however that copper estates will be retained for some time providing transitional alternatives such as G-fast, VDSL or SOTAP (Single Order Transitional Access Product) to homes and premises that do not have FTTP after the switchover.

Mark Collins, Director of Strategy & Public Affairs at CityFibre, which is unrestricted by regulation, was upbeat about his company's progress in bringing fill fibre to 100 cities nationwide and said the integration of service provider Entanet into the business was helping customer migration. "It is our vision to modernise this country and spark innovation in a digital age," he stated.



# big switch off

"We are building fibre alongside existing copper networks in partnership with local authorities and service providers. Bringing the latter onto the network is critical and with Entanet we have the service provider relationships behind us."

## Open door

Justin Leese, Programme Director, Full Fibre Networks at BDUK, urged CP delegates to take advantage of the Government's Gigabit voucher scheme and said the door was open for them to set up their own local fibre networks. "We want to stimulate interest in fibre," he said. "DCMS is funding fibre into 100 schools across the UK and our ultimate target is 1,000. This means CPs can then come in and sell it to homes and business nearby. As an example, Wessex Internet have done this successfully in Chichester."

Leese also encouraged delegates who have identified local project opportunities to investigate the Government's Wave 2 Challenge Fund, which offers funding to companies that can demonstrate how they are creating tangible benefits for the UK in productivity and economic growth.

Tim Cross, Principal at Ofcom's Competition group, confirmed the regulator was targeting unconstrained access to Openreach's poles and ducts for CPs from Autumn 2019, effectively halving the cost of laying fibre and said the prospects for network competition would vary across the UK due to population density and build costs. Delegate questions posed during and after the debate were mainly focused on

any hindering of number porting, which is regulated by Ofcom and enshrined in the regulator's General Conditions of Entitlement.

Bob Irwin, Sales Director at Triangle Networks, said: "We have some seismic changes happening within the industry. Number porting is a nightmare as it is, but when they step up from their current volumes, it will descend in to chaos. I would like to know what plans are in place to deal with this at the very least by 2020." (see FCS Chairman David Dadds comment on page 10).

**As we move to the digital world FCS wants and requires open next generation networks whether fibre or 5G with equal access for all**

Concluding the conference, a sobering view was provided by Professor William Webb, President, Institution of Engineering and Technology, who firmly believes the drive for 'blindingly fast' 5G and full fibre is a religion not everyone buys into. Quoting global consultancy BCG, he said: "Telcos have overrated the role that speed plays in customer satisfaction. For video, we saw that once speeds reach 1.5 Mbps, further increases have little

or no impact on users' perception of performance. The growth in demand is slowing and the requirements of richer content are balanced by improvements in compression and optimisation technology. G.Fast is fast enough for at least a decade, perhaps more."

Webb is also convinced people are generally not prepared to pay for superfast service and economic benefits are minimal. "Speeds are already sufficient for many," he added. "There are no expectations that ARPU's will rise for 5G and, where home broadband alternatives are offered, the majority opt for lower data rate packages. South Korea has not obviously benefitted from early full-fibre and like the UK, with little FTTH, have not obviously seen lower growth as a result. When a gigabit service was rolled out in Australia, just 63 people signed up."

Itret Latif, Interim CEO of FCS, commented on the issues at hand: "As we move to the digital world FCS wants and requires open next generation networks whether fibre or 5G with non-discriminatory and equal access for all so that innovative services and competition can continue to thrive."

Ultimately, the march to a fully Digital Britain is gathering pace and the heavyweight line up of speakers at CP18 provided more questions than answers to the impact it will have and, underlined the need for a coordinated, consolidated plan from all the players involved. Who will take the lead in this is anyone's guess. ■

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# Redefining UK cities

The value of successful smart city projects is crystal clear, just as transparent is the need for a wholesale transformation of existing business models to deliver them, says Anton Le Saux, Head of M2M & IoT at Zest4.

**T**he quest for smart cities is emblematic of the Government's bid to become a global digital powerhouse, but to raise the status of cities and also the nation all projects will require new partnerships and funding models, as well as disruptive service models. "These cities are founded on smart, intelligent solutions and technology projects that are generally built around a number of key areas that need focus – such as energy, buildings and building management, transport and travel, infrastructure and the environment," explained Le Saux. "To pull all of these together will require substantial changes to the existing models. In preparation for delivering smart technology in the above areas, project managers and officials need to engage with key stakeholders that have the ability to deliver in all, or most, of the these sectors."

Cities are now looking towards increasing capacity and efficiency to attract economic growth and activity, but to build highly functional and intelligent cities public authorities need to integrate smart technology into their

existing infrastructure while building new infrastructure from the ground up. "In most cases existing relationships and funding models won't have the capability to achieve this," added Le Saux. "Smart cities are an entirely new entity to most. As such, new relationships will need to be sought to deliver the knowledge and capability required to map out and deliver these initiatives."

"Another stumbling block is that budgets are usually separate for each sector. To deliver smart technology across the entire spectrum these projects will require new financing models. Historically, cities probably had little or no requirements to engage with technology and communication companies to deliver their projects. Moving forwards, a partner that not only delivers the knowledge and capability to drive a project, but also has the resources to help fund the project through leasing, for example, will undoubtedly have the edge over its competitors."

Topping the to-do list in smart city implementations are areas like control of traffic lights, monitoring



Anton Le Saux

public transportation, the concentration of traffic, parking intelligence (including navigation), weather reports and CCTV for traffic and supervision of pedestrian areas. "The list is endless," added Le Saux. "All of these are travel and transport related, so infrastructure that covers all (or most) of these solutions are generally the most common."

#### Solution mix

"The connectivity and data flow for these are managed through a mix of Cellular and Low Power (LoRa) solutions. So, anyone that wants to be involved in any form of smart city roll out will need to be able to offer a blend of both as a bare minimum, while also keeping their eye out for future solutions such as Narrowband IoT and 5G."

With the right IoT platform and smart engine, managing this mix of technology becomes less of a challenge, noted Le

Saux, but developing and managing such platforms can be expensive. "To deliver this properly and efficiently the key is to partner," commented Le Saux. "The right partner in this space can make or break an opportunity."

"Smart cities are ready for channel and have been for some time. Channel partners have been delivering core connectivity solutions such as IT, fixed and mobile to them for some time. In most cases it's the channel that is not ready for the smart city. A large percentage of the channel still seems to be reluctant to take the step and get involved in IoT opportunities."

"My advice to the channel is to look at their business, identify where they can upskill and create a leader that is prepared to get involved, understand and drive IoT and give them the tools, the time and the

resource to get engaged. IoT business is not going to come knocking on the door, so unless a channel partner is prepared to invest they will not be able to help smart cities to develop."

In terms of barriers for smart city projects Le Saux sees two key hurdles that will keep coming around. "The first is education and understanding of what is possible, and the second is funding and making sure a project is delivered within budget and on time," he stated. "Until a partner and the relevant city department has had a few successful roll outs this will always be a factor. To mitigate this would be to choose your partner wisely, and ensure that whoever you are working with has done something similar before."

A number of new approaches to regulatory frameworks that support AI and driverless cars include the Chancellor's announcement of a Regulators' Pioneer Fund. This new £10 million fund seeks to unlock the potential of emerging technologies, while supporting regulators to develop innovative approaches aimed at getting new products and services to market. This is one of many similar Government initiatives.

Budgets for smart cities are growing by the day and any provider that can meet their requirements will gain access to this funding, according to Le Saux. "This year's budget had a strong focus on this type of technology, identifying as a priority how the UK can seize the opportunity and maintain its position at the forefront of the technology revolution," said Le Saux. ■

**Smart Cities continues on p46**





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# Going to town in cities

Joined-up thinking and a collaborative approach from all stakeholders is key to the success of all smart city projects, according to Nick Sacke, Head of Products and IoT at Comms365.

**F**or smart cities in the UK to deliver on the promise of digital transformation – which includes more efficient living, better health as well as greater prosperity – city authorities and their attitude to strategy and planning are critical, noted Sacke. “The UK must also project growth of these technologically driven initiatives based on the sound concept of global competitiveness, in addition to the health and wellbeing of its citizens,” he added.

One danger that could hamper smart city-led innovation are the funding silos held in separate departments. “Only cities with a centralised IoT funding mechanism to support collaboration will make significant headway,” commented Sacke. “That is all down to leadership. Smart city growth is predicated on the building blocks of leadership and strategy, skills and capacity, collaboration, and funding. Without a coordinated approach growth is likely to happen at a much slower pace. With the Asian market already addressing these issues time is of the essence.”

By combining the three elements of academia, innovation

and commercialisation, smart city programmes can be streamlined for the greater good, and through collaboration and coordination there is wider potential for many more locations to benefit. “The commercial aspect results in a value-driven and scalable model with potential to roll out across whole regions, even countries, allowing towns and villages to reap the same benefits as their smart city neighbours,” added Sacke.

The Milton Keynes smart city project deployed a LoRaWAN network towards the end of last year to provide coverage across city central areas for a variety of use cases including energy, parking and environmental. “Data from the several thousand LoRa-based IoT sensors is collected securely over the Low Power Wide Area Network (LPWAN) and deposited in a purpose built IoT data hub, which allows analytics to be conducted by a variety of stakeholders in a secure monitored way that is compliant with data protection legal frameworks,” said Sacke.

“These types of projects undoubtedly hold security as a top priority due to the volume of the deployment



Nick Sacke

and the population numbers that will use the network and the devices connected to it.”

The early smart city accelerator projects in the UK were set up by large companies and academic institutions as a proof of concept. Some SME companies were involved in these projects through innovation work, particularly hardware and application development, but the way for the channel to engage and conduct commercial activities wasn't entirely clear.

## Challenge

“This remains a challenge as only specialist IT firms have the requisite know-how and expertise to contribute to network infrastructure build out programmes,” noted Sacke. “Once the city-wide IoT network is in place the channel has an opportunity to play a role in designing, selling, installing and managing smart bundles of IoT technology and services that leverage the city-wide umbrella infrastructure.”

LPWAN deployments of LoRaWAN and Sigfox to support lighting, water metering, flood detection, waste, smart building, environmental monitoring (and other use cases in cities such as London, Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Bristol and Milton Keynes) have proven to be effective for data gathering at scale and have positively impacted operations. “LPWAN is a complementary network to existing M2M, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and other wireless types, which can be orchestrated together as a resource by cities,” commented Sacke.

“The channel opportunity is to leverage existing IoT network infrastructure by bundling together sensor hardware, software and services as an operations value add. Examples of these smart bundles that are gaining traction in the smart city markets are parking, people movement, environment and building security.”

Security is a priority in the development and deployment of IoT, with Gartner predicting that by 2020 IoT security will make up 20 per cent of annual security budgets. “As a potential inhibitor, analysts, vendors and stakeholders alike are concerned about the potentially significant security risks associated with IoT deployments, especially those that are city-wide,” explained Sacke.

“These concerns are playing an influential role in decision making and end user confidence in deploying IoT services, particularly when it comes to utilising existing networks that are known to be vulnerable – for example, Wi-Fi – and those that are new and operate in the unlicensed spectrum, such as LoRaWAN and Sigfox. Standardisation, or the lack of it, within the IoT industry is also acting as a significant barrier to deployment. With older and newer networks deploying IoT, more standardisation regarding security policies is urgently required.”

An example of a successful initiative is Yokohama in Japan. Suffering from a sharp rise in population that caused construction and pollution increases, with collaboration from the city government, private sector, citizens and household brand names, a pilot was rolled out in just 4,000 homes and resulted in a 20 per cent decrease in power consumption. Sacke commented: “This smart project started with innovation born from necessity, but also took on board government and citizen interests and provided a valuable, measurable and commercial outcome.” ■



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# MOBILE BILL LIMIT LEGISLATION

AURORA

Section 124S of the Communications Act 2003 ('the Act'), which comes into force on 1 October 2018, requires providers of mobile phone services to give customers the ability to limit the cost of their bill and to notify customers when that limit is likely to be reached. The legislation requires that a bill limit is offered to all customers taking out a mobile phone contract on or after 1 October 2018 and to all customers renewing any existing contract from this date. These customers must also be permitted to specify, amend or remove a bill limit on reasonable notice at any time. A customer's limit can only be exceeded with their express consent. If a service continues to be provided without this consent, the provider is prohibited from billing the customer for any charges for the service after the limit is reached.

## AURORA'S GUIDE

This legislation brings multiple issues throughout the channel and resellers need to ensure their billing platform is equipped to cope with these complexities or they could find their business non-compliant and having to absorb extensive revenue and margin loss.

For example; should the end users bill exceed the pre-agreed amount the provider will be prohibited from billing the customer for the excess and will be responsible for any charges and services used themselves.

By now you should have;

- Read and understood the new regulations
- Began to think about how your processes will need to work around the regulations
- Understand impacts on revenue and margin

The biggest risks to resellers are billing platforms that aren't able to;

- Auto-rate CDR data including roamed traffic (as near to real time as possible)
- Directly integrate with mobile networks
- Provide extensive reporting across complex data including revenue loss
- Enable the user to set and amend mobile bill limits through the billing platform
- Notify end users of their usage
- Bar end users

Affinity has extensive provisioning, alerting, barring and monitoring capabilities to maximise resellers' ability to manage their estate and billing revenue exposure.

In addition to these products, which will be available for anyone who sells mobile, Affinity also has a broad suite of communication and reporting capabilities that reduce risk and exposure to potential revenue loss.

Derek Watson, Aurora's Managing Director advises the following "Billing platforms that can't accurately auto rate are the biggest risk to a reseller. CDR Data, including roamed traffic must be collected on a frequent basis to be as close to real-time as possible."

Affinity's automated processing capabilities ensures it can process data as soon as it's available, and via our Virtual Service Provider (VSP) channel we can also offer the integrated capabilities direct with mobile networks not available via 3rd party mobile resellers.

Derek continues "It is essential to have the capability to prevent usage scenarios beyond the bill limit, otherwise resellers will be liable for usage charges that they are unable to pass on to their customers."

Aurora will be guiding its customers through this challenging legislation with free webinars, 1:1 consultative advice, training and support.

Aurora urges all resellers to talk to their billing provider to understand what is being done to their billing platform to prepare them for this legislation.

Please contact Jeannette Goodred at Aurora for more information on the Affinity platform.

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# IFB enlists key execs



George Gordon, Graeme Gordon and Andrew Gordon

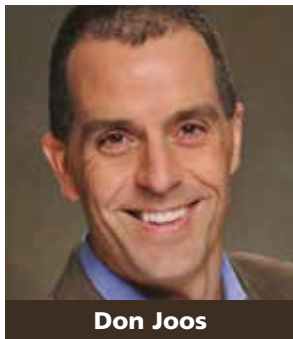
SCOTTISH managed service and data network provider IFB has manoeuvred into expansion mode with the appointments of George Gordon as Chief Operations Officer and Andrew Gordon as Finance Manager.

George, who boasts over 20 years experience in the oil and gas industry, said: "I'm seeking a new challenge focusing more on innovation and technology and IFB is a great fit."

Andrew brings 24 years experience working in the industry and four years as a business owner. He has held senior

financial management roles in the UK and overseas, including 15 years in the oil and gas connectivity business. IFB CEO Graeme Gordon added: "Having George and Andrew join our senior management team is the next step in our growth plans. With their combined experience and expertise they'll play a key part, along with the rest of the team, in continuing to accelerate our ambitious growth plans."

## Also on the move...



Don Joos

FORMER ShoreTel top dog Don Joos has rocked up at collaboration solution provider PGI as CEO. He brings 20 years experience in the technology industry and succeeds Ted Schrafft who is retiring but remains in an advisory role until

the end of 2018. Prior to ShoreTel Joos worked with Avaya in a variety of executive roles. Joos stated: "My focus will be on driving growth opportunities in logical adjacencies." Schrafft commented: "Over the years we have transformed into a more focused, nimble and efficient organisation and Don will continue to drive the business forward."

UXBRIDGE-based Tollring has appointed Alistair Mortimore as Head of Enterprise Sales. He brings 20 years sales leadership experience from spells at Azzurri, Vodafone Global Enterprise and ASC Technologies.



Alistair Mortimore

Mortimore commented: "I've admired Tollring from afar and look forward to helping the company expand further." Tollring also named Andi Williams as its first training specialist.

CEO Tony Martino stated: "Alistair brings considerable expertise in account management and customer relationship development; while Andi will ensure we can deliver clarity and understanding about our services."

# Sky Business signs up Kopf



Rohita Kopf

ROHITA Kopf is to head up the marketing operations at the Business Communications division of Sky Business. She joins as Marketing Manager, bringing seven years experience working in lead roles in digital and communications marketing. She moved from M247 where she was Senior Marketing

Manager. Kopf commented: "It's a fantastic opportunity to leverage my skill set and creative passion within the industry."

Mike Greening, Director of Business Communications at Sky Business, added: "Rohita's core business values are aligned with ours and we are confident that her experience and many accolades will help us grow and achieve greater success."

EXERTIS has promoted Richard Hinds to the newly created position of COO, reporting to Paul Bryan, Exertis UK&I MD. Hinds will have responsibility for the finance, purchasing, IT, logistics and customer services functions. He was previously Group Finance Director for Exertis UK&I.

# Herring nets Pragma role

PRAGMA has sharpened its focus on product marketing with the appointment of Andy Herring as Product Marketing Manager. He joins from Westcon where he worked for 10 years and



Andy Herring

brings experience in sales, product management and product marketing. Herring aims to leverage his knowhow across Pragma's marketing team, technical support and the sales team as he seeks to promote and deliver new products to partners.

"Pragma is a breath of fresh air, bringing a combination of old school values and forward thinking to the partner community," said Herring.

Will Morey, Sales and Marketing Director, added: "Introducing the new Product Marketing Manager role is a tactical move from Pragma to support partner growth through ongoing developments of the iPECS Cloud, on-premise and supporting applications."

# TTG completes round of hires



LEEDS-based The Technology Group has appointed Key Accounts Director Claire Cawthorne to the Board of Directors. The company has also hired Laura Turner as Platform Manager, Tom Gledhill as Support Delivery Manager, Gemma Dale as Management Accountant and Vikki Robinson as HR & Office Manager. Jonathan Marsden, Managing Director, said: "Our new recruits have a pivotal role to play as we drive forward with our ambitious growth plans over the next five years and develop new products and services." Pictured (l-r): Laura Turner, Claire Cawthorne, Vikki Robinson, Gemma Dale and Tom Gledhill.



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# Delivering Digital Britain

This year Comms Vision will set the Digital Britain agenda with an inspirational line up of speakers and thought leadership interviews.

The Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) published on July 23rd sets the date for a full fibre broadband and 5G future, and forecasts the switchover to happen in the majority of the country by 2030. In his Comms Vision Conference opening keynote, Oliver Dowden CBE MP, Parliamentary Secretary (Minister for Implementation), will provide insights into how the Government is driving digital transformation and how he is encouraging growth of the UK's govtech sector.

Also seeking growth as we head towards Digital Britain is BT Wholesale's Managing Director Alex Tempest, whose appointment earlier this year reflects the changing face of BT's channel organisation and its acceleration from 'elder statesman' to 'challenger brand'. In her Comms Vision interview Alex will reveal how BT Wholesale is emerging as a disruptive force that's challenging the status quo. "The move to all-IP represents a huge shift for the whole sector," she commented.

According to Will Whitehorn it's time to reach for the stars in Digital Britain. The former President of Virgin Galactic and ex-Virgin Brand Development Director has a habit for driving

industry disruption and in his Comms Vision keynote he will align his disruptive leadership experience to the revolution in communications technology, and lay down the markers for realising innovation and opportunity through strategic planning as Digital Britain moves from concept to reality.

As we transition to Digital Britain – what next for the channel? It's a question that will be posed and answered by Gamma CEO Andrew Taylor who, in his interview, will discuss how the drivers of Digital Britain are influencing Gamma and business leaders in the comms channel. And in reflecting on his own digital strategy Andrew will signpost how Gamma's objectives align with the future direction of the communications sector as he seeks to capture value from existing and new products and more integrated channel partnerships.

As momentum builds around Digital Britain what will the technology ecosystem look like and how will partner/customer relationships be held together? From which technology areas will business growth be generated and how will our day-to-day working relationship with technology evolve? These are some of the questions Tom Cheesewright, Applied



Oliver Dowden

Futurist and founder of Book of the Future, will answer as he applies true foresight to unravelling these challenging future problems and building strategies for sustainable success.

#### Are we ready?

Kristine Olson-Chapman, Managing Director of TalkTalk Business, will pose the question: Is Britain's infrastructure ready for an all-digital future? In her interview Kristine will explore how technology and innovation is reshaping the digital landscape, and how the channel should prepare for the biggest connectivity change in more than a

generation – and seize the opportunities on offer.

Full fibre and 5G are the single most important drivers of Digital Britain but without the right incentives, regulatory framework and competitive environment the UK's communications infrastructure rebuild will falter. Meeting these challenges and creating value in Digital Britain is the subject of discussion during the Comms Vision interview with Mark Collins, CityFibre's Director of Strategy and Public Affairs, and Entanet CEO Elsa Chen. They will consider the core challenges posed by the Government's

digital strategy and how they should be met; and explore the optimistic prospects for proactive resellers wanting to play an important role in the nationwide roll out of full fibre, ensuring the UK goes the digital distance.

In his Comms Vision interview 9 Group CEO James Palmer will look to demystify what Digital Britain means for the leaders of channel partners and their business customers. James will examine how recent shifts in buying behaviour, connectivity infrastructure and flexible working styles are simplified by distilling what customers really want into three key elements and ensuring that emerging technologies supplement an existing product portfolio. To add value in each of these areas there is a clear opportunity to succeed in the converged comms and IT market.

Crossing the winning line first in the race to Digital Britain will mean reworking aspects of your business, perhaps most importantly individual and team performances. And as Digital Britain unfolds, meeting the challenges and opportunities with a 'people strategy' and development programme will become more crucial than ever. In his keynote address legendary athletics coach Frank Dick OBE will share his unrivalled experience and research into individual and team success and achievement which, as the British Athletics Federation's Director of Coaching, put athletes such as Daley Thompson, Steve Ovett and Sebastian Coe on track to European, Olympic and world honours. ■

**In the following pages Comms Vision sponsors discuss their market views and strategies.**

# BT Wholesale revs up

If you're a reseller, then it's a part of your maturing process to grow and expand beyond your native town and region where you have had initial success. At BT Wholesale it's our mission to help resellers expand by providing the scalability, network reach, skills, regional presence, reliability and breadth of services only available from the UK's largest telecoms operator. We believe that we are uniquely positioned to be the power behind resellers as they address new opportunities and scale their businesses. We do this first of all through R&D so we can help our partners capitalise on innovation in areas such as software-defined networking, virtualisation of network functions and optimising for cloud services.

We also want to move the industry away from chunky, clunky one-size-fits-all models and towards a world where services are utility-based and can be quickly dialled up and down without penalty. On a related point, we endorse the broader shift in ICT towards managed services where vendors and resellers can work hand in hand to serve buyers rather than just selling kit. And we are very focused on removing any obstacles to dealing with us. At the heart of our capabilities, our connectivity portfolio offers an unparalleled range of access solutions and all are available through self-service portals and open APIs, so the connection between us is as seamless as possible. In addition, we also offer a full portfolio of professional services which can range from managed installation, through project and programme management to legacy equipment removal.



Paul Beacham

We want to be in the engine room of the channel and provide the know-how to meet the needs of the On-Demand Economy, writes Paul Beacham, Head of Data Portfolio Management at BT Wholesale.

We believe this full-stack proposition will leave our partners free to focus on delighting customers and growing business.

#### Exciting times

This is an exciting time for our industry as the On-Demand Economy goes from strength to strength and businesses recognise the need to operate in real-time. Data, or at least data analytics, is becoming crucial to modern day businesses in managing customers, products and services more effectively. But on-demand is also about being more cost-effective, using the cloud to reduce capital costs and make infrastructure scalable, as software as a service (SaaS), platform as a service (PaaS) and the Internet of Things (IoT) change how businesses

operate, underpinned by Ethernet connectivity.

Traditionally, businesses would have to second-guess their bandwidth requirements for applications and services and buy connectivity in set chunks over defined periods. It worked for a time but those times have now changed. The On-Demand Economy is ripping up the old rulebooks and demanding a shift in how enabling services are sold and delivered. With this increase in cloud-based services, connectivity becomes critical to business infrastructure. That means service providers have had to rethink Ethernet connectivity and it's not just about quality and quantity, it's also about flexibility.

Bandwidth provision has had to evolve and that means

being available to meet the demands of customers as and when they want it via a bandwidth 'tap' that is easy to manage and quick to deliver. Bandwidth-on-demand is not just a nice-to-have, it is a necessity. BT Wholesale now offers customers the ability to upgrade or downgrade bandwidth via a portal in less than 10 minutes, compared to the 24 hours and often longer that is typical today in the industry. What's more, we are enabling this functionality to customers via an API so the service flexibility can be fully automated into comms resellers on systems, portals and customer propositions.

This of course has implications for billing, which is why bandwidth-on-demand will also be offered as a pay-as-you-go model, calculated by 24-hour periods and billed either monthly, quarterly or annually. The aim is to be as fair and flexible as possible for customers, ensuring they can get access to bandwidth to manage unforeseen events or planned peaks and troughs for their businesses.

What this means is that channel partners can be agile and responsive to individual customer requirements and changing connectivity demands. Add-on services can also be tailored to meet specific needs of customers while providing them with improved total cost of ownership savings. This will foster differentiation and pave the way for new ways in which connectivity will be delivered, managed and financed.

Our approach empowers customers to take control and enjoy increased flexibility, with portal access as an

essential element for self-service. However, to realise the true potential for channel partners, a full systems-to-systems interface via open APIs allows deep integration between BT Wholesale and the reseller community. And again, that includes access to not just products but managed services that are tailored to fit the specific needs of customers.

As we enter the next phase of connectivity provision, where virtualised networks will drive a whole new level of capability, partners will have even more granular options. By offering flexible bandwidth, partners and customers can scale at their own pace, and without being saddled with unwanted costs.

Comms resellers today can look forward to a world of opportunity but we recognise that there are many challenges too. Competition is tough, cash-flow is an issue, technological change never stops, hiring the right people is time-consuming and infrastructure needs to keep pace with ambition. At BT Wholesale we want to be a true partner to resellers by providing a keenly-priced and unrivalled roster of people, products and services for white-labelling, underpinned by connectivity solutions accessed through fully automated and digital channels.

In one of our boardroom sessions we'll be discussing how we're empowering the channel with connectivity solutions to be SD-WAN ready, and exploring bandwidth on demand in more detail. We'd love to get your feedback and look forward to an informative and insightful event. ■



# Driving your business forward

We get that you need the best in voice, hosted or data connectivity services. But we also get that it's much more than just the product. It's about making your life easier, the difficult things made simple. And that's what we're here to do. Backed by a high capacity, secure high-quality network, our solutions are designed to drive your business forward. We just help put you in the driving seat.

Get behind the wheel now – call us on **0800 671 045** or visit **btwholesale.com**

**BT** wholesale



# Time to take the lead

**W**hile the strength of the UK economy is increasingly driven by digital innovation, businesses have to rely on a creaking infrastructure that's failing to meet the needs of modern commerce. In our view, that's unacceptable. To deliver a truly digital Britain that's able to compete effectively we need major full fibre network investment and the key to this is creating the right environment. As the most forward-thinking infrastructure builder, CityFibre is a real disruptor and agent for change in the UK comms market and we're delivering a success-defining solution that's forcing others to sit up and take notice.

The emergence of a committed, passionate and strongly financially-backed challenger has proven to be a powerful catalyst for positive change in other economies that have relied too much on long-established incumbents and as a result, struggled to advance quickly enough. It will work for Britain too.

The Government aims to drive the UK towards a full fibre future, setting out its targets in the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR). We believe the long-term targets are achievable. But to become a reality, a level playing field is needed that creates the right regulatory climate for investment and allows customers to switch easily between infrastructure providers. We need a new model that discourages predatory overbuild and promotes the development of a single, underlying, full fibre network for every city, town and region. This will then act as a neutral platform upon which



Elsa Chen

Channel partners that embrace the full fibre opportunity will inevitably be the ones that steal a march on the competition, writes Entanet CEO Elsa Chen.

multiple ISPs can deliver real choice to customers.

#### Key issue

Another key requirement is to put an end to fake fibre advertising. The Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) currently allows copper-based broadband to be marketed as 'fibre', which misleads customers and holds back the investment and rollout of ultra-fast, full

## Our positive and competitive approach has ignited a full fibre revolution

fibre connectivity. CityFibre has put this issue into the public spotlight through the Coppersaurus campaign (see [www.coppersaurus.com](http://www.coppersaurus.com)).

The key word in all of this is 'delivering'. We're already

executing an ambitious investment programme to deliver the UK's most advanced and intelligent full fibre network, and have just announced a new £2.5 billion investment, identifying 37 towns and cities where we already have critical fibre spine assets as primed for expansion for fibre-to-the-home. The investment plan responds to the Government's strategic

direction for nationwide full fibre connectivity and its desire for this to be delivered by multiple providers.

CityFibre's rollout will deliver five million premises and corresponds to one third

of the Government's 2025 target of 15 million.

Our positive and competitive approach has ignited a full fibre revolution. And to ensure this transformational, fit-for-purpose network roll-out continues to accelerate, Entanet – as part of CityFibre – is enabling the channel to play a really significant role in making it happen.

By driving the adoption of full fibre, resellers, aggregators and wholesalers will be actively supporting the further investment and growth of a future-proof network and opening new opportunities for themselves. Seizing first-mover advantage is crucial, and as the race to 'fibre-up' the UK intensifies Entanet is opening up CityFibre's existing Gigabit cities to partners who understand the opportunity

and want to gain a competitive advantage. We're empowering them to deliver the ultra-fast services that business customers need.

With over 22 years of experience in the connectivity channel, we're building on our reputation for delivering a straightforward and positive customer experience. We're actively supporting partners who are committed to joining our quest to bring fibre to businesses and by aggregating demand to prove the business case for even more full fibre projects.

Since last year's Comms Vision, we've invested heavily to solidly integrate our networks, resources and operations. We've added more quality staff to our teams and continue to expand our services to partners, carriers, mobile operators, the public sector and consumers. We're not just another carrier trying to be better than our peers. Through a differentiated channel proposition, we're empowering partners to achieve their true value and be instrumental in driving the UK's digital success.

This is a hugely exciting time in the UK's connectivity market and we're passionate about taking success-hungry partners on our full fibre journey. In our Comms Vision boardroom sessions we're sharing our strategy for Digital Britain and how we're creating the right environment for success. There will also be ample opportunities for one-to-one discussions. Make sure you come to see us, hear about our plans and talk about the role you can play in building a truly digital future for Britain. ■





# A Champion strategy

Join us at Comms Vision to discover how you can capitalise on our strategy to champion full fibre for Great Britain...

The race to fibre-up British businesses represents a huge opportunity for success-hungry channel partners! We've created the right environment for your own success by unlocking access to our Gigabit cities across the UK and by aggregating partner demand to make the business case for new ones. In fact we're building the UK's most intelligent wholesale network to bring full fibre to 5 million premises by 2025.

We're passionately excited about the UK's full fibre future - share our passion and book your place at one of our Comms Vision boardroom sessions or a 1-to-1 meeting.

**Let's talk full fibre at Comms Vision**  
[www.enta.net](http://www.enta.net)

# Digitalisation made easy

**F**or all the pros and cons of DX one thing is abundantly clear – a business's vision for the future must include a digital strategy in order to be successful. However, for many businesses the concern is less about going digital and more about what is the easiest and most cost-effective way to engage with their customers and suppliers – and digital is the best medium to achieve this.

As the digital landscape evolves we have seen a major shift within the purchasing cycle as customers are no longer passive participants but rather driving the conversation while suppliers scramble to cater for their demands. The margin for error continues to shrink. Strategies and tactics deployed by sales and marketing teams a decade ago would make the modern buyer run for the hills. Buyer's today are savvy, diligent and much more actively involved in the sales process. While they do not accept being sold to, they expect brands to meet them where they are and prove their value before earning their business.

For many businesses digitalisation is daunting. In a single generation they have had to adapt to a set of new marketing channels, decide which technologies will help their business grow while trying to beat their competition. By leveraging their position as a trusted advisor resellers can help clients develop digital and IT strategies that address emerging business needs for seamless customer experience and quality service.

The channel is essential in defining the digital strategy,



Andrew Taylor

For the channel, the opportunity to define a customer's digital strategy has never been greater, writes Andrew Taylor, CEO at Platinum sponsor Gamma.

and customer-centricity is key to implementing the technology that will enable a customer's business to improve and operate more efficiently. Providing mediums like desktop sharing models, video conferencing and live chat as well as having staff that can sit face-to-face with a customer provides a well-rounded and efficient

## Strategies and tactics deployed by sales and marketing teams a decade ago would make the modern buyer run for the hills

approach to customer acquisition. Technology moves rapidly and in order to ensure the communications solutions you implement will be relevant to the customer's business plans for the long-term, it needs to be mobile, flexible and address all stages of the buyer's journey.

The key for partners is to add new solutions to their portfolio that offer real value to the customer while putting themselves in a powerful position to cross-sell or upsell. In order to sell solutions and support customers successfully, a solid understanding of your customer is vital. The product or technology is

irrelevant at this stage, it's about understanding the overall business operation and the pain points that need to be relieved. This is how the channel can differentiate themselves against businesses buying ICT services off the Internet. Partners that listen to their

customers, understand how their business operates, the problems they have, and can solve those problems are the ones that will thrive.

### Enabling Gamma partners to grow

Working with innovative suppliers that have the skills to integrate business processes with technology is fundamental to realising your potential as a reseller. Without a solid foundation in this relationship you could be held back by the lack of experience and support. Gamma's focus is, and will continue to be, on developing innovative ways to help the channel succeed. Our 'easy to do business with' mantra underpins everything we do at Gamma and we will bring this to Gleneagles this year.

We will be running two boardroom sessions – one on our upcoming Horizon Collaborate solution which

offers advanced UCC services such as instant messaging and presence, video, desktop and file sharing, conferencing and mobility features in addition to the Horizon hosted PBX service. The other session will focus on how you can be adopting modern marketing and sales strategies that reflect the changes in the purchasing cycle, which is continually shifting.

### Sessions spotlight three key focus areas

Our focus around these sessions will be on three key areas that give practical advice on driving incremental revenue and margins to your business today: Acquiring new business and generating a better quality of lead; growing your existing base by cross-selling and upselling more effectively; and increasing your margins through Gamma's easy to do business programmes – Academy and Accelerate. ■





## Horizon

# The Channel's favourite just got better.

Gamma's new Horizon Collaborate solution offers services such as instant messaging and presence, voice, video, desktop and application sharing and document sharing. Fully integrated with the award-winning Horizon hosted PBX service, Horizon Collaborate supports all the features and functionality of the telephony service for a true unified communications experience.

Defined by the Channel, designed for the Channel.

Contact us today to find out more.

0333 014 0000

[gamma.co.uk](http://gamma.co.uk)

 **Gamma**  
Clear. Creative. Communications.

# Free to Perform with 9

Closing his Digital Britain article in Comms Dealer last month, our Group's CEO, James Palmer, reiterated the stellar importance of the customer to channel partners' business planning. Unarguably sage advice, but how has 9 adapted to enable our channel partners to actually deliver what their customers now need? What new skills and new technologies are helping to make a difference and how are we sharing and delivering what our Partners really need?

Our brand ethos, Free to Perform, is no trite three word buzz phrase, created by bearded hipsters in a colouring in department, but with no actual grounding in the core business activities. On the contrary, Free to Perform is the embodiment of everything we believe in at 9 regarding our relationship with Partners and indeed customers. We offer a range of practical, real world solutions to our Partners, so that at its simplest, we will do our job, so they are free to do theirs.

To support our Free to Perform message we have recruited five sporting ambassadors to endorse our message and one of them, Gordon Reid MBE, will be with us at Comms Vision, Gleneagles, to talk about how the spirit of Free to Perform helped him to become a gold medal Paralympic tennis champion in 2016 at the Rio games. Our Marketing team don't just hob nob with sporting stars though and delegates at Comms Vision will also be able to hear from Christian Bleakley, MD at Telesis, as he relates how bespoke, on



Adam Cathcart

9 Group's approach to business is anchored by a brand philosophy that makes all the difference, explains Adam Cathcart, Managing Director of the Partners Division.

site and practical marketing help from 9 has helped him to grow his business and even embrace the role of digital marketing to generate leads. There are no white label collateral portals on offer at 9, we just introduce Partners to the power of marketing, then share our capacity and capability to make it work for them.

#### Hands-on approach

In Digital Britain a new level of insight, acumen and language is essential, so 9 is always looking through the Partner, towards the end user, offering to work alongside them as they grapple with this change, supplying information,

training and presence from our Technical Sales team to secure new business. We have deliberately recruited experts in mobile, hosted services and security, not to work in an ivory towered development environment, but to engage, sleeves rolled up and dirty-handed, with Partners and their customers to solve problems and win business.

Thankfully, we have retained the agility of a small business, while acquiring the scale of a serious provider. Look around our organisation and you will not see any departmental walls, so if we need to assemble a bespoke, cross-functional matrix of

people to address a specific Partner requirement, then we can do it – and quickly.

#### Transformation

Emerging technology in our sector has the potential to transform the way we all do business at a rampant pace and with a vibrancy which could bewilder the unwary Partner, never mind the defenceless small business customer. At Gleneagles, we will be running a series of boardroom sessions to reveal how we have simplified an approach to this logjam of acronyms and options that will help all parties to demystify Digital Britain and reap the rewards of the resultant opportunities.

In parallel boardroom sessions we will introduce you to eve, our hosted communication and collaboration platform. We are really keen to share the story of why we looked at the real questions facing our Partners when they surveyed the ISDN, SIP and hosted voice landscape and came to the conclusion that the answers are, 'all about eve'.

The importance of capability and resilience is well understood, but what about differentiation and disruption to actually help you to stand out and win new business? Join us to find out how a deep understanding of the market has enabled eve to increasingly become the platform of choice for many Partners.

"9's Marketing team took a collaborative approach, by sitting down face to face with our sales team to understand their ideas and goals. This personal touch isn't something I've seen elsewhere but it worked! The materials 9 provided established mobile as a product within our portfolio and it drove sales." It is always rewarding to hear Partners play back what we do well, so thank you Andy from Ignite for that one.

During our 1:1 sessions at Gleneagles I will talk about how our current Partners seem to really value our approach and the warmth of our relationship with them. In my view, 9 is especially strong when helping Partners to navigate the route from old world technology and sales tactics to the new world of informed customers and digital technology – so why not book an opportunity to chat and find out more. ■



FREE TO

PERFORM

## Accept no limits, with 9

Gordon Reid, 9's brand ambassador. 2018 Wimbledon Doubles champion, for the third consecutive year. Paralympic Gold medallist and a sporting hero.

Meet Gordon and hear his take on 9's Free to Perform ethos at this year's Comms Vision event.



Contact us at [partners@9group.co.uk](mailto:partners@9group.co.uk)  
or call 0800 068 5939

FREE TO PERFORM



# Digital Britain for all

'We're on a mission to make Digital Britain a reality for all', writes TalkTalk Business (Platinum sponsor) Director of Partners Richard Thompson, who also highlights Comms Vision's exclusive interview with Managing Director Kristine Olson-Chapman.



Richard Thompson

Telecoms can be a complex and fast-paced industry. However, in Kristine's role as Managing Director she is on a mission to untangle this complexity and ensure that customers are at the heart of every decision we make. With a career spanning 20-plus years in three very diverse sectors – FMCG (Unilever), Finance (AMEX) and Telco (TalkTalk Business) – Kristine is a champion of customer driven decision making while understanding the importance of effective business collaboration.

I'm hugely excited that at this year's Comms Vision delegates will get to meet her

## For Digital Britain to exist we need full transparency between providers and Government bodies

and see for themselves why she is the heart of TalkTalk Business. Her unwavering commitment to the channel, our partners and the market is demonstrated through our recent reset in strategy

to simplify the business, so that we are able to focus on what matters most. Our customers and their business.

Our strategy focuses on being entirely supportive to the types of customers we partner with. This enables us to understand the needs of their customers and offer them greater value. We have learnt that naturally, customers seek out the best value and want flexibility from their provider. So it's up to us as an industry to make the customer journey as seamless as possible and keep up with the demand for faster, reliable connectivity. Only then will we be able to say that collectively we have delivered a Digital Britain we can be proud of.

However, in order for Digital Britain to exist we need full transparency between providers and Government bodies, including investment from committed infrastructure providers (like us) to help unbundle the jargon and myths that

3.0 – where pockets of the UK are marginalised by not being able to access ultrafast technology.

Here at TalkTalk Business we believe in inclusivity and that everyone should benefit from the advances in technology, not just those who can afford it. We remain competitive so that the market stays buoyant and we remain committed to our partners so that when we win, they win.

### Fast connections

In York, we have already connected 20,000 homes and businesses successfully with our Ultra Fibre Optic offering and our joint venture with Infracore means that more businesses in different cities will be able to experience the benefits of full fibre for themselves sooner rather than later.

Our disruptive challenger roots, scale and extensive network investment has proven that we are the largest wholesale broadband provider and the fastest growing national Ethernet provider in the UK, together with award winning IP and core voice services. We have reinvigorated our commitment to supporting the UK channel by increasing the number of sales heads by 25 per cent. This will help our teams build more meaningful relationships with our extensive network of resellers, managed service provider and system integrators.

Our partners are with us on the race to full fibre, and without them pushing for better more resilient and fairer connectivity it wouldn't be the exciting journey that it is. ■



Kristine Olson-Chapman



# Enabling a Digital Britain, together



Best ever 1Gb  
Ethernet prices



Service Index &  
Hotpipe reports



Single, simple  
order journey



UK's largest  
Ethernet network



Market leading  
install times



## Why settle for any less?

Join us in the Barony boardroom, Gleneagles Hotel.

[talktalkbusiness.co.uk/partners](http://talktalkbusiness.co.uk/partners)

0800 954 0764

# Winning the CX battle

In the last few years we have seen a lot of change happening across the enterprise communications space. The first industry wave was all on-premise, from telephony to video conferencing to contact centre. But then cloud products were introduced with point solutions that became more and more prominent in the enterprise, across video meetings, UCaaS, CCaaS and messaging and collaboration tools. The third wave of communications is led by the CIO, bringing together voice, video, messaging, meetings and call centre solutions into a single, seamless communications experience. Combining fractured employee engagement systems together under one roof ensures that employees are well equipped to do their jobs, and are happier doing so. This also means different parts of the business are no longer siloed and there's a steady flow of customer information between departments, resulting in improved cross-collaboration and united staff.

In the present day, people have so many channels at their fingertips – social platforms, voice activated devices, instant messenger – so naturally they expect to be able to contact businesses 24/7 via any channel they wish. With this in mind, customers expect a speedy resolution of problems, and if issues can be solved quickly they are more inclined to stay loyal to a brand.

Take, for example, what typically happens when you call into a contact centre. You speak to an agent, they try to find the right person for your query and succeed



Charles Aylwin

The third wave of communications is here, and good customer experiences will drive success while the opposite will lead to failure, writes Charles Aylwin, Director of Channel UK & EMEA at 8x8.

in resolving your problem efficiently perhaps half the time. The agent simply doesn't have the data to find the right person let alone the right channel to reach them efficiently, be it via chat, email, phone or text. It's this type of communications problem that creates poor customer experiences, leading to aggravation and lack of trust. In a world where customer-driven initiatives are a number one priority for businesses, it's an issue that can directly impact the bottom line.

We know that satisfied customers stay loyal and drive business success. On the flip side, dissatisfied customers share their disappointment and cost more money. This is fact, and it should be the absolute priority of every organisation to empower their employees to deliver

an outstanding customer experience every time. Having the right technology and communications in place is vital for this to be realised.

#### CIOs are responsible for customer experience

Customer experience is the CIOs new battlefield. CIOs know that IT is responsible for improving customer experience and should be investing heavily in communications technology to support customer service, but until now there wasn't a clear path to achieve this. Historically, businesses have worked with different IT components cobbled together. However, this inevitably led to disjointed service and a difficult, clunky system for staff to use. As a result, employees experienced a poor working environment and provided substandard customer

service to their base. By bringing fractured employees to customer engagement systems and communications together with one system of engagement and one system of intelligence on one cloud platform, there is finally a solution to the problem.

#### X Series: One cloud communications platform

8x8 recently launched X Series, a new cloud communications platform which brings together voice, video meetings, team messaging and collaboration, and contact centre solutions on one system of engagement, backed by rich data and analytics. The new X Series platform also provides companies with a complete data set across all employee and customer interactions and an advanced analytics engine to derive unique insights from one

system of intelligence. This will allow global mid-market and enterprise companies to better collaborate internally, to provide a more personalised customer experience, and to make actionable business decisions based on business-critical signals.

The benefits are clear. For customers, the person who answers your query will have the context behind the call and your history. This means the customer service agent on the other end of the phone, chat portal, or any other form of communication you might use, has everything they need to resolve your query the first time. This eliminates the debacle where customers are passed between departments searching for an answer.

For staff, one cloud platform means technology that is easy to manage and use. Dealing with inbound customer queries is no longer complex but rather a smooth process that results in positive outcomes and efficient staff. For larger organisations, linking all departments ensures improved cross-collaboration and maximum productivity with one click access to subject matter experts in house. Now, employees have the time and insight to be truly customer focused.

Businesses need to examine how successful their customer service is in its current state and whether employees are armed to deliver outstanding results. It is then a case of taking action, getting the right solution in place to ensure the best service for your customers and help you stay ahead of your competition. ■



# There's no DX without great CX

How Contact Centre technology can spearhead your business's Digital Transformation (DX)

**It's a never-ending race to offer your customers the richest, most differentiating experience possible. Small wonder over 78% of businesses rely on contact centre technology to drive deeper engagement.**

But the right contact centre solution can also form the basis of a **wider digital transformation** of your business – by “leading from the front” in terms of tech sophistication, and by providing the business intelligence and superior CX to power growth as your operations change.

**Learn more here >**

[8x8.com/uk/about-us/partners](https://8x8.com/uk/about-us/partners)

## **How does a contact centre support your Digital Transformation?**

A cutting-edge contact centre doesn't just field customer calls. It also facilitates the capture and analysis of valuable customer data, while making insights available to agents in real time. As technology advances, new developments like AI are forecast to add yet more dimensions to your CX offering, while automating processes for greater efficiency.

The result? Better conversations, more satisfying outcomes and a deeper engagement with each customer, along with transformative business insights to fuel your future strategy

## **Must-haves for a transformative contact centre solution**

- A choice of customer contact channels including phone, chat and email
- Valuable, in-depth analytics that suit the needs of your business
- Ready, real-time availability of customer insights and agent performance data
- Secure, cloud-based storage of customer data
- Compliance with key legislation (e.g. GDPR)
- Advanced features where needed (e.g. speech recognition)

# Daisy adds to portfolio

**D**aisy Wholesale is helping businesses to grow with innovative portfolio add-ons, writes **Lauren McManus, Head of Marketing and Communications**. In February 2018 we launched four new products at the BT Tower: SD-WAN, a UC/FMC app, a broadband quality of service product and SIP. These, together with our existing hosted voice and mobile products, form our One and Only Convergence Solution, designed specifically for the channel to help it maximise the opportunities the convergence of the telecoms and IT markets presents.

As part of our work to provide resellers with all the products and services they need to grow revenues and their customer base, as well as enabling them to provide an improved level of customer service, we are preparing to launch several key add-ons.



**Lauren McManus**

We will soon launch the Daisy Wholesale Sales Academy, covering market awareness, product knowledge and sales skills. It will be delivered via a combination of online and face-to-face modules, and once fully accredited participants will receive badges to share on social media. It is designed to assist with the personal development of our partners' sales teams so they can achieve more in their roles, in turn, benefiting the reseller's business.

New to Daisy, we are looking forward to launching our One and Only Web Store where partners can benefit from leveraging Daisy's buying power and order competitively priced hardware including laptops, computers, tablets, mobile handsets, cables and equipment from world class vendors via our Daisy Wholesale Portal. There will be the option of making a one-off credit card payment or a subscription model to pay monthly.

With the introduction of GDPR earlier this year we understand how critical compliance is to our business, our partners' businesses and their end users. With Wisdom, we help ensure compliance by providing a transparent view of how your data and your customers' data is stored, managed and accessed, combined with various data storage and archive solutions.

The latest addition to our portfolio, Enskil, is an application that enables

partners to find Daisy engineers with a specified skill-set, available in a chosen location. This will remove the need for engineers on your payroll, and they can cover remote tasks, peaks in activity or the holiday season, freeing up your time to focus on selling. Everything we do, we do with the channel in mind and we pride ourselves on creating market leading propositions. As with the majority of our products, there are no volume commitments and they are available with 30 day contracts.

Convergence isn't something that's coming. It's here today and we are positioning the channel to be ideally placed to take advantage of the huge opportunities it presents. So why not speak to Daisy Wholesale to see how we can help you to maximise this market and take advantage of this opportunity with our pick-and-mix solutions, and additional products which will help your business grow? ■

**ALL OUR SERVICES ARE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE CHANNEL...**

**Contact us today:**

T: 0330 100 1233

W: [www.daisywholesale.com](http://www.daisywholesale.com)

E: [sales.wholesale@daisygroup.com](mailto:sales.wholesale@daisygroup.com)





# Energy business booms

In 2015 Fidelity Energy came to Comms Vision with a concept. In 2016 we launched our Partner Portal, Ambolt, and this year we return with a proven track record and £100 million under contract, 260-plus channel partners and £8.5 million of commission secured, writes **Managing Director John Haw**. We see Comms Vision as a melting pot of the best entrepreneurial businesses in telecoms who have spent the years (and the money) to grow a loyal customer base. This year we will showcase our partnership offering and the value this adds to your business today and during an exit.

Fidelity Energy has spent this year not only growing our partner base but also investing in the team and infrastructure to ensure that we take a duty of care with partners' customers, providing partners with the support they need to sell energy as an additional product.



**John Haw**

Fidelity Energy provides partners with onboarding to the energy market with full industry training and the support of desk and field-based account managers. We also train our partners' sales teams and engage with end user meetings where needed. 90 per cent of our partners have never sold energy before and are now fully accredited by us to sell energy. Fidelity Energy has proved the longevity of its offering with over 88 per cent of customers choosing to renew their

gas and electric accounts with their Fidelity Energy channel partner. This makes energy a very sticky product to add to your product line.

We all have a social responsibility to lower global emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 or it could have devastating effects on the planet we call home. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has issued a special report on the impact of global warming of 1.5C. If we don't act soon it could result in significant and dangerous changes to our world. Fidelity Energy has launched a fully renewable (Green) electric offering at no additional cost to UK business users, allowing them to reduce the carbon footprint of their electric usage and give our partners a leading edge when selling to their customer base.

Ambolt provides partners with the tools they need to add energy

to their portfolio. These include an API into the credit checking facility, automatic letter of authority generation, one button quote refresh and fully integrated e-signature facility. Additionally, we have invested heavily in e-commerce platforms to enable partners to offer energy switching to their partners and users. UK businesses can compare 10,000s of electricity and gas tariffs by entering a few simple details in the automated platform.

Incorporating energy into a unified communication offering not only adds additional margin but also protects current products from the increasing number of energy companies that are now offering telecoms. Building on the current objectives of solving customer problems using technology, Fidelity Energy partners can manage their customers' energy needs while shutting the door to other suppliers in their customer base.

## MANAGE YOUR CUSTOMER'S ENERGY NEEDS TODAY

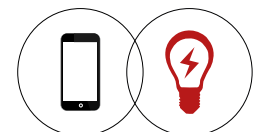
**All of your customers use energy**

- > Monetise your existing telecoms base
- > We make selling energy quick and simple
- > E-commerce option available



£100,000,000 total contract spend under management. 260 Partners - Oct 2018

- > Up to 80% of TCM paid upfront
- > Simple white label online portal
- > No operational overhead



How are you funding your hardware now?

**Fidelity Energy**

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# FluidOne set for growth

**F**luidOne is perfectly poised to deliver the conditions for channel growth and meet the future requirements of partners and customers, **writes Head of Channel Henry West.** We're already able to give the key players in the market a run for their money and there is so much more to come. One of my core objectives is to triple the business. No easy challenge, but the market is huge and most importantly FluidOne is channel-focused. In this we have clarity, direction and the full support of the whole business from operations to finance, sales and marketing, and our in-house software development team.



**Henry West**

FluidOne developers recently brought their latest innovation, Ethernet on Demand (EoD) to market. EoD allows partners and customers to dynamically scale bandwidth up and down on their Ethernet leased line connections in real-time using

FluidOne's Dash Portal, part of the Queen's Award Winning Platform One. This SDN functionality gives FluidOne partners the ability to quote, order, manage and then flex bandwidth up and down on-demand on Ethernet Leased Lines in seconds.

The portal is king: We hear it from customers all the time – 'give me choice, operational benefits and make it easy to consume and manage my services', they say. Having an in-house team of developers will ensure the Dash Portal continues to evolve at pace.

Such agility is key, not simply because the connectivity market is crowded – it's also moving fast and customer reliance on infrastructure is the de facto imperative occupying the minds of key providers. In a cloud-centric on-demand world customers will need to connect to people, places, assets and things from many different origins, together and to the services they need. This is amplifying the need for quality, choice and flexibility.

Ethernet on Demand is particularly strong in industries that have variable or seasonal trading and operational performance across the year. Retail,

hospitality, events, travel and education all display peak bandwidth needs in busy periods – during term-time at a school, for example or at Easter and Christmas for retailers or in the summer holidays for travel firms.

EoD allows customers to see their actual bandwidth utilisation and then ramp up to meet these seasonal requirements and then back down again to a steady-state norm for the rest of the year. However, it's not all about Ethernet right now. We have also started to see demand for FTTP, G.fast, 4G and soon there will be 5G services in the mix.

The high speed and commercial advantages these access technologies deliver enable FluidOne and our partners to address all aspects of the market together and in collaboration, creating a better environment for business growth and success in the future. ■

## INTRODUCING PAY AS YOU GROW BANDWIDTH



ETHERNET  
ON  
DEMAND



*Scale up or down your Ethernet usage in real time.  
Only use the bandwidth you need, when you need it.*

### SDN ENABLED

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FluidOne



# Glide has you covered

It's an exciting time at Glide, an ISPA award winning Internet Service Provider specialising in business connectivity, writes **Head of Channel Daniel Alvarez.**

After reaching the milestone of over 100,000 premises passed and with plans to double the current turnover, Glide's biggest opportunity over the next 12 months is the channel. The pressure is on for the industry, providers, and therefore channel partners to offer solutions that meet business connectivity needs. Businesses in hard to reach areas have historically been neglected by the industry giants, which is why Glide offer you and your customers something truly unique that was previously unavailable.

With our own national fibre footprint, our focus is on superfast and ultrafast broadband built for business, supplied straight from the



**Daniel Alvarez**

source. We lay our own physical fibre and cabinet infrastructure which enables us to provide a service previously unavailable to the business, science and industrial parks we serve. And at last, our footprint is available to you, our channel partners, to provide the best in class broadband for your customers.

Fast, reliable internet has never been so important and in so many locations it is lacking, and so badly rolled out. Almost a quarter of UK small businesses are held back by unreliable internet that costs them time and money causing unimaginable stress. Glide is proud to be part of the change currently happening in the industry, which is seeing the rise of alternative network providers delivering fibre provisions across the UK, and a reduction on the reliance of the likes of Openreach. This allows us to offer you something truly unique and exciting, that you in turn can provide to your customers. And we all know the pressure is on for the industry, providers and therefore channel partners to offer solutions that meet business connectivity needs.

Almost a quarter of UK small business are held back by unreliable internet, which costs time and

money. Our aim here at Glide is to continue our fibre build programme to give you more reach and penetration for both your existing client base, and your future client base – identifying business parks and industrial estates that just aren't getting the broadband they deserve.

Our purpose-built partner portal is easy to use, allowing you to quickly see our coverage and access pricing. And our proactive monitoring and support means you, and your customers, can have complete peace of mind. We offer our partners complete peace of mind bringing national scale, experienced technical support and our in-house capabilities to support and manage an end to end experience for your customers. Which means less time worrying and more time driving business forward.

Whatever you need, Glide has got you covered. ■



## Unleash fibre connectivity to your customers.

- Connecting more businesses in previously hard-to-reach areas
- Over 100,000 premises passed
- Already helping to support over 2,000 businesses

**Let's do more, together**

glidebusiness.co.uk

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# Informing the future

Over the past few years Inform Billing has invested over £1 million in developing Eclipse Next Generation from the ground up, writes **Managing Director Shaun Bodsworth**. Reflecting the needs of users, the platform is entirely web-based and includes a brand new modern look and feel, simple and easy to follow navigation, extensive wizards and much greater emphasis on automation, integration and security features.

Officially launched to the channel in September 2017, Eclipse NG continues to roll out to Inform Billing's 250 strong customer base. The software has taken the best features and functionality from past iterations and added more than 40 new features. Eclipse NG went on to win the 'Best Billing platform' title later that year at the prestigious Comms National Awards. Since then



**Shaun Bodsworth**

the response to the new product has been phenomenal and our business has gone from strength to strength.

With all this focus on product development it's important to remember it is Inform Billing's specialist knowledge and expertise, amassed in the team over decades, that drives the development roadmap and provides value to resellers. When we meet with potential new customers, one of the things

that stands out is our ability to demonstrate significant market knowledge and a proven track record in dealing with the complexities of billing including bundling and complex CDR processing. This is paramount when it comes to understanding, solving and often pre-empting problems that the reseller may not yet even know exist.

We have always had a consultative approach, advising those new to resale as well as supporting larger clients with long-term projects. Our training is all inclusive, we are always at the forefront of regulatory changes and pride ourselves on our outstanding support service. Our first-line support team all use our software day-in day-out to provide managed services and easily help with queries.

The telecoms landscape continues to change at a rapid pace, and as an experienced billing specialist

with significant flexibility within our software applications, we can support new technological areas where billing systems are vital. These include cloud and subscription services and more inclusive package style propositions, where multiple products and services are essentially bundled into a total solution and billed in that way. Our platform has a great deal of flexibility to enable accurate billing for the dynamic nature of many of these services. While the bill to the customer is kept simple, we provide the critical detail for revenue assurance and supplier invoice validation.

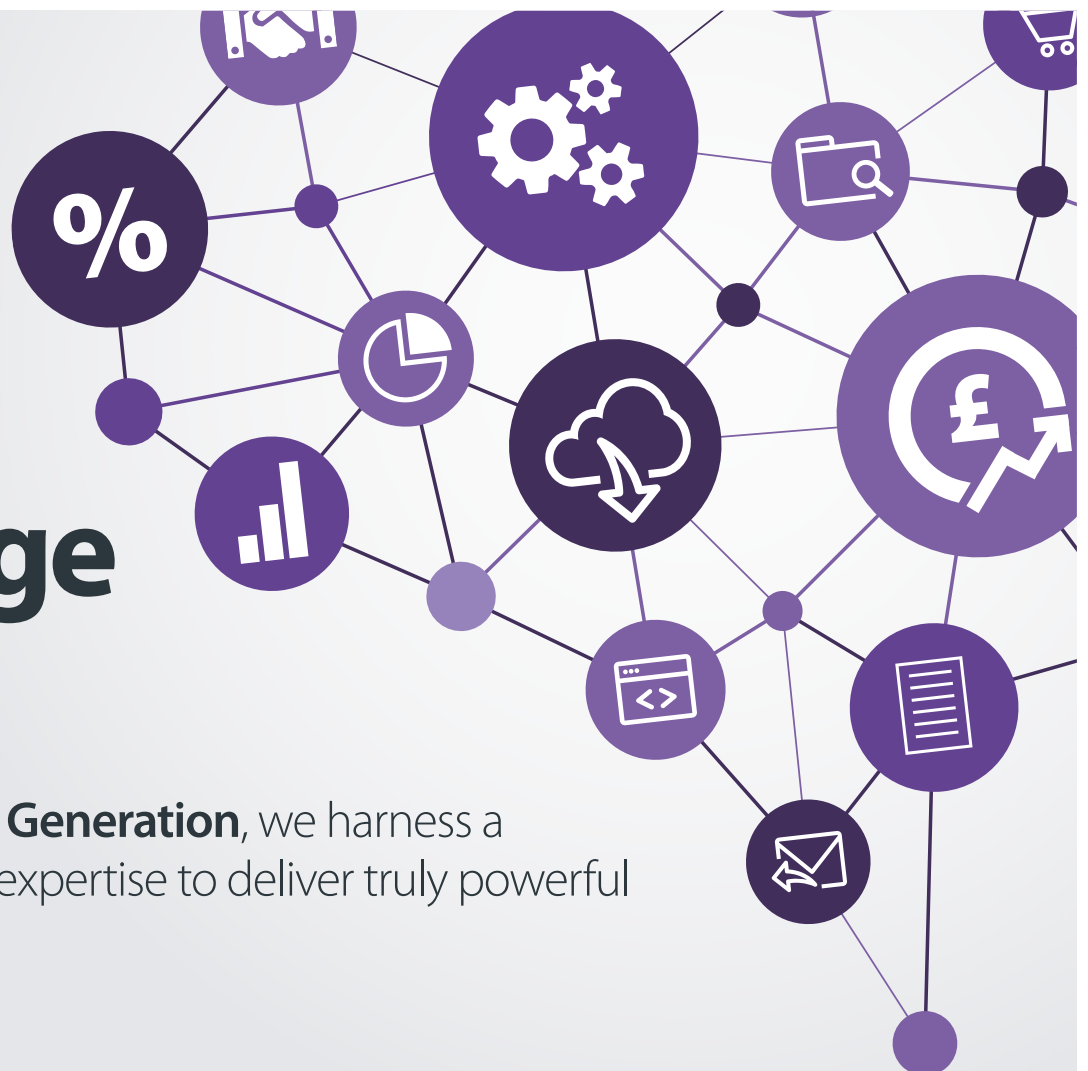
Our focus on development hasn't ended with the launch of Eclipse NG – we continue to invest around 45 per cent of turnover every year into improving our products and services. Resellers can be assured of our commitment to their future and that we are in this for the long-term. ■



## Knowledge is power

And through **Eclipse Next Generation**, we harness a decade of experience and expertise to deliver truly powerful billing solutions.

**InformBilling.co.uk**





# KCOM puts Hull in the lead

**H**ull is leading the UK's superfast digital revolution, with more people using full fibre broadband than standard copper connections for the first time ever, **writes Iain Shearman, Managing Director, National Network Services at KCOM.** This pivotal moment comes as KCOM's investment in full fibre broadband in the region enters the final phase of deployment. Already the most fibre rich city in the UK, by March 2019 KCOM's entire Hull and East Yorkshire network will provide businesses and consumers ultra-fast broadband speeds, light years ahead of the rest of the UK where Fibre to the Premise is available to just four per cent of households.

Nationally, we've invested in our core network services capability to make sure that we're relevant, flexible and agile enough to support our partners' growth today and prepare



Iain Shearman

for the challenges faced tomorrow and beyond. Soon, our refreshed core network will allow our customers to move to the world of software defined networking, which will open up and change the way our partners can deliver applications for their customers using our service capability.

Behind the scenes we've developed a powerful network with 23 next generation nodes enabling us to migrate existing services to the new platform. Our network footprint brings us closer to our customers, and also creates proximity and agility when deploying network and cloud services. We're continually investing in our services to give our partners the best solutions on the market – achieving that fine balance of feature-rich and user friendly products.

It is vital that we offer products that respond to customer's needs and the challenges that are front of mind for them, and in the wake of GDPR some of these requirements include big data, compliance and security concerns.

As part of our next generation voice programme we'll be enabling end-to-end IP on our Myriad platform as well as PCI compliance, delivering

new opportunities for our partners and allowing them to add PCIDSS voice compliant services to their portfolio – as well as offering a great new revenue stream.

KCOM's vision is to provide our partners with the flexibility, longevity and agility to support and underpin their value added services. We're in it for the long run and want to demonstrate that while we have the benefits that come from having scale and heritage, we're also agile and able to move quickly in support of our partners' needs.

At KCOM, we want to be at the forefront of digital transformation, working towards the ultimate goal of a Digital Britain. The investments we've made to date have helped us to cover some ground in this area but we recognise it will take a sustained, industry-led effort to make this vision a reality. ■

## KCOM

### Investing in the future of connectivity

We've invested in our core network so you can deliver more for yours. Powered by greater speed, agility and flexibility than ever before, our voice, cloud and connectivity solutions will set you and your customers on the path to digital transformation.

**Join us at Comms Vision for dedicated 1-2-1s with Iain Shearman and Dan Laycock. Let's share our thoughts on how we can help your business grow.**



0345 122 4777 [partner@kcom.com](mailto:partner@kcom.com)  
[business.kcom.com](http://business.kcom.com)



# A decade of doing deals

**2**008 was perhaps not the best year to start a corporate finance boutique, but 10 years ago we launched Knight CF, writes Directors Adam Zoldan and Paul Billingham. We realised that a wave of consolidation lay ahead and there was a lack of good advice for business owners and entrepreneurs. Fast forward 10 years and Knight has completed 100 deals generating half a billion pounds of value for our clients.



Adam Zoldan (left) and Paul Billingham

The last ten years has seen a wave of change run through the industry. When we started call expenditure was declining, lease approvals were at an all-time low and growth hit the buffers. However, it was also a time of great opportunity for many companies with lower valuations driving opportunistic deals. Over the next few years the advent of high bandwidth connectivity at accessible prices kicked off a dramatic change in

the landscape. System sales declined as hosted voice increased. Meanwhile in the IT sector, recurring revenue 'as a service' products started to replace traditional hardware and software.

As the shock of the financial crisis receded, funding became available to the channel. This increased the number of buyers and investors in the sector and we saw acquisitions become more strategic. Rather than buy simply for scale more deals were

focused on acquiring expertise – in technical expertise, vertical markets and new products and sectors. The comms channel has been the main driver of this activity and change. But have you noticed how many have dropped the 'comms' tag from their name. During this time Knight has advised companies over the course of their life cycle, from working on strategy, finding development capital, acquisition finance, strategic and private equity investment through

to a full exit. So what's next for Knight over the next 10 years? To grow value in our business we have diversified investing in the highly successful Knight R&D tax credit business as well as establishing fund: tmt. We enjoy the fact that every deal is unique and every day is different. And investing in our people has driven true value in our business and we will continue to do so.

Over the last 10 years the communications industry has continuously evolved and remained one step ahead of those predicting a market in decline. It is an incredibly, dynamic, entrepreneurial and successful industry that continues to innovate, and one we are very happy to be operating in. Despite some potential political headwinds ahead, we believe that the channel will continue to adapt to market dynamics and, as a famous politician once said 'things can only get better'. ■



## Deals

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- Exit
- Fundraise
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# What makes us a trusted financial services partner?

## We'll stand by you. Every step of the way.

To navigate a highly competitive market and the ever-evolving technology landscape, you need a finance partner that can deliver expert industry knowledge and reliable service.

At Macquarie, we finance assets spanning the entire communications and ICT sector. We truly understand the industry, and leveraging our asset finance expertise, robust systems and global reach, we enable OEMs, distributors, resellers and their customers to achieve strategic business goals.

We utilise over 25 years of industry experience to deliver intelligent financial solutions that simply work. By placing the customer at the centre of our business, we create meaningful and reliable solutions for all our clients.

Talk to us today, about how we can tailor our finance services and products to your business.

Let's work together to deliver a 'Digital Britain'. As an attendee at Commsvision 2018, we invite you to continue the conversation with:

**Paul Piggott**  
Head of Vendor Financing  
Macquarie Corporate & Asset Finance  
+44 781 853 6568  
Paul.Piggott@macquarie.com

[macquarie.com](http://macquarie.com)

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# Go global with Masergy

**M**asergy owns and operates the largest independent Software Defined Platform in the world, delivering secure hybrid networking, managed security and cloud communication solutions to global enterprises. Masergy has been recognised by Gartner as being a visionary solution provider in the 2018 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Global Network Services, and a niche player in the 2017 Gartner Magic Quadrant for UCaaS Worldwide.

At Masergy we're proud to lead the way in providing channel partners with award-winning technologies that help our customers to adapt their IT infrastructures into more flexible, software-defined solutions. Our innovative technologies, customisable solutions, and the industry's best customer experience as reflected by our Net Promoter



**Steve Harrington**

Score of 71 (unmatched in the technology sector), help global enterprises accelerate their digital transformation agendas. Masergy's world-class customer experience and our 99% customer retention rate guarantee that partners get rich

compensation without any hassles.

Our global partner program provides opportunities for innovative, customer-focused solution providers to sell secure hybrid networking, cloud communications, and

managed security solutions to enterprises on a global basis.

Whether you are a value-added reseller, a system integrator, a consultant or an IT solution provider with international customers, you will benefit from selling Masergy solutions to your customers. Partners like you get unparalleled 24/7 support from Masergy with a dedicated account team throughout the entire sales cycle and continuous revenue streams from new sales and renewals. Your global customers will benefit from the expertise of a local technology partner with a wide array of innovative secure enterprise networking, collaboration, and cybersecurity solutions tailored for their specific business needs.

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# Altos makes big strides

**M**yPhones.com has been at the cutting edge of Internet telephony for more than a decade, specialising in robust, reliable hosted services packed full of the latest features, **writes Managing Director Andrew Robinson**. The Altos hosted telephony platform has recently undergone significant investment and development. The launch of our new dashboard gives improved status reporting and we have added some great new features for our partners and their customers. Development of Altos, to meet changing customer needs, is an ongoing project and our commitment is evident in our roadmap for 2019. There is a huge market out there, new types of customers and we have the agility to continually develop our platform to meet those needs.

The hosted telephony market has changed considerably since the



**Andrew Robinson**

launch of the Altos platform in 1999 by Dr Stuart Marsden who continues to be behind the development. There are now over three million hosted seats in the marketplace and the profile of the customer is changing. Businesses require

individuality, not one-size-fits-all; and partners require flexibility to deliver a solution that matches customers' requirements and maintains margin.

The integrity of the Altos platform remains central to everything we do and our 99.99 per cent record for uptime is the product of careful planning and meticulous attention to detail. That's not something we will ever set aside.

Altos is a true white label hosted telephony solution with a rich feature set and simple pricing structure. A standard licence from just £1.95 includes everything a user needs with options to add business functionality with wallboards, conference bridges, call queueing and auto attendants. There are no minimum contract periods, setup or termination charges and no minimum volume. Along with our outstanding track record for stability we give partners complete

control over the solution they provide, the number and terms of licences they take and the connectivity, SIP trunk and minute providers they use.

Maintaining a stable platform is essential to the success of MyPhones.com and our partners, who benefit from the knowledge that the platform is developed, tested and supported in the UK, free from the restrictions of using a global platform. The services we provide have been designed by us and we know them intimately. Systems are constantly monitored and regularly updated, with comprehensive back-up strategies that are proven and well established.

MyPhones.com is committed to cutting-edge, super-smart technology and ongoing development, supported by a team dedicated to listening to and responding to resellers' needs, who pride themselves in offering intelligent and responsive support. ■

## Cutting edge hosted communications

MyPhones.com has been at the cutting edge of internet telephony for more than a decade, quietly developing and delivering super reliable technologies and applications.

### At the heart of Myphones.com is:

A commitment to cutting-edge, super smart technology

A focus on continuous improvement & development

A dedication to listening & responding to resellers' needs

Pride in offering intelligent & responsive support



And, of course, our philosophy of fair and reasonable pricing.

Put your business in safe hands with MyPhones.

**MYPHONES.COM**

For more information, please contact us today

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**W: www.myphones.com**



# Maximising opportunities

The shift towards a fully Digital Britain continues to intensify on an almost daily basis as the thirst for more flexible bigger bandwidth to deliver ever more sophisticated solutions gains further momentum, writes **Mark Curtis-Wood, Head of Network Services at Nimans**. How can resellers capitalise on these growing market opportunities? True Digital enablement is here now and it's important for a reseller to understand how fixed connectivity, managed mobile data and M2M are converging. Customers' needs are becoming more fluid with a desire for more flexible solutions like 'elastic' bandwidth.

We've been working hard at Nimans to ensure we keep our reseller customers connected with access to over 12 carriers and three mobile networks through our Simplified proposition. This



**Mark Curtis-Wood**

includes access to both fixed and mobile data connectivity, along with a strong managed mobile data and M2M service through our strategic partnership with the UK's leading mobile network EE.

The BT deadline for ISDN switch off has prompted resellers to look at alternative solutions that fulfil their customers' requirements to make

the move from copper to IP. This has speeded up the need for low latency data services like 5G that enable voice applications to be layered over the top. We make this possible by providing the solid foundations from EE's award winning 4G network to capitalise on this huge opportunity.

Using the Government's gigabit voucher scheme and the capability to provide a Pre Ethernet Service – where 4G technology can usually be implemented within a couple of days to bridge the gap between the order and delivery of a fixed service – we help resellers to upgrade to higher bandwidth options and realise profits from day one. Once the fixed circuit is delivered the flexibility of the service means this can be used as a back-up.

Our online portal gives resellers access to real time quotes across the top 10 carriers in the UK, whilst our Simplified Connectivity can

offer resellers simple fixed price On-net connectivity covering over 210,000 postcodes – with savings of up to 40 per cent, shorter than average installation times, no nonsense SLAs and 24/7 support from our dedicated NOC.

With users wanting the ability to control usage and prevent bill shock, our managed mobile data solutions not only enable our resellers to control usage, change tariffs and apply bars in real-time, they also provide the tools and platform to truly aggregate large data bundles from 500 GB through to Terabytes of data. This unique approach enables our resellers to operate as a Virtual Service Provider and maximise utilisation of mobile data.

Digital Britain continues to evolve and diversify so it's imperative to choose a partner that can remain agile and guide you on the right journey. ■

The diagram features a central text 'True Simplified Digital Enablement' in bold black and green. Above it is a blue icon of two connected cables labeled 'Connectivity'. To the left is an icon of two SIM cards labeled 'M2M'. To the right is an icon of a laptop with a SIM card labeled 'Managed Mobile Data'. Green curved lines connect these three elements in a circular path around the central text.

**Contact us now**  
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# Gateway to the cloud

If we've learnt one thing over the last few years it's that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to our partners' requirements to best serve their customers, writes **Andy Wilson, Director of Channel Sales, Node4**. In a connected world, and a world that is increasingly revolving around services, data and applications, one solution won't fit all workloads. It's one of the reasons hybrid cloud has become the go-to infrastructure design for a number of mid-market businesses. Channel organisations need to be wise to this, understanding that they can't just push one particular service towards their existing or prospective customers. It's got to be more consultative, more educated in the approach and fully aligned to its customers' needs now and as it further evolves as a business.

Node4 is a Managed Services Provider. From the front end through to the



**Andy Wilson**

design, build and delivery in the public cloud – it doesn't matter where a business is on its journey – we've got a plethora of options that can support them. Whether its DR-as-a-service or

business-continuity-as-a-service, or access to platforms that provide AWS or Microsoft Azure. The requirement is entirely personal. One of our key messages to the channel is the availability of our Services Gateway.

Launched in Autumn it effectively provides access to a range of managed IT solutions. We like to think of it as a department store for businesses, wherever they are on their cloud journey.

It is designed to help our partners work with their customers to realise the value of digital transformation, allowing them to take advantage of new services, while reducing risk and costs. The Services Gateway allows us to work with partners and their customers, developers and application support teams to review existing applications and see if they are suitable for transition into a digital environment.

By taking this approach with legacy applications it allows businesses to deploy their applications on modern operating systems and infrastructures (such as the Node4 Cloud) and it also allows a reduction in on-premise legacy services, therefore removing the requirement to support old hardware and end-of-life operating systems.

Through this gateway our partners can also connect their customers into the Node4 environment through our UK network and then use it as a springboard to access other services. It supports third party providers as well as access to the public cloud, SaaS and a host of other applications and software to support digital transformation journeys. Our Service Gateway offering is about supporting our partners in placing their workloads on the right services while maintaining control, backups, continuity and security.



## When has one size fits all ever been a good idea?

We know that every organisation is different. Your customers are on individual IT journeys, with individual business requirements. And that's why we'll never try and make a standard size fit when it comes to their cloud transformation.

Take a look at our Services Gateway or come and speak to us at #CommsVision2018

To learn more, visit our new Partner Markets site <https://partnermarkets.node4.co.uk>

Want to know more about the Services Gateway? Scan here to see our video.



# NTA in expansion mode

**T**he last year was particularly exciting for the NTA team, writes **Managing Director Paul White and Channel Sales**

**Manager Justin Blaine.** We added a record number of resellers to our partner programme, have many projects under development (some about to be released) and are very positive for 2019 and beyond. We do however understand that many resellers are worried about what lies ahead with Brexit just around the corner and margins being eroded, so we look after our partners long-term in both the sales and support spheres, and have what we regard as the most feature rich platform available within the channel.

It's not just about functionality, most important is the margins you can make and our partners tell us they make circa 80 per cent gross profit. Therefore, while others talk about a race to the bottom



**Paul White**

our partners are less worried by the threat of competition and have the ability to commercially make the proposition stack up to any business in any vertical. The NTA development team has been



**Justin Blaine**

tasked to deliver an outstanding feature set this year and we are just about to launch some of these within weeks, including an integrated FCA and MiFID II compliant call recording solution, video

conferencing, WebRTC and new mobile apps for iOS and Android.

Comms Vision is a time to rethink our strategy and direction, which is why we take this conference so seriously and listen to the experts and their views. We regard this event as the best leadership and visionary conference in the ICT calendar and are proud to be sponsors for the second year running. The leaders in our industry attend the Comms Vision Convention to be enlightened as to what is coming next, discover what they can do to embrace these new technologies and changes within our industry, and more importantly how we are going to monetise these opportunities.

Delegates should take the time to engage with NTA at this year's event. We do things differently, are disruptive and want to make money for us and our partners. ■

## The Race to the Top with NTA



**We are proud to be sponsors at Comms Vision**  
**Visit NTA to see how you can join the race to the top!**  
**Feature Rich, Disruptive and Enjoy margins of 80% GP**  
**A choice of models available**  
**All new Resellers and Dealers Welcome**  
**Find out about our holiday incentive to Las Vegas!**



Tel Sales on: **01708 320 000** or Email **sales@nta.co.uk**



# Enduring power of voice

**A**longside emerging technology, our ability to capture conversations remains key to customer engagement, **writes James Emm, CEO, Oak Innovation.**



**James Emm**

Voice is back in the spotlight. While many interactions take place online, the adoption of speech technology and AI in the home is causing organisations to refocus on speech as the most human, instantaneous and effective way to communicate.

Conversations provide important opportunities to build relationships. They help to maintain customer loyalty and provide a better understanding of needs and sentiment. In an online world, businesses need to focus on the quality of conversations wherever customer interaction occurs. This recognition goes hand in glove with the trend to assess and improve the quality of interaction across all

touchpoints in an organisation, not limited to traditional call centre silos and quantitative frontline metrics.

Oak can capture voice from almost any environment. We are well positioned to support business transformation with a range of recording, analytics and integration capabilities. Our applications help businesses to manage compliance, protect reputation, improve workflow and enhance customer experience.

The latest version of our flagship call

recorder, Clarify 2.2, delivers improved support for mid-market and hosted telephony users. Using our own SIP technology we provide cost-effective, high quality call capture and quality management to support compliance, training, trend analysis and service improvement. Clarify 2.2 also has multi-site and redundancy options.

Improvements to face-to-face and online credit card transaction technology have caused fraudsters to turn their attention to payments over the phone. Our new payment automation service, PaymentAssist, reduces this risk by eliminating frontline staff from the collection of card data. Touchtone digits entered by the caller are received in a secure data centre and passed to the payment service provider. The agent has a screen view of payment progress and remains connected to support the customer. Alternatively, the self-assisted option provides a

24/7 payment facility that significantly reduces transaction costs.

Call analytics continue to play an important role in front line operations. Evolve provides real-time business intelligence by reporting on call activity as it occurs. Supervisors can see who's calling and who's available to respond. They can listen to selected conversations and monitor key performance indicators. They're empowered to make on-the-fly decisions to minimise waiting times and support staff. When deployed alongside call recording, organisations can get new starters up to speed faster and track trends to improve the quality of conversations.

All Oak applications are underpinned by SupportX with a choice of service levels and options, plus access to expertise that extends to project management, data analysis, onsite training and custom development.

record | report | integrate

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**Cloud**  
More flexibility & faster deployment

**Virtualisation**  
Reduce cost & improve availability

**Multi-site**  
Simplify storage & administration

**Redundancy**  
Mission-critical call capture

**On-Premises**  
Retain control for compliance

**Call Recording**  
Delivered your way

ideas that change everything

# Win with Pragma

**P**ragma is a channel only provider of Cloud and On-Premise UC solutions. We have a focus on Ericsson-LG technologies and are working with some of the UK's best resellers to deliver iPECS Cloud, iPECS UC and a host of complimentary applications to the UK market.

We work hard to be different from other vendors by ensuring that the reseller is at the centre of everything we do. We listen and collaborate with our channel to build strong, long-term partnerships.

Ericsson-LG are in the unique position of seeing significant growth across both cloud and on-premise technology. With iPECS, there is a common feature set and handset range across all platforms, allowing the right solution to be provided to fit the customer's needs. All options offer CRM integration, call



**Tim Brooks and Will Morey**

reporting and analytics, and with the Cloud you have the added benefit of a user-friendly portal. The latest innovation from Ericsson-LG is the upcoming launch of the virtualised iPECS UCP which will further extend opportunities for resellers.

The value of the iPECS Cloud proposition is the ability for resellers to choose from multiple business models. From Dealer to Full Service

Provider our resellers choose the model that suits their business, giving full control over how they take iPECS Cloud to market.

With new solutions from Ericsson-LG launching in the next 6 months including native mobile PBX functionality, assured and secure network connectivity, collaborative online meetings and contact centre, there has never been a better

time to be a Pragma partner.

The Pragma team have undertaken selective recruitment of new resellers in targeted areas of the market across the UK. This controlled distribution policy helps to maintain the margin our resellers enjoy on the product and helps them to differentiate themselves in a competitive market. Pragma continue to recruit high growth resellers who are looking to establish a true partnership and take advantage of the significant benefits of partnering with Ericsson-LG.

If you are looking for a vendor partner who can help you to continue to grow and build your business, then we would love to work with you.

Recently recognised as SME platform of the year, as well as being finalists for numerous cloud awards, Ericsson-LG are proving that innovation and reseller focus are key. ■

We are Pragma, the multi-award winning channel technology provider. Working with Ericsson-LG and SO Connect we enable high growth resellers with cloud and on-premise Unified Communications and marketing solutions. To start winning with iPECS, SO Connect and Pragma, contact us on [sales@wearepragma.co.uk](mailto:sales@wearepragma.co.uk) or call 01903 927100. [www.wearepragma.co.uk](http://www.wearepragma.co.uk)

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BEST SME TELEPHONE SYSTEM



# Beyond distribution

**D**istribution today goes far beyond the traditional concept of 'box shifting', writes ProVu Managing Director Darren Garland. As a key player in the supply chain, distributors must add value to the products being deployed – ProVu does this in spades. We support our partners by reducing the time and costs associated with supplying hardware and help them to differentiate themselves in what is a very saturated market. ProVu's mission is to simplify the delivery of Customer Premise Equipment. By offering the right product set at a competitive price with a range of services which complement our partners' objectives, we enable them to focus on their core business.

### Product selection

We work hard to establish strong relationships with the world's leading manufacturers and actively address the needs and requests of



**Darren Garland**

our partners. Specialising in the field of VoIP we currently stock over 1,000 products including IP desk and DECT phones, access control units, routers, switches, headsets and gateways – but it's our services that differentiate us.

### Differentiation

ProVu is, and always will be, committed to the channel. As the first UK distributor to offer automatic provisioning our team are experts

in the development of such services and continue to push the boundaries with new advancements continuously being implemented. Through our award winning portal, ProSys, we give our partners the tools to take control of their orders both pre and post-deployment. Consisting of four main tools, ProSys offers online ordering, automatic provisioning, remote device management and API integration.

Our most recent development was the launch of a router provisioning and management service which enables resellers to deploy routers direct to their customers ready to work straight out of the box. These routers can then be remotely managed through ProSys to perform tasks such as firmware upgrades and editing device settings. With a flexible, modular approach, our partners are able to select the services they require, this means they can be moulded

to suit our partners' businesses, helping to support their growth.

### Adding value

We've always worked closely with our partners and responded to their requests. What we are beginning to see more of is a demand for ways in which we can support our partners' business goals and help them to differentiate themselves in the market. This has included the creation and sourcing of bespoke packaging, incorporating personalised marketing inserts in shipments and the development of individual API features – we take on the roles that many distributors shy away from.

### Partnering with ProVu

Our team spends more time than ever supporting our partners, helping them to win more business through the creation of specialist multi-vendor projects and the development of mutually beneficial opportunities. ■

LEADERS IN VOIP HARDWARE DISTRIBUTION



## Driving Distribution



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# Nuvias innovates in UC

**N**uvias Unified Communications (UC), formerly Siphon Networks, is a specialist distributor and UC technology enabler for the channel. With our expertise across the Unified Communications ecosystem, Nuvias UC provides a breadth of vendors, offering best in class solutions, enabled by a large dedicated UC technical service and support team. Nuvias UC's combined offering is unrivalled in this growing market for collaboration and communication solutions.

Over the last twelve months, Nuvias UC has onboarded several new technology vendors giving us one of the most extensive, comprehensive UC distribution portfolios in the channel. These new vendors include leading brands such as BlueJeans, Sennheiser, Huddly and Dolby, alongside Cisco, which has been on-boarded following their acquisition



**Ed House**

of Broadsoft, with whom Nuvias have a long-standing relationship.

In addition, Nuvias UC remains a leading distributor for Polycom and Lifesize, with dedicated sales and vendor management teams supporting these vendors and partners across our regions, driving double digit growth and securing

significant long-term investment to grow these vendors pan-EMEA.

## Leading innovation for UC

We are renowned for our technical excellence in the implementation of UC technologies. Our in-house dedicated solution engineering and software development teams have built unique platforms Dovetail and HUB, designed to simplify the deployment and management of UC solutions, and improve user experience across the channel.

Dovetail is a unique CPE deployment and provisioning service available across a range of end-point devices including Polycom, Yealink and AudioCodes. This flexible service enables partners to fully automate their device roll-out processes ensuring smooth, efficient project implementations.

Unlike other solutions in the

market, its enhanced management functionality provides cloud-based network assessments, CPE provisioning and inventory management, as well as in-life network statistics and analytics. Through secure device management users can pinpoint potential problems in service delivery and proactively deal with any issues, ensuring satisfied customers through successful equipment deployments.

Automation is a theme that underpins the innovation mindset for continuous improvement at Nuvias UC. HUB is an order-API interface that's been developed with customer experience at its very heart. By easing the administrative burden through automation, partners can reduce risk and free up resources to focus on consultative selling with customers, driving value and opening doors to new revenues for both parties. ■

**NUVIAS** | UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS  
with **DOVETAIL + HUB**

Nuvias are delighted to be attending this year's Comms Vision, we will be showcasing our vendor portfolio alongside HUB and our award-winning Dovetail solution

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# Sky: Limitless by design

**S**ky's Business Connectivity division launched in September with the roll-out of the UK's largest exchange network offering 1GB Ethernet services, **writes Mike Greening, Strategy and Commercial Director.** Sky's 'Limitless by design' message to all channel resellers reinforces our vision to challenge the market status quo to give wholesalers the competitive edge to achieve healthy, continuous growth and to increase end user satisfaction.

As a new entrant to the channel, Sky has the complete freedom to build from the ground up, delivering game-changing technology from Ethernet to dark fibre while delivering an experience that provides Channel partners with a significant competitive edge. Coming to the channel with no legacy base gives us a chance to re-write the rule book and work with our key



**Mike Greening**

partners in a way that's completely different to other providers.

Because we don't have any legacy processes, products or contracts to protect, it means we are not restricted and can be open minded

about where we go and where we invest, particularly focusing on areas that make a difference for our partners. And that's really important to us. Our plan is to work on a partner-by-partner bases offering bespoke and innovative solutions to

our key partners. In addition to our world-class network with 96 per cent UK coverage, Sky also promises to sprinkle a little 'Sky magic' through offering its hard-working channel partners money can't buy rewards. It's key for us to offer a compelling partner experience, giving partners access to sporting events, content and marketing support which they might not be able to get elsewhere.

We are looking to work with a diverse range of partners from specialist connectivity players and aggregators through to cloud providers, international carriers and SIs. I think in each of those pools people are innovating and those are the types of players we want to work with.

We are looking for deeper relationships where we collectively want to grow wallet share and develop services and platforms of the future together. ■



**Sky Ethernet**  
Limitless by design

**Talent wins games,  
teamwork wins  
Championships.**

We look forward to welcoming you into the Sky Studio to discuss your vision for the future of the industry.

Sky Business is proud to be sponsoring the prestigious Comms Vision event.

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# Billing for Digital Britain

**D**igital Britain is achievable through investments in technology that challenge the status quo, **writes Strategic Imperatives Managing Director Wail Sabbagh**. In the telco market, the challenges will be exciting and vast, but customer satisfaction is something that every provider will have to address, especially with the unprecedented interconnectivity that lies ahead and new technologies that will be on offer. As a key enabler of Digital Britain, Strategic Imperatives has built the infrastructure to deliver technology that will allow for businesses to harness all the opportunities this digital era has to offer.

Unfortunately, the rate of churn in the telecoms market is high but creating value for customers will almost certainly guarantee loyalty and retention. Customer satisfaction is of course a combination of experiences



**Wail Sabbagh**

the customer has through multiple touchpoints with communication providers. At Strategic Imperatives we believe that crafting a better overall experience through billing is key to maintaining a positive relationship with customers. Billing is the main touchpoint that CPs have with their customers – and accurate, honest and transparent bills will build better relationships with them.

Digital transformation, which has been omnipresent within telecoms over the last few years, has thoroughly upended conventional wisdom within the market. Seamless connectivity, AI, IoT and Big Data are revolutionising the telecoms market, and with customers' ever-rising expectations CPs have their work cut out. Completely new revenue streams, product portfolios and services have already become requirements and continue to evolve.

CPs have to harness these and any future iterations and innovations to gain an edge over fierce competition. We strongly believe that telcos must focus on elements that capture value while offering new services to keep customer relationships fresh.

This is why our cloud-based Elevate Billing solution provides CPs with sustainable success through its disruptive and innovative way of

approaching monetisation. It is flexible, adaptable and a solution that is completely reliable. With industry-leading stability, massive scalability and highly rated support teams behind it, Elevate is the only way to go if your company is looking to stay ahead in the ever-changing times that lie ahead. We are at the forefront of innovation within our market, disruptors of the revenue assurance world and Elevate is the billing solution we've created that will be a key building block in delivering the vision of Digital Britain in the telecoms market.

This digital revolution is completely reforming the telecoms sector and as we inch closer to a fully immersed Digital Britain each CP has to work hard to be at the forefront of technology. Elevate allows them to take their businesses to the next level and take advantage of everything this new era has to offer. ■

The race to Digital Britain is on, don't be a spectator.  
Harness every opportunity with **Elevate Billing**.

Disruptive innovation is the name of the game and we've completely rewritten the rules. With **Elevate Billing**, you are equipped with the best monetisation engine to take your business to the next level, and immerse yourself in digital transformation.

This competitive environment keeps fuelling forward-thinking technology in the industry and you can't afford to be a wallflower. Elevate's speed, open connectivity, flexibility and ease of use are simply not found in any other billing platform.



Proud sponsors of



If you're at Comms Vision, join us for dedicated 1-to-1 meetings, or find us in The Ballroom over a casual drink to find out how we can help you **win the race to Digital Britain**.



# Stand out from the cloud

It's no longer about offering hosted voice to demonstrate the benefits over a premise-based PBX solution, it's all about hosted UC and value add solutions and how they can be delivered, writes **Paul Harrison, Director at thevoicefactory (an Evolve IP company)**. thevoicefactory knows more than most that change is a constant and nothing stands still, so a solution provider must lead from the front by being agile in innovation and development, and by offering an open platform that is carrier grade and brandable.

If your provider promotes their brand and can only offer one or two solutions they will struggle to stand out, and so will you. And if you grow your business with a focus on the small enterprise you also risk customer churn through greater competition from similar providers offering better prices and



**Paul Harrison**

shiny new features that will be too tempting to avoid. Small customers will churn again and again.

We at TVF recognised this some years ago and our average seat size is 100-plus. We specialise in verticals by delivering the most advanced solutions to meet and exceed the business requirements of the larger enterprise. To be successful in the mid to large enterprise market you must have a domestic and international

offering and deliver more advanced hosted UC solutions such as Omni Call Center, PCI Call Recording, Analytics and FMC. The solution has to be carrier grade with a guaranteed 5x9s Service Level Agreement giving you the confidence that other providers cannot even come close to the solution you can offer.

Be different: All businesses and all verticals are ready for hosted UC but struggle to find the right solution or partner that can understand their requirements. If you're selling a one-size-fits-all solution from one of the large UK providers you will be restricted by the lack of flexibility, resulting in no differentiator between you and your competitor. To make matters worse your chosen partner will sometimes go direct for the larger deals and end up competing for the same business. With nothing more than price in your locker you must reduce your

margin. Even then you may not get to the table. You will never escape the small business market.

Hosted UC is not just for the select few or a select market type, it's ready for every business or vertical if you choose the right partner. We at TVF don't believe in one-size-fits-all and allow our partners to brand and deliver the most advanced solutions in the market today, with no boundaries. We never compete with our partners and adopt a 100 per cent indirect model.

It's all about standing out, offering value add bespoke solutions nationally and internationally. Your provider must be able to offer you an open ecosystem with your own brand and open APIs for third party integration. They also need to offer international reach to 70-plus countries so you can truly 'Stand out from the Cloud'.

## Stand Out from the cloud



With more clouds than a rainy day to choose from it's easy to look the same as all other hosted providers.

When you Stand Out from the Cloud with the most advanced solutions you don't need to compete on price to leave the competition behind.

Think different, be different and promote your brand with the only global UC solution provider in the market today offering next generation solutions.

### Stand Out with TVF



w: [www.thevoicefactory.co.uk](http://www.thevoicefactory.co.uk) e: [partners@thevoicefactory.co.uk](mailto:partners@thevoicefactory.co.uk)

# MOSAIX's in the frame

Last year when we attended Comms Vision we had enjoyed a particularly successful year with growth across all areas of the business and the release of some innovative new features to our billing and provisioning software, writes **Vincent Disneur, Head of Sales and Marketing, Union Street Technologies**. Since then our customer base has grown to over 600 CPs, cementing aBILLity's position as the channel's de-facto standard for billing. We've also received recognition in the form of industry awards, having won 'Best Billing Platform' at the Comms National Awards and 'Best Independent Software Vendor' at the Comms Business Awards.

Perhaps most exciting of all was April's launch of MOSAIX, a new software designed with wholesalers of connectivity and IT services in mind. Many wholesalers struggle



Vincent Disneur

to manage quoting and ordering through a hybrid of email and phone communication. This can be a very time-consuming and error prone process. There's also significant challenges associated with managing partners' orders as they progress to fulfilment. Recognising these difficulties we developed MOSAIX, a framework for creating sophisticated but simple to use provisioning portals for wholesalers. These can be used by a wholesaler's partners to browse,

price up and order products and services. From aesthetics through to data capture, everything about MOSAIX's front end ordering portal is completely configurable, ensuring a perfect fit for wholesalers and their partners. Elegant system architecture also makes MOSAIX highly extensible, meaning that new products and services can be added easily and without limit.

In addition to enabling reseller partners to self-serve, MOSAIX delivers a flexible yet powerful business process management engine. This automates the flow of orders from receipt through to fulfilment, generating tasks and email communications at each step of the way to ensure nothing is missed and all relevant parties stay informed.

Advanced APIs make it possible for MOSAIX to plug into the ordering systems of both internal and

external suppliers. So, as partners place orders through the MOSAIX web portal, these are automatically directed to suppliers, eliminating the need for manual or 'swivel chair' ordering between platforms. Our APIs also enable MOSAIX to integrate with other software packages such as accounts, service management and CRM systems.

Seamless integration with other Union Street products, including our aBILLity billing system, can provide you with added benefits. For example, by drawing pricing information from aBILLity the MOSAIX web portal allows your partners to configure connectivity services, build quotes and compare prices with pinpoint accuracy. In short, MOSAIX seamlessly combines business process management with effortless partner ordering, facilitating a complete end to end orchestration of service delivery. ■

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# Stand out from the crowd

**W**ith UK business' demand for bandwidth ever increasing, Vaioni Wholesale recognises the challenges that channel partners are facing with their customers, **writes Sachin Vaish, Managing Director, Vaioni Wholesale.** While traditional network operators focus on a one dimensional strategy, with our Ethernet network, V.E.N. we're empowering channel partners with control over the network.



Sachin Vaish

Vaioni Wholesale initially launched V.E.N. into three of the UK's major digital hubs (London, Manchester and Birmingham) in 2015. Since then V.E.N. has continued to grow and currently connects more than 60 cities and towns, 96 exchanges and 180,000 postcodes across the UK. Now, Vaioni Wholesale is building one of the UK's most powerful, **intelligent and Software Defined Networks (SDN)** which will see V.E.N. become one of the largest

independently owned Ethernet networks – disrupting the connectivity market and connecting over 170 cities and towns, approximately 80 per cent of UK businesses. Our vision is clear... to deliver **choice and excellence in connectivity**, and our network is at the heart of every product and service we deliver. We've invested significantly in V.E.N. over the last three years with the aim of helping our channel partners acquire bigger, faster Ethernet connections, by **standardising ultra-high 1Gb and 10Gb services**

and incorporating **intelligence and automation** into the network. Built on Vaioni Wholesale's core network, which has had 100 per cent uptime for the last three years, V.E.N will enable its channel partners to manage their customers' networks and extend automation tools to the end user – delivering **flexibility, agility and security** to the network and providing the ability to make changes and upgrades instantly in just a few clicks with little technical expertise.

Putting partners and their customers back in control of their connectivity, V.E.N. will also deliver an advanced, feature-rich set of tools including **Adaptive QoS Profiles, Elastic Bandwidth (turning bandwidth up/down), Setting up Direct Peering, New Service Provision, Diagnostics and the ability to Reduce/Increase IP Addresses**, built into its Ethernet and MPLS solutions, making V.E.N. the most advanced

network of its kind. V.E.N. provides the channel with a genuine alternative to the main large Ethernet carriers and gives its channel partners access to an award winning and trusted network operator, delivering a clear differentiator when competing in such a competitive marketplace. What's more, Vaioni Wholesale's channel partners benefit from the highest level of customer service, support and fast provisioning, which is backed by an industry leading SLA.

At Comms Vision, alongside V.E.N., Vaioni Wholesale will showcase its portfolio of products, services and promotions including its latest promotion, 18 month contract with 36 month's pricing, **myVaioni**, its automated quoting and ordering partner portal, **Pre-Ethernet** which is delivered in as little as 10 working days, **Hosted UTM Security, TierIII+ Colo** facilities in **London and Manchester.**

**V.E.N. will become one of the most powerful Ethernet networks for the Channel, connecting...**

OVER  
80%

UK BUSINESSES

200+

EXCHANGES

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CITIES  
AND TOWNS

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# Why PBXIT is a big deal

VanillaIP has developed a radical new programme for 2019, supporting resellers looking to attract the M&A market, writes **Sales and Marketing Director Iain Sinnott**. In February this year Cavell shared a report which showed 80 per cent of the UK business market was still serviced by traditional PBXs which meant we, along with most cloud players, had misread the speed at which things would change and what would motivate that change.

## The PBX reseller

Having successfully serviced UK businesses for over 30 years the PBX reseller community watched as new cloud solutions providers started to take advantage of improved broadband connectivity to deliver a SME business communications alternative. The main thrust of this challenge has been fought with simplified service portfolios



Iain Sinnott

which represent no real functional challenge to a standard PBX. Most cloud providers have also opted for a one-size-fits-all approach, meaning commercially the PBX was able to remain price competitive or even price compelling.

## The change

While better service portfolios, and more capable service automation portals, have substantially improved a cloud reseller's potential effectiveness, PBX resellers retain the trust and

close relationship with their clients. It's emerged that the big change will come within five years and be driven by the PBX resellers' new motivation – the need to capitalise fully on a lifetime's work.

## The M&A opportunity

Many of the leading players in the PBX reseller community are reaching a point where they begin to contemplate an exit. The problem this presents is that the investment community only really has eyes for predominately cloud businesses, meaning the choice facing the PBX players is to sell low and exit early or convert to cloud first and sell at the highest multiple.

## The PBXIT programme

VanillaIP has designed a comprehensive and commercially supportive programme to help resellers convert their base from traditional PBX to a feature

appropriate cloud alternative over a five year period. With the PBXIT programme we have created a pathway to the best exit valuation for resellers who can present their businesses in the most saleable structure.

## The key elements

The commercial support programme is important but Uboss and the breadth of the VanillaIP portfolio are the vital ingredients. Simple low-cost extensions, mobility and home working, omni-channel contact centres, integration of third party services, mapped DECT solutions, key & lamp replication with a mix of contract and on-demand deployments makes it a powerful proposition. Uboss manages all aspects from commercial and contract rules to call quality management and invoice generation, meaning a complex transitional programme can be delivered smoothly and safely. ■

Make the move

# PBXIT

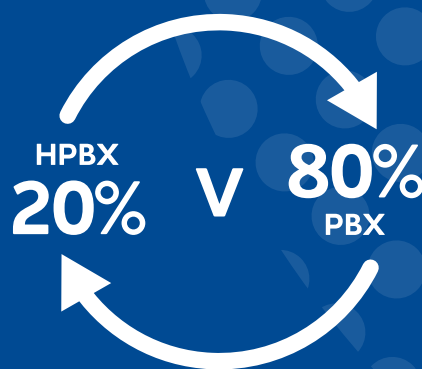
WITH  vanillaIP

## VanillaIP launches a 2019 PBXIT programme

Designed to support PBX resellers transitioning your base to the cloud either:

- To exit the industry, realising the maximum return
- To develop and build a Cloud Revenue into the business
- To buy and build your value, through your own M&A programme

PBXIT is today's big debate, driven by the M&A question, but what will it look like in 2022?



PBX Resellers have to re-evaluate how they can get the best value for a lifetime's work building a successful telephony business.

Contact VanillaIP for full details on the PBXIT support programme which includes 12 months free user licences, designed to help you make the most of your life's work with a planned M&A exit.

**sales@vanillaip.com**  
**0800 970 0971**  
**www.vanillaip.com/pbxit**



# Virtual1 drives innovation

It has been an eventful 12 months for Virtual1, writes CEO **Tom O'Hagan**. We completed the rollout of our national network to more than 280 fibre exchanges across the UK, bringing over 180 towns and cities on-net. But our network expansion wasn't just about reach. Our Software Defined Network has automated change across our network, and most significantly we have put the channel in direct control of the solutions they provide to UK businesses for the first time. This control brings the traditional service lead times of days down to just minutes.

Spearheading the service revolution in the connectivity market has always been a key objective for Virtual1. We are making 35-plus network features available via both our customer service Portal, 1Portal, and our suite of APIs. Ten of these are already live, and our partners can configure



**Tom O'Hagan**

the most common change requests we receive themselves directly now, including bandwidth change, VLAN

resizing, Quality of Service, DHCP, SNMP, IPV4 routing and JFlow changes, all in seconds, 24/7/365.

It's not just in life services that benefit from this architecture, our use of SDN has also reduced our install times too. We are now averaging 26 working days for a Layer2 provision on our network, significantly ahead of the market average. We ship hardware pre-staged, so once connected, it will dial back to the core and download the full configuration. This means less time is taken preparing and shipping hardware, all resulting in our partners being able to realise value much faster than before.

Automation continues across the rest of our systems as we invest in 1Portal and the accompanying suite of APIs. We have just released our first set of Service APIs, allowing partners to access their service inventory and case information straight from

our systems to streamline support and communication between our businesses. APIs are the future for service provision and we are at the front of that movement.

The end of 2018 will also see us introduce Cellular Ethernet to our portfolio. Our intention is to provide a feature rich experience, not just Internet connectivity. So our cellular solution replicates the standard product set of traditional wired Ethernet, offering multiple VLAN capability and bringing all traffic privately back to our network. We are bringing this to market in three forms – Primary connectivity, a more flexible and capable backup solution than DSL and as a rapid deployment Pre Ethernet-model.

With such a busy 2018 we will have plenty to discuss at Comms Vision, as well as sharing a glimpse of our plans for the year to come.

Virtual1

## THE UK'S MOST ADVANCED NETWORK

**OUR NETWORK FUTURE**

SDN is a foundation technology

We can expand our network to meet our customers needs

Future proof platform!

virtual1.com

# Voiceflex now a Unify CSP

Comms Vision is widely recognised as the highlight of the UK's ICT calendar offering an excellent opportunity to share and gain an invaluable insight into industry and channel developments, writes Paul Taylor, Sales & Marketing Director at Voiceflex. As a committed sponsor, it also provides us an opportunity to meet with new customers and enhance relationships with existing customers in a relaxed and informal setting.

The event content is always thought provoking on several levels – new technology is always high on the agenda as speakers delve into the possibilities, the importance and potential impacts of the latest advancements in our industry. With the phased withdrawal and the ISDN switch off looming the areas of SIP and hosted applications are hot topics.



Paul Taylor

Voiceflex, the first Unify Cloud Service Provider (CSP) in the UK will be launching Circuit and OpenScape Cloud at Comms Vision 2018. Unify, part of Atos, is one of the world's leading communications software and services firms, providing integrated communications solutions for approximately 75 per cent of the Fortune Global 500. Unify products represent a strong heritage of technology innovation, reliability and flexibility.

Unify Circuit is a WebRTC UC application offering a multitude of opportunities both for cloud and on-premise applications. It can also be integrated with our Nebula hosted platform and as a SIP carrier we can add additional value to on-premise telephony applications bridging the gap to UC cloud. Unify OpenScape is a hosted application from one of the world largest telecommunications providers. The hosted market is crowded, however few have the

pedigree, established base or reach of Unify. While the channel is packed with a 100-plus providers from around the world, the addressable market is however massive as hosted accounts for only 15 per cent of the UK market (Cavell Group).

Voiceflex is well known within the industry as being a SIP carrier and continues to show double digit growth month-on-month. This increase is expected to continue to grow. Voiceflex's focus is on our partners and we will continue to develop our SIP Trunk offering which is core to our business. Applications such as Click-to-Call and Click-to-Call-Me which are both WebRTC based applications have proved very successful and secured business against other carriers. These are exciting times, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss your needs and requirements and why you should partner with Voiceflex. ■

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# Zen's in for the long-term

In a sector awash with statistics, here are a couple that we are particularly proud of, writes Steve Warburton, Managing Director of Wholesale at Zen Internet. "Over 75 per cent of our channel partners have been with Zen for five years or more. Over half have been partnering with Zen for over a decade. In a highly competitive sector, that kind of loyalty stands out. Furthermore, Zen is continually innovating - in technology, product development, customer service and technical support - to make our channel and wholesale offer more compelling. We are acutely aware that partners' success is ours. We create partnerships in the truest sense of the word.

What does that mean in practice? It means that when wholesalers plug directly into our Layer 2 broadband network, or resellers sell products from our portfolio of connectivity and communications services, they



Steve Warburton

are partnering with the UK's largest independent carrier. We cherish that independence because it means we can focus on the long-term health of our business and yours, without having to satisfy the short-term whims of stock markets. It also means that partners have access to Zen's next generation data network, the fifth largest in the country, and more importantly one of the most advanced.

We recently invested heavily in our core network to future proof it for a rapidly evolving world. That's why we're one of a tiny handful of ISPs equipped to offer a full spectrum of connectivity solutions from ADSL and superfast fibre to ultrafast full fibre (FTTP) and G.fast. Our highly scalable, highly reliable network is the solid foundation for everything we do, and everything our channel partners and wholesale customers sell.

But while those factors are important, we think the main reason channel partners and wholesale customers stay with Zen for the long-term is that we offer them the kind of personal, dedicated and interested support they will not readily find elsewhere.

Zen has a proud history of winning awards for service and technical support. Partners regularly comment on the speed with which Zen returns calls, offers advice and solves problems. At Zen we don't read from scripts and will never palm off your query onto someone else. Our UK-based support staff are experts who will take ownership. Our account managers continually monitor your Zen services and will proactively suggest efficiencies and economies.

It's all part of our people-first approach to business. We strive for long-term success rather than chasing short-term (and short-lived) gain. ■

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