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four-fold growth p24



Enda Kenneally shows
why experience is the
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Soft seized Cisco coup

Comms colossus BroadSoft is set to significantly
abilities and scale in one decisive swoop.

combined offers – from collaboration technology for enterprises to BroadSoft’s for small and medium businesses delivered via service providers – will give customers choice and flexibility.”
Brocklehurst, EMEAR Region Lead at Cisco, said that the combination of BroadSoft and Cisco is a ‘recipe for success’ and that the two teams will create, collaborate and perform in ways not previously imagined.
With the addition of BroadSoft, Cisco expects to accelerate the

pace of innovation across our entire collaboration portfolio,” commented Brocklehurst.
He also noted that BroadSoft’s play in the SMB sector complements Cisco’s corporate presence and is a neat fit with its on-premises and enterprise-centric HCS offerings.
The deal is expected to close in Q1 2018 after which BroadSoft employees will join Cisco’s UC Technology Group. Until then Cisco and BroadSoft will operate as separate entities.
Industry reaction on page 3

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the digital agenda



BroadSoft seized in key Cisco coup

CISCO'S £1.9bn bid for hosted comms colossus BroadSoft is set to significantly boost its global influence, capabilities and scale in one decisive swoop.

SPECIAL REPORT

A new force in UC and collaboration is set to descend on all market sectors worldwide as Cisco blends BroadSoft's cloud voice and contact centre solutions with its meetings, hardware and services portfolio.

"Cisco and BroadSoft will deliver a robust suite of collaboration capabilities across every market segment," stated Rowan Trollope, SVP and GM of Cisco's Applications Business Group (pictured above).

"Our combined offers – from Cisco's collaboration technology for enterprises to BroadSoft's suite for small and medium businesses delivered via service providers – will give customers more choice and flexibility."

Andy Brocklehurst, EMEAR Collaboration Lead at Cisco, believes that the combination of Cisco and BroadSoft is a 'recipe to inspire teams to create, collaborate and perform in ways never before imagined'.

"With the addition of BroadSoft we expect to accelerate the

pace of innovation across our entire collaboration portfolio," commented Brocklehurst.

He also noted that BroadSoft's play in the SMB sector complements Cisco's corporate presence and is a neat fit with its on-premises and enterprise-centric HCS offerings.

The deal is expected to close in Q1 2018 after which BroadSoft employees will join Cisco's UC Technology Group. Until then Cisco and BroadSoft will operate as separate entities.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

WHAT came first – technology or millennial-types? The previous generations, the pioneers of communications technology, are the ones who defined the tech-world millennials (or similar) came to inhabit. So why do we elevate their use of technology over their seniors who most times use

the same tech in the same way and belong to the generation that pioneered and invented 'digital'? The cult of youth over experience is surely just as exaggerated.

On starting my own career I worked as an understudy and properly learnt the ropes from a good mentor. Nowadays though the term 'understudy' rarely gets an airing because they barely exist. Experience is not being handed down to up-and-comers in anything like the volumes we used to witness. Where does this leave British industry and the comms channel? No wonder apprentice schemes have become so important. They fill the understudy vacuum and are redolent of an era when the investment of experience in youth was the order of the day, and the word 'apprentice' was in far more common usage.

Knowledge transfer is also a key theme of this magazine, perhaps more so this month as we stage the industry's leading conference at Gleneagles on November 8th-10th. Comms Vision has again attracted a gathering of industry experience like no other, and will be a platform for Conference Chair and globally renowned Andrew Lippman, Associate Director and co-founder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab, to talk about his experiences as he charts the future of digital communications.

Also on stage will be TalkTalk Chairman Sir Charles Dunstone who in an exclusive interview will discuss his own experiences as one of the comms industry's greatest entrepreneurs. To find out more about Comms Vision 2017, read our conference preview which starts on page 49.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

Channel thumbs up for BroadSoft deal

LEADING UK channel providers of BroadSoft-based hosted telephony have given Cisco's £1.9bn bid for the global cloud PBX giant broad approval.

"This potentially creates a complete solution for UK businesses that can be serviced effectively via the channel," stated Gamma CEO Bob Falconer.

"As both a BroadSoft and Cisco partner we are looking forward to working with them to enhance the services that we take to market."

Vanilla IP CEO Dave Dadds also believes that Cisco provides a good home for the BroadSoft suite of cloud PBX solutions.

"This is an excellent opportunity for both VanillaIP and our partners," he enthused. "It will strengthen BroadSoft's global position with the added benefit of Cisco R&D dollars; and from a sales perspective can be sold with the Cisco badge.

"It will be interesting to see what happens with overlapping products like Cisco Spark and BroadSoft TeamOne, but we expect to see a best-of-breed messaging and presence suite in addition to the core dial tone."

Paul Harrison, MD at the-voicefactory (which owns and operates BroadSoft BroadWorks



Bob Falconer

software licenses), observed: "Cisco sees the value in stepping away from just routers and switches to compete with the likes of Microsoft and Amazon to secure its place as a cloud solution provider.

"BroadWorks has circa 18 million business users with the leading service providers so we believe our future is secure. Hopefully with further investment from Cisco this will help us to deliver new solutions.

"We can also choose who we integrate with using our APIs and continue to choose who

we interop with for IP phone or customer CPE.

"But if you are a service provider using only BroadCloud you don't have control and your destiny is the hands of Cisco/BroadSoft – therein lies a risk."

Enzo Viscito, MD at Inclarity, only sees value in the intended acquisition.

"The BroadSoft name was relatively unknown in the UK by end users," he commented. "The Cisco deal endorses the BroadSoft platform and will bring brand recognition in the ever expanding SME market."

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COMMENT: NORTH POWERHOUSE?



Richard Carter

THE Northern Powerhouse is a Government-backed project which has been gathering momentum throughout this year – a joined up strategy to connect major regional hubs to inspire greater economic prosperity. The idea aims to offer a viable alternative to London for business growth and

investment and rebalance the so-called north-south divide, and has won many plaudits. Not surprisingly the concept has been well received in our home city of Manchester, which would play a pivotal role. But enthusiasm has been met with equal amounts of frustration due to a lack of progress and question marks over funding.

Communication is a key strand of the forward thinking blueprint but with clogged up motorways and a rail infrastructure where some journey times take longer than they did 50 years ago, the Northern Powerhouse is currently a long way off. While plans for HS2 are to be welcomed it won't speed up journey times directly between northern cities. It's not just ageing rail stock that is hampering progress, intermittent mobile phone coverage, not just in the north but across the whole of the UK, could see us left behind the rest of Europe. That's the view of leading industry experts. I know from experience how a train trip from Manchester to London cannot be relied upon for coverage unlike many European countries such as Germany, Holland and Spain which are investing heavily to ensure robust mobile coverage.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has announced that commuters on the London Underground will be able to access 4G connectivity within two years, as our reliance on mobile communication continues to grow. So if London continues to lead the way, northern cities have a lot of catching up to do if they are to become the powerful force politicians and business leaders are aiming to create. I hope the Northern Powerhouse remains on track.

Richard Carter, Director of Channel Sales, Nimans

IP Solutions backed by LDC investment

MID-market private equity firm LDC has invested in London-based IP Solutions and given it access to additional capital to fund acquisitions and build scale in the lucrative Unified Communications marketplace.

As well as acquisitions IP Solutions has plans to expand its portfolio with new products as more companies move to cloud-based services.

David Garman, former Chief Executive of TDG, will join the board as Chairman alongside LDC Investment Directors Alex Clark and Troy Harris-Speid.

LDC is backing the existing management team which is led by CEO Matthew Parker and includes CFO Olly Garland, CMO Jeremy Langley and CTO Andy Lindsell.

Parker said: "We have delivered strong organic growth due to our focus on innovation and working with customers who are driving real transformation.

"Having established a strong business platform we are now keen to build our scale through the acquisition of high performing businesses that have complementary technologies, geographies and customers.

"Bringing a new investment partner like LDC on board, with



Matthew Parker

its record of supporting major acquisition programmes, will enable us to make this happen."

Alex Clark, Investment Director at LDC, added: "Matt and the team have an impressive track record in scaling business-

es, having successfully delivered and integrated a total of 10 acquisitions in previous roles."

IP Solutions services over 200 SMEs including National Geographic, Secret Escapes and Oak Furniture Land.

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Spotlight's on new wireless network tech

THE development of disruptive light-based wireless comms took a major commercial step forward in London last month when pureLiFi unveiled its latest generation of plug-and-play devices to provide secure high-speed, bi-directional, fully networked connectivity via light.

The LiFi-XC system consists of an access point and USB station that is compatible with the Windows 7, Windows 10, Linux and MAC OS systems.

The company claims its solution will ease the strain on wireless networks resulting in 'The Spectrum Crunch' and create added value sales opportunities for comms providers.

Alistair Banham, CEO of Edinburgh-based pureLiFi told Comms Dealer: "Over the past year we have been driving adoption of LiFi and deploying real-world applications of LiFi for our customers globally.

"We have now reached the point in miniaturisation where we will see LiFi move beyond the dongle and be integrated.

"The LiFi-XC is a big step towards getting this disruptive technology into every bulb and every mobile device."

This means solutions providers will be able to offer customers the opportunity to develop special locations where people can get online using LED light source points.

With an array of ceiling-based LEDs connected to pureLiFi access points, users can move within the location with virtually no loss of bandwidth.

Applications could include environments such as airport lounges, operating theatres, boardrooms and locations where secure uninterrupted bandwidth is essential, including defence and first response situations.



Alistair Banham

"Our technology doesn't require special licences across territories which makes implementation easier," said Banham.

"And, as lighting suppliers lose rip-and-replace revenues due to the longevity of LEDs, they will be looking at ways of adding value to their lighting solutions, we have the answer."

LiFi is increasingly viewed as a disruptive technology that can change the way the mobile Internet is used as part of future 5G cellular networks while being an enabler of the emerging Internet of Things.

Mostafa Afgani, who is the CTO of pureLiFi, commented: "We have made substantial leaps in delivering a great user experience. We have not just improved the design with LiFi-XC, we have also delivered a module that can enable smart devices and appliances to be LiFi connected today."

Inventor of the technology Harald Haas added: "It is gratifying to see the vision we had over 10 years ago come to life with the launch of LiFi-XC, which is not only testimony to the engineering brilliance of our team at pureLiFi, but also a significant step towards a fully connected world."

NEWS ROUNDUP

Revenues from IoT connectivity will increase sharply by 10% per year to fill some of the void left by falling voice and data revenues, accounting for 7% of operator enterprise revenue by 2022, calculates telecoms research and consulting firm Analysys Mason, which also says the worldwide market for telecoms business services will grow from \$411bn in 2017 to \$415bn in 2022.

RepKnight's just-launched channel programme gives partners access to its cloud-hosted platform, dark web monitoring and data breach detection application. BreachAlert looks for corporate data posted on the dark web and many other paste-and-dump sites used by cyber criminals.

Michael Koufopoulos, who is Channel Director EMEA, said: "It's no longer sufficient to protect the perimeter of your company, you also need to be looking for your data outside the firewall."

Australian tech start-up Async has established a new London-based operation and expanded its offering to B2B markets as a white label solution following its selection on the 2017 Microsoft Accelerator Programme.

Async is a patented asynchronous video messaging app where two videos shot separately are merged to appear as a live conversation.

Westcoast has sealed a distribution deal with ThinkMarble to offer the full range of security solutions including managed threat and vulnerability monitoring services, GDPR compliance services, Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus.

The company's other solutions include Titan, which delivers enterprise-level detection and response to SMEs; and Atlas, which helps protect SMEs by performing regular vulnerability scans.

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COMMENT: THE DIGITAL PRIORITY



Ian Bevington

WE ALL know that digital transformation is becoming a priority for business leaders. Disruptive entrants like Uber and AirBNB have issued a wake up call to established organisations, causing long-standing business processes and customer experience models to be questioned.

The pace of change will accelerate as organisations move to the cloud and begin to leverage 5G mobile networks. So, what does this mean for voice solution providers and how can we prepare for the exciting opportunity ahead?

Today, an ever-increasing number of organisations are recognising the value of exceptional customer service. A great customer experience can be hard to achieve and difficult for the competition to follow. Partners that take the time to understand their client's business, have the skills to assess existing practices and make practical recommendations for improvement are more likely to succeed in this space. A step improvement may be driven by embracing a new compliance standard, focusing on mobile consumer needs, refocusing on business analytics or moving to a clever CRM integration.

The technology deployed will become ever more specific as we move towards the integrated world of digital transformation. These changes will drive more of us towards working closely with specialist technology players. The opportunity is not confined to the private sector. Public sector organisations must look towards technology to drive the next wave of cost savings required through to 2020 and beyond. The current obsession with the IoT and M2M will evolve to embrace the value of voice enablement in supporting complex business processes.

In conclusion, by gaining a better understanding of your customers' business and helping them to deliver an exceptional customer experience, you can develop your integration capabilities and lay down a foundation for the interconnected world ahead.

Ian Bevington, Marketing Manager, Oak Innovation

CPs riled by SPBE billing

THE FCS is seeking a swift resolution to a late billing error made by Openreach for Special Phone Book Entries (SPBEs) that left CPs owing thousands.

In a statement The BT Phone Book put its hands up and said, 'we are sorry for this issue', but nevertheless plans to claw back what it says it is owed following an audit of BT's billing systems that revealed the non-billing of certain entries that are a chargeable additional listing in the Business A-Z section.

This issue is a re-run of a similar episode in 2012 when Openreach included a high volume of back dated charges for SPBEs going back years.

The FCS said at the time that the total bill was estimated to be over £1m with some larger CPs reporting individual charges in excess of £100,000.

Negotiations over several months led to the back billing being reduced to 12 months.

Following a working group with the FCS on 19th October BT agreed to make some allowances but according to FCS CEO Chris Pateman CPs are 'in no mood to go through this whole process again'.

"FCS members are taking an uncompromising line, and sev-



Chris Pateman

eral new companies have come into membership as a direct result of the need to show a united front," he stated.

"BT has already announced some concessions like excluding MPs' and local government addresses, doctors' surgeries and schools from the list. But the industry is still waiting to hear that the position we came to last time will be honoured.

"FCS will keep working to try and get all back billing dropped with forward billing only for entries customers wish to maintain."

Channel Telecom MD Clifford Norton received a bill for circa £20k. "We are again fighting these charges," he stated.

"The contract should be with the end user and not involve service providers."

NEWS ROUNDUP

West Unified Communications Services has ramped up its partner recruitment campaign with the appointment of Steve Day to head up its UK channel push backed by a clear statement of intent by Enda Kenneally, VP Sales & Business Development.

"Our strategy is to leverage the capabilities of West on an international basis while we drive our local growth through existing and new partnerships," she stated.

"We will get there by doing good business with channel partners, having integrity and not by forcing them to pay handsomely for the privilege of helping us sell and deliver our solutions." See page 26

Director of Partners at 9 Adam Cathcart has signalled plans to launch a cloud IT offering in Q1 2018. "This will be focused on Microsoft Office365 with a full service wrap to help partners move into a market that may be new to them," he commented.

The move builds on 9's mobile and hosted-driven expansion following the channel launch of eve, 9's hosted voice solution, and a sharp uptick in the firm's mobile business. "By the end of Q3 we had sold more mobile connections than the whole of 2016," said Cathcart. See page 34



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COMMENT: STRATEGIC TALK



Richard Thompson

FOLLOWING my recent return to a channel role as TalkTalk Business' Director of Partners, last month was the first time in a while that I've attended the Comms National Awards. What a terrific night. It is always a pleasure to see channel innovators being celebrated by the industry for providing a wonderful service to

UK businesses. What was especially nice is that many were familiar faces. I worked closely with some of these organisations back in my Account Management days when they were just getting started. It was remarkable to see, years later, their success being recognised after all the hard work their teams put into making their businesses grow. More than just that, however, it had me reflecting on the entrepreneurial spirit that permeates our industry.

These business leaders weren't necessarily selling the same services as when I first worked with them. To stay relevant they have evolved their propositions in line with changing customer demands, which is testament to the power of innovation and flexibility in business. It reinforced the belief that entrepreneurial spirit is behind many of the most successful stories in our industry. With the ever-changing nature of technology, and customers yearning for a trusted provider, more opportunities lie ahead for these innovative individuals and organisations that are bold enough to pursue them.

This month, myself and colleagues will be attending Comms Vision, where I look forward to catching up with more channel partners. I am also excited that TalkTalk's own entrepreneur, Charles Dunstone, will be able to meet many of the other highly successful entrepreneurs in the industry.

Richard Thompson, Director of Partners, TalkTalk Business

- Comms Vision has set the digital agenda with an inspirational line up of speakers and thought leadership sessions (p49).

Snom drives turnover up

BERLIN-based IP telephony company Snom witnessed a 21% turnover hike in Europe during H1 2017 and forecasts continued growth for the second half of the year.

Gernot Sagl, CEO, stated: "The reorganisation of our company and the hard work of our sales and marketing teams, as well as a greater focus on the customer and the new pricing model and conditions, are the real driving factors."

Armin Liedtke, Head of Global Sales, commented: "We want our growth to remain in double figures in the future."

"Notably, new products such as the C520 conference phone



Gernot Sagl

and the A100M headset have been well received.

Furthermore, we have the new D785 and D385 desk phones in the pipeline. They are already attracting a lot of attention from our customers."



NEWLY crowned British GT Champion Rick Parfitt Junior joined sponsor VIA (the hosted Skype for Business provider) for a celebratory event to mark the racer's achievement. Parfitt said: "It's been a hectic season with many ups and downs. I won GT4 a few years ago and to win the GT3 Championship was a dream come true. I appreciate the season-long support from VIA, and wanted to meet the team to say thanks."

NEWS ROUNDUP

Advisor to the Board of Redsquid Communications Andy Tow has revealed plans to add 60 new staff members over the next three years as part of his strategy to hit £25m revenues within the same period. "My remit is to grow the organisation four-fold," he stated. **See page 24**

Loop Voice & Data MD Shahram Bagherzadeh has intensified efforts to bring hosted VoIP to local businesses sooner rather than later and is pushing forward with his ambition to become the primary telecoms firm in Essex.

"The impending switch from traditional telephone systems to VoIP has made our ability to demystify telecoms more important than ever," he said. "We don't want local firms to panic and rush to install technology at the last minute, so we're doing more to encourage them to look at VoIP now." **See page 32**

Head of UK&I Alliances & Channels at Oracle, Simon Hill, confirmed strong growth in the firm's SaaS business. "It's all about deployment and execution," he stated. Hill noted that the cloud business is growing by 50% quarterly. "The focus remains on taking partners to the cloud and adding new partners," he said.

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COMMENT: ON CALL FOR XMAS



David Rowlands

CHRISTMAS is well on its way, and for retailers we all know what that means – an influx of not only calls, but also emails, chat and instant messaging. This will be a particular challenge for online-only retailers, and with £20 billion predicted to be spent online this Christmas, retailers must be ready for more customer calls and emails and social interactions than ever.

Failing to deliver on the service that customers expect could see them vote with their feet. In fact, our own research shows one in eight consumers have started searching for competitors during a badly handled contact. This rises to more than a quarter among those aged 25-34 who have a much lower tolerance for bad service.

For resellers, this is the perfect opportunity to give your clients an early Christmas present. Having a flexible multi-media cloud system in place, with advanced reporting and monitoring, gives businesses the ability to instantly bolster their customer service team. Keeping their customers happy and ensuring staff aren't overworked ultimately improves business performance. With clever analytics, businesses can be notified if the volume of interactions exceeds a certain amount, and therefore pull in the additional resource needed to deal with demand.

The unique problem with customer demand during the Christmas period, and in particular on the bank holidays, is that this is often when contact centre and customer service staff are on leave, spending time with their families. However, this does give the opportunity for those retailers who have a cloud-based contact centre to stand out. By allowing staff to work remotely, the impact on family time can be minimised. Businesses with international capabilities can also lean on their global customer service teams. Being able to offer this additional value is a sure-fire way for resellers to stand out from the crowd this Christmas.

David Rowlands, Contact Sales Director UK & EMEA, 8x8

Slade moves into CEO job

PROXAMA CEO John Kennedy resigned from the business late last month and was replaced by Mark Slade who joined the Board earlier this year and headed up the Location Sciences division.

Kelvin Harrison, Chairman of the mobile location and data intelligence business, commented: "John has led Proxama through a period of significant change. The company has been de-leveraged, refinanced and has transformed its strategy.

"It is now able to build on its network of assets and partnerships to focus on the mobile

location intelligence market with a new executive team."

Slade founded and sold his mobile advertising business Fourth Screen to Opera Mediaworks where he became MD for the EMEA region and helped grow the business to over \$100m in revenues.

"I am taking the lead as we launch into the location intelligence market with a range of products in demand from marketing agencies and brands, plus other sectors," said Slade.

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



A HALLOWEEN inspired theme day ensured that distributor Nimans' Manchester headquarters was in high spirits as staff dressed up in scary costumes and took part in ghoulish party games, including a Murder Mystery challenge. The day was declared a 'spooktacular' success, raising hundreds of pounds for a local school.

NEWS ROUNDUP

AN ISDN scrappage scheme launched by Channel Telecom has been billed as an 'industry first' by the company.

"The scheme intends to help partners and their customers move from ISDN to Ethernet and offers £1,000 for every Ethernet ordered," said MD Clifford Norton.

"Partners will receive the money upon installation, and it can be used against hardware, infrastructure, sales incentives, early term fees, or whatever else."

Liquid Voice's international ambitions have been underscored by the appointment of Sean Gallen as APAC Sales Manager. He brings 25-plus years experience in the contact centre market and joins from Cyara, a provider of customer experience testing and monitoring solutions.

Despite Brexit concerns and uncertainty the UK remains the leading European destination for Silicon Valley investors, with British technology companies raising more venture capital from Bay area VCs than any other European country, according to data released last month by London promotional body London & Partners, which says 2017 has already seen a record \$1.13bn raised.

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Prospects in cloud raised

INDUSTRY watcher Gartner has revised upwards its forecast for prospects in the global public cloud services market.

In its latest forecast the analyst firm now expects 18.5% growth in 2017 to \$260.2bn, up from \$219.6bn last year, with IaaS accounting for the biggest uptick at a projected 36.6% rise in 2017 to \$34.7bn.

Gartner analyst Sid Nag observed that SaaS growth is also outstripping previous forecasts. "SaaS revenue is expected to grow 21% in 2017 to reach \$58.6bn," commented Nag.

"This is leading to a significant uplift in the entire public cloud revenue forecast.

"Adoption of PaaS offerings is also out-performing previous expectations as enterprise-scale organisations are increasingly confident that PaaS will become their primary form of application development platform."

Although public cloud revenue is growing more strongly than initially forecast, Gartner still expects growth to even out from 2018 onwards.

This stabilisation reflects the increasingly mainstream status and maturity that public cloud services will gain within a wider IT spending mix, noted Nag.



Sid Nag

"As of 2016, around 17% of the total market revenue for infrastructure, middleware, application and business process services had shifted to cloud," said Nag. "Through to 2021, this will increase to around 28%."

In terms of vendor share, Gartner expects 70% of public cloud services revenue to be dominated by the top ten public cloud providers up to 2021.

"In the IaaS segment, Amazon, Microsoft and Alibaba have already taken strong positions in the market," added Nag.

"And for SaaS and PaaS we are seeing cloud's impact driving major software vendors such as Oracle, SAP and Microsoft from on-premises, license-based software to cloud subscription models."

Exclusive hails record period

EXCLUSIVE Group's core vendor revenues continue to grow at pace, driving the distributor towards record half-year revenues of 731m euros – up more than 19% on H1 2016.

The figures do not include revenues from the Q2 acquisition of Fine Tec in the US.

"While we continue to accelerate the growth of new, emerging vendors with triple-digit increases, this period has also once again seen strong performances among our most established vendor partners," commented Olivier Breittmayer, CEO of Exclusive Group.

EMEA's performance was particularly strong in the larger established territories such as southern Europe (Italy, Spain

and Portugal) which grew 36%. Results in the UK and France also stood out for Exclusive with annual growth of 28% and 30% respectively.

BigTec, the data centre VAD, now accounts for over 100m euros of annualised Group revenues, almost double the size of one year ago.

"More and more business is now made up of international cross-border projects, leveraging our global logistics and project management capabilities," said Barrie Desmond, COO.

"This is further boosted by the integration of our US operation which is already delivering significant opportunities, keeping us on track for unprecedented long-term growth."



Olivier Breittmayer

Grill time fills grad positions



Lee Reuben

COMMS National Award winner TelcoSwitch is staging its own version of 'The Apprentice' to secure two top notch Graduate Internal Account Managers.

In conjunction with recruitment firm Brightsparks, TelcoSwitch bosses will grill and challenge 20 graduates in a marquee on the roof terrace at their offices in Highgate, London, on November 16th.

"The graduates will undertake a series of tasks, presentations and interviews while senior management at TelcoSwitch will observe and appraise their performances," commented TelcoSwitch COO Lee Reuben.

"At the end of the afternoon, we hope to have whittled the field down to four candidates who will be asked to return later in the week for a final interview. We think this is the perfect way to find the best and brightest graduates to fill the two openings we have created."

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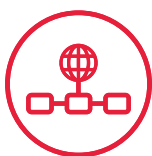
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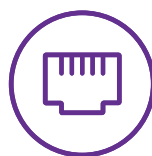
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Veeam sets a blisteringly hot pace in race to cloud

VEEAM'S upward trajectory continues to enter new orbits of growth, most recently boosted by Q3 2017 results that represent the 37th three month period of record bookings.

The company reported 72% bookings growth for its multi-cloud solutions and 84% growth in new enterprise business – tantamount to a 34% year-over-year increase in total bookings for Q3 2017.

The EMEA region stood out mostly with year-on-year bookings up by 33%.

In response to strong demand for always-on digital experiences Veeam has expanded its capabilities to physical environments as well as multi-cloud support for Microsoft Azure



Peter McKay

and Azure Stack, Amazon Web Services, IBM Cloud, and support for SaaS applications including NEW Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365 1.5.

The expanding company has also reached a new channel milestone in surpassing 16,700 service provider partners.

“Customers are adopting our multi-cloud solutions at record pace,” stated Peter McKay, co-CEO and President of Veeam.

“It took six years for Veeam to clear \$50m in bookings for our cloud business. We now see \$54m in three quarters. With our partners and alliances we

aim to meet our goal of \$1.5bn in bookings revenue by 2020.”

Veeam's momentum is spurred by a growing number of organisations embracing a multi-cloud strategy; but as workloads expand and user expectations for availability increase many organisations are left vulnerable, according to McKay.

“As the demand for uninterrupted digital experiences continues our vision is to protect the most critical workloads across any cloud,” he added.

Veeam currently has circa 267,500 customers and adds an average of 4,000 new clients each month.

More than 15.3 million VMs are now protected with Veeam Availability solutions.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Swyx solutions are now deployable throughout Europe as a service following the launch of the SwyxON cloud-based offering at the German vendor's Partner and Technology Conference last month.

Martin Classen, CTO, stated: “As well as bringing on-premises and cloud together in one core software platform we aim to make it possible to have a uniform range of functions across different cloud types from public to private through to hybrid.”

Blackbox Solutions has teamed up with TelcoSwitch to provide VoIP, conferencing, mobile, broadband and contact centre features to its customers. Paul Gibbs, Sales Director at TelcoSwitch, said: “Blackbox shares our vision for the future of the business communications market.”



AN ANNUAL fund raising cycle ride undertaken by Exertis directors and vendor partners has this year raised £21k for the Naomi House and Jackspace charities. Eight Exertis directors and representatives from Netgear and Fujitsu cycled around the Isle of Wight in a day, covering almost 100 miles and over 6,000ft of ascent. Nick Foster, HR Director, ran a half marathon across a number of hills from Cowes to Ventnor in 2hrs 20mins. Exertis UK MD Paul Bryan said: “It was a challenging day with a few bumps, cramps and sores, but most importantly we were able to raise a significant amount for a tremendously worthwhile cause.”

Naomi House and Jackspace are hospices for children and young people with life limiting or life threatening conditions.

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NEWS ROUNDUP

Hosted UC provider thevoicefactory (tvf) has developed Virtual Meeting Room, an open cloud-based UC system that integrates instant messaging, presence, content, voice and video calling in real-time to the desktop (PC/MAC), tablet and smartphone.

“Without having to invest in new infrastructure, businesses can increase productivity through enhanced collaboration and fast access to information, improving customer service with an easy to use and manage, non-proprietary system,” commented Paul Harrison, tvf MD.

New features that highlight financial stats and show the monetary value of calls waiting, answered and abandoned have been launched by Akixi. “It is only when resellers understand how customers make money that they get a clear picture of the supporting business processes and customer engagement cycle,” said MD Bart Delgado.

The company has also introduced a smartphone app that works on both Android and Apple devices, enabling users to access Akixi’s wall-board reporting functionality while ‘on the go’.

Akixi has also brought out extended data storage as an option. **See page 42**

Belcom247's snapped up



John Giblin (left) and Stephen Thompson

INDIGO Telecom’s acquisition last month of Belcom247 (Bellcom UK) adds field engineering and global data centre connectivity expertise to its core telecoms heritage.

Belcom247 provides network installation and maintenance services to data centres across Europe and Asia.

Indigo Telecom CEO Stephen Thompson stated: “Indigo and Belcom247 had already been working together over a number of years.

“Bringing the two companies together is another step in realising the strategic intent of Indigo to strengthen its global presence in the provision of managed services to our customers.

“This deal addresses our need to offer both existing and new customers a broader portfolio of services and greater geographical reach.

“Belcom247’s experience, specifically within APAC, will enable Indigo to provide additional value to customers who recognise that a one-stop global service approach provides significant commercial and operational benefits.”

Belcom247 MD John Giblin commented: “Our complementary product portfolios and expanded global footprint will allow us to respond faster to the evolving needs of customers. Our heritage and culture fit very well together.”

TTG swoops on Exchange

LEEDS-based The Technology Group (TTG) has acquired Hertfordshire company Exchange Comms, taking TTG’s turnover to £3.5m and expanding its regional scope to deliver services including hosted VoIP. A number of Exchange Comms employees have been retained by the enlarged business.

To support the acquisition TTG has opened a local office in Welwyn Garden City, adding to its existing Leeds and central London operations.

TTG MD Jonathan Marsden pointed out that the acquisition is the next stage in the company’s ambitious expansion strategy to service a greater number of business customers located across the UK.

“The synergies between the two businesses, including a mutual supplier that helped facilitate the deal, will result in a seamless integration of the Exchange Comms team and services into the group,” he said.

David Mackinnon, former Director at Exchange Comms, added: “The Technology Group was highly recommended to us by a mutual supplier as a forward thinking technology company looking to grow. The time seemed right to slow down and pursue other interests.

“Our customers will see a smooth transition over the coming months supported by our staff who will play a key role in servicing our system maintenance contracts.”



CONGRATULATIONS to Union Street Technologies Account Manager Lauren Knight and her fiancé Andrew Jacobs for successfully completing the Royal Parks Foundation Half Marathon, raising over £500 for the Cleft Lip and Palate Association (CLAPA). Competing alongside 16,000 runners, Lauren and Andrew completed the 13.1 mile race in an impressive one hour, 52 minutes and 15 seconds.

“Our amazing son Ben was born in March 2016 with cleft lip and palate, a condition that affects one in every 700 babies in the UK,” said Lauren. “The support we received and continue to receive from CLAPA has been fantastic and we’re really grateful for their efforts.”

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

Misco’s UK biz hits the rocks

MISCO’S UK arm hit the rocks last month with the loss of almost 300 jobs.

The company went into administration after a winding-up petition from HMRC (over unpaid VAT), leaving it no option other than to seek the protection of administration.

Around 30 jobs are currently being retained at the Welborough headquarters and Greenock warehouse to assist the administrators.

Earlier this year, to cut costs, Misco UK closed an office in

Watford, Herts, and had taken the decision to shut down the Scottish warehouse.

It is believed that US reseller PCM had been in negotiations to buy all or part of Misco UK.

Geoff Rowley, Joint Administrator, said: “Misco UK had made great progress since a change of ownership and new investment in March this year, but its turnaround plans could not deal sufficiently with the rapid deterioration in cash-flow after the sudden tightening of credit insurance terms.

“The UK business had moved to a system of supply chain outsourcing of stock, with increasing levels of automation to enable greater efficiencies with suppliers and distributors to deliver overall lower costs.

“But these efforts came at a time of heightened competition from other globalised online retailers which have eaten into the margins of even established IT resellers like Misco.”

Resellers get cloud jitters



Adam Simon

OVER 50% of resellers taking part in a global channel survey have no plans to sell cloud computing services this year.

Their primary objections are that the demand does not justifying the investment (35%), security concerns (19%) and too much complexity (14%).

But a growing number of resellers are already addressing what is estimated to be a market worth \$160bn by 2020 with the US and Japan at the forefront.

In the survey by Context 10% of resellers said that either SaaS or IaaS were among the top growth areas, with the most popular services being back-up (53%), storage (47%) and business apps (35%).

The report urges vendors and distributors to monitor emerg-

ing category products and consider how to accelerate growth. The study also indicated that vendors and distributors hold the keys to unlocking a cloud market treasure trove.

“Specialist retailers and distributors are best placed to capitalise on growth as they are able to demonstrate products to customers most effectively,” stated Context MD Adam Simon.

“As demand increases so will the requirement for distributors and vendors to train their reseller partners.

“Hardware as a Service and SaaS were found to be the main areas where resellers felt coaching would be most valuable.”

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Calligo's in London

FAST growing cloud service provider Calligo has opened a new London office and appointed Ross Worthington as UK MD along with other key hires and the promise of more recruits in the pipeline.

Jersey-headquartered Calligo also drafted in Chris Petrie as GDPR Strategy Consultant and Charlene Manning as Business Development Manager.

Julian Box, who is Calligo's Chief Executive, commented: “Our push into the UK reflects the size and opportunity of the

cloud market here, and is a natural next step given our existing UK client base.”

News of the UK office opening came just days after Calligo acquired Canadian CSP 3 Peaks. The deal is highlighted by Calligo as an ‘important step’ in its ongoing growth strategy and expansion into north America.

Last month Calligo snapped up Luxembourg IT services firm AMS Systems PSF, which provides managed services and cloud infrastructure to the financial services sector.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Quoting figures from comms analyst MZA, Sales Director of NEC Andrew Cooper enthused on the market for hardware-based technology.

“According to MZA an estimated 88% of the UK's sub 100 extensions are premises-based, so there's still plenty of life in traditional comms-based platforms,” he stated. “Its demise has been greatly exaggerated and it remains the dominant force.”

Cooper was speaking at an event staged with Nimans to launch the vendor's new SL2100 system to an audience of circa 70 resellers.

Bytes UK's acquisition of Phoenix Software boosts annual revenues to more than £400m and places it as Microsoft's largest UK partner.

The deal gives Bytes a broader geographic reach with Phoenix's focus on the north complementing Bytes' traditional presence in the southern region.

“The acquisition comes at an opportune time for Bytes UK as it looks to expand much further into the public sector, from where Phoenix derives a significant percentage of its revenue,” stated Neil Murphy, Group MD, Bytes UK.

Timico has ploughed a six figure investment into systems and portal development, primarily focused on ServiceNow (its cloud-based software platform) and Robotic Process Automation, which enables organisations to automate tasks and streamline processes. The new systems will go live in 2018.

Martin Riley, Technical Director, stated: “The scale of the investment shows our dedication to cloud transformation, delivering company-wide integrated solutions.”

Timico is also making ongoing investments into its existing service provider networks to add scale and extend its capabilities in delivering a hybrid cloud network.



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NEWS ROUNDUP

RingCentral has extended the UK reach of its cloud comms and collaboration solutions following a hook-up with Nuvola Distribution.

“Businesses around the world are transitioning to cloud solutions for greater mobility and enhanced collaboration,” said the distributor’s MD Michael Lloyd.

Robinder Koura, Head of Channel Sales for RingCentral EMEA, added: “Cloud solutions have reshaped the way in which today’s enterprises communicate with their customers and partners, powering greater agility, scalability, and interoperability for more seamless workflows.”

plan.com has been shortlisted in the Amazon Growing Business Awards as one of the fastest growing companies in the UK.

Keith Curran, co-founder, said: “Our mission from the start was to shake things up with a fresh approach, state-of-the-art thinking and a brand new way of doing things.

“We’re up against some stiff competition, but stepping outside our comfort zone and taking on new rivals is something that we thrive on.”

The awards take place on 29th November at The Brewery, London.

Rainbow Communications has won a multi-year contract with the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to upgrade and maintain comms networks across 185 locations. As part of the deal Rainbow will transfer approximately 55,000 direct dial-in points to centralised data centres.

Philip McCauley, the Head of Telecoms at NICS, stated: “Service delivery is the Government’s number one priority and this contract will help us to ensure we can maintain that provision by introducing a single infrastructure solution that provides stability, resilience, reduces costs and improves flexibility.”

MP drops in to celebrate



MP Sajid Javid and Will Copley

MP SAJID Javid joined Armstrong Bell guests to celebrate the firm’s expansion, having recorded 15% growth in revenue during the last financial year and again doubled its office space just two years after its first doubling of capacity.

To mark the achievement Armstrong Bell, based at Greenbox Office Park, Westonhall Road in Bromsgrove, hosted a champagne reception at Grafton Manor Hotel which was attended by 80 clients, suppliers and partners.

Armstrong Bell MD Will Copley said: “Increasing office space had been a project for January next year, but growth in business suddenly made it a more urgent issue for us.

“When we had the opportunity to take on the second floor of our building we knew it would be ideal.

“Business is accelerating and we’re in a strong position to meet our ambitions of quadrupling the business in six years, which is essentially 26% year-on-year growth.

“The last time we doubled our space we attracted key senior figures to the business and we’re now looking for more

talented people to join us. A few years ago it was hard to visualise such an expansion, but now we have a good framework to support our longer-term growth plans.”

Sajid Javid MP added: “I’m pleased to help mark the success of local telecoms star Armstrong Bell. It’s a remarkable success story – right here in Bromsgrove.”

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

Daisy opts for Azure in revamp

DAISY Group’s selection of the Microsoft Azure platform to underpin its modernisation programme heralds a revamp of the business and how it services customers, claimed the firm.

Daisy Group will combine Azure with its own private cloud, enabling customers to move away from legacy on-premise systems.

The move will also enable Daisy to streamline its offering, reduce its own data centre footprint and create the conditions for innovation to thrive in its customer base, said the firm.

Daisy’s Chief Digital Officer Nathan Marke stated: “The cloud has already reinvented the way in which we live our lives, and more businesses now get it.

“Daisy’s customers want to access Azure as a platform for digital transformation, but they want to do it safe in the knowledge that their business operations will work seamlessly across old and new. With Microsoft’s support we have been gearing up to deliver our customers exactly that.”

Cindy Rose, CEO, Microsoft UK, commented: “Daisy Group is not only transforming the services it offers, but also the culture of the organisation.”

NEWS ROUNDUP

Chess Partner hosted its second CSI & Digital event of the year with the aim of helping partners increase their knowledge of the digital world and customer engagement.

Over 30 partners attended the seminar that took place on the warship HMS Belfast in central London.

Head of Partner Support Kerri Lendo stated: “Growth has been a key focus for Chess in 2017 and will be again in 2018. By providing our partners with more tools and products to add to their portfolio we will support their growth, and ours.”

Logicalis Group’s SMC consultancy operation has been sold to DXC Technology and will join the ServiceNow practice within Fruition Partners, a DXC Technology company.

Eugene Wolf, Logicalis SMC CEO, commented: “All the members of our team will carry on as before and be part of this next exciting chapter.”

Mark Rogers, who is the CEO of Logicalis, commented: “This is a win-win deal for all parties: SMC can continue its growth in the service management consultancy and training arena, DXC will add another strong European arm to its operation, and Logicalis will release funds to focus on core business.”

Node4 bolsters security

NODE4 has bolstered its security portfolio with a series of upgrades and new services under the banner of SECaaS (Security as a Service).

The new service, which is fully managed by Node4’s Security Operations Centre (SOC), incorporates a number of new elements including AI and Threat Intelligence.

“Everyone talks about layered protection these days, and that’s hugely important,” commented Steve Nice, Chief Technologist at Node4. “How-



Steve Nice

ever, it also misses the point slightly. Businesses need the intelligence to put the various tools and services under a single layer of management, and to ‘cement’ these elements together

in such a way that nothing can slip between the cracks. If components aren’t well optimised, or you don’t have the visibility to identify and react to threats quickly, businesses risk leaving themselves vulnerable.

“As threat vectors and the nature of security threats constantly evolve, security is becoming an increasingly difficult challenge for many SMEs to meet. Node4 is offering to take that headache away with holistic security that can be fully managed by us.”



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THE GAMMA GUIDE TO...

Supporting your customers through MiFID II

For many businesses across the board, a big focus for 2018 will be preparing for the introduction of GDPR. However, for those in the financial sector, the new EU data protection regulation is not the only legislation they will have to get used to next year. MiFID II will come into effect on 3rd of January, changing the way financial services businesses must record and store calls (both landline and mobile). Businesses will be required to record and keep the communications of every active participant in a transaction and have to keep these records for at least five years, in some cases seven.

As a result, there is a significant opportunity for cloud-based fixed line and mobile call recording to help customers meet the new requirements. For the channel particularly, this is not only a prime opportunity to help their customers navigate towards MiFID II compliance but also benefit from increased revenue opportunities as well. For businesses who need to become MiFID II compliant, Gamma are integrating Horizon with a comprehensive call recording solution which will offer a complete toolkit to enable businesses to be MiFID II compliant.



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Secure your customer networks

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Web browsers are an indispensable source of information for today's workforce, as well as a large portion of the population as a whole. However, 85% of all malicious software (or 'malware') is spread through web browsers. Even more alarming, 94% of fully undetectable malware is delivered via web browsing. The results of these infections can range from annoyances like adware to the complete collapse of a business.

Traditional, detection-based security products offer no protection against these new and unrecognised attacks. Therefore, Ombex is offering a different approach, specialising in the fields of Cyber Warfare 'Quantum Safe' and Secure SDWAN solutions, offering UK networks state-of-the-art cyber security – one network at a time – utilising the UK ICT Channel Network as our 'go to market' platform.

We plan to acquire 150 ICT channel partners to help take state of the art cyber security solutions to the market that will redefine the industry

standards in computer security and communications.

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The CybX value proposition is provided via proactive computer security, analytical reporting, decision support and information sharing solutions in commercial and government marketplaces worldwide. The CybX 'Quantum Safe' suite of products ensures unsurpassed protection from any attack. CybX can demonstrate the world's first and only truly 'Quantum Safe' data protection.

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Sean Chumura:

The man behind CybX



- A computer security and forensics expert and programmer with more than twenty-five years of experience working with federal, state and local governments, as well as foreign governments and private industry.
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- Authored programs that investigate piracy, detect financial fraud, and allow computer networks to identify and automatically self-heal configuration change.
- Consulted with the FBI in the areas of cyber terrorism, forensic computer investigations, and white-collar crime. He has also been called to testify as a computer forensics/cyber warfare expert on numerous occasions.
- Co-founder of the first private cyber warfare/terrorism defence centre, and developed the technology to identify attacks against infrastructure in real-time.
- He has also been issued several patents for products of which he is an inventor/co-inventor.
- Under FBI confirmation, Mr. Chumura is a member of the HTCC, the Washington D.C. Law Enforcement Association's High Tech Crime Consortium group, as well as other task forces and associations.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Uptake of Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise's Rainbow cloud collaboration platform continues at pace with over 900 partners worldwide now having access to the service. A third of ALE partners onboarded Rainbow during the last quarter. Rainbow's services can be delivered as a standalone solution or via a hybrid approach.

Cherry aims to ramp up UK sales following a deal with Beta Distribution. Cherry, the maker of computer input devices such as keyboards, mice, keyswitches, magnetic and chip card readers, will have access to over 3,000 registered Beta customers. Stefan Lutter, Business Development Manager at Cherry, commented: "Strengthening our B2B sales in the UK market is the primary objective"

Exponential-e has secured a strong position on the new Technology Services 2 Framework, giving it a presence in all four lots.

Director of Public Sector, Afshin Attari, said: "This signals our intent to deliver solutions to scores of government organisations. It's also a firm marker that Exponential-e is committed to growing its position in the public sector technology space."

Network upgrades boost ITS

ITS Technology Group has gone live with an upgrade to its network following an investment from Maven Capital Partners.

ITS has standardised its technology stack with Huawei and all 21 of its networks will be migrated to the new national network, including the networks across north Wales, Nottingham, Bristol and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

The company has a presence in Telehouse North, Telehouse East and Manchester; and has become a London Internet Exchange (LINX) member.

This will allow ITS and its wholesale partners to have greater control and visibility to users, as well as access to products and services including VoIP, Unified Communication and cloud based services.

Tim Mercer, CEO of Vapour Cloud, commented: "This investment brings more connectivity capabilities for the clients we collectively work with."

Rod Lawrence, who is Head of Product and Network Strategy at ITS, added: "This opens up opportunities for our customers and wholesale partners; and it mitigates cost complexity and risk for our multi-site enterprise customers throughout the UK."

DCS ties up merger with Leckhampton

BOSTON Spa company Deans Computer Services (DCS) has added expertise in bespoke business software development after a merger with Harrogate-based Leckhampton Computers.

In due course the Leckhampton brand will be retired and the combined company will be known as DCS.

The two organisations are no strangers having worked together on a number of projects prior to the deal.

Retiring Leckhampton founder and MD Peter Lichtarowicz also co-founded DCS with its current Chairman Peter Rogerson in 1982.

Two other Leckhampton directors, Richard Foulds and Steve Robson, have joined the DCS board and will remain based at the Harrogate premises alongside seven developers. The newly merged company now has 48 staff including 20 systems engineers.

Patrick Clayton, MD of DCS and the merged company, said: "Having worked alongside the Leckhampton team for the last 20 years it's great to finally cement that relationship into something more solid.

"It's a superb opportunity for both companies to develop new



Patrick Clayton (left) and Steve Robson

business, giving us both a much broader scope of offerings and solutions for our clients.

"The newly expanded DCS development team will comprise 11 developers which, as well as providing third party add-ons to accounting systems such as Pegasus Opera, Exchequer and Intact iQ, will now be able to provide consultancy and advice across multiple platforms and operating systems.

"Leckhampton has expertise in providing mobile and tablet

applications for business, document management solutions and integrating Internet services with existing systems."

Richard Foulds, who is the Development Director, commented: "It was an obvious fit for the two companies with each one complementing the other. The skills and resources of the new business will open new markets and opportunities."

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

Gamma raises MiFID II alert



Paul Wakefield

THE comms industry's preoccupation with the advent of GDPR next May has overshadowed another EU data protection regulation due to come into force in 2018, which is set to

have a significant impact on the financial sector, according to Paul Wakefield, Product Manager at Gamma.

"MiFID II is set to come into effect on January 3rd and

it will change the way financial services businesses record and store both landline and mobile calls," he commented.

"Businesses will be required to record and keep the communications of every active participant in a transaction, and retain these records for at least five years, in some cases seven."

The introduction of MiFID II represents a significant opportunity for partners to sell cloud-based fixed line and mobile call recording to the finance sector, believes Wakefield.



ONECOM staff are stepping up to a new challenge following the firm's link up with Fitbit that enables workers to buy devices at discounted prices, a move designed to improve employee wellbeing. Onecom is also contributing 50% of the discounted price. Aaron Brown, Chief Operating Officer, said: "We have recently launched a range of benefits for staff in a scheme we're calling Employee Plus, and a focus on wellbeing is a big part of that commitment. We've already seen a huge buzz across the business, along with some good natured competitiveness as we launch into our first Fitbit challenge."

The real truth on TMT business valuations

IN the so called 'Post Truth World' people are exaggerating or twisting facts, specifically across social media, to influence people and make them accept an argument based on their emotions or beliefs rather than the actual facts.

Anyone who has watched Dragon's Den on TV will understand the importance investors place on valuations so, in this Post Truth World, who do you believe when it comes to putting a value on your business?

This conundrum forms the basis of the latest seminar M&A specialist Evolution Capital will be running in association with NatWest Corporate at the NatWest Conservatory on

November 21st. "The 'Valuations in a post-truth world' seminar is aimed at directors of businesses in the TMT sector, who are looking to grow or ultimately sell their business and are keen to understand the acquisition and business growth landscape, specifically in the run up to Brexit," said Evolution Capital Managing Director Nigel Cook.

"The event will also give business owners a unique opportunity to meet debt and equity funders, network with like-minded peers and meet successful entrepreneurs who have experienced the pain and gain of business growth,"

During the evening senior industry leaders and



NatWest Corporate HQ

investment managers will explore: the economic landscape within the TMT sector; the impact of Brexit on valuations; how business valuations are changing; how TMT businesses can make the most of the economic and Brexit climate; views on the macro economy with predictions for the future; and sources of capital available to accelerate business growth.

Included in a heavyweight line up of speakers at the seminar will be:

- Nigel Cook from Evolution Capital, who will discuss valuations in a 'Post Truth World'
- Ian Spence from Megabyte, who will review recent transactions and sector trends
- Neil Parker from NatWest, who will summarise the macro economic outlook
- Ian Fishwick from Adept, who will explain sector opportunities for businesses
- Ian Williams from Lyceum, who will explore changing appetites for equity investment
- Ian Mason from NatWest, who will look at the bank perspective in an evolving World.

Evolution Capital is a leading mid-market corporate finance boutique and exists to raise advisory standards and value of the sector, helping business owners achieve their dreams.

"We believe TMT Business owners can achieve maximum value in company sale and M&A transactions when advised by a specialist firm with relevant industry experience, deep market knowledge, and exemplary project and advisory standards," says Duncan Gregory, Director of Transaction Services.

The seminar will take place at **The NatWest Conservatory, 250 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4AA on November 21st.**

To register visit <http://www.evolutioncapital.com/register>

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NEWS ROUNDUP

A BT Wi-Fi guide created by Nimans is designed to help resellers address the mesh networking market and move into more vertical sectors.

An update to BT's Whole Home Wi-Fi firmware makes it possible to create a mesh network of up to six discs. With each disc supporting up to 32 concurrent users it enables connectivity for users anywhere in a building.

IntraLAN has been named as SpliceCom's first Silver Cloud Service Partner under the vendor's new SelectVoice Accreditation Programme.

Based in Epsom since 1995, IntraLAN is also a supplier of Microsoft Office 365 and has offered cloud services for several years.

Mark Collins, the Director of Strategy & Public Affairs at CityFibre, welcomed last month's publication of the National Infrastructure Commission. "The report recognises the critical importance of full-fibre digital infrastructure as well as the contribution it can make towards protecting the UK's future competitiveness," he commented.

"It is also critical of the current status quo which sees outdated and misjudged policies and regulations stifling competition and investment."

Pangea in era of fast expansion



Bernie McPhillips

M2M and IoT connectivity and solutions provider Pangea has reported a 19% increase in revenue and is predicting 40% growth next year.

Since the appointment of former Telefonica channel chief Bernie McPhillips in April the firm has seen strong growth in its partner programme and says 100 active partners will have signed up by the end of 2017.

Pangea claims the results show a growing channel appetite for M2M from partners seeking to differentiate themselves in the supply of fully managed global connectivity solutions.

"We are growing quickly and have forged strategic partnerships with many of the channel's key and forward thinking organisations," said McPhillips.

"Prior to me joining the foundations were there for us to build on. I am pleased to have made a positive difference."

Avaya aims Select with BT Wholesale

AVAYA and BT Wholesale are targeting mid-size companies with a new hybrid cloud service that they hope will convert organisations that are hanging onto legacy equipment.

Avaya's UK launch of ACS Select – which is hosted on the BT Wholesale network – enables its users to collaborate via voice, video, messaging and customer contact applications on a single platform.

The service scales up to 3,000 seats for UC and up to 400 seats for CC and will only be charged based on its use.

ACS Select is an extension of the existing relationship between BT Wholesale and Avaya, based on BT's Ethernet network and the vendor's IP Office Cloud and Avaya Contact Centre Select solutions.

Ioan MacRae, UK MD at Avaya, stated: "ACS Select is not a mass-market, one size fits all offering that restricts performance capabilities or lingers on companies with functionality that is of no use to them.

"Our reseller partners can offer it as a bespoke solution that fits to their mid-sized customers' existing systems and applications, along with the economies of scale and speed



Ioan MacRae



Simon Orme

to market enabled by the combined reach and market share of two of the biggest brands in the communications industry."

Simon Orme, who is the Director of Sales at BT Wholesale, noted: "Avaya and BT Wholesale have designed ACS

Select to solve the issues that we know companies are facing when it comes to configuring a solution that will deliver a consistent end-to-end service."

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

Interoute launches Edge

INTERROUTE'S launch of Interoute Edge SD-WAN (a Software-Defined Wide Area Network service meshed into its global Cloud Fabric) reduces costs and improves cloud application performance by intelligently managing connections to applications, said the firm.

Utilising the company's Cloud Fabric, Interoute Edge SD-WAN blends public and private access networks into one dynamic application network, ensuring application traffic is directed over the fastest routes

without impacting availability or needing costly, unused back-up circuits.

Mark Lewis, Executive Vice President of Products and Development, explained that the Cloud Fabric mesh is constantly adapting and re-routing itself to intelligently optimise application data flows between local offices and the corporate private cloud environment, and accelerates applications delivered from the public cloud.

"Interoute Edge SD-WAN is bringing new levels of opti-

mised application performance in the cloud," he stated.

"As more applications move to the cloud, enterprise users can be forced to take an indirect route across the global Internet to access those apps, which can result in increased latency and poor performance.

"Interoute Edge SD-WAN combined with Interoute's Cloud Fabric Software Defined core ensures that traffic takes the fastest and most direct route, optimising throughput and cloud application performance."



TWO 'thank you' events staged by Invosys recognised the support from its team and clients during the year. A group of customers joined the Invosys sales team for a VIP vintage car day in the Cotswolds where they got behind the wheels of six classic cars including the Triumph TR6, HMC Healey, Jensen Interceptor and Jaguars E Type, Mk2 3.4 and Mk2 3.8. Dave Trivett, MD of Assembly Channel Services, enthused: "The classic car driving day was a fantastic way to spend time with like-minded people and provided us all with an unforgettable experience."

Event number two rewarded Invosys staff and their families at Barton Airfield in Manchester, which was transformed into a family fun zone with bouncy castles and a helter skelter, a rodeo machine and many super-sized games. Staff were also treated to a helicopter ride over Manchester.

Peter Crooks, COO, said: "Both events were perfect days with fantastic weather, making for perfect conditions. The vintage car day was a great opportunity to chat to our customers in a relaxed setting and the staff family day was a chance for the team to introduce their families and have lots of fun."

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Tow sets down path to fo

Advisor to the Board of Redsquid Communications, Andy Tow, aims to realise £25 million turnover within three years, and it's a prize he is certain to lay his hands on. Here's how...

For a man who stumbled into telecoms 16 years ago Tow soon found his feet. Straight from studying Law at university he joined Vodafone (then Racal Electronics) in 1985 in a temporary telesales role. Since then, two strands can be traced throughout Tow's career – an allegiance to Vodafone and a knack for rapidly growing businesses. "I've led a number of IT, telecoms and technology companies towards achieving growth while undergoing strategic change," said Tow, who joined Redsquid in April this year. "As CEO and more recently Board Advisor, my remit is to grow the organisation four-fold. Staff numbers are currently 40 but will increase to over 100 within the next three years as we target a forecasted turnover of £25 million. Gross profit and EBITDA are expected to grow at a faster rate as economies of scale kick in."

Redsquid recently added its 750th customer and turnover is forecast to exceed £6 million this year. To help achieve his growth ambitions Tow quickly strengthened Redsquid's Board with the appointments of Andy Coughlin as Non-Executive Chairman and Nick Grime as Sales Director. And in acquiring the adjacent premises Redsquid upped its square footage by 50 per cent, knocking through to create one large open plan office. "That's more than

enough space to house our expansion," stated Tow.

Redsquid Communications was founded by Sohin Raithatha and Vince Mignacca in 2006. After leaving their jobs they set up shop in Mignacca's spare bedroom. One month later the first customer was signed and a move to a small office in Finchley soon followed along with their first employee. Redsquid then relocated to a five-person office in Borehamwood in 2007, and within three years of starting up had become a Vodafone Gold Unified Communications Partner with annual turnover exceeding £200k. Two years later the company made its first acquisition, adding the mobile subscriber base of Boscomms.

In 2010 Redsquid was elevated to Vodafone Platinum Partner status with turnover rising to more than £1 million. Fast growth prompted a move to its current offices in 2012. Turnover a year later registered £2.5 million, and in 2015 Redsquid secured the acquisitions of 5Com Airtime and 5Com Network Services, expanding its customer base and headcount. Last year the company was awarded Total Communications Partner status by Vodafone.

"The acquisition of 5Com was transformational," explained Tow, who was formerly Avenir's Managing Director. "It was entirely



Andy Tow

self-funded and enabled Redsquid to clearly see the benefits of cross selling and upselling, tripling the sales of both businesses' fixed line telephony inside two years. This strategy is part of the criteria now being employed to further grow the company, especially in the IT managed services and traditional fixed line reseller sectors."

Targeting the mid-market

The customer base is almost exclusively SME with a sweet spot of circa 200 employees. "Our target customers are in the mid-market, those organisations large enough to benefit from our range of services and who are likely to take multiple products," explained Tow. "We are

active in introducing relevant new products and services. For example, we are about to launch a new business unit, Redsquid IoT, and have recently launched our own App Development business building to design and manage smartphone applications for our customers. We can do this by applying a truly consultative sales process that gives us a deep understanding of what our customers do for a living."

Tow also aims to grow Redsquid's traditional fixed line reseller model, increasing the percentage of its own billings through wholesale relationships with carriers. Fast growth

is also planned for the IT managed services division. "Growth in this area has been interesting, but making it really exciting will involve acquisitions," noted Tow. "We have two purchases at the due diligence stage now. IoT, app development and recycling are also new services capable of delivering significant growth."

Tow's main priority right now is to ensure his newly developed business plan, that has been six months in the making, is implemented in the most efficient and productive way. This depends in large part on culture, which inevitably takes time to infuse into the Redsquid DNA. "Our culture is a vitally important aspect of what we offer to customers and how we deliver it," explained Tow.

"Ensuring our whole team is engaged and empowered to deliver customer service excellence is an essential aspect of that. Picking out two of many examples, we run periodic 'all hands' meetings to inform and advise staff about current company performance. We also run monthly Director's Lunch meetings where two of the Board meet with two or three members of staff who can ask anything and everything under Chatham House rules, which encourages closer engagement."

A key measure of success for Tow isn't only delivering demonstrable bottom line

our-fold growth

growth, it is delivering growth from his team by developing them to be the best they can be, not only through close engagement, but also through profit share and annual bonus schemes. The plan is paying off with the firm exceeding its NPS of 90 with an unbeatable 100, and its status as a trusted advisor is becoming ever more entrenched with expertise across the full range of telecoms, IT and technology products and services.

"Resellers that focus only on calls and lines or just mobility solutions, for example, are not building long lasting sustainable relationships with their customers," observed Tow. "Our opportunity is to

I really enjoy the nimbleness and dynamism of small businesses

bring all services under one roof and provide the classic single point of contact, single supplier philosophy to our customers, while maintaining integrity and expertise in all of those elements."

As previously mentioned, a new project is RedSquid Apps, a division that can specify, build, develop and maintain iOS and Android apps for customers to enhance the service they give to their own clients. "Our capabilities are unlimited as apps can be bespoke, but common standard features we have developed include geofencing, online store with full e-commerce

check-out and delivery capabilities, product price list management and an online appointment or booking service," stated Tow. "Another growth opportunity is developing our new online recycling service which is available to new and existing customers. Old devices can be recycled and found new homes, usually in third world markets. And we plant a tree in urban areas for every device recycled."

Perhaps Tow's biggest long-term opportunity is rooted in contracted recurring revenues, which are by far the lion's share of RedSquid's gross profit. "This model brings lasting relationships with our customers," he said. "Although robust contracts underpin this – for example the Vodafone OneNet Business UC product is typically a five year contract – the reality is that the more products and services taken by a customer, the longer they will stay with us. This, along with low churn figures in single digits, provides a sound business base upon which additional future services can be sold such as Microsoft Azure and Dynamics. Both of which we will offer as part of our Total Communications Partner status with Vodafone and in line with our current efforts to achieve Microsoft Gold partner accreditation.

"Progressive and exciting activities such as these prompt thoughts that I should have moved into the reseller world sooner. I really enjoy the nimbleness and dynamism of smaller businesses. Being fleet of foot and more able to take advantage of market conditions is great fun and highly rewarding."

Just a minute with Andy Tow...

Role model? My Dad: He used to take me to his work on weekends, which instilled in me his work ethic. And Neil Armstrong: My first TV memory is of the moon landings and I'm still in awe of what they achieved

What talent do you wish you had? To play a musical instrument really well

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I lived in the USA, in Pennsylvania and studied at Valley Forge Junior High School – for a month!

What's the biggest risk you have taken? You can de-risk with enough appropriate due diligence. But employing an untested sales person because they showed spark, initiative, desire and hunger (but no track record) paid dividends

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

Three ideal dinner guests: Winston Churchill for his inspiring quotes; Elon Musk to find out how he's going to follow the ultimate electric vehicle and solar powered roof tiles; and Peter Kay, a genuinely funny man

Your greatest strengths and what could you improve on? I can sometimes be too focused on the end goal and less so on how to get there. Although the desire to achieve set objectives is ultimately a solid strength

One example of something you have overcome: Jumping from a 16 year corporate career with prospects and a gilt-edged pension into the relative unknown of the reseller world

BTT 'energises' its trusted reputation

BTT has been operating in the business communications industry for over 19 years implementing changes to the working practices of a diverse range of small, medium and large organisations and has gained a great deal of knowledge and experience in the way that various organisations operate.

A move into the supply of energy services with Fidelity Energy has given the Northants based company another string to its bow and the establishment of its new BTT Energy business is a natural step in improving its trusted advisor status, according to Managing Director Shiv Passap.

"I found that a lot of our existing client base were surprised that we were now in the energy market. When I explained how our partnership with Fidelity could help them, they were happy enough to use us or keep us in mind for their next contract renewal.

"As with any venture, it takes time to build a client base and trust with them, but we recently helped a new customer who is a large consumer with their new energy contracts and we are making good progress with existing customers as well."

Amongst others, BTT Energy is

now targeting hotels, car dealerships, steel processing sites and manufacturing businesses. Shiv reports that organisations are generally cautious about changing their energy supply until the benefits of looking around are explained.

"Even though you are there to help customers get the best deal, they do not like change. Once you point out that energy companies do not offer lower rates for loyalty and you can get a better deal by looking around people are much more receptive," he said.

"Energy prices are changing all the time, sometimes on a daily basis. There is no haggling or bartering, the price is set. As an energy broker, you are not there to sell energy to a customer, you are there to help them buy energy and give advice to get them the best deal you can.

"As with any utility or product there are a lot of people out there trying to sell the same thing as you but Fidelity Energy are always on hand to assist you in landing and managing deals. They are with you from the moment you put a potential customer information on the portal to the very end when the contract is signed. Any questions or queries are quickly answered or resolved," added Shiv.



“

As an energy broker, you are not there to sell energy to a customer, you are there to help them buy energy and give advice to get them the best deal you can.

”

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Listen up: Experience is th

If ever there was a time in our industry to listen to the voice of experience, it's now: Enter Enda Kenneally, VP Sales & Business Development, West Unified Communications Services.

Not taking 'no' for an answer was Kenneally's route into the telecoms market, and her intransigence in the face of male domination was an early sign of the ambitious determination that has become her trademark. "I first applied for a sales rep role at a large well-known paint manufacturing company I was working for," she explained. "But I was told they don't give sales jobs to women! So I applied for every sales position listed in our local paper and found a job with a company that sold new word processing telex machines. The rest is history!"

That was three decades ago. Kenneally went on to become one of the most influential comms industry figures with leading roles at SDX Business Systems, Avaya and Mitel. "I've worked in many roles, for many different types of organisation," she recalled. "From driving huge growth to transforming a small independent into a large corporate, each has taught me valuable lessons. But what hooks it all together is taking advantage of a moment in time where the market needs something different and real, and delivering on that to achieve disruptive change and exponential growth."

Kenneally joined West Unified Communications Services in July last year. The company was formerly known as

Magnetic North (a provider of cloud-based customer contact centre and UC solutions), but was acquired by West Corporation in November 2015.

Kenneally was attracted by the opportunity to use her experience to deliver West's transformational growth strategy following the acquisition – and her appointment was a clear sign of intent. "My immediate priorities were to work on sales and channel strategy, as well integrate our infrastructure with West so that we can build a top team able to deliver on growth expectations," she commented. "We already have blue chip partners at West with key vendors but our contact centre platform is developed in-house, which opens up avenues for West to develop partnerships with contact centre focused channels as well as channels looking at the more holistic customer journey from a cloud perspective."

Kenneally's current priority is to bring on board new channel partners who share West's vision within the contact centre and customer experience space. "One of the main challenges we've faced in the past is that West Corporation is not well known in the UK market, but we have enlisted industry heavyweight Steve Day to head up our channel push," she commented. "It's an exciting time for us. Our strategy is to leverage the capabilities of West on an



Enda Kenneally

international basis while we drive our local growth through existing and new partnerships. We will get there by doing good business with channel partners, having integrity and not by forcing them to pay handsomely for the privilege of helping us sell and deliver our solutions to the market."

Global footprint

West Corporation was founded in 1986 in Omaha, Nebraska, by Gary and Mary West as West Telemarketing, an inbound contact centre dedicated to combining technology with client service. The company went public in 1996 and was renamed to West Corporation in 2000. Now it's a global provider of communication and network infrastructure

services, and West UC is the cloud contact centre of excellence for West globally. "Around 80 per cent of our 70-strong team is working in development or support for the engineering operation," said Kenneally. "We will achieve double digit growth year-on-year in 2017, and will be aiming to exceed those results next year when we expand in markets abroad."

As Magnetic North, the company's typical customer was circa 30 agents, but since its acquisition by West the agent numbers have grown five-fold. "Our largest customer currently in deployment is an 800 agent contact centre with 1,500 back office users on Skype for Business," explained Kenneally. "The beauty of

our cloud model is that we can provide an option for every size of contact centre, however large or small."

She noted that contact centres face a number of challenges. These include an inability to respond to customers' demand for seamless communications across multiple channels, a lack of systems flexibility, financial and resourcing constraints, keeping up with the pace of regulatory requirements, and growing concerns about cloud resilience and security. Kenneally says West Unified Communications Services' portfolio addresses these issues and gives operational control to contact centre managers, enabling them to design and deliver seamless

he best teacher

customer experiences, without needing to involve the IT department.

"Many organisations are struggling with outdated, proprietary, legacy systems that were not built for today's multi-channel world," she said. "Our market opportunity spans small, medium and enterprise sectors where there is a need for straightforward ways to create seamless customer experiences across multiple channels. We'll be working closely with our partners to bring these strengths to our customers."

Kenneally also noted a strengthening market for Skype for Business as part of the UC story. "Now

I was told they don't give sales jobs to women! So I applied for every sales position listed in our local paper

organisations want to extend that into the contact centre," she stated. "Over half of our pipeline for contact centres is using Skype for Business. We're also noticing an increase in the use of the term 'customer experience'. It's no longer just used in the contact centre environment and is becoming more mainstream for all businesses."

The company's own research, State of Customer Experience

2017, reveals that digital is expected to overtake voice by 2020. "In order to be ready, businesses need to start leveraging the full digital experience by implementing solutions like CC Pro that cater for a multi-channel future," added Kenneally. "But many resellers and System Integrators have defaulted to bring one single, dominant vendor-specific proposition to customers rather than offering a best-of-breed multi-vendor solution approach.

"The problem is that for customers that have invested in an on-premise solution, it is difficult to see how one single solution is going to help them respond to changing customer behaviours and the explosion in the use of digital channels. The shift to cloud-based solutions will deliver collaborative improvements to the customer experience by offering more choice in how customers communicate with the business."

The scale of the opportunity is reflected in West's growth from a small independent business to a large global player. And resellers would be doing themselves a big favour by listening to Kenneally's voice of experience.

"Resellers need to explore their options and work with flexible vendors that can offer a clear roadmap for the cloud-based future, while also being able to sit within multiple vendor solutions if that is in the customers' best interests," she said. "I'd advise resellers to focus on the need for the customer journey to be improved. A better customer experience enables companies to be more competitive, which leads to growth." ■

Just a minute with Enda Kenneally...

Role models? Jeremy Cooke from my days at SDX. He's inspirational, innovative, creative, driven and energetic, and he's always searching for ways to make things bigger and better for customers and partners. And the Dalai Lama: I've learned how to draw a breath when needed!

What talent do you wish you had? To play the saxophone

What do you fear the most? Fear itself

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I have a black Labrador called Chilli who I absolutely adore

How would you like to be remembered? Kindly

What's the biggest risk you have taken? I just do what I believe is the right thing all the time

If you weren't in IT what would you be doing? Playing the saxophone

Industry bugbear: A legacy mindset that remains in pockets of the industry that prevents good and realistic business decisions and relationships

Your greatest strengths and what could you improve on? My strengths are energy and a passion for what I do and the people I do it with; but I could work on 'breathing' more often

One example of something that you have overcome: Fearing fear: Using it as an impetus to change and evolve rather than be inert

What is your biggest opportunity? Bringing our message to the market via channels – it's powerful, impacting, credible and real

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Ombex takes Quantum I

Forget the conventional state of corporate network protection. What really counts is the next revolution in cyber security services and SD-WANs, the likes of which the UK comms industry has never seen before, according to their inventors and evangelists.

Ombex is the UK channel's chance to bring to market a revolutionary and ultra secure SD-WAN solution fully authenticated by the stand-out credentials of its US-based makers – a joint venture between CybX Security, which specialises in attack and penetration prevention, and Omega TeleServe, said to be one of the first independent telco consultancies to embrace secure SD-WAN. Its go-to-market brand, Ombex, is gearing up for a UK channel launch in January, handing resellers an opportunity to deliver the same security levels deployed to protect whole governments and nations.

CybX Security's promise to keep Britain's networks and businesses safe from attack cannot be overstated and comes as we witness a dramatic upshift in cyber threat levels. So high are the security stakes that nothing but the absolute cutting edge of technology will do, claims Sean Chumura, the man behind CybX.

He urges the channel to keep this one fact in mind – that CybX Security is credited as the first company to integrate technology solutions that are certified Quantum Safe by NIST, ANSI and ISO standards. "Our goal is to bring secure solutions to the market, redefine the industry standards in computer security and communications,

and provide a revenue opportunity to the UK ICT channel network," he stated.

CybX Security was founded in January last year and has since acquired multiple patents, forged strategic partnerships with a number of corporations specialising in disruptive security technologies, and assembled a mission critical development team. The company has already become a front runner in attack and penetration software, and claims to have catalysed a shift in the way networks and data are protected and managed.

"CybX specialises in cyber warfare defence and risk mitigation/Quantum Safe security services to governments and multinational corporations," added Chumura. "The CybX Cyber Warfare/Terrorism Defence Centre (CIWIX) has the capabilities to offer a full range of services centred on the world's most advanced technologies."

The CIWIX centre is based in Pennsylvania, the heartland of America, and uses a proprietary set of IT technologies to create a real-time monitoring, controlling and remediation system that services the network and data security needs of government agencies and commercial enterprises. "The centre enables full protection against cyber attacks and eliminates exposure of data



Sean Chumura

from any possible intrusions of systems," explained Chumura. "The centre also has its own capability for counter measure applications against the source of attacks, and the ability to detect abnormal computer behaviour patterns when a computer is attempting to illegally connect into another to install malicious programmes, extract data or induce a buffer overflow to initiate a remote code execution."

Time to listen

In simple terms, the CIWIX centre 'listens' to Internet traffic worldwide and makes no attempt to connect to any computers outside of the centre. On a day-to-

day basis, compromised computers attempt to send 'burst' communications as a 'beacon signal' to inform their attackers (for example, China, Korea and Russia) of a successful penetration. Those intrusions could be for immediate or future malicious use.

"The CybX Quantum Enterprise system is able to detect these 'Passive' attacks in real-time by implementing the Quantum Shield security solution's Listening Correlator which identifies and records all real-time abnormal behaviour," commented Chumura. "CybX's Quantum Shield detects and stops programmes before they are allowed to

execute, and also pinpoints internal unauthorised network connections."

Chumura is a computer security and forensics expert and programmer with more than 25 years experience under his belt working with federal, state and local governments, as well as foreign governments and private industry. His experience includes writing programmes that investigate piracy, detect financial fraud, and allow computer networks to identify and automatically self-heal. Chumura has consulted with the FBI in the areas of cyber terrorism, forensic computer investigations and white collar crime. He has also been called to testify as a computer forensics and cyber warfare expert many times.

Leveraging his expertise, and as co-founder of the first private cyber warfare and terrorism defence centre it was important for Chumura to develop and integrate disruptive technology that has the capacity to identify attacks against infrastructure in real-time. He has subsequently been issued with several patents for products of which he is an inventor and co-inventor. Under FBI confirmation, Chumura is a member of the HTCC, the Washington D.C. Law Enforcement Association's High Tech Crime Consortium group, as well as other task forces and associations. He is considered

Leap in security

one of the foremost experts in the field of cyber security.

Under his guidance, CybX provides proactive computer security, analytical reporting, decision support and information sharing solutions in commercial and government marketplaces worldwide. The company boldly claims to have created the world's 'first and only truly Quantum Safe' solution that ensures data protection from any attack.

"Ombex brings to the UK the ability to truly protect data," added Anton Oliver, Head of Channel Development for Ombex in the UK. "CybX has allowed us to package its suite of virtually hack proof Internet security technologies, replacing four to six appliances currently used in most WANs, and the costly private data networks most companies rely on for network management. The Ombex product and service suite will only be available via resellers in the UK as a wholesale opportunity."

In January 2018 Ombex will officially unveil its SME and enterprise SD-WAN suite of security solutions

to the UK channel, which are plug-and-play and in one box, requiring little configuration, while its multi-server professional platform will scale to meet customer needs. Ombex intends to penetrate the UK market quickly and at scale and has set its sights on recruiting a minimum of 150 ICT resellers with well established client bases. Ombex partners will get full product and staff training, marketing and technical support 24/7/365.

Margin potential

"Ombex is offering resellers an opportunity for high earnings that has not been seen in the UK for a long time," claimed Oliver. "Reseller margins are going down because everybody is competing on price. We will demonstrate to the reseller networks that they do not have to compete on price."

Any assessment of market trends will provide a long measure of the channel opportunity Ombex puts forward for the CybX SD-WAN solution. "Cloud adoption, mobile applications, expanding branch facilities and a host of other business

imperatives continue to drive up bandwidth demand for businesses nationwide," said Oliver. "While challenged to meet these escalating demands, IT leaders of distributed enterprises are also faced with delivering a seamless and consistent connected experience for all of their customers, employees and partners, regardless of location or proximity to the network backbone."

In highlighting another reliable indicator of the reseller opportunity advanced by Oliver, he pointed to figures from Gartner that suggest the SD-WAN industry will grow from \$225 million in 2015 to \$6 billion by 2020, while 45 per cent of all edge routers will be replaced by SD-WAN by 2018. Gartner called it a 'new and transformational way to architect, deploy and operate corporate WANs'.

"Leveraging SDN and NFV technologies, SD-WAN allows users to establish and configure VPNs, WAN optimisation, VoIP and firewalls to enterprise branch offices through software," stated Oliver. "SD-WAN implementations minimise the need for additional physical equipment at sites, which eliminates significant expenses.

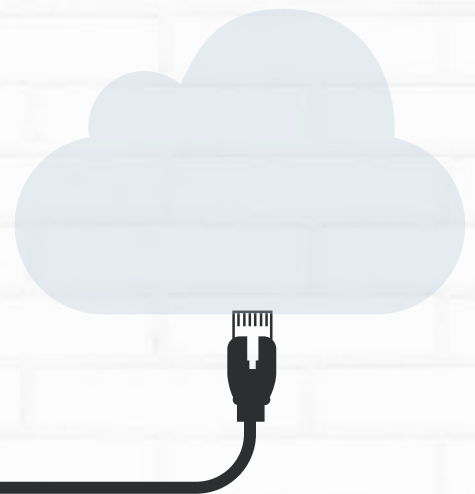
"For the reseller community, SD-WAN as a Service is a new and exciting revenue opportunity as it enables them to manage WAN services for enterprise businesses. Likewise, SD-WAN as a Service can be appealing to end users and enterprises that don't want to manage the WAN network or applications, preferring to outsource these services to a trusted service provider. ■



Anton Oliver



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Cloud Market bustles

Following the launch of Giacom's Cloud Market, Managing Director Mike Wardell sets out his stall for accelerated channel growth.

In September fast growing Giacom advanced its growth ambitions by introducing its substantial IT reseller network to the Cloud Market, which replaced the MessageStream brand, in a move that enables resellers to more easily sell and license cloud services. "Resellers can provision cloud services such as Office 365, Signature Hosted Exchange, Acronis Backup Cloud and Bitdefender GravityZone in minutes," stated Wardell. "The launch of the Cloud Market comes at a pivotal point in our journey."

The journey began in 1999 when Nick Marshall established Giacom as an ISP selling dial-up services. Fast forward 18 years, and during the past 12 months the company's headcount has grown from 36 to 47 and will approach 60 within 12 months. Revenue of £6.6 million was recorded for financial year 2016, rising to £13.9 million this year with a forecasted £20 million-plus in 2018. "The number of businesses we support has exceeded 40,000, up by circa 15,000 in the last year," stated Wardell.

Channel partner numbers have risen by around 1,000 over the past 18 months and currently stand at more than 4,000. This growth rate is expected to continue. "Giacom operates

an indirect-only model," added Wardell. "We base our product development and vendor strategy on the SMB space, ensuring our products are simple, straightforward and aligned to this target market."

Giacom currently has six anchor product categories: Email services; Office 365; security, backup and disaster recovery; voice and connectivity; IaaS; and business solutions. "We plan to broaden the product set in each of these categories," explained Wardell. "Rising cloud adoption continues to drive the market opportunity for us, as well as our footprint in the SMB space. So we have spent the last 12 months building the enablers to ensure that we can effectively support our customers, and we are working with vendors that can fulfil demand."

Giacom's six product categories are the pinnacle of a strategy that has been under constant development since the company's inception. The portfolio has evolved, in chronological order, from web email and server hosting; proprietary email security; the launch of the MessageStream platform; and the subsequent launch of Hosted Exchange which enabled Giacom to refocus as a channel-only business. Hosted SharePoint and back-up services were added



Mike Wardell

and in 2015 Giacom was awarded Microsoft CSP 2-tier status and was named Best New Partner at the 2015 Global Cloud Summit.

Investment boost

Last year the company secured a minority investment from LDC, after which Wardell joined the business. "Our strategy then evolved to focus on offering additional value to our customers by providing access to a greater number of vendors and products, developing the user interface and adding more services," said Wardell.

This year, Giacom introduced hosted voice via TalkTalk

Business and welcomed Bitdefender to the Cloud Market. Giacom was also listed in the Times Tech Track 100 for the first time. "In June 2017 we reached over 200,000 licences, and at that point had the largest licence volume of any Microsoft CSP in the UK," noted Wardell. "The LDC investment provided the impetus and freedom to invest more heavily, as well as look further into the future. Our strategy is to develop the Cloud Market, improve the customer experience and add new cloud services and products, while continuing to retain our place in the cloud distributor race."

According to Wardell, rebranding from MessageStream to Giacom Cloud Market will help to reinforce the Giacom name and raise its profile in the channel. "The opportunity for us is to deliver services in a simple and straightforward way, but the related challenge is ensuring we don't compromise our proposition and values in order to satisfy customer demand," he added.

An important market trend noted by Wardell is the growing number of millennials entering the workforce, which he says is helping to drive up cloud adoption and on-demand applications. "Cyber security is also a hot topic that we need to help our customers through, and GDPR is front of mind," he commented. "Keeping abreast of these changes ensures that we are able to help our customers overcome any challenges, and allow them to take advantage of the opportunities they provide."

"Giacom's objective is to become a 'true marketplace' providing all the cloud-based services an SMB requires. This will be achieved by staying focused on our Cloud Market roadmap and selecting the vendors that fit into our values and proposition."

When designing the new platform Giacom prioritised the key requirements of resellers, such as easing the customer journey, simplicity in its usage and availability on any device. "With several exciting product launches planned, our customers needed a modern, easy to use and flexible way to manage and deploy services," added Wardell. ■

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Loop's strong client ties

What really matters in today's market is an ingrained culture of customer service and education, according to Loop Voice & Data Managing Director Shahram Bagherzadeh, whose ethos helped to secure the Best SME Cloud Solution accolade at last month's Comms National Awards.



Shahram Bagherzadeh

rather than leaving it until the last minute. At the same time, we'll continue to keep our existing clients happy and increase turnover. The challenge, as always, is maintaining high margins while delivering an uncompromising standard of service. But bringing new products and services into our portfolio will help to increase turnover."

Bagherzadeh identified video, security and IT as potential future growth areas against a backdrop of escalating SIP and cloud telephony adoption as data connectivity prices come down and availability extends to more regions. "As the lifespan of traditional business phone lines and ISDN comes to an end more of our clients are asking about VoIP, SIP and hosted," he added. "In terms of how we steer Loop Voice & Data in the future, we review our products every three years, so we'll continue to refine and evolve our offerings based on market demand and research."

According to Bagherzadeh, end users are getting more clever, playing resellers against each other to get the best deals. "But our biggest opportunity is customer service, something that's lacking in the market generally," he said. "We're in a people business, so we look after our team and keep them motivated to deliver the best service they can. After all, we typically spend more time at work together than we do in our own homes. So we need people who share our enthusiasm and passion for service. That means regularly looking at how we select candidates. We can train in product knowledge, but not attitude."

Just a minute with Shahram Bagherzadeh

Role model? My brother. He built his business from zero to a multi-million pound enterprise, and he's never forgotten who he is

Tell us something about yourself we don't know:

I was a member of the Chinese Kung Fu Association and I taught Wing Chun Kung Fu for over 12 years in the UK

One example of something you have overcome: Being shy

What possession could you not live without? My mobile

How would you like to be remembered? Happy on a bad day. Very happy on a good day.

Top tip: Understand what you are good at and use it to find your competitive position

Current challenge? Recruiting the right team and making sure they have the right attitude

In hindsight: I would have only sold services – no hardware

If you weren't in comms what would you be doing? Teaching martial arts

Bagherzadeh has triggered a ten year plan to become the primary telecoms company in Essex. The big guns in his armoury are customer service and a focus on educating clients about new technologies such as VoIP – both dependent on fostering strong relationships with end users, which comes naturally to him having spent 11 years in the hospitality sector prior to being alerted to the growth potential of the comms market during a conversation with a friend.

Bagherzadeh took a risk and set up Wireless Telecommunications as a sole trader in 2000. "Nine years later we decided to trade as Loop Voice & Data and I started to narrow our product offering," said Bagherzadeh. "We began to specialise in hosted telephony and VoIP, which was crucial. The products we focused on reflected where businesses and the industry were heading."

The company grew 38 per cent during the last year and has a headcount of 14 servicing over 600 clients including big brands and

international businesses. Its target customers range from five to 600 users. "We've always positioned ourselves as communications experts above all else," stated Bagherzadeh. "Part of that is untangling technology and understanding client needs before finding the best solution for their goals and budgets. Our evolving strategy will see us adopt new ways of capturing client feedback and using it to transform our customer service."

Moving from traditional telephony to the world of VoIP was pivotal. Digital telephone systems and ISDN lines still have some market share, but it was key for Bagherzadeh to grasp new technology and keep customers in the loop about VoIP. "The impending switch from traditional telephone systems to VoIP has made our ability to demystify telecoms more important than ever," he added. "Part of our strategy for growth is to educate businesses and guide them through the process of change.

"We don't want local firms to panic and rush to install

technology at the last minute, so we're doing more to encourage people to look at VoIP now and explaining technology so they can talk the language. In addition, we are continually training our staff. This is critical to ensure we have knowledge and experience in a market that is constantly evolving."

People business

While Loop Voice & Data's business growth is shooting skywards, customer churn is heading in the opposite direction, reducing to less than 1.1 per cent per annum. "I'm a great believer in 'people buy from people', and if your clients believe in you and trust you it is much easier to introduce them to new technology," said Bagherzadeh. "We want to highlight the need for change and understand resistance to new technologies. But ISDN isn't going to be an option for much longer. It's also important to emphasise the benefits of VoIP, not just the challenge of making the transition.

"Therefore we explain the competitive advantages that businesses can gain from adopting VoIP now,



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A lesson in partnering

Adam Cathcart, Director of Partners at 9, has put his own stamp on building channel relationships and shown himself as a fully fledged hands-on partner champion.



Adam Cathcart

Just a minute with Adam Cathcart...

Role model? Roger Federer for his sportsmanship, finesse on court and ability to continue to perform at the highest level

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I was GM at an ice rink. And played ice hockey from the age of six, going on to play professionally. I also represented Great Britain at the World Junior Championships

One example of something you have overcome:

The reality that I would not make millions as a professional sportsman

What possession could you not live without? My dogs Boo and Delila. With my car a close second

How would you like to be remembered? Hard working, honest and successful

The biggest risk you have taken? Setting up my own business after working at Genesis and Outsourcery for 12 years

Your strengths and what could you work on? My work rate and passion for the role is strong, but I can sometimes over analyse

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

What talent do you wish you had? To drive a F1 car quicker than Lewis Hamilton

The face-to-face partner engagement policy practised by Cathcart is a classic model for all 'people' businesses. It is redolent of the pre-Internet, pre-email and pre-digital era when communication was far more immersed in a physical live experience that yields so much more context than an email or short call. "You can get the best out of partner leaders when you see their operation, shake their hand and look them in the eye," said Cathcart.

His first priority after becoming Director of Partners a year ago (Cathcart joined the company as Director of IT Services in April 2016) was to undertake a 'partner tour'. "It is crucial to understand why businesses partner with us, what works well, and most importantly what we can do to improve the relationship," he said. "I was struck by their openness and honesty which was refreshing and helpful."

Advances in technology are inevitable but they needn't represent insurmountable challenges, noted Cathcart, who wasted no time in putting partner tour feedback into practice. "It is crucial for 9 to always be up-skilling our capabilities to support partners through the convergence of IT and comms markets," he stated. "We continue to

evolve 9's portfolio and will be launching our cloud IT offering in Q1 2018. This will be focused on Microsoft Office365 with a full service wrap to train, support and provide sales assistance to help partners move into a market that may be new to them."

Unlocking potential

The key is to keep giving partners exactly what they need and enable them to do the same for their customers. And 9's push into the mobile market and launch of eve, its hosted voice solution, are proof-points of its commitment to enhancing both the purpose and value of its partnerships. "I was keen to review our product portfolio which over the last nine months has seen us revamp our mobile offering," explained Cathcart. "And following a £2 million investment and more than two years of development we launched eve over a year ago into our partner community.

"We then refined and developed the product to compete successfully in the market, enabling us to confidently launch externally to the wider channel. Perhaps our biggest opportunity is

the growth of eve as we increase its feature set and integration capabilities and win new partners looking to add a voice solution, or arm others with an alternative option if they are starting to see product fatigue from their older product offering."

9's partners range from traditional telcos, mobile dealers and resellers, IT resellers and distributors, and its average partner transacts 4.7 different services with the company – which now has a 200-plus headcount and provides a complete UC offering with value added services to help partners sell, transact, support and bill their customers. "Having a 16 year heritage of billing with Cascade enables us to provide over 180 partners with a full billing and DD service," added Cathcart. "We also provide a Virtual Office capability to partners where we can white label their support services, managing all faults, calls, provisioning and billing queries on their behalf."

9's mobile and hosted-driven expansion was catalysed by a directorship appointment perfectly timed, and perfectly matched. "I have

a background in mobile and I'm excited about our opportunity in this area," noted Cathcart. "We have a decent five figure mobile base that has been built up over the years. With our new proposition and sharper focus on this area we are seeing fantastic growth from our partners. By the end of Q3 this year we had already sold more mobile connections than the full year in 2016. We are currently on track to deliver 151 per cent over last year's performance. 9 has also accredited 65 existing partners on selling eve and witnessed significant month-on-month growth."

Cathcart's mobile experience is rooted in Genesis Communications where he led the channel business. The company operated a direct sales strategy but became channel-led and grew its base to over 100,000 mobile connections. It then became known as Outsourcery, the cloud pioneer. In May 2014 Cathcart co-founded Lapdog for Business Consulting and later became a Non-Exec Director at Zest4. "I have known 9's CEO James Palmer for 10 years and we agreed that it would be great to work together," added Cathcart. "An opportunity arose for James and I to complete a deal with Lapdog for Business last year. It was perfect timing.

"Meeting and getting to know everyone at 9 was also a priority. We are a large organisation but have a family business culture with many long-serving and dedicated employees. Getting to know them and hear their thoughts and ideas was instrumental in helping me to define our strategy in the 9 Partners business." ■



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Business lead generation

When it comes to business generation there is a plethora of strategies to choose from but according to Lead Forensics, the real challenge lies in ensuring you're focusing all of your energies (and precious budget) on the ones that will get results.

The London based lead generation specialist searched the web to see what some of the most successful organisations are doing and were happy to share what they believe are some of the best practice strategies for 2017 and beyond.

Content marketing

We now live in a content-driven world. Every business needs content – and lots of it! But not just any content, it needs to be high quality, interesting and relevant for the target audience. How much you produce and where you use it is up for discussion, but you won't get far without it.

Email marketing

For B2Bs in particular, this tactic can be vital for your ongoing lead nurturing. You're basically aiming to generate leads, to qualify them, nurture them and build up the relationship, so you're top of mind when they finally reach the decision-making stage.

Event marketing

For some organizations, big events are still effective. For others, smaller self-hosted in-person events will work better. Either way, in B2B sales nothing is more valuable than scoring some quality, face-to-face time with prospects and pursuing networking opportunities.

Webinars

A well-executed webinar containing truly valuable information that makes participants' feel their time has been well spent, is worth its weight in gold.

SEO

A well thought through SEO campaign can be used to target specific keywords that may not be searched for often, but which are highly targeted. That will put you ahead of the game.

Social Media

B2Bs often find it hard to get social media right. However, showing an approachable, 'social' side of the business can work wonders. People buy from people. The impression you create can have influence – plus, the targeting capabilities that social media offers means you'd be missing a huge trick not to at least try. Experiment with social ads if nothing else.

The best strategy of them all will always be one that you can follow through, with the budget and time you have available, and our Kaleidoscope contributors this month generally agree.

To find out more visit Lead Forensics at www.leadforensics.com



CRAIG NORMAL
DF COMMUNICATIONS

“ DF Communications has a multi-faceted approach to business development. We run a local business golf league which provides networking opportunities for all 36 teams not just us. We recently played our final at St Andrews. We use PR, direct marketing and social media to raise awareness of our products and services. In addition, staff attend Aberdeen Business Network and Chamber of Commerce events in Aberdeen and Dundee to engage with other companies. We were recently shortlisted for two national awards, and again, this presented an opportunity to highlight to the market our innovative solutions and commitment to customer service. We track our efforts to ensure what we're doing is working. We've found this combination of activity delivers results. ”



JAMES WAPLINGTON
LILY COMMS

“ For me, success in marketing has always been centred around having a broad range of activities within your strategy. Even if one particular lead generation activity is paying dividends one year, this may have become too expensive, competitive or archaic the next. Marketing, like the comms industry, moves very quickly and unless you are consistently trialling and testing new techniques you could quite easily get left behind. You have to be fearless and sometimes use your budget for something that has no guarantee of working. What works for one company may not work for another. It's not an exact science. It's all about building up and maintaining, through trial and error, multiple lead generation techniques that are successful for your business. ”



DAVE STEPHENS
AERIAL BUSINESS
COMMUNICATIONS

“ Keen to develop new business opportunities, one of the key activities adopted by our Technical Sales Executives, is attending networking groups like BNI Fortress Fareham, BNI Meon Valley Flyers and 4Networking. This gives our sales staff the opportunity to build trusted relationships with local business representatives and increases the flow of new leads. These networking events have also opened up opportunities for Aerial to work with local companies to provide services as a collective. For example, when providing services for businesses that have moved premises, Aerial works alongside a regular team of office designers and suppliers. Networking, combined with telemarketing, referral schemes, online enquiries, email newsletters, and promotional campaigns have supported Aerial's continued growth as a unified comms provider. ”



KERRY BOLAND
ICA

“ ICA's growth has historically been organic with client referrals and recommendations generating most new business. However, the way in which businesses now engage with suppliers has changed dramatically over our 22 years and we have had to respond to this change with more networking events and the recent introduction of an in-house marketing team. This has seen an increase in our client base as we have been able to design and tailor the content of our own marketing material and bespoke it to our audience. Social media makes this process even easier because people are ready to share more information on social media and because of the sheer number of users on sites like Facebook and Twitter. For B2B marketing the obvious channel is LinkedIn and whilst this has proved positive for us bringing in a full time marketing team to increase our presence on twitter and Facebook is not only promoting our brand but re-connecting with our clients. ”



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PETER CROOKS
INVOSYS

“ At Invosys we’ve always embraced the whole marketing mix, including Direct Mail, advertising, PR, e-mailers and more recently social media - and it’s a strategy that has paid off. We also have a very active sales team - we believe the best in the channel - who work hard to build real relationships with customers. This face-to-face contact, as well as attending trade shows, awards ceremonies and customer days, is crucial and very effective when combined with the other activity. I believe the real key to success is consistency of message and consistency of activity across all channels - companies who focus too much on only one element often fail to maintain a meaningful presence. ”



RYAN KERSEY
NSN

“ To get to a churn rate of 1% or less we constantly raise the importance of our existing customers and the business opportunities that can come from their goodwill, which is why we launched our 5-star programme. This focuses on feedback from our existing customers within the framework of a 5-star performance review. This was a highly valuable exercise, yielding an awesome number of full 5-star reviews. Even when we didn’t achieve 5 stars we quickly learned what was needed to achieve this going forward. We generated many new customer lead referrals from the exercise and strengthened core relationships across the board. This is now a firm aspect of our ongoing client relationship strategy. ”



SHAHRAM BAGHERZADEH
LOOP VOICE & DATA

“ Traditional press has always helped us gain local brand awareness across Essex and it continues to do so. We always strive to deliver exceptional service to win awards. The awards that we do win are received well by our local press and provide our audience with evidence of our capabilities, helping our credibility as a trusted leading telecoms provider in Essex. I’ve even been stopped to be congratulated in the shops and at my children’s school. PR works for us. It is cost-effective. We of course supplement this with social media to further the reach of our stories and attend various business networking events. People buy from people, so we make sure we meet our people. ”



NEIL WILSON
VIRTUAL1

“ Lead generation works best when it directed to the right person, about a topical issue at the right time. This all comes down to a clear objective and preparation. Who is your target? What are their challenges and how does your product or service address those? Once you have your target you need to understand their behaviour. Where do they go? How do they consume information and research issues? This picture of their persona helps you work out how best to reach out to them, to communicate most effectively and at the right time. ”



CHRIS WIDOCKS
NIMANS

“ Here at Nimans we deploy a mix of different methods to maximise lead generation and build potential customer relationships. For us there is no holy grail. A combination of email marketing, newsletters, PR, social media, direct mail and traditional print advertising help us get our message out there and grow sales. We attend selected exhibitions too. But, most importantly, we build relationships with resellers and offer them a human touch with dedicated account management combined with high levels of general support. A mix of marketing mediums strengthens our lead generation opportunities. ”



KATIE SLOAN
FIDELITY GROUP

“ As a channel-centric business, our B2B lead generation is focused on building relationships with our partners and providing the support to generate new business from their existing base. With a broad product set, we provide partners with opportunities to grow new leads from their existing customer base with multiple products that can be supplied on one bill. Our partners have access to our marketing assistance including web content, white labelled product material, email marketing and telemarketing. Email marketing in combination with follow up telemarketing continues to be most effective for generating new leads. Attending trade and business shows is also important for brand and new product awareness, in addition to social media which is a key factor in growing a digital business. ”

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THE COMMS NATIONAL AWARDS 2017

CHANNEL STARS MAKE THEIR MARK

The stars of the ICT channel were recognised and celebrated at this year's spectacular 2017 Comms National Awards event hosted by TV actor James Nesbitt who had anything but 'Cold Feet' in winning over the gathering of industry heavyweights.

"This truly was a night to remember. The number of entries again broke all our records and the difference between a win and highly commended in many of the categories was tiny. I would like to thank everyone who entered and sponsored the awards and contributed to making it such a celebration of channel togetherness," said Comms Dealer Editorial Director Nigel Sergent.

This year's hall of fame saw Virtual1 founder and CEO Tom O'Hagan named Entrepreneur of the Year for turning a business he started in his kitchen 10 years ago into the 5th largest wholesale network in the UK with a turnover approaching £30m.

On the reseller side, Incom-CNS secured Enterprise Reseller of the Year for its NHS solutions and ICA picked up SME Reseller of the Year for its work with laser eye treatment specialist Optimax and its innovative approach to customer service.

Mark Saunders, Group Marketing Director at 9 Group, commented:

"For 9, the event could not have been any better with guests enjoying a sensational evening of revelry and entertainment, while our sponsored Porsche Super Cup car was a star attraction outside the glittering Park Lane venue. Eve and 9's brand ambassador, racing driver, Josh Webster, posed for many photographs, before kicking off the evening with illuminating stories from the track and the pit lane, while Jimmy Nesbitt was an inspired choice as the main host.

"There was a welcome range of new faces amongst the award winners and I don't think I have seen a single photograph which didn't show people having an exuberant and enjoyable time. Well done to Comms Dealer and I am truly delighted that 9 will be the main sponsor for the awards next year for the 6th year running."



The event was a sell-out



TV star Jimmy Nesbitt was a brilliant host



Comms Dealer Editorial Director Nigel Sergent set the tone for the evening



The 9 sponsored Porsche Carrera was an eyecatcher



9 Racing driver Josh Webster had a winning message



Tom O'Hagan, Virtual 1 had the night of his life

Headline Sponsor



FREE TO PERFORM

Category Sponsors





FREE TO PERFORM



Jola get in the spirit



Entanet spread the word



It was smiles all round from guests



BT enjoyed the entertainment



Inform Billing had a memorable night



An industry 'Perfect Day' video went down a storm



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VENDOR AWARDS



FREE TO PERFORM

Entrepreneur of the year



Entrepreneur of the Year – Tom O'Hagan

Network Category



Best Mobile Network Provider – Daisy Wholesale



Best Fixed Line Network Provider – Vaioni

Distribution Category



Best Convergence Distributor – Siphon

Service Provider Category



Best Wholesale Service Provider (under £10m) – Zest4



Best Wholesale Service Provider (under £10m) – Daisy Wholesale



Best ISP – Entanet



Best Mobile Distributor – Daisy Distribution

Partner Services Category



Best Channel Business Service – Agilitas

Software & Application Category



Best Call Management Solution – KCOM



Best Billing Platform – Inform Billing



Best Partner Portal – plan.com



Best Installer/Maintainer – IPNetix

Telephony Category



Best SME Telephony System – Ericsson LG



Best Enterprise Telephony System – Ericsson LG



Best End Point or Device – Jabra



Best Hosted Platform – TelcoSwitch

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RESELLER AWARDS

SPECIAL AWARDS

Contact Centre Category

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Best SME Contact Centre Solution – ICA



Best Enterprise Contact Centre Solution – Cirrus

The Nine Customer Service Award

Sponsored by



Nine Customer Service Award (under £5m) – Rydal Communications



Nine Customer Service Award (above £5m) – NSN

Vertical Market Category

Sponsored by



Best SME Vertical Market Solution – MPS Networks



Best Enterprise Vertical Market Solution – Cisilion

SME Reseller of the year

Sponsored by



SME Reseller of the Year – ICA

IOT/Wireless Category



Best SME M2M/Wireless Solution – Pangea



Best Enterprise M2M/Wireless Solution – BDR

Enterprise Reseller of the year

Sponsored by



Enterprise Reseller of the Year – IncomCNS

Cloud Communications Category

Sponsored by



Best SME Cloud Solution – Loop Voice & Data



Best Enterprise Cloud Solution – IncomCNS

Unified Comms Category

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Best SME UC Solution – Lily Comms



Best Enterprise UC Solution – DF Communications



Hospitality Sponsors

How analytics is changing

The way bottomless troves of customer data are analysed and used is down to the R&D activities of communication interaction experts such as Akixi, Oak Innovation and Tollring. Here, we gain insights into their strategies and priorities as they manoeuvre to help resellers bring leading edge analytics and automation technologies to SMEs.

Developments in data collection, analysis and AI promise to give businesses the insights they need to improve the experience they deliver to customers. And the ability of speech analysis to interpret unstructured data such as call recordings, combined with the rise of natural language processing (NLP) technologies, means that organisations have a treasure trove of information at their finger tips. Modern day speech analysis, for example, is not so much about what is said, but how a caller says it, with their tone of voice, the words they choose to use, sentiment and pauses all suggesting a particular emotion or mood. "The dramatic

improvement in speech technologies means that we can service incoming calls in a more automated way and with higher transcription rates than humans," said Phillip Reynolds, CTO, Oak Innovation. "And with mood detection we've got a lot more to work with in terms of understanding our customers.

"There is also a shift towards self-service, ongoing improvements in automation and the availability of apps for everything. Demographics will determine how each customer group wishes to be looked after – some wanting to talk to a person, others happy to interact with a computer service in the cloud or on their smartphone, some preferring to use email or



Phillip Reynolds

Resellers have always been brilliant at selling telecommunications, but now they're selling communications and the customer experience.

the postal service. It's about delivering the best service to customers in the way they want to receive it. Resellers have always been brilliant at selling telecommunications, but now they're selling communications and the customer experience."

Unlocking the data treasure trove has hitherto been expensive and the exclusive domain of large companies and large contact centres. But these technologies are now affordable to all businesses. "Future growth in this area is an enormous opportunity for resellers," stated Reynolds. "We are following the trend with our cloud-based solutions and multi-site and multi-tenanted support, as well as our hosted, data

centre and CPE solutions. The clever thing is to bring them all together into one platform with multiple and flexible deployment models, which we've done."

Reynolds is now 'majoring' on integrations and providing a managed integration service. "Customers don't necessarily want to fork lift out their business or CRM systems, but they do want to take advantage of the latest customer engagement and measuring models," Reynolds explained. "Resellers need support on this integration journey. Someone who can help them deliver solutions to a wide variety of industries."

Oak Innovation's R&D is focused on the company's

single communications platform. It can be deployed on a cloud, hosted or CPE basis, and supports call recording, call reporting and performance analytics, with CRM and database integration. "We also have several mobile development tracks in progress," commented Reynolds. "Some for our traditional markets, and others for new methods of delivering the customer service solutions of the future."

According to Carl Boraman, Commercial Director at Tollring, we are entering a new phase of business analytics based on data from omni-channel communications. Not just phone calls but also Skype for Business interactions, cloud calls, video calls, web chats, web bots, emails, social media etc. Here, the analytics can be lifted out of their traditional silos, consolidated and easily analysed, he pointed out. "These insights will help to deliver an immense understanding of customer behaviour, which in turn will trigger initiatives to drive up customer satisfaction and profitability," stated Boraman.

The big opportunity is the 'democratisation of data', believes Boraman, as cutting edge analytics solutions become accessible to SMEs. "Cloud-based omni-channel solutions are beginning to



Carl Boraman

Insights will help to deliver an immense understanding of customer behaviour, which in turn will trigger initiatives to drive up customer satisfaction and profitability.

g interactions

emerge," he said. "Growth in the demand for omni-channel in the SME sector is going to explode over the next few years as the cost and complexity barriers to entry are removed. Omni-channel as a Service (OCaaS) will become the norm."

Another trend noted by Boraman is that more SMEs are investing in contact centre solutions, not to manage and increase agent productivity, but to access the rich information offered by customer analytics. "Forward thinking SMEs are hungry to understand their customers better than ever before," he added.

Expanding capabilities

Tollring's main priority is to expand the capabilities of its reporting and recording products to deliver a single pane of glass analytics solution. "This will combine customer interactions with APIs into all major CRM systems, where the complete customer journey, history and behaviour can be easily captured and understood," stated Boraman. "The

aim is to ensure that customers receive the best experience first time every time according to their needs and behaviours."

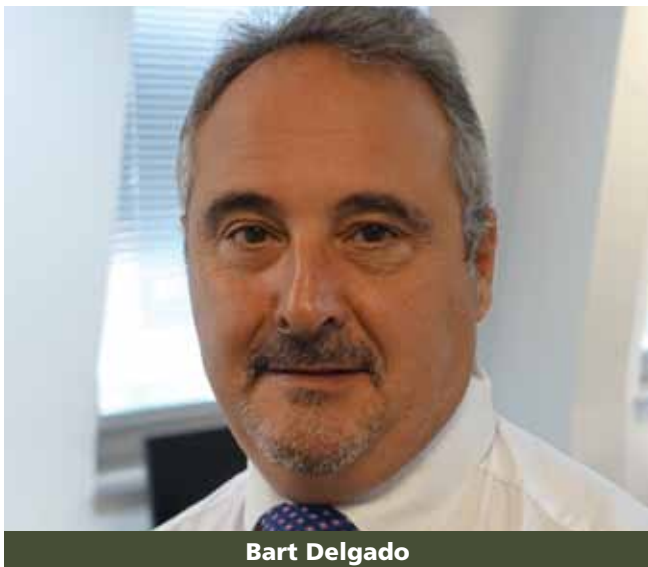
A key focus area for Tollring's R&D is expanding its omni-channel tools to include new features such as sentiment analytics around video, where Boraman sees a big opportunity. "GDPR compliance is another key investment area for us, to ensure the safe management of personal information that we hold on behalf of our SP and OEM partners and their customers," he added. "Our partners depend on us to keep them protected and ensure they meet current as well as future regulatory compliance. Tollring's ongoing development will enhance functionality and capabilities, embedding 'security by design' for GDPR compliance.

"GDPR is a huge consideration for businesses. In situations such as the contact centre where capturing and storing personal information for non-essential purposes is the

norm, changes will take place over the coming months. We will be offering our partners and their customers full GDPR compliance products before the May 2018 deadline."

Having a clear sight of financial business stats and what they mean is also high on the wish list of all organisations, and Akixi Managing Director Bart Delgado is urging resellers to 'follow the money' with the launch of new features that deliver the 'dream'. "The link between company activity and fiscal results has always been one of the most desired metrics in the quest for business improvement," he said. "But this data has been too difficult or unreliable to correlate due to the disparity of information silos. Now it is becoming far easier to interact between those silos as we introduce features that highlight financial statistics and show the monetary value of calls waiting, answered and abandoned.

"It is only when resellers understand how customers make money that they can get a clear picture of the supporting business processes and customer engagement cycle. Resellers can then engage with the customer to ascertain their pinch points and challenges, before educating and working with them to define a better way of working. Of course, this also raises the question of Business Intelligence, and how by integrating and connecting customers' independent systems there is an opportunity to not only improve efficiency and productivity in the short-term, but also to inform better decision making across the customer's business in the long-term."



Bart Delgado

The link between company activity and fiscal results has always been one of the most desired metrics in the quest for business improvement.

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Building new business in

Here we put a spotlight on the concerted campaigns pursued by three of the comms channel's energy providers as they continue to boost partner revenues with not only market beating energy solutions, but also the associated opportunities in cross-selling, new customer acquisition, client ring-fencing and retention.

A reseller's primary obligation is to sell more and keep their customers' voice and data services ticking over nicely. Their other obligation to clients, according to Mark Jones, Managing Director at Blizzard Telecom, should be as a source of reassurance in their energy supply, not just as a purveyor of gas and electricity, but as a partner in finding the best energy deal and handling the ongoing management of the service. Blizzard first offered energy services in 2008, mainly targeting the corporate market. But the advent of software that allows quotes and e-sign contracts to be done in minutes turned the service into an empowering channel opportunity.

"Energy is a key part of what we do," explained Jones. "Both Blizzard and our channel partners find that it is sale enhancing to the telecom offerings and in many cases makes more money. Partner feedback also tells us that they have also used energy revenues to make their telecoms offering more compelling. I can only see this growing through the channel as it's a no brainer."

The energy proposition is a simple one: Channel partners get an ongoing share of the revenue. "All they really need to do is get a copy of energy bills from their customers,"

added Jones. "All bills have the exact information needed to produce a quote, the rates, the usage, and most importantly the current contract end date. That information is then put on our online energy management software either by them or us, and prices, quotes and even e-sign contracts are produced. The partner can then go direct to the customer to agree the contract or pass it on to us to do it for them. Energy commissions are split 50/50 and are ongoing based on customer usage."

Blizzard currently has over 150 partners and is continually recruiting resellers via word of mouth and referrals. Newcomers to its energy management service soon find traction. "Energy is used by all businesses with the better spenders generally in the manufacturing, hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors," added Jones. "The main benefit for end users is to secure the best market prices for their energy needs, recommend the most appropriate contract duration and then monitor the energy market to select the best time to extend or renew their contracts."

Energy is now centralised in many of Blizzard's reseller businesses as an inevitable revenue generator that also brings a dramatic upshift



Mark Jones

Energy is a key part of what we do. Both Blizzard and our channel partners find that it is sale enhancing to the telecom offerings and in many cases makes more money.

in customer loyalty. And for resellers, the simplicity in which such a dividend is gained is remarkable as Blizzard does all of the work. "The support we provide in terms of pricing, quotations and e-sign contracts means that the channel simply needs to supply end user bills to us," explained Jones. "From there they can be involved as much or as little as they wish in terms of getting the customer into an agreement. Furthermore,

if a customer is currently in a contract we can simply produce a new contract to seamlessly start at the end of their current contracted period. The key to success though is asking for that bill when you're interacting with your customer – be it telephone calls, appointments, maintenance or customer service."

Because energy markets are always moving the challenge for energy buyers will always

remain the same: What level of risk are they prepared to accept? For almost all SMEs that normally means very little, and Jones recommends customers enter into annual or multi-year contracts to ensure certainty about prices – in other words, the supplier takes the risk at a cost. "For other more sophisticated users, more complicated energy contracts are available which share the market risk between user and supplier and offers opportunities to beat the market," added Jones.

Focus Group began offering energy to its customers in 2010 as a simple add-on to its existing portfolio. "Our customers were delighted to be offered the chance to save money, particularly in what at the time was a tough economic climate," said James Baker, Head of Energy. "It is fantastic to be able to offer another product where it is all about saving money. Having tested the market with our own customers we launched energy to our channel partners in 2011. It was an instant success in both our direct and indirect channels, providing something different to talk about and enhancing the recurring revenue model that we all enjoy."

While energy forms a relatively small part of Focus Group's operations it is achieving over 20 per cent

powerful times

growth year-on-year. "It represents another revenue stream outside of telecoms, spreading risk and adding value to existing customer contracts," added Baker. "Selling energy often allows us to get our foot in the door when we otherwise wouldn't. It fits nicely into the cross-selling culture of the business and is a great success with our channel partners, especially in sectors such as hospitality, healthcare and engineering – all industries where businesses often spend more on energy than they do on telecoms."

Focus Group is investing in the development of a dedicated Energy Partner Portal where its channel partners can view updates on leads, tenders and progress with ongoing opportunities in real-time. "Our energy proposition covers opportunities from single sites through to high volume multi-premise tenders,"

The energy proposition is a simple one: Channel partners get an ongoing share of the revenue

noted Baker. "Procurement and cost reduction has always been our sweet spot, but in the last five years we have gained significant experience in meter installations and site work projects. With the cost of energy continuing to rise we are now switching our attention to energy management systems alongside efficiency offerings."

Focus Group has over 20 channel partners selling

or introducing its energy solutions as part of their product portfolio. During 2018 the company will be holding Partner Days and events to promote its services. "The greater the customer usage, the greater the commission potential," stated Baker. "It's very simple for resellers to sign customers up for an energy switching solution. Once we have agreed the preferred tariff and term, we can either work directly with the end user customer or allow our reseller to complete the sale themselves. We then provide the back-office support services to ensure that contracts start at the required time, while also taking care of any existing contract terminations."

"The majority of customers will be within a contracted period. However, we can sign up customers onto preferential tariffs up to 12 months in advance of the required contract start date. With costs rising frequently during the last two years, it's vital that we continue to offer unbiased advice and longer-term strategies for energy purchasing."

Government policy-driven charges and increases in third party costs are adding to the overall energy price at present, especially in the electricity market where the wholesale cost of power is equating to less than 50 per cent of the overall cost. "We are now continuing to look at preferential tariffs for longer-terms which we can pass on to our customer and channel partners, providing business owners with a longer-term level of budget certainty for their energy usage," added Baker.

Continued on page 46



James Baker

With the cost of energy continuing to rise we are now switching our attention to energy management systems alongside efficiency offerings.



Blizzard

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Continued from page 45

Baker also noted that smart metering is an easy way to engage people in discussions about their energy, as most would be happy to avoid suffering from ongoing billing problems or cash flow issues due to 'underestimated' billing. "Smart meter offerings have worked well for us," he added. "By having access to real-time usage data as well as reporting tools we are able to assist our larger customers with long-term energy efficiency strategies. After all, in a marketplace where the cost of energy is continuing to rise our customers will have a greater focus on reducing their overall energy usage. Without the data collected by smart meters this is simply impossible to monitor."

The key to success when offering energy switching propositions is to keep it simple, believes Baker. "Customers will not always be aware of important information relating to their supplier agreements," he stated. "By using a letter of authority signed by the end user we can work on the customer's behalf to gather all the necessary information that enables us to quote based on accurate usage and real cost forecasts. But 'cheapest is not always best': With more suppliers to choose from than ever before we do our best to work with reputable energy suppliers that care about our customers and channel partners as much as we do. If a tariff appears to be too good to be true the chances are that may well be the case."

Baker also highlighted that most energy suppliers now publish their contract end dates on the customer's bill. "Every day we see prospective customers that have somehow fallen into 'out-of-contract' tariffs that are expensive and represent an instant opportunity

for our partners to add value," he commented.

It was the scale of the opportunity that 'switched on' Fidelity Energy. The firm was launched in 2014 and John Haw, Managing Director, joined in December 2015. The company now has circa 200 partners and is signing between 8-10 additions a month. "The channel manages hundreds of thousands of SME and corporate clients between them, and every single customer uses energy," stated Haw. "Most are poorly served by antiquated spreadsheet-driven comparisons, or are being exploited by the big energy companies on standard variable rates."

Empowering services

Fidelity Energy's service consists of procurement, contract management, in life bill validation, all MACs, carbon reporting, energy reduction initiatives and all elements of the switching process. "The portal is used in conjunction with CRM to effectively manage our partners' customers," added Haw. "We are now looking to license the portal software to our competitors also, opening up a whole new market for the business. Partners earn profits by marking up the KVAs in the same way that they can mark up pence per minute. There

is a lot in common with the old LCR world of telecoms."

Fidelity Energy witnessed growth of 110 per cent in 2016 and is aiming to build on that substantially this year. "We are seeing growth across all sectors, especially manufacturing, care, hospitality and sporting facilities," said Haw. "No one wants to manage their energy. Partners already solve problems in the telecoms or IT world. Energy is no different and our portal allows partners to manage the customers' energy needs. Furthermore, the issues in switching have improved at an industry level in recent years, but part of the value add we bring to the table is to ensure that the whole process is smooth and seamless. We have a team focused solely on this."

Like telecoms, the energy market does not stand still and as such provides a stimulus to innovation and commercial opportunities. "The move to electric vehicles is happening fast and the EV charging point expansion will be a huge opportunity," observed Haw. "So will battery storage that can feed into the grid. Tesla has some cool batteries that will form part of the supply infrastructure at a local level. This will form part of the future service offering from Fidelity Energy." ■



John Haw

Partners earn profits by marking up the KVAs in the same way that they can mark up pence per minute. There is a lot in common with the old LCR world of telecoms.



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Mitel drafts in Butt



Jeremy Butt

CHANNEL veteran Jeremy Butt has been drafted in by Mitel to head up its EMEA operations. The move follows the completion of Mitel's acquisition of former rival ShoreTel. Butt reports to Todd Abbott, Mitel Executive Vice President of Global Sales. As SVP of EMEA Butt will draw on experience gained in previous international roles at Avaya and most recently Westcon Group where he was Executive Vice President responsible for the distributor's EMEA business. Previous roles include notable stints at Symbol Technologies and Cisco Systems.

Abbott said: "Jeremy has been working for many years with customers in the region on every kind of technology deployment. There is no one better able to help them understand what it takes to modernise existing communications and chart a course to digital transformation."

Butt added: "Customers know where they want to take their business. Whether it's a growing company, mid or large sized enterprise, they see a tremendous opportunity to leverage communications solutions and advanced business applications to achieve a competitive advantage."

Waters rises at Westcoast

CRAIG Waters brings strong industry experience to his new role as Head of Services at IT distributor Westcoast. He was previously Head of Procurement at Misco and spent more than 16 years at Ingram Micro in UK and European roles, leading the channel for Fujitsu and Belkin.



Craig Waters

Westcoast Managing Director Alex Tatham said: "Craig's appointment is a coup for us, adding a huge slice of zest, drive and heavy-hitting channel experience to our services offering." Waters commented: "I look forward to expanding the range of services that Westcoast offers to vendors and customers."

Also on the move...



Stephen Dykes

STEPHEN Dykes has joined Voiceflex as Channel Account Manager, bringing 20 years experience in ICT, channel development and account management. Previous roles include stints at Zen Internet, BT, Nimans, Cisco and NFON

UK. In recent years he has focused on the cloud, hosted telephony and UC space. Paul Taylor, Sales & Marketing Director, said: "We are in exciting times with the development of SIP and WebRTC, and Stephen's industry knowledge and experience will allow us to maintain existing and develop new relationships, and support our partners with the growth opportunities available."

DAISY Group's Danielle Price has climbed the career ladder with a promotion to Head of Sales at Daisy Wisdom, the firm's data management arm. She



Danielle Price

was previously an account manager. A key aspect of Price's promotion was her law degree, which is especially apt given the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) due to come into force next May. "We are in a great

position to help businesses that aren't quite ready for GDPR," commented Price. "We have been providing data management services for some time, so it seems natural to also ensure that our customers are compliant with relevant legislations."

Two key hires for TeleWare



David Neal

TWO high level appointments are set to strengthen TeleWare's channel operation as Andrew Collis and David Neal bring their long-time sales experience to the company. Both formerly worked at industry giant BT for a number of years.

Collis joins as Senior Channel Manager responsible for all aspects of channel management and development for the BT Group, one of TeleWare's key partners. He worked at BT for eight years where he oversaw the sales strategy and activity aligned to the conferencing sector. Prior to TeleWare Collis worked at Vodafone as a principle sales solution advisor. He has over 18 years experience in the UK channel.

Neal joins as a Senior Partner Business Development Manager, bringing over 30 years experience in commercial sales including 15 years at Infonet Corp and eight years at BT Global Services. Prior to TeleWare he was a business consultant at Larato.

TeleWare CEO Steve Haworth commented: "TeleWare is on an ambitious growth trajectory over the next three years, and now is the time for experienced, ambitious individuals such as Andrew and David to join the fold."

Converged trio earn promotion



A TRIO of promotions have positioned Aberdeen-based Converged Communication Solutions for a new growth phase. The moves follow the completion of Institute of Leadership and Management qualifications by three staff. Andy McKay becomes General Manager, Gavin Simpson moves to the new post of Technical Manager, and Stacey Smith takes on the dual role of Service Delivery and HR Manager. Systems developer Chris Toothill also gained an ILM qualification.

Managing Director Neil Christie said: "We are committed to investing in the development of our employees. The effort and focus shown by Andy, Chris, Gavin and Stacey to gain their ILM accreditations is testament to the ethos of hard work each possesses."

Pictured above: ILM course tutor Shirley Henderson (centre) with (l-r), Andy, Stacey, Chris and Gavin.



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EVENT PREVIEW (pages 49-87)



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** www.comms-dealer.com Online property (1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016), Derived daily Average Unique browsers 840)

*** Distribution of weekly email newsletter (1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016, Average Distribution 20,392)

Mastering the digital era

Comms Vision has again set the digital agenda with an inspirational line up of speakers and thought leadership sessions.

World renowned conference Chair Andrew Lippman, Associate Director and co-founder of the globally renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab and one of the world's foremost researchers on the evolution of digital technology, will take a highly animated and engaging approach to discussing the latest trends and research, giving Comms Vision conferees compelling insights into the future of communications technology.

In a rare conference appearance TalkTalk Executive Chairman Sir Charles Dunstone will take part in an exclusive conversation and share his thoughts and experiences on challenging the status quo and stepping outside the norm, while creating a business culture that fuels growth and puts the customer first.

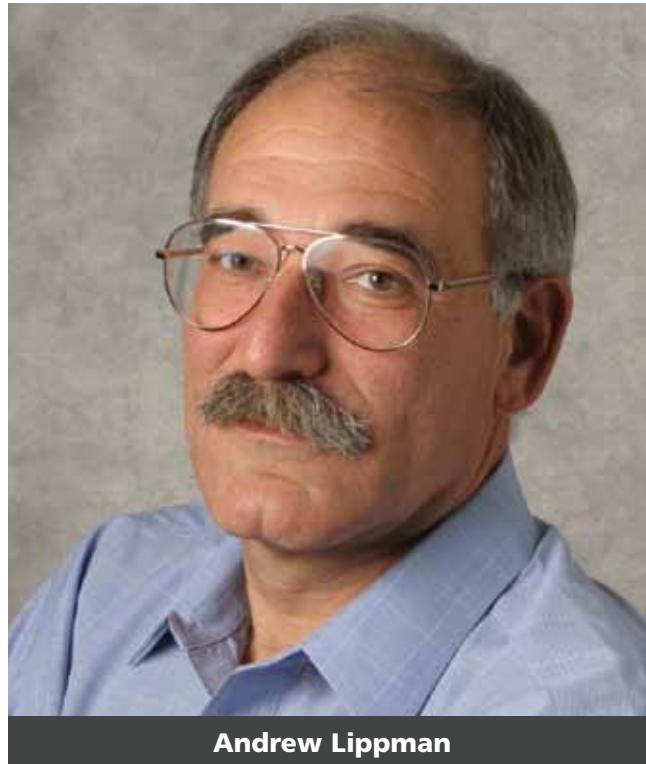
Also keynoting is Adrian Tucker, Chief Technology Officer, Public Sector/ Retail, who spearheaded an 18 month technology transformation for the Department for Education. He will show how the project changed the culture of mobility and ways of working across the department; and discuss the challenges of realising opportunities through new technologies and how the hurdles were overcome. Adrian will also

explain why digital is more about exposing value chains than making business processes faster; and why it's important for technology suppliers to develop a collaborative partnership with customers as a prerequisite to easing the transition to digital.

David Dunbar, Director at Workmodes Consulting, is well known for leading the development of BT's flexible working strategy, and as Head of Digital Workplace and Transformation at Nationwide he was responsible for planning and driving the digital transformation for 20,000 people. In his keynote, David will illustrate why a strong digital workplace strategy is crucial to the success of transforming organisations towards more agile, more flexible workplaces through technology, the physical space and culture.

Future of work

Optimising the workforce through technology is also a big theme for Euan Davis, who leads the Centre for the Future of Work in Europe at Cognizant Technology Solutions. In his Comms Vision keynote session Euan will explore the future direction of workplace digitalisation, how technology providers can help to deliver the future of work, and show why all enterprises must rethink their operations in terms of technology, process and skills



Andrew Lippman

to create value and survive.

Survival is ultimately a matter of leadership, therefore 8x8 will introduce Mark Rhodes, author and international leadership speaker, whose keynote will emphasise why the future success of digitalisation in the workplace is as much about effective leadership development as it is technological innovation. He will explain what transformational leadership means in the more complex digital workplace, and why business and cultural change is imperative and can be achievable without having a negative impact on customer service. Mark will also outline new management skills and offer guidance on creating an organisational culture which together will unlock leadership success at a time of unprecedented workplace transformation.

A key driver of this transformation is the rise of SD-WANs and their impact on the UK ICT market,

which will be disruptive and seminal, says Mark Lewis, EVP of Products & Development at Interoute. In his Comms Vision keynote Mark will highlight the power of SD-WANs to digitally transform businesses, and shine a light on how giving CIO's what they want with a SD-WAN strategy will create new business opportunities for the partner channel. Mark will also outline where SD-WAN fits into the next generation of IT infrastructure – the new Cloud Fabric.

Gamma CEO Bob Falconer will elaborate on why digital transformation starts with the channel partner, and discuss how the channel can more effectively expand on its capacity to foster customer ties and derive greater margin, value and differentiation from innovative real-world network-based solutions.

Building on this strand, Steve Best, Managing Director for Product Management,

Strategy and Regulatory Affairs at BT Wholesale, will explore how resellers can successfully become a competing force in the new digital enterprise. He will discuss how the channel can respond most effectively to the new ICT ecosystem and on-demand world, driven by the rise of M2M, the IoT, growth in bandwidth, and new technologies such as NFV and SDN.

Digital Britain

CityFibre, the disruptive infrastructure builder, and Entanet, the channel-centric connectivity wholesaler, are united by their shared vision on the essential role of full-fibre in serving the growing needs of the digital workplace. In their session, CityFibre Director of Strategy Mark Collins and Entanet CEO Elsa Chen will rally the channel to embrace the power they have to deliver full-fibre at scale and ultimately help to make Digital Britain a reality.

Comms Vision's enlightening line-up of keynote speakers and panel sessions embrace all of the key elements that make up the overriding theme at this year's conference – 'Workplace and customer experience – Redefined for the digital age'. "We will explore the trends that are currently shaping and redefining the digital workplace, and examine the role of the partner channel and service provider community in bringing workplace and customer experiences fully into the digital age," commented Stuart Gilroy, Comms Vision Content Lead. ■

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

UC: Truly unified by 8x8

The way we work is changing, and the only future-proofed solution that enables today's and the future workforce is a 'true' UC platform, writes Charles Aylwin, Director for Channel, 8x8.

Already, just under half of workers say flexible working arrangements and a work-life balance are the most important benefits companies can offer them. And millennials say the ability to work remotely is one of the top three perks they consider when evaluating a job opportunity. By 2020, this generation, along with Gen Z, will make up 50 per cent of the workforce.

As the workplace changes forever, so the way we communicate is changing. It's impossible to collaborate quickly and give good customer service when telephony, messaging, video conferencing or contact centre teams are all sitting in isolation from each other. This breakdown in communication means that valuable data and customer insight is not being shared across the organisation. All of this slows down speed of resolution and time to revenue.

Truly unified communications

For us, it's not just about cheap phones in the cloud. This misses the point. It's about helping companies to move from working in individual silos to a truly unified communications system, moving time to resolution from hours to just minutes. That's why we talk about truly unified cloud communications. One single unified platform, easy and simple to use,



Charles Aylwin

so our customers can maximise every connection and their employees can communicate in whichever way suits them best.

We offer truly unified communications to make it easy for organisations to communicate, collaborate and engage with employees, partners and customers. One of our biggest strengths has always been that we own and develop

all our technology, which means we can respond quickly to an ever-evolving market. Our partners and customers trust us to deliver transformational projects and it's no surprise that we have been named a Gartner Magic Quadrant UCaaS Leader for six consecutive years.

We're growing fast

We've been growing strongly in the UK with 114 per cent growth through the channel

in the last financial year. This year we're seeing a similar story. We now have more than 200 staff working in offices in Aylesbury and London, and last year we opened our new flagship office in the Relay Building in London. Of course, we can't continue our exciting rate of growth without the support of our partners. This means expanding our partner reach and continuing to invest in our

flagship partner programme to make sure our partners continue to be the best supported in the industry.

Our partners are vital to this growth

I'm particularly proud of our channel programme that has been in place since 2006. Last summer, we refreshed it to give partners of all sizes access to marketing funds and support. It's the first in the industry to offer marketing support that includes PR and Fast Track Funding. Designed in response to partner demand, the programme builds on the 8x8 Academy, a highly rated educational resource that ensures partners have the best tools to understand and sell 8x8's portfolio of products. It includes classroom courses and on-line technical sales and marketing resources. Resellers must educate themselves and we give them the support they need to keep up to date. Just as importantly, we help them understand the issues and challenges their customers face and how they, as partners, can add value.

The channel is an integral part of our business and fundamental to our growth. We have a big focus on channel enablement, with different models: Distributors, wholesale partners, dealers and affinity partners. Along with our channel partners, we're looking forward to bringing truly unified communications to more businesses across the UK. ■

Truly unified cloud communications

At 8x8, we want our channel partners to succeed. That's why we've always gone above and beyond to ensure they are the best rewarded, best trained and best supported in the industry.

We offer a comprehensive partner programme that provides industry leading training, a portal that is rich with content, as well as support from our channel team whenever you need it.

Partner with 8x8 - A Gartner Magic Quadrant leader for the last six years.

To find out more about partnering with 8x8, visit 8x8.com/uk.

Strength in 'difference'

It doesn't matter how old you are or how long your business has been around, we are all millennials now. By that, we mean we all have to become digital natives, such is the scale of change we are facing. Telecommunications services are now starting to touch everything around us – every industry. We are increasingly used to seeing this in the home, with digital TV, remote controlled heating and a growing range of Internet-enabled devices. According to research from Deloitte, 92 per cent of the population own a smartphone. Broadband is becoming a necessity. According to Ofcom, the total number of fixed broadband connections increased to 25.3 million in 2016, driven by growth in the number of fibre and cable broadband lines.

All this growth and shift to cloud-based digital services has already changed the way we live and communicate, and it's going to keep accelerating. In the telecommunications industry we have been aware of change for many years now, initially triggered by voice and data convergence. With the Internet of Things (IoT) and increased Machine-to-Machine communication this change is dramatic. Telecommunications services are becoming the most critical piece of infrastructure on the planet, as organisations of all shapes and sizes increasingly rely on data from devices to make decisions, or even save lives.

Helping resellers focus

This is why we have invested heavily in R&D, developing solutions that help customers develop, deploy and manage services that take advantage



Steve Best

Here's how BT Wholesale continues to evolve and turn heads with innovation and future thinking for an on-demand world, by Steve Best, Managing Director for Product Management, Strategy and Regulatory Affairs.

of new technologies. Whether it's working in smart city development or logistics, we have evolved into a business that can not only provide the backbone – the traditional voice and data services that partners and customers have relied upon for years – but also new technologies and forward-thinking innovation.

We are supporting customers on their own transformational journeys, helping them cope

with the insatiable demand for bandwidth, and also working as an outsource partner where they can take advantage of our ability to scale, our range of wholesale and hosted products and services and of course our resilient network and ongoing innovation. Our professional services can help resellers navigate the challenges of modern business and drive efficiency through the outsourcing of complex operational activities

allowing them to invest in areas which drive customer acquisition and growth.

Cutting edge technologies

Clearly, part of this support is providing the latest technologies that can help resellers' and their customers' transition smoothly to products and services that will enhance their own businesses. Technologies such as Software Defined Networking (SDN) and Network Functions

Virtualization (NFV) are changing the way in which businesses of all sizes access fundamental voice and data services. By developing an evolution from traditional and expensive hardware to more virtualised infrastructures, BT Wholesale is at the cutting edge of modern business.

NFV in particular will prove to be a real game changer, replacing many bespoke hardware devices at the edge with a common hardware platform for resellers to deploy their application software. SDN will also drive new opportunities in the market offering businesses fluid and dynamic data and bandwidth management that meet the ever changing need of the enterprise.

These cutting edge technologies are not just nice-to-haves either. The on-demand economy is changing the face of modern business, so we have to develop infrastructures that cannot just cope but can help businesses thrive. The whole ICT ecosystem is changing. It's no longer about just voice and data. There is convergence within infrastructures, which can be complex and challenging and expensive if you get it wrong.

This is why BT Wholesale is evolving, innovating, solving problems and developing new ideas that will help our partners flourish. We are different, more so than ever before and that's a strength. Given our scale, our incredible range of products and services, our depth of knowledge of fixed and mobile networks and our ability to continually innovate, we believe we are the partner of choice. ■

A woman in a pink dress is running on a rocky beach towards the ocean. She is holding a large bunch of red balloons. The background shows a clear blue sky and the ocean. The text is overlaid on a purple rectangular background in the upper right corner.

We don't stand still

We're constantly improving our services and adding more to the mix so your customers can enjoy evolved services, new technologies and move to the next stage of communications. We don't stand still. We make it possible.

Find out more at
www.btwholesale.com or
call us on 0800 671 045

BTwholesale

Catch the Cisco Spark

We collaborate more than ever before in the workplace.

More people, in more places, are being asked to do more things together. And quickly. We need to create, share, meet and communicate all the time. So, as knowledge workers, you – and your customers – know we spend on average more than a third of our working days in meetings. According to a recent study by Harvard Business Analytics, almost three in four executives believe that effective team communication is the number one driver of business success today.

But (and it's a big but) collaboration technology in the workplace is still playing catch-up. Many businesses commonly have a mix of solutions from multiple vendors for their collaboration needs. Yet more often than not, the technology falls short – antiquated phones, poor audio, mediocre video, joining issues – then once the meeting is over, ideas die without any record or follow-up.

At Comms Vision 2017 we will show you a better way. A way to take the misery out of meetings and conversations mediated by technology. A way for people to create, share, and get work done at speed and with quality. Sometimes even without needing to 'meet'. A way to bring out the best in people and a way to change that people work.

How would you like to play a role in that?

Cisco Spark allows people to create, share and get things done together in one space.



Andy Brocklehurst

How to create, share and get things done together in one space with the ground breaking Cisco Spark collaboration tool: By Andy Brocklehurst, Head of Collaboration, Cisco EMEAR.

It connects the physical and virtual. Teams who use Cisco Spark have fewer meetings and when they do meet, they're more productive. They discuss the meeting agenda, post meeting comments, follow-up action items or notes from the meeting in the same space. They draw and share documents on the Cisco Spark Board, whether participants are in the physical room or not. They add people to meetings or spaces in real-time so they can contribute and innovate when the good ideas happen. Remove the pain from meetings. Enable true teamwork. Simple to use, secure, comprehensive and affordably priced. This is the promise of Cisco Spark and the Cisco Spark Board. And

what is the promise for you as partners who bring this to life for your customers?

Lead the transition

Solving a customer's needs and pain-points with the right answer is bound to bring you a trusted advisor status, earn you high credibility and establish you as a technology partner – particularly with the lines of business who increasingly own or influence technology purchases, above and beyond IT departments, or to small and medium companies looking to understand the best paths to growth in the digital future.

Recurring revenue

As customers move from capex to opex spending models, this leads to the

adoption of subscriptions models for purchasing technology. Companies now want to pay as they consume, not upfront and move from expensive hardware to cloud-based software and services. This enables the partner ecosystem to create and capture value as they provide better, faster and more affordable services to their customers.

Add your value through integration, knowledge and adoption

It is crucial that collaboration technology aligns to workflows and business processes. Through our open APIs and business application integrations, we create the connection points. Cisco Spark is open

to developers and allows endless possibilities for bots or integrations to automate or optimise tasks. Partners need to go beyond sale and deployment to extend value to customers in the usage and adoption of technology. This should include lifecycle and adoption services to ensure the dream is delivered and users reap every benefit.

Seize the opportunity to grow the customers' share of mind and investment in technology

By integrating video endpoints and IP phones with Cisco Spark in one collaboration platform, we follow our north star of a simple, seamless experience for people to collaborate effectively, not battle the technology. Innovative purchasing and deployment models with subscription offers and flexible choices allow the customer to choose – whether they need on-premise, cloud or a mix of both. Our thought leadership programmes also enable partners to fulfil more than RFPs to become business consultants and trusted technology advisors. Thus, you take your customers beyond the transactional sale to the journey of truly becoming digital businesses.

I hope these are all good reasons to spend some time with us at this year's Comms Vision Convention for a live experience of the Cisco Spark platform and for a deeper discussion on how it enables us to solve real customer issues together. Join us for the Boardroom Sessions to consider all of the above and more. And for the fun part, we'll also be giving away some surprise prizes in every session! I look forward to meeting you there. ■



Create. Share. Do

Space to create, share, and get work done together.

Join us for our sessions and meetings at Comms Vision to see Cisco Spark and Cisco Spark Board in action. Experience the all-in one platform for teams to collaborate.

Learn how to become a Cisco Spark partner and add value to your fast-growing business customers.

www.cisco.co.uk/spark



Full-fibre call to arms

Channel-focused connectivity wholesaler, Entanet, and parent company CityFibre share a passion to deliver widespread full-fibre faster than ever, and not sell a copper service if a full-fibre alternative exists. By joining forces with the UK's most disruptive independent full-fibre infrastructure builder in August, Entanet not only gained joint ownership of physical modern fibre networks across 42 UK towns and cities, it also inherited network design and engineering expertise, a hunger to dig and the funding to do so. With strong full-fibre focused partner relationships already emerging, it's now perfectly positioned as an aggregator of demand for future CityFibre network expansion.

Entanet has long since operated its own extensive network but joining forces with CityFibre takes the business to a whole new level, as Elsa explains: "Our well established network continues to enable us to deliver powerful connectivity solutions using major carriers. However, with CityFibre we gain a new depth of control and agility that helps partners to stand out in the market. If you combine CityFibre's appetite to extend its footprint with the importance we place on channel needs and relationships, you have a new and exciting breed of wholesaler that puts the power to influence and accelerate Britain's full-fibre future firmly in the hands of the channel – without losing or diluting anything that we were previously known for."

To activate this power, it's just about choosing a CityFibre-based Entanet



Elsa Chen

True power sits with CityFibre-Entanet partners who recognise their own vital role in shaping and accelerating Digital Britain, says Entanet CEO Elsa Chen.

alternative whenever it's available, explains Elsa: "By consciously diverting spend in this way our partners not only gain a superior gigabit experience, but typically at a lower price."

Entanet's CityFibre-based products include easy-to-sell wires-only GPON 500Mbps and 1Gbps Internet access, plus a range of managed CityFibre Ethernet services designed to give partners a winning advantage in a highly competitive landscape. "It's this exciting new range of products, the network plans we already have and the opportunity to influence future build that we're inviting Comms Vision delegates to come and learn about in our boardroom and one-to-one sessions," adds Elsa.

Only full-fibre ticks the boxes

Only full-fibre can serve the future needs of the digital workplace, and investment in anything other than this is viewed as increasingly futile. The

Government has recognised the same, reflected in its own recently announced full-fibre build incentives and funding programmes.

"In our daily conversation with partners it's clear that there's no room for anything in the digital workplace that hinders staff and their ability to focus on their core functionality, role and objectives," says Elsa. "Users expect fast and reliable access to data and systems from anywhere and via any device. That expectation is driving demand for faster connectivity infrastructure including full-fibre fixed lines and mobile backhaul."

The keys to full-fibre accessibility

Serving this demand, Entanet has introduced its CityFibre Ethernet products to give partners true differentiation in the market. With Ethernet connections carried across its own network, the pricing for CityFibre-based Ethernet solutions is typically 30 per cent cheaper than alternative carriers.

As well as dedicated CityFibre Ethernet services, Entanet also now offers a range of 'responsibly-managed' shared GPON services. These only share fibre between a maximum of eight business premises – nowhere near the theoretically possible 128 – meaning no ill-effects are ever likely to be felt.

Even with a full-fibre infrastructure in place, contention remains the elephant in the room for many. A network operator may commit to rolling out full-fibre at scale, but if their intent is to squeeze every drop of available margin out of it by contending to a level that's detrimental to customer experience, then innovation within the channel will continue to be stifled. "Contention has become a dirty word as it's often been used by network operators to share out a scarce resource for maximum gain. Used correctly with the benefit of a capacity-rich network though, it holds the key to affordable gigabit speeds for all," says Elsa. "By getting

the balance just right, we're able to deliver exactly that without materially impacting headline speeds. We're so confident that we commit to sort it 'quick-smart' in the unlikely event that negative impacts are ever felt."

Delivering what's promised is more important than ever. Not only are end customers wising up to the language used to describe services, but the Advertising Standards Authority also indicates that only full-fibre solutions will be allowed to bear the term 'fibre' in their description at some point in the future. "Our industry has a responsibility to make the increasingly complex simpler than ever!" says Elsa. "With our CityFibre-based services you know exactly what you're getting. They're fibre all the way, and we're crystal clear about how we build and manage our network. Serving needs at both ends of the demand spectrum also means making fibre available in its rawest form – with no 'ifs', 'buts' or 'maybes'. So, if dark fibre is what our partners want, we'll get them talking to the right person."

Entanet is on a mission to release as many businesses as possible from the shackles of copper by 2020, while bringing down prices, driving up the quality of service and making Digital Britain a reality. Elsa concludes: "As a Platinum Comms Vision sponsor our combined team will be taking to the stage, hosting a boardroom and one-to-ones, participating in panels and socialising like pros! It's a great opportunity to learn about the new commercial propositions we've designed to help every partner accelerate their own full-fibre journey." ■

The POWER'S in **YOUR** hands

SHAPE BRITAIN'S FULL-FIBRE FUTURE

At Entanet and CityFibre we're united in our vision to empower partners to release as many businesses as possible from the shackles of copper by 2020. Simply by migrating existing circuits and/or diverting spend to Entanet's CityFibre-based services, you can accelerate Britain's full-fibre future as well as earn fantastic margin.

We give you greater choice, differentiation and opportunity to serve UK companies with the gigabit experience they need to support and grow their business. Our CityFibre wires-only Internet access and managed Ethernet services are unbeatably priced to give you a winning advantage in a highly competitive landscape.



Let's talk full-fibre at Comms Vision.
Come to our board room session or book a 1-to-1.
www.enta.net

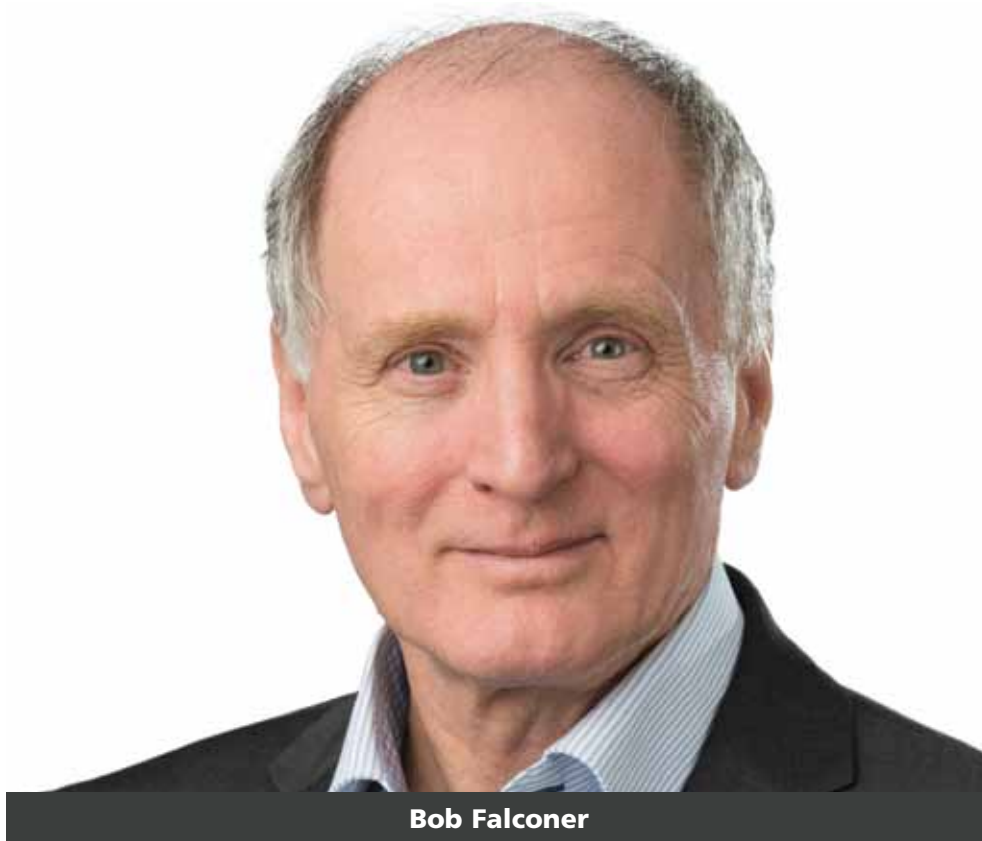

CONNECTING CONFIDENCE®

Connecting experiences

The importance of customer experience has increased drastically in the digital age. Customers now assume that they can interact with a business whenever and wherever they want and expect instant gratification from the products and services they purchase. The room for error that may have existed before the digital transformation no longer exists. Through the introduction of social media particularly, customers now control the conversation by expressing their anger, asking for assistance or praising their brand. In short, customer expectations are high and word of mouth travels quickly.

To cater for customers' increasing demands for a joined up ICT environment, businesses are under constant pressure to have employees work longer hours to maintain the appearance of being always available. However, in today's competitive environment the workplace is more than just providing a space where employees do their jobs. Businesses need to provide a workplace where employees want to come to work. Staff engagement and satisfaction are vital parts of the employee experience and will have a knock-on effect to the customer. Companies are becoming more aware of this and are beginning to change their culture and internal process to ensure employees are working as efficiently as possible.

For many businesses the move into this new digital ground can feel uncertain. The challenge being to strike the right balance between adopting modern,



Bob Falconer

In today's digital world, the most effective way to connect the workplace with the customer experience is through flexible, mobile and unified solutions, writes Gamma CEO Bob Falconer.

efficient digital practises, while still remaining in touch and personable to your customers.

What does this mean for the channel?

The key for the channel is to sell solutions rather than products. The channel has been receptive and quick to embrace the digital transformation particularly in regards to marketing and finance. It appears to have slowed in terms of adopting digital practises to sell, project manage and on-board customers. While this leaves a lot of room to implement new practises, the test will be where not to digitalise. There is a reluctance, and

perhaps for good reason, to substitute face-to-face contact with a video or audio conference to close a deal or on-board a customer.

In order to sell solutions and support customers you need to listen and understand how their business operates and what they want to get out of the transaction. The digital transformation begins with the relationship between partner and customer rather than the individual product. Long-term success in the channel depends on more than product alone. Our view would be that a channel partner must ensure that the transition to any new solution needs to be

smooth. Most businesses are usually looking for evolution rather than revolution. The key would be adding new solutions that give a tangible value, and this puts the partner in a good position to cross sell another product or add to the solution. As we know technology moves rapidly, so 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 and flexible.

Enabling Gamma partners to do better

To produce big results partners need a supplier with the right balance of

price, solutions and support. Without this the relationship can be unproductive, stifled by a lack of expertise and backing. When thinking of new solutions Gamma works to understand the pain points of many businesses and then the technology that can deliver the improvement and the cost structure that ensures it can be delivered at a price point that businesses can afford.

Our aim is to make it easy for partners to do better, providing access to the Gamma Academy for all their training needs, Accelerate for white label marketing material/lead generation, and the Gamma Portal to provision and manage services online. With these tools partners can focus on what they do best – providing excellent customer service and offering clients the right solutions for their needs.

In our boardroom sessions we will be running two sessions – one on Voice and Mobile and how we are bringing Horizon and Mobile together with our new service Connect to bring true fixed-mobile integration. The other session will be on Gamma's new partnership with AWS that makes it easy for channel partners to take Cloud Compute and Cloud Backup services to their customers, alongside Gamma's connectivity services, which help drive that uptake.

Our focus around these solutions will be on three key areas that give practical advice on driving your incremental revenue and margins: Winning new business, growing your existing base, and increasing margins by making it easy to do business with Gamma. ■

BRINGING FIXED AND MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS TOGETHER

Connect, a new solution from Gamma, integrates your customers mobile phone with their Horizon service allowing them to join landline, mobile and laptop communications together and make use of the service's features anytime, anywhere. By streamlining the communication service, businesses can provide their staff with the flexibility to work wherever they are and ultimately improve the overall productivity and responsiveness to customers. With Connect you will be providing your customers with a solution to many of their demands, particularly for mobile workers.



Your customers will benefit from features such as the ability to record all calls (fixed and mobile), present a business number from their mobile and report on all calls made, received or missed across all devices. Connect allows you to increase your margins by taking a greater share of your customers wallet - secure long term fixed line and mobile estate contracts, whilst offering a better user experience.

Connect with Gamma.



Clear. Creative. Communications.

gamma.co.uk

Optimising the network

Not so long-ago networks supporting corporate functions were clearly separated from the Internet. Today, the rapid rise in enterprise services accessed through the Internet, such as Salesforce and Office365, have muddied the waters. Networks are now expected to support business critical Internet traffic as well as the traffic inside the corporate perimeter, simply to allow staff to do their work. These traditional networks were designed to deliver applications from a central data centre, with low latency from each site. As applications move to the cloud, traffic can take an indirect route resulting in poor performance.

Especially in Europe, enterprises face the challenge of many cloud services being delivered from other continents, meaning increased latencies and national challenges around data jurisdiction, business bandwidth access, pricing and quality. Fortunately, networking technology has evolved to tackle this challenge. An SD-WAN solution often takes the form of a small virtualised hardware box which runs its software on generic silicon chips, rather than the proprietary hardware traditionally used for routing. These boxes can be deployed across many sites at low cost and are usually controlled centrally with local customisation available. A box is used to run common networking functions, with added value.

Compared with a router, it can also understand what traffic you are sending and



Mark Lewis

SD-WANs have fundamentally redefined our understanding of networks as fully optimised and configurable business enablers, writes Mark Lewis, EVP of Products & Development, Interoute.

how best to treat the traffic to get to its destination, as well as having firewalls, intrusion detection and more.

Networking between customer sites has generally relied on purpose-built, expensive hardware to manage routing in the wide area network. Making your routing software defined means you can separate network control from the underlying hardware, improving flexibility and gain the ability to customise more of your ICT estate to suit your business.

Does that mean your customers are simply switching one kind of box for another? In a way, yes. Smart SD-WAN solutions are aware of both the source and the destination of applications and treat traffic differently to traditional routers, which are not aware

of the data they carry. Implementing SD-WAN solutions opens many more options for bringing value to your business, including a new approach to support branch office connections which offers simplification and cost benefits, a way to address price and performance issues with connecting to public cloud applications, and the ability to manage multiple types of connections – from private VPN through to locally sourced Internet.

Virtualised services

There are newer, more sophisticated solutions in the market where service providers integrate additional services that are delivered from the same box. These virtualised services can include security, WAN optimisation, choices around using the fastest or the lowest cost route as well as

'Local cloud' on-premises IaaS resource, centrally deployed, but locally used.

Global network and infrastructure providers with mainly enterprise customer bases have accelerated in the SD-WAN space. Their business growth has depended on technology development to differentiate services from incumbents and to disrupt existing models. This is driven from large scale investment in Software Defined platforms, adding speed and agility to deployment models and product offerings. These providers can deliver network, speed of delivery, and choice of technology. They have proven experience in delivering and supporting large scale network and ICT solutions to multi-national companies in local languages. Their networks and cloud infrastructure are optimised for enterprise traffic. These solutions are not necessarily the cheapest due to reliance on third party last mile connections. They may also not offer a wide portfolio of complementary professional services.

Multi-national network and infrastructure incumbents are increasingly partnering with, or acquiring SD-WAN vendors. These companies will offer extensive professional services, often strongest in their countries or regions of incumbency, where they also serve large consumer customer bases.

Resellers should be aware: The customer challenge is often technical and operational. SD-WAN can break the boundaries of their traditional business units and networks. A lack of both technical and

operational integration within the business may result in inefficient and inflexible connections. Network traffic may not be able to leverage multiple access networks and adapt as conditions and demands change, but rather is bound to just one. This doesn't prevent SD-WAN from working, but could limit its value. They may also be inflexible with 'Bring Your Own Internet' solutions as last mile services can form a valued revenue stream.

New entrants are challenging traditional vendors and service providers. Their technology is cutting edge but they can struggle under the weight of direct customer expectations for operating a sales channel in multiple languages as well as Enterprise grade SLAs, and leave buyers to work out optimisation of their underlying infrastructure.

Deploying devices from these vendors across Internet access you buy from a generic service provider will be reliable in that it will connect you. But, one of the many service providers in the Internet supply chain might decide to vary their routing and send your traffic the long way around in your country, on your continent, or across the planet. This can result in vast variations in latency and unreliable and potentially unworkable performance for customer applications.

IT and applications today are often much more geographically diverse than their user base, SD-WAN is helping make the network simpler to configure and control centrally. It also offers more variability in costs and access points, without sacrificing performance. ■

**MORE POWER
MORE PERFORMANCE**



INTERROUTE SD-WAN

OPTIMISE NETWORK TRAFFIC
MORE POWER AND CONTROL

ACCELERATE YOUR GROWTH

It's all about growth

Charles Dunstone, one of the most successful telecoms entrepreneurs the UK has ever produced, has staked his reputation on TalkTalk's growth – and it's going to come from the channel, writes Richard Thompson, Director of Partners, TalkTalk Business.

Back in April 2017 Sir Charles Dunstone, TalkTalk's returning Executive Chairman, stood in front of City investors and told them about TalkTalk's future, and that the coming financial year was all about growth. Not that surprising you might think. Nobody that owns a business wakes up in the morning and says, 'You know what, today we are going to stagnate and earn less money'. But investors sat up and took notice because when one of the most successful telecoms entrepreneurs, with a track record of disruption and growth, stakes his reputation on doing it once again, you know that exciting times are on the horizon.

Of course, we all know that telecoms is a challenging market to operate in. It's

highly competitive, with margins that can be tight, and where the next wave of innovation can make or break a business. But one thing is for sure, the cloud, IoT, communication and collaboration, and virtually every other tech revolution that's taking place or coming over the skyline, relies on a world class network. That's TalkTalk Business' strategy for the channel – creating high-performing, reliable, affordable connectivity, from which TalkTalk Business, our partners and our customers can build our futures upon. If TalkTalk Business and our channel partners execute this well, we will all be rewarded with growth.

Personally, I'm incredibly excited that Charles will be attending Comms Vision 2017 because the partners I love working with will get



Charles Dunstone



Richard Thompson

to meet my organisations' dynamic Chairman. During his 'fireside chat' on the 9th November, the audience will hear about how a humble business idea, executed with creativity and determination, led him on a path to The Sunday Times rich list. They'll also meet a man who is still as hungry for success as ever.

Perfect timing

Having recently become more hands on with the business, the timing of Comms Vision is perfect. It allows Charles to meet the partners who continue to be the growth engine of TalkTalk Business. It gives him the opportunity to understand your business and how this is intrinsically linked to our mutual success.

If we are collectively going to succeed then we need to be adding great value to our customers' business. That can't be done by providing legacy connectivity

services which may have worked well last year, but don't support businesses in the foreseeable future. We must keep innovating.

As you hopefully are aware, TalkTalk operates one of the largest Tier1 networks in the UK, with the performance and resilience necessary for businesses to stake their future on it. We often refer to it as Next Generation because it's an all-IP network that doesn't have a lot of the legacy technology other operators have. But in this industry, Next Generation is the frame of reference that continues to shift. Currently the technology that is advancing that reference the most is cloud.

Sure, 'the cloud' isn't a cutting edge term. It came into common reference off the back of the likes of Amazon introducing Elastic Cloud Compute in 2006 and

Microsoft Azure in 2008. But it has now moved full-throttle into the business adoption cycle, with Ovum in particular predicting over 80 per cent of businesses will become dependent upon it by 2019 in order to run their communications, applications and backup.

But not all connectivity is cloud-ready, therefore software performance, which is the staple part of most businesses day-to-day operations, is slow. They also may not be resilient, with some operators transferring their cloud traffic to the likes of Amazon, Microsoft and Salesforce, through a potential single point of failure.

TalkTalk has invested millions of pounds in our network to optimise it for cloud traffic. We've utilised our network knowledge about routing traffic the shortest distance to create performance, with the maximum number of contingency routes to increase resilience, and we've applied that to cloud traffic. This investment means greater performance from your existing bandwidth, at no additional cost. With hundreds of cloud provider direct-peering arrangements with multi-terabit capacity, we are ensuring that partners utilise a network with robust cloud architecture, and not staking the future of their business to chance.

If you're attending the Comms Vision Convention this month then make sure you sign up to our boardroom sessions to learn more and understand how you can leverage cloud-ready connectivity and over-the-top voice services to significantly grow your business. ■

Just reaching our entrepreneurial best

We've been working with Channel Partners for over 20 years, but like an entrepreneur of that same age, we're only just hitting our most ambitious phase. Likeminded, channel focused, and motivated to grow our businesses together.

Join us in the Barony Room at Comms Vision, or request a 1-2-1 meeting.



The 'One & Only' solution

As a business, Daisy Wholesale is totally focused on helping our partners grow, and in particular, helping them maximise the market potential brought about by convergence. It's a truly massive opportunity, **writes Lauren McManus, Head of Marketing and Communications, Daisy Wholesale.** It's widely recognised that traditional telephony connectivity (PSTN lines and ISDN) are being phased out, and the technology will be fully IP-based by 2025. In addition, there is now a major move to cloud-based telephony systems as end users and resellers alike appreciate the many benefits this type of technology delivers.

In support of this, Daisy Wholesale has been working tirelessly to update and enhance its portfolio of services. These new services have been designed specifically for the channel and to help resellers deliver



Lauren McManus

converged solutions for their end user customers. We now have the latest 'One & Only' suite of services – the one and only services you

need to deliver true convergence. This portfolio today includes mobile, broadband/Ethernet, hosted voice and SIP; and we have a number of other exciting services under development.

Once again, our products come with a raft of 'bests', including best price, best contract term, best licence, best calls bundle, best handset, best portal and best QoS. These deliver what we believe to be the best converged solution for the channel.

In the hosted voice arena alone, by 2020, hosted seats and minutes are projected to be worth around £180 million, or £353 million if hardware, access charges and connectivity are included. The market opportunity is over a third of a billion, with 30,000 new seats available per month in the SMB space.

We can enable your customers to move seamlessly, through a

combination of fully hosted or mixed environment systems, to a platform which allows employees and teams to interact using any device, anywhere. We can even support varied, multi-site environments, whereby teams on the road can keep in touch using mobile devices, and desk-based teams can use our hosted voice platform.

Since the 2014 introduction of the right to request flexible working, it has become even more important for businesses to provide staff with the equipment to work from home, or another location of their choosing. Our One & Only portfolio can assist with this as it enables staff to work from any location.

Convergence isn't something that's coming. It's here today already, so why not speak to Daisy Wholesale to see how we can help you to maximise this market and take advantage of this exciting opportunity? ■



The One & Only converged services portfolio

- **One & Only** Broadband/Ethernet
- **One & Only** Hosted Voice
- **One & Only** Mobile
- **One & Only** SIP

Designed specifically for the Channel

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Funder raises the game

Henry Howard Finance (HHF) funded in excess of £50 million of telecoms equipment for more than 300 partners in the last year alone, writes **Dan Proctor, Commercial Director**. And as the leading independent finance company to the telecoms channel, HHF commits that its financial products are exactly fit for purpose. We provide fast and flexible leasing solutions for PBX, hosted voice and mobile handsets with transaction values from £250 for single handsets.

The HHF platform also offers a range of innovative products and pre-pay facilities to support more complex installations. Our experience in providing extensive credit facilities to our channel partners allows businesses of all sizes to make decisions with confidence, particularly if they are transitioning to a service based model.



Dan Proctor

Earlier this year, Henry Howard Finance is recognised by both the leasing and telecoms industry for the development and implementation of our innovative online leasing portal, known as HowApp. Using the latest technology, HowApp works by providing vendors with immediate credit decisions and generating documentation for customers to complete electronically. Since launch,

HowApp has been successfully adopted by many high profile suppliers and partners, allowing users of their system to manage the sales and leasing process online and onsite.

Users of the portal claim that HowApp has contributed to significantly reduced customer transaction times, up to 90 per cent in some instances. At HHF, we believe that this technology has revolutionised the way that vendors across the channel incorporate leasing into their sales processes. The open nature of our API enables partners to access our services from their own CRM and web shops, meaning that a completed transaction via an electronically signed document can be achieved in a matter of minutes.

HowApp was produced by HH Vendor Finance, the branch of Henry Howard Finance that specialises in sales aid finance to support resellers

in the reprographic, telecoms, security, vending machines and health marketplaces. HowApp can be used on any device, including laptops, tablets or smartphones – allowing sales people to transact lease agreements online from anywhere, at any time. Crucially, the reliability of the system, and our expertise in channel support ensures that both HHF and HowApp are trusted by leading manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors.

HHF offer more than just leading technology and immediate credit acceptances. Our experienced vendor team also provide tailored marketing collateral to support our partners, including telesales resources that willingly undertake sales campaigns on behalf of our vendor partners. Our aim is to satisfy both equipment suppliers and the end customer, and we strive to help vendor accounts succeed and grow. ■

Henry Howard Vendor Finance are the leasing specialists for the UK's telecom market.

We provide fast and flexible leasing solutions for PBX, hosted voice and mobile handsets, and have extensive experience in vendor sales.

Our innovative online leasing portal HowApp provides immediate acceptances and correctly completed paperwork.

HowApp can be used on any device, including laptops, tablets or smartphones – allowing online transactions at any time, from anywhere.

Henry Howard Vendor Finance support our partners with a depth of expertise.



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Contact us to find out more: 01633 415 222 | enquiries@hhf.uk.com

Energy: Vital for business

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 with £65 million under contract, 200-plus channel partners and £6 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 and provide partners



Team Fidelity Energy: John Haw, Simon Payne, Paul Havell

with the support they need to sell energy as an additional product alongside the core business.

Fidelity Energy provides partners with onboarding to the energy market with full industry training and support of desk-based account managers, along with field-based account managers to train partners' sales teams and to engage with end user meetings where needed. Ninety per cent of Fidelity Energy partners have never sold energy before and are

now fully accredited by Fidelity to sell energy to their customer base. 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 the Fidelity Energy channel partner. This makes energy a very sticky product to add to your product line.

With corporate social responsibility becoming more significant within SME businesses Fidelity Energy has launched a fully renewable (Green)

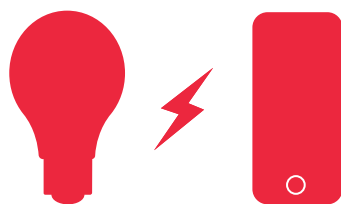
electric offering at no additional cost to UK business users, allowing them to reduce the carbon footprint of their electric usage and give our partners leading edge when selling to their customer base

The Fidelity Energy portal – 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.

Incorporating energy into a unified communication offering not only adds additional margin, it also protects current products from the increasing number of energy companies that are now offering telecoms. Fidelity Energy partners are able to manage their customers' energy needs whilst shutting the door to other suppliers in their customer base. ■

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Matthew Boyce, Cybermo

Fidelity Energy

Energising Our Partners

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Fresh thinking in billing

So you're at the top of your game. Nothing is changing any time soon, right? That's what the folks at AOL, Kodak, and Nokia thought too. You've always billed lines and calls and it's always been profitable, why change? Remember when VHS, Blackberry and fax machines were cutting edge tech? But how can fresh thinking help? Ask Apple, Netflix and Amazon, writes **Wail Sabbagh, Managing Director, Strategic Imperatives.**

The only constant in the telecoms market is change, and change demands fresh thinking or it spells a death sentence to a business – sometimes quick but too often slow and painful. But while the industry has kept pace with the demands of today, billing is stuck in a time warp. Why are so many CPs still struggling with outdated solutions that no longer meet the needs of the channel? Isn't it time



Wail Sabbagh

for some fresh thinking on how you bill your customers? Strategic Imperatives has built a well-earned reputation for delivering effective and innovative solutions that the market demands. We take fresh thinking

very seriously and our premiere SaaS billing platform is born from it.

Legacy billing systems and processes are painful. That is why we have brought our own brand of fresh thinking to this essential but time and energy-hogging area. Our Elevate platform is transforming the billing market into a modern, cloud-based, SLA-driven service. Over the past year we've helped usher in a profound change in how the channel views billing. We've evolved billing away from an out-dated standalone software application to a modern cloud-based service with a fundamentally different relationship to the reseller community.

Billing providers must now demonstrate competence beyond their traditional remit as they become accountable for new priorities like disaster recovery, service monitoring, up-time and on-demand scalability. In

parallel, we're witnessing the demise of purchasing applications, annual releases and multi-year commitments as the subscription model takes hold.

Today's focus is on flexible monetisation of products, services and events, and a shift towards a true subscription model. If your billing provider is still talking about lines, calls and minutes then you're missing out on opportunities and risk getting stuck in a fast-fading market. Customers who've switched to Elevate have said it's freed up their time to develop their business and offer more innovative propositions with greater flexibility. It has also identified revenue loss through incorrect billing and fraud saving them time and money.

Isn't it time you applied some fresh thinking? It's time to check out Elevate, our proven and future-facing billing solution. ■

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The world has moved on from lines and calls.
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Leading transformation

The transformative influence of cloud has brought a massive change in the way traditional IT operates today, **writes Henry West, Head of Partner Sales, KCOM.** Companies are keen to leverage cloud's agility, cost-effectiveness and ease of use, making it a permanent topic of discussion in any size of business. Keeping up with the needs, wants and expectations of customers in this new wave of cloud adoption can be all consuming. That's why the opportunity to attend Comms Vision is so valuable to the team here at KCOM. It allows us to come up for air and get a full 360 degree view of our industry – not only what's working for resellers but also where the technology itself is adding value.

Comms Vision gives us and our partners in the channel the opportunity to challenge views on future strategies and to explore new



Henry West

opportunities for growth. We've been part of this event since its inception in 2006 so we've seen the birth (and sometimes the demise) of many a high growth technological solution. The growth in cloud services however is unprecedented. According to Gartner the highest growth will come from IaaS, which is projected to grow 36.8 percent in 2017 to reach \$34.6 billion.

Sid Nag, Research Director at Gartner, said: "While some organisations are still figuring out where cloud actually fits in their overall IT strategy, an effort to cost optimise and bring forth the path to transformation holds strong promise and results for IT outsourcing buyers. Gartner predicts that through 2020, cloud adoption strategies will influence more than 50 per cent of IT outsourcing deals."

That's a big piece of the pie to miss out on if you don't have strong relationships with the public cloud providers – either direct or via partners like us. Having a clear view of these providers is just for starters. It's not just Amazon any more – Google and Microsoft are ramping up their partner programmes and your customers will want to know about your capabilities with each.

Regardless of the supplier, your customers need a clear and comprehensive view of all their cloud-based estates. No company is 100 per cent public cloud so this will always require a hybrid platform that encompasses cloud services hosted both publicly and privately, configured to its individual needs.

Packaging and selling that capability will be a big part of what we'll be talking about at the Comms Vision convention this year. ■

KCOM

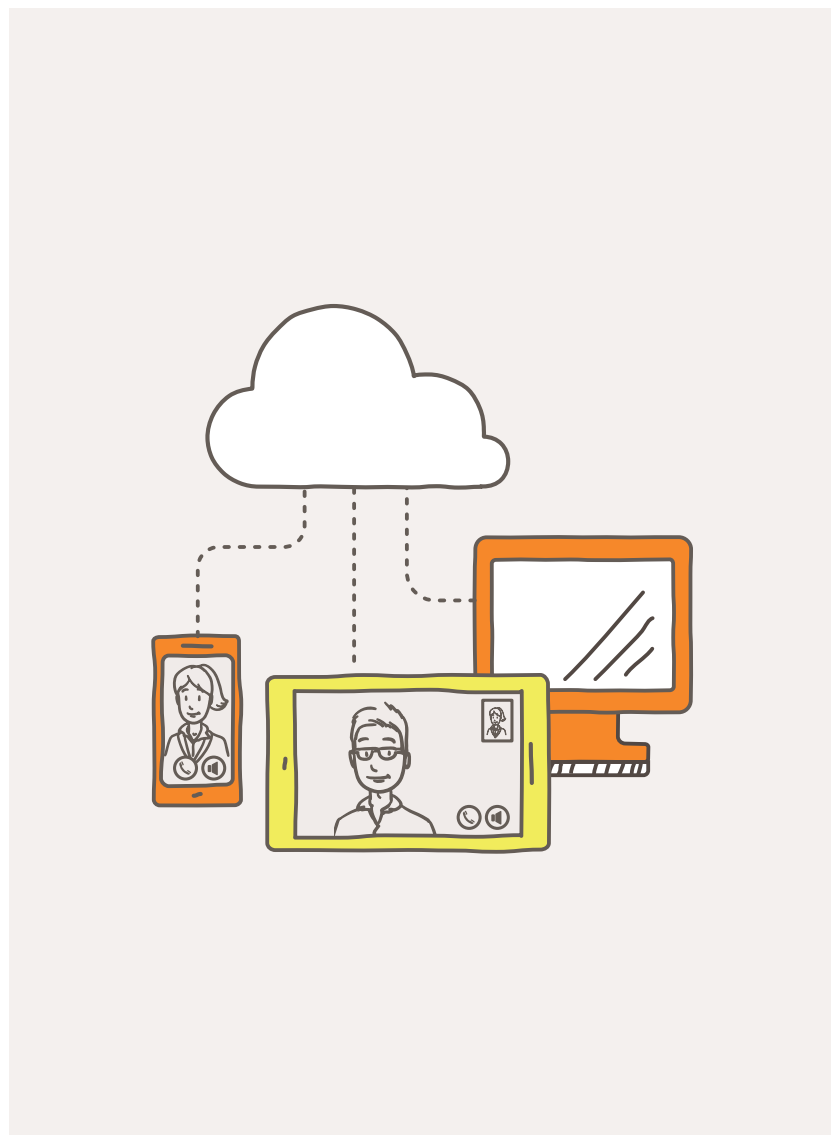
Build your path to cloud

We'll help you expand your portfolio with the right connectivity offering, an effortless call management solution and a flexible hosting environment; getting you and your customers in the cloud with minimal disruption.

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



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More than meets the eye

With a revamped Partner Markets division, Node4 has its sights on channel growth and driving home the message that it is now 'more than just a data centre business', writes **Andy Wilson, Director of Channel Sales**. From humble beginnings, Node4 has grown from a team of three with a small data centre to a multi-site, multi-award winning, and multi-accredited organisation in the hosted IT and communications sector.

Since its establishment in 2003, the company has always retained 100 per cent control over its data centres, core network, cloud infrastructure, and the solutions portfolio that sits across them. It has essentially built a platform from which the business has been able to innovate, diversify and continue to grow. And Node4's growth is now set to propel further into the channel.



Andy Wilson

Targeting mid-market partners that cannot afford the capital investment needed to build their own cloud infrastructure, Node4 is directing their expertise towards providing true sales enablement, giving the channel a new level of support for end users in the mid-market. Looking past the partner and directly into key customer challenge areas, through the 'Hidden in Plain Sight' campaign, Node4 is intent on enabling the channel to

have an end-to-end conversation across the expanse of Node4 solutions. The team is working with partners to help their customers address three main business challenges: Cloud/IT transformation, collaborative workplace of the future, and IT Security.

In the last financial year the business continued with its growth spurt, achieving revenues of £33 million. Crucially, 40 per cent was attributable to its indirect channel. As Director of Channel Sales, I have my sights set on educating the channel on the growth of Node4, demonstrating how the company has transformed from a data centre business to a leading IT provider of cloud based technologies targeted towards the mid-market, based on a proposition – 'channel without challenge'.

We have been discussing our channel without challenge ethos at length,

which means supporting our partners to address the real-life issues their customers are facing and are looking to overcome. We do that through innovative products and solutions, underpinned with market leading technical expertise and support. Too many organisations fail to look at their partners' customers and their challenges, and we believe that will be key to our success. We have been market leaders at this for the last ten years so hopefully our renewed focus within the channel will mean we are no longer 'hidden in plain sight'.

Over the last 12-18 months we have been enhancing the business, and we will continue to do so, through our strategic build and acquisition, as well as further industry insights. We have heavily invested in both our infrastructure and vendor relationships as a business to provide a true channel differentiation across the partner market. ■

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A model of channel choice

NTA is proud to be a sponsor for the first time at Comms Vision. "After my visit to the convention last year as a guest, I was 100 per cent convinced there and then that NTA would be a sponsor at the 2017 event," said Managing Director Paul White. "We will be talking to delegates at Comms Vision about our models and the choices we give resellers when engaging with NTA.

Justin Blaine, Channel Sales Manager, added: "We do not tie our resellers into three or five-year contracts for each customer they sign as we feel that our partners should be free to trade as they wish without tie ins and expensive ongoing recurring fees. This is why NTA has a 30-day rolling contract as standard.

"After extensive market research it has been established that there are now 94 providers in the UK that



own their own platform, my guess would be there is at least another 50 per cent of that figure that white label someone else's platform and sell it to the channel as their own."

The hosted space is a crowded one, for so many it is becoming a race to the bottom. However, it does not have to be that way. NTA runs a series of training sessions for partners, positioning the NTA proposition at the forefront of the sales process and matching these to the requirements of the customer



while highlighting the advantages of hosted telephony to include, mobility, UC, remote working, instant adds moves and changes; as well as highlighting emerging technologies like WebRTC which will be ground breaking for some businesses.

White said: "If this market was all about price, the manufacturer with the cheapest PBX would have been the winner with all resellers over the last 30 years, as that is what end customers required – cheap products. We all know that this is

not the case. However, we have to learn to sell the benefits of hosted telephony and the benefits in efficiency and flexibility like we did when selling PBXs. In today's market, it is about PaaS and SaaS and then the applications that deliver a solution to the customer that other providers cannot or do not understand."

NTA will also show the resilience in its network architecture, the flexibility of the platform – including full API integration, features such as a full UC suite and the roadmap for what is an internally developed platform in-house. NTA also offers outstanding support with their technical helpdesk, account management and training for all levels of staff within a resellers business, regardless of their size.

Blaine concluded: "If all of the above sounds good, wait until we talk about our 'No Per Seat License Fee' and the margins our partners make." ■

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Next gen' collaboration

Collaboration creates unique opportunities for the channel, writes **James Emm, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Oak Innovation**. But it's chiefly about survival of the fittest in a saturated marketplace. Collaboration is about creating a customer offering that is more than the sum of its parts – delivering greater functionality, better value for money and that 'edge' that resellers need to seal the deal.

Product differentiation

Oak always has, and still does, offer call recording and reporting products that work on any voice system. But our new generation of solutions are designed for, and approved by, specific platform manufacturers in accordance with their stringent partnership programmes, in recognition of the added value they create. For the end user, this means greater choice, hassle-free integration and greater interoperability across



James Emm

their systems. For the reseller, it creates a point of difference that may even be unique in the marketplace.

Take Evolve, Oak's award winning contact centre reporting solution. For Avaya, ShoreTel and Unify resellers, Evolve delivers call centre functionality – real-time reporting, agent control and wallboard – at a cost-effective price. Evolve can monitor standard workgroups, making it ideal for a small or informal contact centre, or more advanced ECC groups. It can also

be used to complement proprietary contact centre solutions that don't come with their own wallboards.

Then there's Clarify, Oak's mid-market call recording suite, which includes advanced features such as our quality measurement module, screen recording and stereo recording, plus all the essentials for FCA, GDPR, PCI DSS, and MiFID II compliant call capture. For ShoreTel and Avaya platforms, Clarify uses TAPIwav integration for optimum performance.

Vertical market opportunities

Going forward, Oak is also seeing growth areas within a number of vertical markets, in part through collaboration with niche manufacturers. PatientConnect is the perfect example – a middleware software solution designed to support the specific operational and patient care goals of healthcare providers. It is currently the only solution of its

kind compatible with all three leading patient information management systems – EMIS Web, SystemOne and Vision. Hot off the press, it can now be integrated with Gamma's Horizon hosted telephony platform.

Reseller partnerships

We've always worked with resellers. We now see these relationships becoming tighter and more co-productive. Our expanded executive team are spending more time than ever talking with resellers to inform strategy and product development. Our new Marketing Manager, Ian Bevington, brings 25 years experience and insight from working at Mitel. Comms Vision certainly plays a part in all this by bringing the movers and shakers of the comms industry together. I look forward to forming stronger relationships and the beginnings of new, mutually beneficial opportunities.

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Pragma's winning formula

Pragma is a channel-only provider of Unified Communications, cloud and social WIFI. We have a focus on Ericsson-LG technologies and are working with some of the UK's best resellers to drive iPECS Cloud, iPECS UC and the complementary applications, **writes Managing Director Tim Brooks and Sales & Marketing Director Will Morey.**

We also work with SO WIFI, one of the fastest growing WIFI marketing companies. SO WIFI provides tools for companies to better understand, analyse and communicate with customers in retail, hospitality and leisure, resulting in increased revenue.

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 a strong, long-term partnership. Ericsson-LG



Tim Brooks & Will Morey

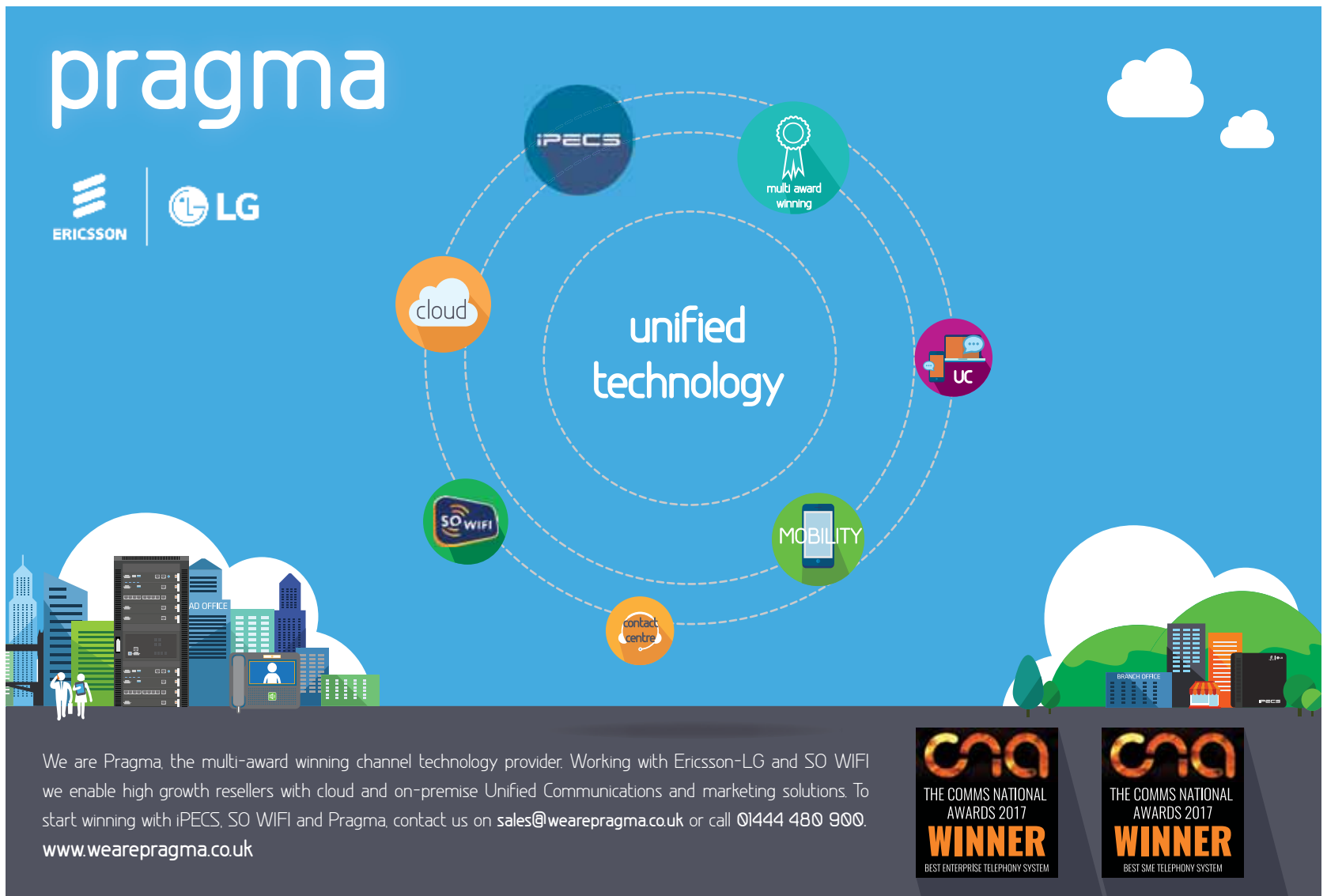
is in the unique position of seeing significant growth across both cloud and on-premise technology. With iPECS, there is a common feature set and handset range across all platforms, allowing the right solution to be provided to fit the customer's needs. All options offer CRM

integration to over 150 applications, ical reporting and analytics, and with the cloud you have the added benefit of a user-friendly portal. The latest innovation is the upcoming launch of the virtualised iPECS UCP which will further extend the opportunities for resellers.

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 continues 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 and SO WIFI. 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 and Enterprise platform of the year, as well as being finalists for numerous cloud awards, Ericsson-LG is proving that innovation and reseller focus are key to success. ■




The diagram features the Pragma logo at the top left, with Ericsson and LG logos below it. A central circle labeled 'unified technology' is surrounded by several icons: 'iPECS' (top), 'multi award winning' (top right), 'UC' (right), 'MOBILITY' (bottom right), 'contact centre' (bottom), 'SO WIFI' (bottom left), and 'cloud' (left). The background includes a stylized cityscape with buildings and a 'BRANCH OFFICE' sign, and a 'HEAD OFFICE' sign on a server rack.

We are Pragma, the multi-award winning channel technology provider. Working with Ericsson-LG and SO WIFI we enable high growth resellers with cloud and on-premise Unified Communications and marketing solutions. To start winning with iPECS, SO WIFI and Pragma, contact us on sales@wearepragma.co.uk or call 01444 480 900. www.wearepragma.co.uk



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WINNER
BEST ENTERPRISE TELEPHONY SYSTEM



THE COMMS NATIONAL AWARDS 2017
WINNER
BEST SME TELEPHONY SYSTEM

Value in VoIP distribution

Distribution isn't just about shipping products, it's about enabling partners to access the products they require at a great price, from a team who are able to offer support and understand each individual partners' requirements, **writes Darren Garland, Managing Director at ProVu Communications.** Established in 1999, ProVu has become one of the UK's leaders in VoIP hardware distribution. Our mission is to ease the delivery of CPE. This is something we are committed to providing and strive to offer the very best service to the channel.

With this in mind, we were quick to identify that the best way to serve our reseller and service provider partners is to equip them with the tools and support they need to take control of their orders pre and post deployment. This led us to develop a range of value added services which



Darren Garland

wrap around the products we supply. Through our award winning reseller portal, ProSys, reseller partners are able to access four key tools

including online ordering, automatic provisioning for phones and routers, remote management of devices post deployment and an API integration tool to enable our partners to link their systems with ours.

We understand that everyone's system is unique, therefore we often work with our partners to build custom APIs to enable them to create a seamless ordering process that works for them and their customers.

For over eleven years we have been developing our systems to provide the channel with the tools they truly require. Our partners are at the forefront of everything we do and we are fast to respond to their ever changing requirements. With 43 per cent of our team in technical-based roles, we pride ourselves on our technical expertise. Our vast product portfolio comprises over 1,800 items from all the major vendors. Along

with a wide variety of SIP phones, we also supply routers, network switches, door-entry solutions, SBCs and software licenses.

We continue to grow year-on-year, but know there's much more potential out there! During 2017, we have worked hard to continue to bring the latest VoIP innovations to the channel and further develop our services. Our most recent developments include the launch of our TR-069 Router Provisioning Server, enabling us to ship routers direct to site ready to work automatically out-of-the-box and the addition of our new DECT survey and installation services.

We're keen to hear how we can help you simplify your VoIP deployments, arrange a 1-to-1 meeting with us at Comms Vision to discuss your requirements and discover the value we add to VoIP distribution. ■



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Ordering Provisioning Management Integration

Any device, any platform

Harbinger of a 'new way'

Established in 2016, TelcoSwitch is an award winning, innovative and fast-growing company, bringing a new way of doing business to the telecoms sector, **writes CEO Russell Lux**. Our watchwords are innovation, value, reliability and quality. We offer a unique combination of products and solutions that meets the needs of our customers today and tomorrow, works without interruption, has capabilities beyond others, and provides margin for our resellers while delivering cost savings for their customers.

Our leadership team has over 20 years experience in running and building IT and telecoms businesses and we have used this knowledge to revolutionise business communications by providing a unique unified turnkey open standards hosted telephony platform. We take unified communications



Russell Lux

to the next level by providing not only software and hardware, but also support and advice based on years of experience, ensuring a complete telephony solution from start to finish.

TelcoSwitch's core solution is CallSwitch which was recently awarded the Comms National Award for Best Hosted Platform

2017. It is an innovative telephony platform specifically designed to be intuitive and simple, making communication effortless from installation through to operation.

CallSwitch comes in three varieties, depending on the end user requirement. CallSwitch Business is our comprehensive, full feature set platform providing advanced call function capabilities to all. It allows for CRM integration and includes the CallSwitch for Desktop Application. CallSwitch Lite is a scaled down version of CallSwitch Business, built for small businesses who want quality and ease of use without paying for features they do not want or need. It includes a Mobile App for both iOS and Android so users can always be reached. And CallSwitch Contact Centre uses standard call routing features from the main CallSwitch product but with additional levels of management

and control to produce complex and measureable call handling and agent performance data.

Resellers need a partner who is willing to understand the needs of their customers and in turn give them an end-to-end solution that makes them stand out. The channel community has demanded a cloud telephony specialist provider and by offering a truly flexible solution they can now be confident to say yes to users when they ask for particular functionalities.

However, differentiation alone isn't enough, which is why we underpin our solution with practical support and ongoing investment in our partner relationships to ensure their organisations flourish. We work hard on our onboarding process and take the time to gain a genuine understanding of what training and tools our Partners need to maximise on the CallSwitch opportunity. ■


TelcoSwitch

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Best Hosted Platform 2017



Better business for you

At TeleWare, we're guided by one simple principle – we believe that better communications create better business, **writes Nick Reaks, Chief Operations Officer.** For more than 25 years we've been developing solutions that have transformed how many of the world's leading organisations communicate. Our solutions include Teleware Communication Manager (TCM), a cloud-based call management solution; and Intelligent Number, a unique number that can be accessed on any device across the globe. We're also the world's leading provider of SIM based mobile voice and SMS recording for the financial services sector.

TeleWare partners with Avaya to bring personalised cloud to the mid-market
ACS Select, the next generation of the Avaya Cloud Solutions delivery



Nick Reaks

platform has recently launched and is hosted securely on the BT Wholesale network. The service enables mid-market organisations with legacy on-premise and complex integrations of multi-vendor solutions to transform their customer experiences, and create the same personalised and tailored cloud experiences which have typically been

the preserve of larger enterprises.

Available through BT Wholesale channel partners, ACS Select will empower medium-sized customers to confidently migrate to the cloud. They will be able to collaborate and communicate on a par with larger enterprises and personalise their customer experience across voice, video, messaging and customer contact applications, all via a single platform. With the addition of fixed and mobile recording plus Skype for Business voice and IM recording provided by TeleWare, financial services customers will be able to demonstrate recording compliance with existing regulatory requirements and with MiFID II, which comes into effect in January 2018.

Microsoft Gold Partner
As a proud Gold partner for Communications, OEM and Cloud, we also provide unique technology

into the Microsoft Partner Network. Our Microsoft partnership also delivered the world's first real-time call through Microsoft Azure on 13th September 2016. Followed by another world first on 31st October, as the teams migrated fixed line call recording functions on to Azure. These technological advancements provide tangible, commercial benefits for TeleWare partners and their customers.

Partners are key to our success
At TeleWare, we work with a select number of partners to ensure that we can give them the focus to help them achieve growth. Alongside our expert developers we have expertise across sales, marketing, product management and operations who will operate as an extension to our partners' operational teams. We're always looking for new strategic partners to join our exclusive partner network, so get in touch. ■



Could your business be TeleWare's next partner?

The TeleWare Partner Programme was awarded was awarded the Comms Dealer Best Vendor Partner Programme 2017.

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New revenue opportunities

Race to the cloud is on

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 how it can be delivered, writes **Paul Harrison, Managing Director, the voicefactory (TVF)**. We know more than most that nothing stands still so a solution provider must lead from the front and be agile in innovation and development 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 in the race – and so will you.



Paul Harrison

providers will offer better prices and shiny new features that will be too tempting to avoid, small customers will churn again and again.

Consolidation is happening all around us. Companies from outside the UK are buying UK and European businesses with the smaller providers all but gone in the US. If you grow your business with a focus on the small enterprise you are also at risk to customer churn through increased competition. Similar

We at TVF recognised this some years ago and so our average seat size is 100-plus. We specialise in verticals by delivering the most advanced solutions to fully 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 centre, 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.

Who will win the race? 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 differentiation. 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,

and even then may not get to the table. You will never escape the small business market.

Hosted UC is 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 not a race to the bottom, but a race to the cloud, offering value add and 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 go beyond the cloud and beyond the small business. ■

The race to the cloud is on... and TVF are winning

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Get out in front and go beyond the cloud with TVF

w: www.thevoicefactory.co.uk e: partners@thevoicefactory.co.uk



Streets ahead in billing

The past 12 months have proved highly eventful for Union Street Technologies, writes **Vincent Disneur, Head of Sales and Marketing**. We launched a new cloud infrastructure to host the award winning aBILLity billing platform and achieved certification for the ISO/IEC 27001 standard in data security. In addition, Union Street voluntarily gained compliance with Ofcom's Total Metering and Billing Scheme and underwent a significant business transformation in its software development and support operations.



Vincent Disneur

These changes were implemented to speed delivery of new software enhancements for partners, provide an even better partner support service and ensure partner data is entirely safe and secure. The idea is to keep our partners 'Streets Ahead' of the competition by delivering innovative products and services that are

built on best practice. The changes we've made to development and support, including implementation of the 'Agile' methodology for software development, are already delivering considerable benefits to our partners. As new working practices become embedded into

our company culture, these benefits will increase exponentially.

The past few years have seen rapid growth for Union Street particularly in the sophistication of our solutions. We now provide our aBILLity platform to almost 600 partners and have ambitious plans for continued growth. Our 'Streets Ahead' roadshow (held during June and July across the UK) provided a perfect opportunity to unveil our latest product developments, demonstrate how these will add value and, most importantly, thank our partners for choosing Union Street.

Under the guidance of our dedicated Product Team, Union Street has devised our strongest ever roadmap for enhancing the billing and integration capabilities of our solutions. We're poised to roll out a really exciting addition to our product portfolio. Quite possibly an

industry first, this product is disruptive and will automate a particularly labour intensive data entry process for our partners. It will save our partners a huge amount of time and should be available in early 2018.

In addition to innovative new developments in our product portfolio, we will be expanding the scope of our consultancy and professional services, particularly in the area of bureau billing. Over the past year we've seen tremendous uptake of our bureau service. Our team effectively work as an extension of a partner's business, taking on much of the time-consuming work. Their knowledge, advanced revenue assurance techniques and commitment to best practice ensures compliance and optimal profitability. Further development of our professional services is a significant undertaking, but one that will deliver enormous benefits for our partners. ■

Streets Ahead

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Vaioni's network nirvana

Digital transformation continues to impact businesses with more emphasis than ever being placed on their network connectivity requirements, **writes Sachin Vaish, Managing Director, Vaioni Wholesale.** In order to gain more agility and faster response times many of our partners' customers are rapidly moving their applications to the cloud. Yet concerns around network availability, resiliency and security continue to plague businesses, with the perceived risk of downtime outweighing the opportunity for increased innovation and agility.

Leading the way in Ethernet connectivity, multi-award winning Vaioni Wholesale helps channel partners deliver exceptional connectivity solutions to their customers by focusing on three key areas – **Connectivity Options, Risk-Mitigation and Service.**



Sachin Vaish

Vaioni Wholesale provides channel partners with the largest choice of network options, including The Vaioni Ethernet Network (V.E.N.), our own competitive Ethernet product, while **mitigating risk** and safeguarding concerns around resilience and security.

V.E.N. connects key digital hubs throughout the UK, including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle, to name but a few. Being our network, V.E.N. enables us to build all possible network configurations that our partners require,

additionally we offer a large range of feature rich benefits, including free back-up, free SIP trunking, free monitoring and free QoS.

Alongside V.E.N., we offer **#Pre-Ethernet** connection options within London (UK wide by Q4 2017), including Wireless Ethernet and 4G, **delivered in as little as five working days**, with a seamless transition to your customers primary leased line.

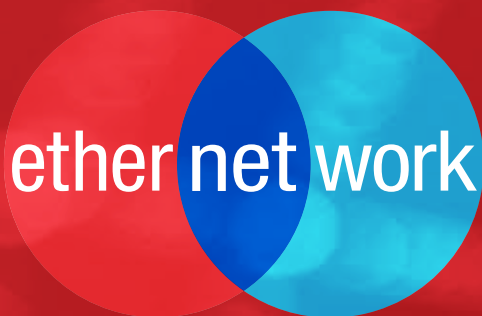
Our **Hybrid WAN** solutions are highly scalable, with access speeds up to 10Gb, **a choice of 7 access technologies**, across 12+ operators, on net with 7 UK data centres and 100% uptime SLA as standard, resulting in cloud-ready connectivity for your customers. "We **mitigate risk of downtime** through building resilient solutions using multiple carriers, technologies and resilient carrier options, all the way back to

our National Core Network, always terminating multi-connection solutions in different NNIs and PoPs, offering true resilience," says Sachin Vaish.

Alongside our Ethernet options, we offer a suite of products to the channel such as SIP through TalkTalk and BT Wholesale, Hosted UC, Hosted UTM security and TierIII+ Colo facilities in London and Manchester.

Our vision is clear, to deliver choice and excellence in connectivity, and our network is at the centre of every product and service we deliver. Recognising excellence and innovation within the channel, Vaioni Wholesale was recently awarded the **Best Fixed Line Network Provider of the Year** at the Comms National Awards in October 2017. Vaioni Wholesale was recognised for helping its partners grow their businesses through the provision of resilient network solutions. ■

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Rise of the Uboss Cloud

Iain Sinnott, Sales Director at VanillaIP, provides insights into the company, its products and strategy... VanillaIP is a leading provider of cloud solutions to the UK channel through the Uboss Cloud. This includes BroadSoft Hosted PBX, Mobile GSM, connectivity and resellers' own services. All elements can be combined into custom bundles to help resellers stand out with a unique offering.



Iain Sinnott

Uboss Cloud: Our Uboss portal streamlines all back-office process, including 100 per cent billing and service automation, real-time reporting and analytics, all with your own service differentiation and branding.

BroadSoft Hosted PBX: We believe our BroadSoft deployment has the deepest feature-set available in the UK, including premium call centre, desktop share, video,

presence and chat. In addition, we have the Unity apps and custom call centre reporting.

Mobile GSM: Mobile GSM, either provided by VanillaIP or the reseller, can now be combined with Hosted PBX for unified IP and mobile user bundles. All calls and recordings from Mobile or IP are logged against the user profile in Uboss in near real-time.

Scale quickly: Uboss features advanced wizards to quickly on-

board new users. Reporting options include P&L and consumption reports allowing customised marketing programmes and discounts to be sent to up-sell opportunities.

Create custom bundles: Simplify the creation of multi-vendor bundles, featuring BroadSoft Hosted PBX, GSM Mobile and your own services. Uboss goes beyond simply provisioning services and allows resellers to productise complex technology solutions into deliverable bundles.

Uboss Htek cloud phone: In a first for the channel, Uboss can now provide a Hosted PBX IP phone that is completely programmed from the cloud. This is a significant development as all directories, logos and button functions come from Uboss, meaning that the end user does not have 'orphaned' buttons on their phone. There is no local intelligence on the phone

and the customer won't lose local settings as everything is pushed to the Uboss Cloud. Furthermore, this level of integration has enabled us to unveil true key and lamp working for the first time.

Branding: Uboss is your product enabler and builds your brand across the portal, IP phone screens, invoices and applications.

PCI compliance: The VanillaIP platform is now fully compliant with PCI requirements for processing credit card transactions over the phone.

Integrated API service delivery: Uboss now has fully integrated and automated broadband provisioning. This totally embeds all the steps required to deliver the specified connectivity service to the customer. Because this is native within the Uboss portal there is no disconnect between provisioning and billing. ■

Meet the team at Comms Vision 2017



Uboss Cloud delivers BroadSoft Hosted PBX, Mobile GSM, Connectivity and Resellers own services, making VanillaIP a leading provider of Cloud Solutions to the UK Channel Market.

Come and have a chat with the team to find out how VanillaIP can 'Solve your Cloud Puzzle'

Dave Dadds
CEO

d.dadds@drd.co.uk
020 8288 1231



Iain Sinnott
Sales Director

i.sinnott@drd.co.uk
020 8288 1267



UK-wide carrier emerges

Comms Vision will mark the conclusion of a standout year for Virtual1, writes **CEO Tom O'Hagan**. In our 10th year, we have evolved from being a London operator and network aggregator to a UK-wide carrier. Over the past 12 months we both announced and executed on our plan to disrupt the legacy carriers. We tackled the channel's frustrations with the existing carrier market head-on, and expanded our award winning network across the UK. It now delivers cutting edge connectivity services to over 180 towns and cities nationwide.

On top of this, while others have been talking about Software Defined Networks, we have implemented the technology across ours and become the first UK provider to offer real-time bandwidth changes. Our partners are now able to increase and decrease the bandwidth via



Tom O'Hagan

1Portal, with changes taking effect in real-time. In addition, over the next six months we will further build on these SDN capabilities to allow our partners to directly control up to 35 different features of the solutions that they provide, again all in real-

time. By giving this functionality directly to the channel our partners can now dictate their own SLAs. And how the channel makes use of this new functionality to create innovation in the propositions taken to market will be particularly exciting.

We have taken further steps to integrate our network with the solutions being demanded by the end customer, and this year has seen a sharp rise in demand for private connectivity to the big public cloud, UC and SIP players. By adding cloud to our UC and SIP exchanges, as well as our online backup solution 1Backup, our network can underpin a vast range of solutions that our partners are looking to offer.

Finally, the introduction of a robust and substantial partner programme demonstrates our commitment to the channel, rewarding our loyal partners with strong commercials and greater service wrap, while providing a clear incentive and milestones to build and grow the relationship.

We are looking forward to catching up with the channel at Gleneagles and being able to share more on these areas. ■



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WebRTC storms market

Comms Vision content is thought provoking on several levels, writes **Voiceflex's Sales Director Paul Taylor.**

New technology is always high on the agenda, including WebRTC (web real-time communications) at a previous Comms Vision conference. At the time, I recognised a great range of applications but was unsure about how they would fit into the voice communications market how anyone could make any money from them. This is no longer the case. Following a foundation of research, design, development and delivery we identified the potential of leveraging WebRTC technology and, once more, Voiceflex is leading the market having launched two new WebRTC applications in the last six months – Voiceflex Visual Attendant (VVA) and Click to Call Me.

VVA enables click to call capability from any website or web page



Paul Taylor

allowing real-time customer interactions. The transition from a web page visit to a real-time communications experience is seamless. The customer is instantly connected to the right person/department as a result of their selection of menu options before starting the voice call. The customer saves time and no longer

needs to listen to lengthy, complex automated attended menus.

Voiceflex's Click to Call Me integrates WebRTC and SIP adding value to Voiceflex SIP Trunks. Customers are provided with a code which is easily and quickly integrated into any email signature or website enabling customers to call directly from the web, eshot or email with little effort. There's no need for customers to dial a number to make a call, they just click to call via a web-enabled device. The call is then delivered via the Voiceflex network as a SIP call meaning no expensive upgrades are required to the customer's equipment.

The applications are easy to use, very much customer focused and you don't need a developer to implement any of the applications. The applications can be enabled on any telephony application and most hosted applications. The benefit

is immediate: It opens doors as it offers a new way to communicate, and most importantly we can all make money from the applications.

Voice calling directly over the web is arguably the last stage in a complete customer experience: We can chat online, request information online, request a call back online, but not until now could we make a call to a company or department directly from a web page. Like any leap in technology it needs several differing forces to combine or allow connectivity to take place, this has now been achieved. Most Internet browsers now allow WebRTC traffic, Apple being the last of the key players to implement support with the launch of ISO 11. WebRTC is turning any web-enabled device into a voice communication device and will change the way we communicate. It's set to take the market by storm. ■



SIP

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WebRTC

Enhancing your website with real-time communications



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Find out more, come and see us at Comms Vision 2017

sales@voiceflex.com
+44 (0) 20 3301 6000

voiceflex.com



It's time to find your Zen

At Comms Vision this year we look forward to telling you all about what makes Zen different, writes **David Hudson, Managing Director, Zen Wholesale**. We are often told by partners that they didn't realise how large we are, how broad our product portfolio is and just how capable our network and team of experts are. Our success over the last 22 years reflects our evolution from a small ISP to the UK's fifth largest (and largest independent) carrier. With an operational footprint exceeding 450 employees, a state of the art national network, 400-plus LLU exchanges, a purpose built data centre and a broad, deep technical resource of knowledge in-house, our £60 million business is experienced, capable and committed to making a difference in the channel and wholesale markets.

Our portfolio has been developed with care to ensure that our



David Hudson

customers' demands are met while our reputation for service excellence is maintained. In today's technology-driven market, we can provide our partners with a safe pair of hands and a personable, consultative approach to the services their customers demand. Complex or simple, Zen's solutions are designed at every level to support your business and its customers.

So, whether it be IP VPNs, ultrafast connectivity (FTTP and G.fast), or cloud and hosting one day, and hosted voice, WLR and SIP the next, partners can be assured that Zen's approach to supporting your business can really make the difference you seek. We're here for you, to provide the right products and services for you and your customers. Your success is our priority. After all, what hasn't changed over the last 22 years is our values, ethos and way of working that sees us continually recognised

for service support excellence by customers and industry panels alike.

We have invested heavily in our network and business to create an infrastructure to support partners, and their customers, through a connectivity revolution. As demand for bandwidth continues to grow exponentially as more and more business moves to the cloud, and as ultrafast moves into the mainstream, we have the infrastructure, the skills and the resources to make that transition seamless for you.

Our long-term focus on happy staff, happy customers and happy suppliers makes for a stable, long-term business plan. And our partners flourish and share in the benefits of this 'way of working' that makes Zen the success it is today – all summarised by our watchwords, 'Find your Zen – Connecting people to make life and business better'. ■






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Ready for GDPR or not?

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is fast approaching but many businesses are still not prepared for the changes required to comply with the new regulation, writes **Katie Sloan, Marketing Manager at Fidelity eLearning**. A recent survey by the Institute of Directors (IoD) revealed that a worrying number of companies across the UK are still not aware of the costs, complexities and responsibilities associated with the new rules. The survey of almost 900 members showed that nearly a third of company directors have not heard of the GDPR, while four in 10 didn't know if their company will be affected by the new regulations.

The new rules will redefine the way companies handle data and will include tougher punishments for those who fail to comply. Is the potential fine of up to 20



Katie Sloan

million euros or four per cent of your annual turnover worth the risk of not investing in preparing your business and your employees? While many companies have opted to engage costly external consultants, a key factor of any organisation's GDPR compliance is staff awareness and education.

A very simple way of doing this is to provide all employees with an Introduction to the GDPR, the

latest online course provided by Fidelity eLearning. Deploying this course across your organisation can avoid fines for non-compliance through ensuring all members of staff understand the requirements under the new regulation, as well as avoiding reputational damage.

The programme provides a cost-effective solution to ensuring that all staff understand the regulations that are set to fundamentally change the way organisations store data and personal information. It can be deployed for existing employees or as part of an induction process, delivered through e-learning so that you have no additional technology, course attendance or integration costs. It will equip them with the knowledge of the principles, roles, responsibilities and processes under the GDPR.

For businesses looking to support their customers even further and

drive new digital revenues, Fidelity eLearning offers over 500 courses in more than 50 subject areas.

Channel partners can assist customers with other compliance regulations such as health and safety. Fidelity eLearning partners can help to close growing skills gaps, provide tools and support in-house growth without expensive external recruitment. There are courses to complement existing communication businesses such as Microsoft Office packages, as well as sales techniques, cyber security, accounting and project management.

Preparing for the GDPR is a must for every business storing, handling or processing personal data. This course is an easy and necessary first step on the journey. Reduce your organisation's risk of non-compliance, assist your customers to do the same, and create your own new digital revenue stream. ■

GDPR IS COMING!

Prepare your business and your customers now from just £35

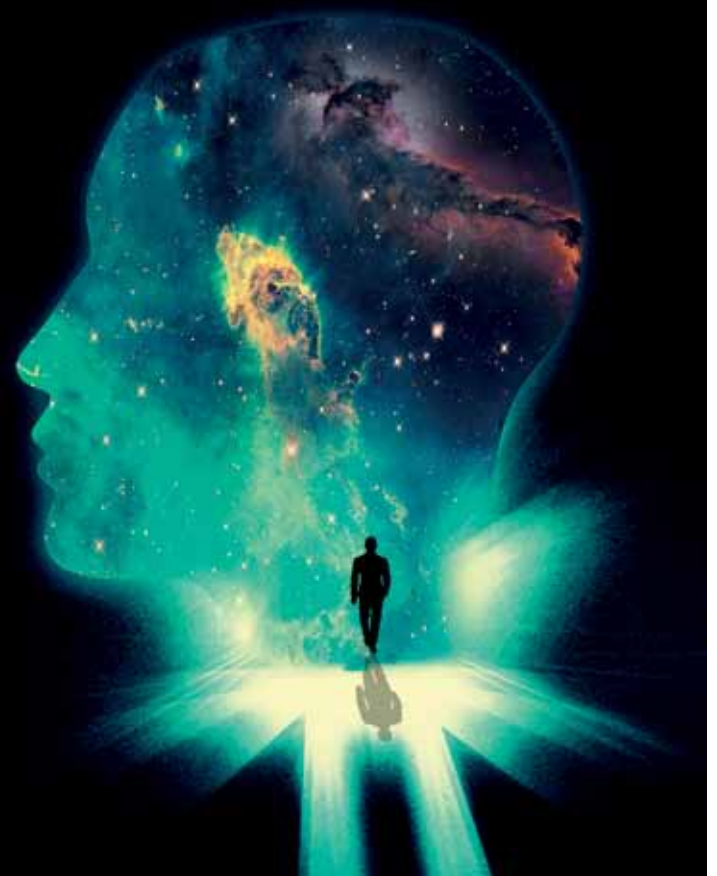
The GDPR is fast approaching and every business needs to be informed and prepared. Empower your customers by providing GDPR e-learning courses starting from just £35 inc. VAT.

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ICT sector funding options

Despite the current economic and political uncertainty the ICT sector continues to thrive and is seen as a relatively safe haven for financial institutions looking to deploy capital, writes **Knight Corporate Finance Directors Paul Billingham and Adam Zoldan**. This means that for those businesses seeking funding, options have never been greater.

Banks, both traditional and the new breed of challenger banks, have finally realised that while ICT resellers in particular are 'asset lite', they have valuable intangible assets (contracted recurring revenues) to lend against. This means that ICT resellers can borrow cheaply without dilution up to a certain level (usually c2 x EBITDA) without having to dilute shareholders.

Mezzanine debt providers allow ICT resellers to borrow a higher multiple in return for a small equity



Adam Zoldan

'kicker' and a higher interest rate. These mezzanine providers probably offer the most interesting options for ICT resellers looking to raise funds but they are less mainstream than banks or private equity and hence can be very selective.

Private equity has been the largest source of funds to the sector over



Paul Billingham

the last five years and we see no sign of this abating. Private equity offers ICT resellers far more scope in terms of use of funds and higher levels of investment, in return for equity and a more involved interest in the business. Private equity sees the long-term value in the sector and recognises the opportunity to complement organic growth with M&A, and

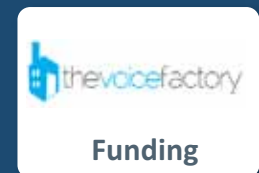
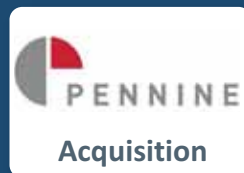
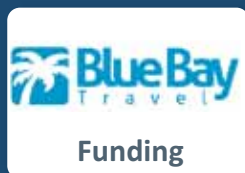
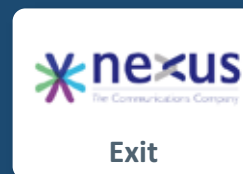
are prepared to back management teams with significant investment.

What's available to your ICT business? This will depend on a range of different factors, including how you plan to use the funds that you access, the size of your business over all, and the level of equity and control that you are willing to concede. In all circumstances, preparation is key. Having a detailed business plan and up to date and detailed financial information is crucial when talking to institutional funders. It is worth investing time at the front end of the process to make a good impression and ensure for an efficient and effective process.

The funding environment is extremely positive for ICT businesses at the current time, and if you want to understand more about the available options talk to an advisor such as Knight Corporate Finance. ■



The industry's trusted advisor



Whether you are looking to grow, raise finance, acquire or exit, contact us to find out how Knight Corporate Finance can help your business realise its true value

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Gain the cloud advantage

Vantage Cloud is the brainchild of a former telecoms engineer who had the vision to build a simple yet highly flexible platform to increase productivity across the UK data market. Inspired by the lack of synergy between business systems and the limitations of existing software, in 2014 work began on constructing one of the industry's most efficient, cost-effective and highly integrated systems. Vantage Cloud enables IT providers and their consumers to fully manage data products throughout the full-service lifecycle in a single and easy to use interface.

The Vantage Cloud workflow builder pioneers a new approach to delivering IT services by enabling organisations to break down their quoting, ordering and delivery processes into digitised workflows. With integration into some of the



Lee Watts

leading CRM and ERP systems, it can efficiently track, process and monitor almost any product alongside existing software and send out alerts when things start to steer off course

Organisations now have the ability to design their own provisioning and quoting processes without having to engage software companies to build them a one off system. "The main problem with commissioning bespoke software is that the development team often have no vision to the

overall objective," said Lee Watts, Director and founder of Vantage Cloud. "Our system has been designed to work specifically with the UK telecoms industry. By using our system, clients get the full flexibility to configure the application to work the way they need it to while being safe in the knowledge that the product is constantly being maintained, secured and development by our team."

To further empower users, Vantage Cloud integrates directly with the top connectivity carriers and wholesalers via API. This makes it the only product that can enable clients to deliver live quoting directly from their providers to their customers while allowing them to keep 100 per cent of their margin.

"Data is extremely important to any business," added Watts. "It can empower organisations to effectively plan and improve their

services to give them an edge over their competitors. In order to keep data accurate, we have adopted the philosophy that information should only need to be entered once. Vantage Cloud works alongside existing software to provide a centralised, fully responsive interface to input and maintain data once."

For Watts, there is no better place than Comms Vision to launch his latest innovation aimed at helping businesses provide a personal value added service to their customers without investing in inflexible off the shelf or bespoke software. "Our strategy is to partner with IT service providers of all sizes and help them to deliver connectivity and cloud solutions," he said. "By empowering our customers to sell and manage more effectively, we aim to support our clients through sustained growth and be on hand to provide our expertise as they evolve." ■

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