



Samsung mobilises wireless revolution with new system P26

Channel by definition: Norton reflects on a whirlwind year P54



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## Regulators forced to split-up

with Openreach but faces tougher regulation  
of Communications published last month.

It is still possible to create more independent Openreach under a regulatory environment. The regulator needs to be on a level but proportionate to the current model and forward a positive proposal that can form the basis of discussions with both the wider industry," he said.

The proposal includes a new governance structure for the regulator as well as a clear commitment.

ITSPA believes an increased focus on service quality will ensure a fairer marketplace while supporting investment in faster broadband services and greater competition.

"We encourage the roll out of new FTTP networks by ensuring competitors have better access to BT's mast and duct infrastructure," commented Eli Katz, Chair of ITSPA.

"But constant scrutiny is required to ensure BT meets its new obligations."

Continued on page 3

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This month's movers and shakers



# BT escapes forced Openreach split-up

**BT HAS escaped a forced break-up with Openreach but faces tougher regulation in Ofcom's Strategic Review of Digital Communications published last month.**

### SPECIAL REPORT

Ofcom has stopped short of forcing the break-up of BT but told the company it must open up its telephone poles and ducts to allow rivals to build their own fibre networks and encourage greater competition.

BT CEO Gavin Patterson (*pictured*) said that BT's poles and ducts had already been available for other companies to use and invest in but with 'little interest to date'. "We will see if that now changes," he stated.

A break-up is still possible if BT fails to create more independence for Openreach under a stricter regulatory environment.

"The focus needs to be on a strengthened but proportionate form of the current model and we have put forward a positive proposal that can form the basis for further discussions with both Ofcom and the wider industry," added Patterson.

"Our proposal includes a new governance structure for Openreach as well a clear commitment on investment."

ITSPA believes an increased focus on service quality will ensure a fairer marketplace while supporting investment in faster broadband services and greater competition.

"We encourage the roll out of new FTTP networks by ensuring competitors have better access to BT's mast and duct infrastructure," commented Eli Katz, Chair of ITSPA.

"But constant scrutiny is required to ensure BT meets its new obligations."

**Continued on page 3**

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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

LET me get this straight. Industry analysts have long predicted the death of the PBX, attributing its demise to a thorough trampling by the long march of cloud-based communications. On-premise kit in the main has fallen underfoot, their embers stamped out by the boot of an all powerful cloud alternative. That's

the world according to current analytical wisdom.

You'd think, therefore, that PBX resellers would hear the army coming and run for the hills in a cloud of dust. But there is a different story to tell. Some are standing their ground. Far from being a story of survival against all the odds, Ericsson-LG's success in the UK on-premise market is significant and flies in the face of many analyst predictions. It's significant because UK sales growth of 30 per cent has been achieved in a market all but written off. True, last month Pragma launched Ericsson-LG's iPECS Cloud system to channel partners, but as a complement to the thriving on-premise portfolio rather than a PBX replacement or first step towards an all cloud future (see page 36).

In another example of staunch commitment to on-premise solutions, Samsung last month launched an alternative to wired systems – the SCM-Compact and SCM-Express, both CPE. Together they address almost all of the market from top to bottom and represent what Samsung hopes will be a wireless-first game-changer for partners. See page 26 for the full story on Samsung's new product offering, which by the way was enthusiastically welcomed by channel partners.

Change is happening, but it takes time and can test the patience of those who feed on change. Analysts can give chapter and verse on the future dominance of cloud communications. But the whole story is a narrative on variety and choice for customers – whether on-premise, hybrid or cloud.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

# Mixed reactions to watchdog's review

Continued from page 1

CityFibre CEO Greg Mesch is upbeat about the recommendations made by Ofcom. "The conclusions are clear," he stated. "To meet the UK's current and future digital communication needs and enable widespread availability of competing FTTP networks, a strategic shift to support large scale investment in end-to-end fibre is required.

"To accelerate this, Ofcom recommends the promotion of investment and competition, and provisions such as the assurance of meaningful access to BT's physical infrastructure.

"The conclusions in Ofcom's report will considerably strengthen CityFibre's capability to drive forward an alternative fibre future for Britain."

TalkTalk Group CEO Dido Harding commended the watchdog but she issued a cautionary note. "Ofcom has done well in identifying many of the worst problems but has produced 100 pages of consultation with little concrete action behind it.

"The risk is that we end up with 10 more years of debate and delays rather than facing the problems and delivering improvements for frustrated customers now."



Ian Fishwick

According to Karl Alderton, MD of Comms Supply, Ofcom's initial conclusions 'don't go far enough'. "If Openreach was independent its profits could be reinvested back into the infrastructure, ensuring that consumers and businesses would benefit from a powerful and reliable digital network," he said.

"But for this to be anything other than a technological pipe-dream Openreach must be completely separate from BT.

"Ofcom suggests that total separation of Openreach, with separate shareholders, is a last resort. But separation should be the starting point if we are to improve telecoms quality for consumers and businesses."

Although in theory there is still the possibility of a BT break-up, Adept Telecom CEO

Ian Fishwick believes that the practicalities of such a move would prevent it ever happening, citing as an example the implications for pensions and how they are paid.

"While the threat of total separation of Openreach is still on the table I doubt it will ever happen," he stated.

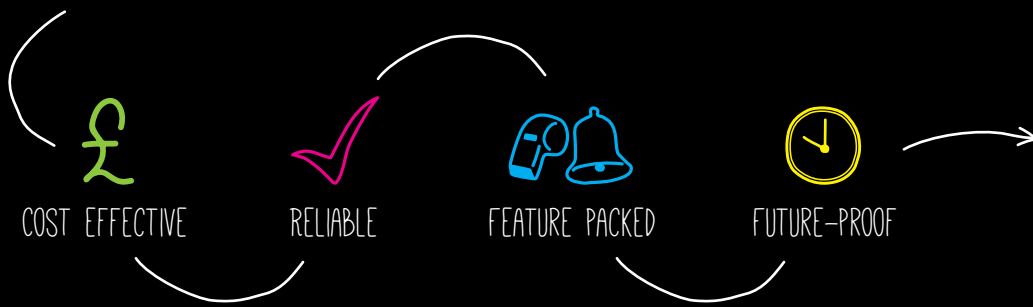
"One of the difficulties appears to be the sheer size of BT's pension obligations.

"There are thousands, if not tens of thousands, of ex-BT employees who worked for the company prior to Openreach being formed. How do you decide who should pay their pension liabilities, a separated Openreach or the rest of BT?"

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COMMENT: A PLACE FOR PRINT



Richard Carter

HOW do you follow the news these days? Television, radio, newspapers or online? Probably a combination of them all. Some commentators are predicting the death of print. However, while The Independent newspaper may have jettisoned its print version I think the death of print may still be a long way off. Consumer habits are undoubtedly changing but for me there's still a place for traditional print-based media.

Many of us like nothing better than relaxing on a Sunday reading the papers with a nice glass of something cold.

At Nimans we now produce our regular newsletter in print and online formats, and it's well received in both versions. Many of our customers prefer to have something on their desk to dip back into when time permits. Others prefer the flexibility of reading on the move with a tablet or smartphone. Obviously, the Internet wins hands down for instant updated news but there's still something very reassuring about a printed document that online can't match.

Live television as well as newsprint continues to come under threat with catch-up programmes via PC and tablets rapidly gaining popularity. It's even reported that large sporting events such as the Super Bowl in America see less people huddled together live around a TV, preferring instead to keep up-to-date with the action via other digital methods.

I'm sure this year's Olympic Games in Rio will see a similar diverse and dynamic way of watching as the impact of technology continues to change behaviour. Fortunately for us all this new way of watching drives an ever increasing demand for profitable data pipes both at home and in the office.

**Richard Carter, Group Sales and Business Development Director, Nimans**

# Gamma poised for major mobile push

GAMMA has released more details around its planned launch of a business mobile service in the first half of 2016 using the core mobile network infrastructure that it acquired in 2014 and has since expanded.

This core network contains all the functionality of a mobile network and is based on the latest Ericsson software build, including 4G, and is capable of supporting emerging technologies such as Voice over Wi-Fi and VoLTE.

The new mobile proposition gives channel partners the same levels of customer ownership and control they have over fixed line services.

Gamma has selected Three to provide the primary radio access in the UK with separate roaming agreements also now in place.

The service will include 4G as standard on all tariffs as well as improved data monitoring with near real-time mediation and billing and more flexible data usage alerts.

With this new capability Gamma believes it is well positioned to help the channel provide increasingly converged fixed and mobile services to the UK business market.



Rob Davis

Rob Davis, Head of Converged Products at Gamma, commented: "We have full control of the mobile service in addition to the control we already have over our fixed voice and data network."

"The ability to work with multiple large carriers coupled with the flexibility of being a channel-focused provider means that the new Gamma Mobile proposition will give our partners the best of both worlds."

"We recognise the importance of mobility in an increasingly converged world and see this new service as a core component and the foundation for Gamma's converged offering moving forward."

"This capability enables us to take our full portfolio of voice, data and mobile solutions to the next level." **Full story on p28**

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**COMMENT: HOW MUCH IS 'FREE'?**



**Clifford Norton**

LET'S consider the true cost of 'free': The market is full to the brim of special offers and price promises – buy one get one free, free SIP trunks, FTTC, first six months free etc – but as the old adage goes, 'if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is'. What is 'free'? Have we been conditioned to believe that the elimination of upfront payments equates to a service being

'free'? In an industry that often gets a bad rap for its poor service, many are doing it no favours by offering an array of these so called 'freebies'.

Whether it's BOGOF, free for the first six months or a free installation, you can bet your bottom dollar that the deficit is made up somewhere, and who ends up footing the bill? You, and your customers no doubt. What does that do for your reputation? I have always vowed to be honest and open in an industry that has a reputation for shying away from such things. Success is rarely a short-term achievement. Often it has to be established over time and built on solid foundations. Providers that promise the world and deliver very little, or hide charges or fees, really aren't in it for the long-term.

Don't get me wrong, everyone loves a freebie, myself included. But a freebie can be like buying a dodgy motor – it looks nice and shiny on the surface but pop the hood and you find a world of hidden trouble. What I urge everyone to do is carry out your research. Make sure you know what you're buying. Find a provider you can trust, you can rely on and has your interest and future success, not your cash, at its core.

**Clifford Norton, Managing Director, Channel Telecom**

SAMSUNG aims to displace market rivals by de-cabling on-premise telephony with a new pure IP wireless phone system (p26)

# CityFibre ramps up partner campaign

CITYFIBRE'S rolling campaign convoy across the UK's major cities is gathering pace following the company's acquisition of KCOM's network (excluding the Hull and east Yorkshire areas), giving it 21 additional metro footprints that are now being prioritised and prepared for launch as new CityFibre Gigabit Cities.

In the line up for a pure fibre alternative to the incumbent are Milton Keynes, Manchester, Leicester, Sheffield, Northampton and Nottingham with more city opportunities in the pipeline. CityFibre's mission is to team up with like-minded launch partners in each city.

"Bristol was the first of the acquired KCOM network-based cities to be launched as a new Gigabit City in partnership with Triangle Networks," commented CityFibre's Commercial Director Rob Hamlin. "We're now looking to replicate a similar city launch partner model across other acquired cities.

"An ideal launch partner is typically a mature service provider with a good reputation and established customer base in or near the project city.

"Knowledge of the local market is important and the



**Rob Hamlin**

provider should also have marketing resource that is available to work with the CityFibre team week-by-week. A strong, established sales engine is also key."

Hamlin explained that CityFibre will help its launch partners to map existing assets/customers plus potential new customers to the relevant pure fibre city network.

This information will then be used to help drive upgrade, retention and run heavyweight acquisition marketing campaigns alongside the partner.

According to Hamlin, CityFibre's launch partners have a rare opportunity to take fresh products to market and attract new customer types by leveraging the media attention and sales leads that result from

targeted, joint local marketing campaigns with CityFibre. "It's about innovating and accelerating our launch partners' business growth," he added.

Paul Anslow, MD of Triangle Networks, stated: "By becoming CityFibre's launch partner in Bristol we've effectively been given the opportunity to not only sell something fresh and innovative directly to businesses, but also to become a wholesale aggregator for other business CPs in our area.

"We're already working with many of our local competitors for example.

"CityFibre understands the importance of a local presence and gives us and our customers an alternative to the previous incumbent-only option."

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# Toshiba withdraws from UK&I markets

TOSHIBA Business Communications Division (BCD) is withdrawing its primary telephony products from the UK and Irish markets in early summer but pledged to continue a tech support operation.

In December last year Toshiba stated that it expected to report a record 550bn yen (\$4.5bn) annual loss and axe 6,800 jobs amid restructuring efforts. The firm also said it had overstated profits for six years.

A spokesperson for the vendor said: "After careful consideration, Toshiba has decided to move its IP Edge and Strata CIX products into technical support phase on the 1st June 2016 for the UK and Irish market.

"Toshiba is committed to providing ongoing technical, licensing and spares support to its partners and customers and is already in communication with relevant parties regarding this decision to assist in their current and future planning."

The loyalty of UK partners to the Toshiba brand has not been repaid with the expected levels of support for five years, believes Colin Hepher, MD of Toshiba distributor SOS.

"This is very disappointing," he said. "There is bound to be a



Stephanie Watson

*"One cannot discount that Toshiba may choose to bring an appropriate cloud solution to the UK hosted market."*

backlash from large companies, county councils and schools to name but a few that have been loyal to the brand.

"This has nothing to do with the financial declarations recently admitted. It's more a question of commitment rather than the fault of Japan."

Toshiba's announcement that it proposes to withdraw the existing Strata CIX and IP Edge from the UK is not unexpected given the relatively small portion (<1%) of market share it has held in the past few years, and its desire to focus activities on areas of greater opportunity,

observed Stephanie Watson, General Manager, MZA.

"Importantly, Toshiba will offer technical support to existing customers and channels, and those customers and channels represent an opportunity for other vendors," she said.

"It's important to note that Toshiba has a much stronger position in the US market and has already introduced cloud solutions in that territory.

"As Toshiba rounds out its global portfolio, one cannot discount that it may choose to bring an appropriate cloud solution to the UK hosted market."

# Mitel reports a strong quarter

MITEL CEO Richard McBee has attributed record Q4 revenues to a solid performance across the entire business.

In its financial results for the quarter ended December 31st 2015 the Canadian vendor reported a 44% leap in cloud business and a significant rise in mobile segment revenues, driven by the Mavenir acquisition.

Overall revenues of \$335.7m were reported, exceeding estimates of \$332.4m.

"The results were particularly impressive in our strate-

gic growth pillars of cloud and mobile," commented McBee. "Our cloud business continued to fuel recurring revenue growth which increased 24% on a year-over-year basis.

"In mobile, we reported 73% year-over-year growth and expanded gross margins. These results lay the foundation for Mitel's ongoing transformation as the market migrates to next generation solutions."

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# TMS gets Sawkins

THE appointment of Clive Sawkins as Non Executive Director at TM Solutions signals a ramping up of the company's growth ambitions.

Sawkins is currently CEO of BCS Global Networks and brings wide industry experience including a background in emerging technology such as building public and private cloud solutions.

His previous roles include senior positions at Cisco where he was responsible for UC, telepresence and video collaboration; Avaya where he was

VP UK&I; Unisys and Nortel Networks. Sawkins is also President of the OVCC, a global industry body for video and unified collaboration.

TM Solutions Director Duncan Wilkinson said: "We are delighted to have someone of Clive's calibre to help with our growth strategy."

CHANNEL Telecom MD Clifford Norton has called for greater industry collaboration to tackle toll fraud. "The industry's response to the issue is poor," he said. See page 50



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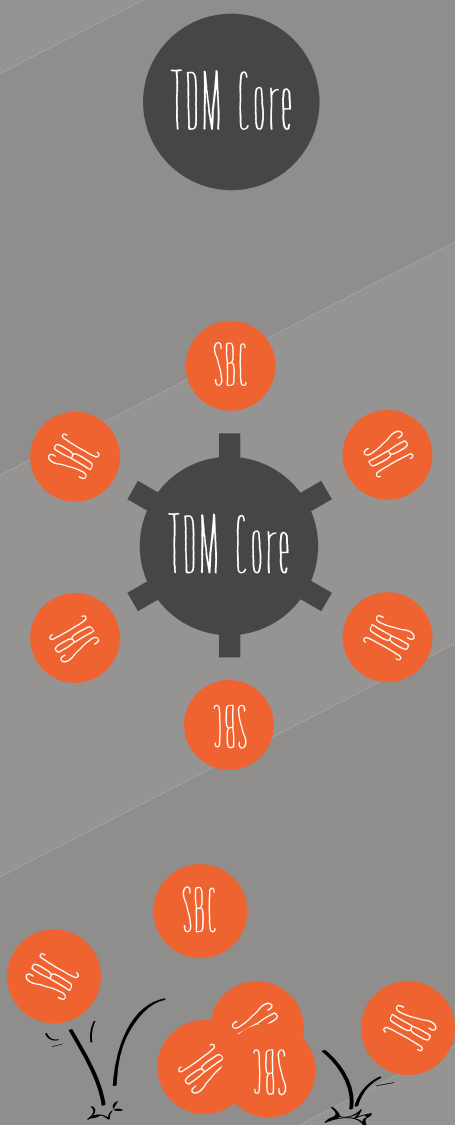
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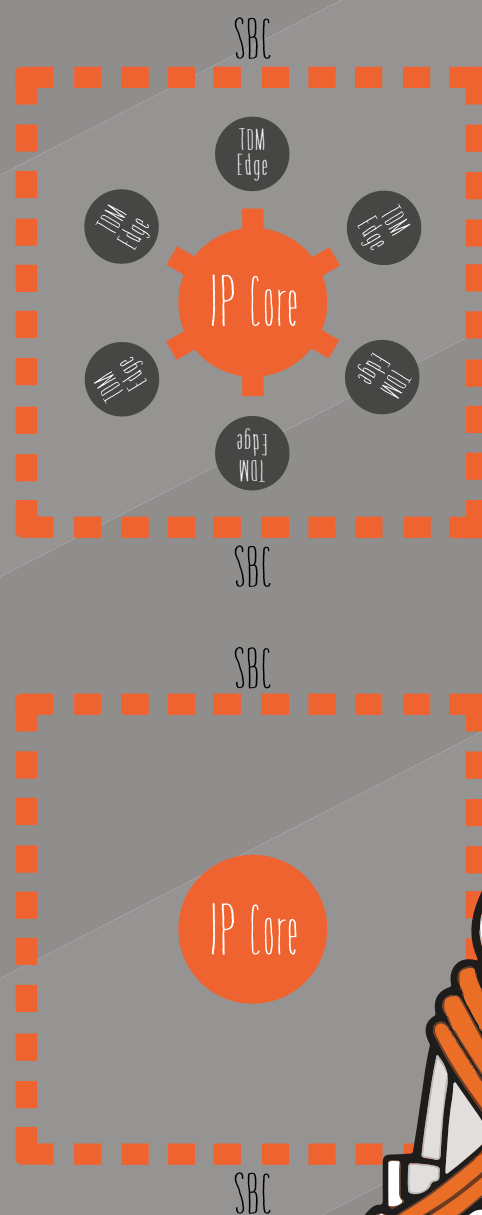
TDM will eventually be retired, and that will be a painless transition for us and our customers, not least because we built all that we are - Simwood *is* the SBC. How will *your* carrier fare?

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### Legacy Carriers



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COMMENT: STRATEGIC TALK



Alex Tempest

CONFIDENCE, cost and connectivity: The three vital ingredients for business success. According to a recent survey from the manufacturers' lobby group EEF, the UK economy is suffering as too many businesses pay too much for a broadband connection that is too slow.

With only a third of the businesses surveyed saying they were confident

their connectivity would meet their future needs, and half saying the cost of connectivity had risen during the last two years, there is a clear opportunity for partners to address an overwhelming customer demand and guide them to the options that help them make the most of their connectivity needs.

There is no denying that connectivity is the lifeblood of British business and as companies handle ever-increasing amounts of data they need robust, affordable infrastructure they can rely on. Channel partners can seize this opportunity and play a key role in educating and guiding businesses so they have the confidence to demand more from their providers and ultimately ensure they get the service they need to grow and thrive in today's digital economy.

By demonstrating the value that the right data services at the right price can deliver, partners can build a solid foundation to encourage customers to invest in and future proof their networks and embrace the inevitable rise in data hungry devices.

Connectivity needs to be a top priority for Government as well as business. If the UK is to make the most of its digital potential we need to ensure that companies, not just consumers, have access to the infrastructure they need to meet customer demands, as well as innovate, grow and thrive in a national and international marketplace.

**Alex Tempest, Director of Partners, TalkTalk Business**

# Easy energy deals recall the old days

OFFERING an alternative energy supply is like going back to the old days of lines and minutes resale. That's the view of Dean Ison, MD of Cheshire-based Max Telecom, which has recently added energy to its customer service portfolio in partnership with Fidelity Energy.

Ison argues that traditional telecoms sales people are more comfortable with the simplicity of the energy offerings which are very attractive in the current market, and find it easy to sell to customers who are already trusted by them.

"I would recommend selling energy to anyone with a loyal customer base and staff that embrace the slightly simpler sales approach," he said. "The key to selling energy lies in the customer feeling comfortable with the person that is handling the process for them.

"We have dedicated product specialists overseeing every stage of comms delivery with an obsessive attention to customer service, backed up by a 24/7/365 support process. Trust with our customers has therefore already been established.

"Selling them energy is a simple way of cementing the relationships they have and



Dean Ison

could even help fund telecoms spend by offsetting against energy savings.

"And there is a willingness to obtain a comparison because energy prices are high profile in the media at the moment. Once the savings are explained it is then the small matter of convincing them to embrace those savings now."

Ison has established a long-term relationship with telecommunications sales veteran John Haw who joined Fidelity Energy as MD last November and is spearheading the company's channel campaign.

"We have done a lot business with John for many years and we knew if he was involved this had to be a good opportunity," added Ison.

"It's so simple and no technical knowledge is required. It is like telecoms used to be because the partner forms are simple, the customer forms are simple and self-explanatory and all the pricing is handled by Fidelity.

"We have already signed up to good deals and there are many more in the pipeline."

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# Tollring seals iCall BT Wholesale deal



TOLLRING has won a three year contract to provide BT with call analytics products on the telco's Wholesale Hosted Centrex (WHC) platform.

The cloud-based iCall Suite will be deployed to customers on the WHC 2.0 version of the platform from June 2016,

offering resellers a call reporting and analytics solution that provides historical reporting and trends, along with live events such as user presence, queue statistics, agent status and call answer times via wallboards.

Steve Best, MD for BT Wholesale Products, said: "BT

Wholesale resellers will be able to build high value call analytics and wallboard products into their WHC 2.0 offering which will help differentiate their proposition, increase their competitiveness and help drive new recurring revenues."

Tollring MD Tony Martino commented on the deal: "iCall Suite offers security, scalability and flexibility which will complement BT Wholesale's multi-channel route to market."

Pictured (l-r): Oli Barker, Head of IP and UC at BT Wholesale with Tollring MD Tony Martino.

Got a news story? email: [sgilroy@bpl-business.com](mailto:sgilroy@bpl-business.com)

# Cross revs up for Challenge



THE countdown to Twin Town Challenge 2016 has begun as organiser and STL MD Brendon Cross reveals that just four places remain up for grabs in the 100 car rally in aid of charity SpecialEffect.

The Challenge takes place on 27th-30th May and will see 100 cars costing less than £500 drive from Witney to its twin town of Le Touquet and back via Silverstone and Croix en Ternois, including a street party with live bands, a civic reception on the beach and a money can't buy auction.

"Twin Town Challenge 2014 raised £130,000 with 50 cars, so this year we are taking 100 cars and hope to raise £250,000," stated Cross. "It's a great weekend and one of the participants in 2014 said it was the best fun they'd ever had raising money for charity and the best networking event too."

SpecialEffect uses technology to enhance the quality of life of people with physical disabilities by adapting games consoles and using eye gaze technology to help children and adults to play computer games.

The money raised by Twin Town Challenge 2014 has enabled SpecialEffect to establish a games room for young people and also take on more staff to meet the demand for support and services.

Last month Witney MP and PM David Cameron officially opened the games room alongside Cross and SpecialEffect founder Dr Mick Donegan (pictured above).

Cross added: "I am so proud of all the people who took part in Twin Town 14 and gave so generously while enjoying such a fun weekend in a £500 car." To find out more about this event visit [www.twintown16.co.uk](http://www.twintown16.co.uk)



MAINTEL has been named as one of London Stock Exchange's 1,000 Companies to Inspire Britain, a report that celebrates the UK's fastest growing and most dynamic SMBs. To be included in the list companies needed to show consistent revenue growth over a minimum of three years, significantly outperforming their industry peers. Angus McCaffery, Director at Maintel, said: "With a great team behind us and by acquiring companies that add greater value to our customers we've achieved more organic growth over the past few years than many of our peers."

Pictured (l-r) Xavier Rolet KBE with Angus McCaffery.

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# Cabbies hail roaming SIM



David Samuel

24 SEVEN Communications has teamed up with smartphone brand KAZAM to keep taxi drivers connected to a mobile network more of the time using 24 Seven's roaming SIM Jump.

The SIM card will switch between three of the UK's biggest mobile networks should the signal drop, giving better coverage than a single network SIM.

Jump was launched in early 2015 following a year in development and will be compatible with two of KAZAM's models.

David Samuel, MD and founder of 24 Seven, said: "Private hire has been a breakthrough industry for the Jump

SIM. Taxi and private hire firms can see the benefits of better coverage by using a national roaming SIM."

Andy Lee, Country Manager (UK & Ireland) of KAZAM, said: "If taxi professionals lose connection it can be totally debilitating for their business. When they slip into a mobile black-spot, or if their network fails, that can make a real difference to profitability.

"Taxis need to stay connected for voice and data more of the time from the point of view of accurate fares, ensuring reliable directions and not least from a safety aspect."

## Analytics specialist in new partnership deal

PROVIDER of cloud-based telephone analytics IOVOX has sealed a channel partnership deal with Cobweb Solutions.

"IOVOX offers clear marketing attribution and telephone performance data, one of the key insights for a business in interacting and transacting successfully with the market," said Ash Patel, Director of Transformation, Cobweb.

IOVOX's intelligent phone numbers deliver real-time analytics on calls and texts for hundreds of thousands of small businesses in 32 countries.



Carl Di Cicco

Carl Di Cicco, who is MD of IOVOX, commented: "As businesses continue to rely heavily on telephone systems, IOVOX analytics was a natural addition to the portfolio."

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COMMENT: ACTING ON IDEAS



Pete Tomlinson

ONE of the fun things I get to do is decide which of my colleagues' great ideas make it onto our roadmap. Whether they get the thumbs up or down can depend on different things, but if you want your product and proposition ideas to get attention, there are four key points to consider. These are not the only success factors, but in my experience they are the most overlooked.

They also apply if you're running your own business.

First, think audience: Who is this being done for? Have you defined the customer segments? Are there specific use cases? And are you clear on the challenges or opportunities you're helping them address?

Think acquisition: How are we going to reach customers? Is it via a direct or indirect channel? Where are these customers today? Why will they choose your idea and what will be the cost of acquisition?

Then onto pricing: Are you making a market or following it? Is your pricing based on the value you deliver or the cost of production? Is it a lifetime value you're looking for or immediate returns? And critically, what could influence pricing over the next few years?

Does it fit your 'why'? Every great business knows why it exists. For Eclipse it's to make technology easy and enjoyable. If the idea doesn't advance your 'why', then you've got to ask why would you do it?

The great ideas on our roadmap are the ones that have convincing answers to all four of these questions. Not the ideas that are the easiest to execute, likely to drive the highest short-term profit or those from the people who have the loudest voices. To paraphrase a famous quote, 'good ideas aren't in short supply, I can go down the pub tonight and get ten, what counts is knowing the ones you'll still be glad you acted on in the morning'.

**Pete Tomlinson, Director of Product, Marketing and Sales, Eclipse**

# Mobile technology remodels fleet firm

A MOBILE managed service delivered by Ethos Voice & Data to Valk Fleet UK has streamlined the food delivery company's comms operation and delivered significant savings across mobile tariffs, mobile devices and human resources.

Valk Fleet UK provides an outsourced food delivery service and operates a fleet of drivers who work around the clock delivering thousands of orders across the UK to restaurants.

Ethos Voice & Data (which will produce £1m EBITDA this year and is part of the Ethos Communications Group) secured the deal to provide a mobile contract and service for 1,200 users with 3,000 more to be rolled out this year.

Tablets will also be deployed across all independent restaurants served by the company.

"With no ability to lock down services on mobile and tablet devices it was difficult to control usage, type of usage and therefore billing control," said Matt Hill, MD of Ethos Voice & Data. "The devices weren't always being used for their business function."

Valk Fleet UK also lacked control over the management of its previous mobile service.



Matt Hill

With no fixed monthly contract it was difficult to predict costs and tariffs sometimes increased without warning.

"MDM online software enables Ethos, as the partner to Valk Fleet UK, to track employees' mobile usage," added Hill.

"Each user can be bespoke configured when the device is shipped and we can manage the device and applications remotely, ensuring each user's usage is managed efficiently."

All mobiles are integrated into the driver fleet and SIM technology tracks driver activity and productivity.

In addition to enhanced visibility across its mobile estate Valk Fleet UK now receives a fixed bill, giving the food delivery service complete control of its communications spend. "It is important for any business to manage costs and quality of service. We have helped Valk Fleet UK with both," added Hill.

"By providing a new three-year managed service mobile contract across all phones, tablets and tracking devices we have reduced the customer's monthly spend with a projected £1m saving over the term.

"The MDM tools we have provisioned control usage and make it easy for the business to roll out new versions of software to their apps, and also ensure that restaurants can communicate across Wi-Fi or 4G."

Valk Fleet UK CEO Steve Knight added: "We are constantly reviewing our cash management and Ethos has helped us save thousands versus our previous provider."

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# Glamorgan's MBO sealed



A MANAGEMENT buyout of Cardiff-based Glamorgan Telecom led by MD Kelly Bolderson has been swiftly followed by the appointment of a new management team.

Bolderson, who owns 73% of the company shares, started her career with the firm when she was 17 and has restructured the leadership team ahead of a three-year growth push.

Following the MBO Mathew Evans has been appointed Sales Director. He has worked at Glamorgan Telecom for 17 years and owns a 22% share in the company.

Mark Bolderson takes the Technical Director role and will lead the firm's growing engineering team. He joined in 1994. Operations Manager Hayley Jones will support the engineering and sales teams and

has worked at the firm for 20 years; while Leanne Sullivan becomes Financial Controller, having joined in 2012.

Kelly Bolderson commented: "After becoming the majority shareholder there was a great opportunity for us to formulate a new, dynamic management team to ensure the foundations are laid to achieve our growth targets for the next three years.

"We have expanded our existing team with new administration and customer support staff, new telesales and new sales team members.

"Our geographical area has also been expanded to give us more presence and coverage across new regions."

Pictured above (l-r): Leanne Sullivan, Mark Bolderson, Kelly Bolderson, Mathew Evans and Hayley Jones.

## Jobs galore at BT

BT IS CREATING 1,400 new apprenticeship and graduate jobs this year in a recruitment drive that will see new employees work in a range of positions from cyber security and software development to research and innovation.

The roles will be spread across the company with EE and Openreach both taking on large numbers as will BT's research and development arm.

Gavin Patterson, CEO, said: "Technology is changing and companies need to support and

train young people to develop the skills required for successful careers in essential areas such as science, engineering and IT.

"The UK has been ranked as the leading digital economy in the G20 for the past five years, and our investment in these people will help this continue."

A third of the new apprentices will be recruited into Openreach where they will work to extend the fibre network.

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### SHORT CALLS

Venus is to host an event for new and existing partners at London's The Hippodrome Casino on 15th March. "In order for Venus' partner programme to grow and prosper we need to listen to our partners and understand what they need to help their business grow," commented Brian Iddon, Director.

**Distributor** Exertis has consolidated its Basingstoke employees in new premises on the same Chineham Business Park estate. Paul Bryan, UK&I MD, said: "The requirement to move is indicative of how Exertis has developed over the last few years. We now have a facility that meets our needs and can cope with our strategy for continued growth."

**Stoke-on-Trent** and Darlington based technology company Fifteen Digital is celebrating 10 years in business. The firm specialises in telecommunications and in November 2015 took home a National Business Award at the Lloyds Bank National Business Awards in London.

**Global IT distributor** Ingram Micro has been snapped up by Chinese investment firm Tianjin Tianhai for \$6bn. The deal, termed a 'merger', will see Ingram Micro operate as a subsidiary of HNA Group, a Hainan-based Fortune Global 500 enterprise organisation that specialises in aviation, tourism and logistics.

**Two thirds** of UK Plc plan to move their entire IT estate to the cloud according to the latest research from the Cloud Industry Forum (CIF). Of those organisations already using cloud, three quarters expect to increase their usage in 2016.

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# HHF business boom 365 tuning to prompts expansion rev up profits

SPURRED by stellar growth Henry Howard Finance (HHF) has secured a foothold in the midlands from where it will expand geographically and more effectively work with customers across the UK.

Following a £25m investment from Cabot Square Capital last year HHF now employs 90 staff, has generated growth of 60% in 12 months and witnessed record growth this year with its lending up by 75% to more than £70m.

The investment allowed HHF to increase its lending capacity and restructure into four divisions with HH Vendor, HH Asset and HH Retail Finance focused on leasing, while HH Cash Flow Finance provides invoice finance.

The funding boost also enabled HHF to develop its FinTech offering with the launch of HowAPP, an online credit decision and deal management tool that can give an acceptance in less than 20 seconds, claims the company. Finance contracts can then be securely completed via Echo-sign.

HHF's just-opened Solihull office builds on its presence in London and HQ in Newport and will be headed up by Dan



Mark Crook

MacKrell who joined the company as Head of Technology in October 2015.

He will be supported by business development managers working mostly with manufacturers, distributors and vendors in the IT and telecoms sectors.

MacKrell said: "The new office will help us service our nationwide clients from the heart of the country."

HHF began trading in 1996 as a sales-aid leasing company supporting vendors using leasing to spread the cost of the customer's purchase over a term of usually three or five years. It now has a portfolio in excess of £150m which includes more than 20,000 UK businesses.

Mark Crook, COO and co-founder of HHF, commented: "We have clients and staff operating across the country but this new office in Solihull will allow us to better serve the whole of the UK.

"We have seen amazing growth throughout the business in the last year and want to continue this expansion in 2016.

"Dan and his team will work hard to develop strategic partnerships with our FinTech offer. Manufacturers, distributors and resellers all benefit from the simple, useable quick and functional HowAPP product."

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A NEW programme introduced by Cobweb Solutions enables partners supplying Office 365 under Advisor, Open or EA licensing agreements to transfer customers onto the CSP Reseller Programme with no disruption in service and higher margins.

"Profit Tuner for Office 365 creates a simple way for Microsoft partners with existing Office 365 customers to make margins up to 15% higher," said Julian Dyer, Chief Technical Officer, Cobweb.

The automated platform also helps with customer lifecycle management and is available to Microsoft partners wanting to become a CSP reseller.

"Customers only see that they are no longer billed by Microsoft and their preferred technology partner is now their account manager, support and billing owner," added Dyer.

"The Profit Tuner Programme takes care of the complexity of moving customers into the CSP reselling model while managing the licencing arrangements appropriately.

"What would normally be challenging for a Microsoft CSP reseller is provided as a low overhead process to bring customers on board."

Dyer also noted that the opportunity to cross sell and upsell additional cloud services from multiple suppliers becomes technically and commercially possible. And a billing option removes the costs of customer billing and cash collection.

"Resellers can take charge of the client relationship and offer more subscriptions or replace the existing subscriptions with their own," said Dyer.

"The opportunity for CSP reseller partners is significant with millions of potential UK customers to sign up. It offers a way for resellers to reinvigorate their cloud services." See p34

## SHORT CALL

Steljes has signed an exclusive distribution deal with Nureva, a Canadian provider of software and hardware solutions for education, and signed two UK resellers, Rapid Technologies and Smarter Interactive. "We wanted to appoint resellers as quickly as possible to serve customers in the UK," said Martin Large, CEO, Steljes.

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# Pragma hits iPECS Cloud start button

ERICSSON-LG distributor Pragma unveiled iPECS Cloud to partners during its annual conference held at Whittlebury Hall near Silverstone on February 4th. The launch comes at a time when Ericsson-LG's confidence in the UK market has ascended to a ten year high.

The Pragma-Ericsson-LG partnership is paying dividends with a 30% rise in sales of on-premise systems last year and significant advances made into the mid-market and larger enterprise space; and in a show of bullish ambition the vendor is eyeing third place in the UK vendor league having moved up to fifth position in MZA's latest market report.

Will Morey, Director and co-founder of Pragma, said: "Cloud evangelists say that the PBX is dead and cloud is the only option. That isn't true. But cloud is showing healthy growth and our partners expect an increasing proportion of their customer base to move to the cloud over the next few years.

"Therefore we've made significant investments in taking iPECS-CM and turning the product into a fully virtualised feature rich and reseller friendly cloud platform."

iPECS Cloud has four engagements models: Dealer, reseller, VSP and full service provider. And everything is wrapped into a portal with four levels of access.

Ericsson-LG has a clear roadmap to develop new features, functionality and capabilities for iPECS Cloud with version two planned for release in May, version three in September and another next year.

"Every step of the way Ericsson-LG ensured that iPECS Cloud upholds a reseller-



Will Morey

centric business model with a strong commercial proposition, simple deployment and bundles for leasing propositions," commented Morey.

"Proprietary and feature rich functionality is also key. All on-premise kit is cloud-ready, so customers can move to the cloud 'as and when', and partners can build up these future upgrade opportunities."

Pragma partner Lily Comms MD Chris Morrissey welcomed news of Ericsson-LG's progress. "With the launch of iPECS Cloud we are able to offer our prospective and current clients a choice of on-premise, hybrid or cloud communication systems without sacrificing features, all under the Ericsson-LG brand," he stated.

"No longer is Ericsson-LG a telephony manufacturer, it is a communications provider focused on applications and software in addition to the base proposition which is telephony.

"This aligns with how we are positioning ourselves in the market, not as a telephony provider, but a communication solutions specialist."

**Conference report on page 36**

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## SHORT CALLS

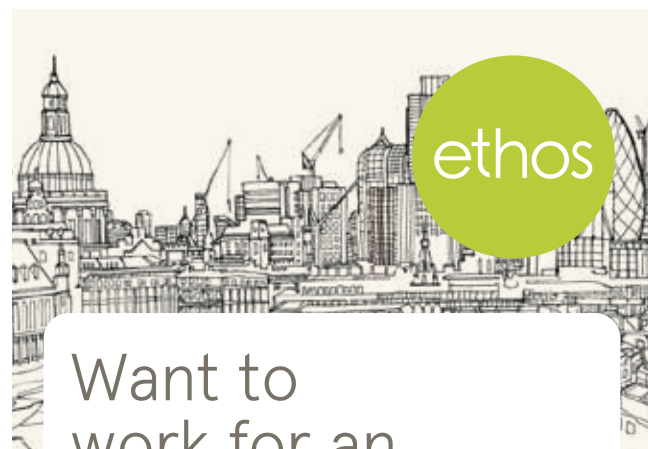
**Nimans** has entered the computer market following a link-up with audio and video manufacturer Venturer to offer resellers two-in-one mini Windows notebooks. "Teaming up with Venturer is another example of how Nimans continues to diversify and evolve," said Group Sales and Business Development Director, Richard Carter.

**telent** Technology Services has teamed up with Unify to offer the OpenScope Voice solution as part of its new telentConnect service, in addition to rolling out OpenScope Voice across its own operations in the UK and Ireland.

**Rob Tomlin** has been appointed MD UK & Ireland of Azlan, Tech Data's value enterprise division. He joined Tech Data when the company acquired SDG in September 2012 and takes over from Andy Gass, MD UK & Ireland for Tech Data, who also acted as head of Azlan.

**IT distributor** Entatech UK has settled its legal battle with the liquidators of Changtel and is now solely owned by Stevinson Capital. Dave Stevinson, Entatech MD, said: "We believe the settlements eradicate all uncertainty, enabling Entatech to go forwards with purpose and confidence."

**Jola** Cloud Solutions has opened a new office in Stapleford, Nottinghamshire, to house its growing provisioning and support departments. Andrew Dickinson, MD, said: "We have over 100 partners to support and it is important to make sure that we recruit an experienced and effective team to retain responsiveness and satisfaction targets."



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# Oak swoops on Adaptive

OAK has expanded its portfolio with progressive and predictive diallers and a media blending platform following its significant acquisition of the Adaptive business from New Media Software (NMS).

Oak's joint-CEO Phil Reynolds stated: "We've been building our new high-end call recorder and call centre reporting platform, OCP3, ready for a 2016 release.

"The acquisition of Adaptive couldn't have come at a more opportune time as we can now include advanced dialling and media blending options in the OCP release.

"For the channel, all this means that at a time when the bottom end of the market is being gradually eroded by cheap hosted solutions, Oak is able to present resellers with tested solutions and strategies to help them aim at bigger targets."

NMS MD Phill McGowan will continue working alongside Oak as a consultant while the handover takes place and the new version 10 of Adaptive is rolled out.

All Adaptive staff have taken up employment with Oak ensuring that support and development of the Adaptive



Phil Reynolds

Suite continues uninterrupted. Oak is currently organising an Adaptive roadshow for resellers this spring.

Reynolds commented: "With more than 15 years experience in dialler technology the team from NMS have a lot to offer Oak's channel partners."

Joint Oak CEO James Emm is putting plans together for a national reseller roadshow of the Adaptive Suite.

He stated: "This product will create more opportunity for our resellers here in the UK as well as for our North American operation. These are exciting times with three new products in 2016, a high-end voice and data recorder called Clarify, version 3 of our Evolve contact centre reporting solution, and now the new version 10 Adaptive suite."

# Exclusive's IT finance enters UK

EXCLUSIVE Capital, the financing and leasing division of Exclusive Group, has set up operations in the UK and will be led by IT financing veteran Chris Armitage.

The bulk of Exclusive Capital's local forecast revenue is expected to come from Exclusive Networks UK and BigTec UK resellers.

"Chris is already making a big impact with his 25-plus years of UK channel experience and knowledge of how the IT supply chain works from a financing perspective," commented Franck Laga, MD of Exclusive Capital.

"2016 will be a pivotal year in the life of Exclusive Capital as we invest in widespread expansion into the major European markets and beyond."

Exclusive Networks UK Country Manager Graham Jones added: "There is an appetite for IT asset financing, borne out by the pipeline Chris has drawn around our partners within a short time frame.

"Partners that are engaging now can see the potential to increase deal sizes and longer term tie-ins, with the added bonus of receiving full payment of the deal value within days."

# Onyx pushes for objective

ONYX Group's ambition to become a £100m revenue IT support and services business within the next five years is on course following a year in which it experienced record growth of 34% with turnover of £28.3m.

Onyx's £10m acquisition of technology company Knowledge IT in December 2014 help to drive growth and the group also bagged some important deal wins including English Premier League side Newcastle United Football Club and Yorkshire-based tolling company Sanef Group.

Ex-Daisy Group MD Andrew Goldwater was appointed Chief Financial Officer late last year, strengthening the board.



Neil Stephenson

Neil Stephenson, CEO, commented: "In the past 12 months we have made significant investments into our infrastructure, including a seven-figure sum into the installation of a new 10Gb national core network and upgrades to our entire data centre portfolio to ensure it is now fully PCI DSS compliant."



SABIO has secured Gamma Platinum Partner status following its achievements in bringing Gamma's portfolio of SIP trunking and inbound number solutions to the contact centre market and broadening its network services portfolio.

During a four-year spell working with Gamma Sabio has grown its network services operation, strengthened its technical, support and training expertise, and helped to reduce network services complexity for customers.

Gamma's Chief Operating Officer Richard Bligh said: "Sabio brings its systems integration capabilities – including skills in the design, provisioning and support of SIP trunking and inbound services – to provide organisations with a unified network services offering, from the PSTN all the way through to the delivery of calls to contact centre agents."

Sabio's MD Sebastian Henkes added: "We're already seeing considerable momentum as customers take advantage of our services wrap, enabling them to benefit from coordinated SLAs across both their networks and systems operations.

"As a Gamma Platinum Partner we'll be looking to build on this, helping organisations to take advantage of the benefits that come from Sabio's simplified telephony supply chain and single support model." Pictured l-r: Richard Bligh and Seb Henkes.

# Networks First snapped up

SOLIHULL-based network services provider Convergence Group has acquired Networks First, a privately owned IT managed services and network support business.

The acquisition strengthens Convergence Group's capabilities in the provision of end-to-end connectivity solutions across the LAN and WAN.

Both Convergence Group and Networks First are headquartered in the west midlands and operate in the channel partner community.



Neal Harrison

network support, engineering and project services for LAN and WAN.

Neal Harrison, MD at Convergence Group, said: "Our partners and customers will benefit from more choice and have a simpler way of meeting all of their network connectivity needs in one place."

Networks First MD Tom Mulvaney added: "This brings together two successful companies in non-competing but related sectors, with great people and entrepreneurial leadership."

The combined organisation now has a portfolio of managed network services, network security expertise, multi-vendor

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# Fuze fired up for expansion

UC FIRM ThinkingPhones has rebranded to Fuze (the video conferencing brand it acquired in 2015) and secured \$112m in new funding led by Summit Partners, bringing the company's total funding to \$200m.

Fuze delivers mobility-enabled and analytics-driven business communications and is targeting established brands in the market.

In 2015, the company grew revenue by over 100%, adding more than 175 new customers and expanding existing customer relationships. Expansion across Europe is a key part of Fuze's growth strategy for 2016.

The firm has already experienced substantial growth in Europe, increasing revenue from this market by 150% year-over-year and adding 60 new customers in the last 12 months.

Fuze's European headcount rose from 15 in January 2015 to more than 120 employees.

Fuze has opened new offices in Germany and Switzerland to run alongside existing full business operations in the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and France. A new office has also opened in Australia.

"The way we communicate at work simply doesn't match up to the experience we expect in our personal lives," said



Luca Lazzaron

Luca Lazzaron, Senior VP of International Operations, Fuze.

"Despite almost two decades of IP telephony and an established UC market, little has fundamentally changed. It's time for a revolution in workplace communication. The new generation of professionals expect voice, video, and collaboration to be instantly accessible from any device, and they expect it to simply work."

Steve Kokinos, CEO and co-founder, Fuze, added: "Voice is only the beginning of our story. Work life is dynamic and unpredictable, and the new Fuze is all about flexible, always-on business communications, video conferencing, messaging, and collaboration.

"When voice, text, data, and video are 'fuzed' on a single platform, great things happen."

Fuze's channel partners include Annodata and New Voice Media.

# Incoming CEO with big ideas

MATTHEW Parker is to lead IP Solutions as CEO following investment from Livingbridge.

His previous experience includes 10 years in the leadership team at StepStone, the European online recruitment portal. He was part of the team that delivered a 100m euro return to shareholders when Axel Springer acquired StepStone ASA in 2009.

He then led a management buyout of the Solutions business, became CEO, and led the transformation of the organisation now called Lumesse.

"Taking IP Solutions to the next level is a fantastic opportunity and I am looking forward to leading the business on this journey," said Parker.

IP Solutions' Chairman Andy Lockwood added: "Matthew brings the qualities of a professional and experienced leader that will add real value to our next phase of growth."



Matthew Parker

## SHORT CALL

3CX has joined forces with Formula, the receptionist switchboard specialist and developer of Totalview. Nick Galea, 3CX CEO, said: "One of the main points of 3CX being for Windows was to be able to integrate more closely with Windows applications and deliver productivity increases to companies. The integration of Formula's Totalview Workforce Management is a perfect example of this."



DENWA has been nominated for the Employer of the Year award at this year's Red Rose Awards hosted by Lancashire Business View (10th March, Empress Ballroom at Blackpool's Winter Gardens). Rob Scott, CEO, said: "Our biggest asset is our people and their personalities radiate the Denwa vibe, pizzazz and quirky way of doing business. We find it second nature to reward and develop our team, they are the DNA of Denwa." See page 44

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# Bashton buy beefs up Claranet in AWS

CLARANET has bolstered its Amazon Web Services (AWS) and DevOps capabilities with the acquisition of Warrington-based AWS specialist Bashton.

The deal builds on last year's purchases of LinuxIT and Techgate and accelerates Claranet's managed public cloud drive.

Bashton was established in 2004 and works primarily with retail and media customers, helping them to run mission critical web applications on AWS infrastructure.

Its DevOps tooling expertise enables customers to deploy code updates into their web application, as well as monitor and improve performance.

Bashton's annual revenues stand at £1.2m and its customers include ITV, Odeon, BBC Worldwide, Liverpool FC, made.com and Virgin Holidays.

Claranet UK's MD Michel Robert stated: "Bashton was a natural company to join Claranet and follows a number of strategically important acquisitions we have made in the past year across Europe to enhance our public cloud capabilities.

"The development of managed services on third party clouds is a key focus for Claranet



Michel Robert

and the skills and experience brought by Bashton go a long way in helping us to manage more complex applications in these environments.

"As cloud adoption increases the real value we can add as a managed services provider is in our expertise, tooling and automation capabilities.

"We are focused on developing advanced hosting capabilities to streamline our customers' operations and underpin the evolution of our managed application hosting services."

Bashton's founder and Director Sam Bashton added: "Claranet's application-centric approach to combining hosting and networking services, including its Cloud Connect service into AWS, demonstrates a solid understanding of the challenges faced by businesses today."

The expanded Claranet Group now boasts annual revenues of £165m, more than 1,000 staff and 5,500-plus customers across the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal.

## Zest4 set to launch VoxSmart

UC WHOLESALER Zest4 has linked-up with VoxSmart to launch a mobile voice recording solution for partners.

Zest4 will provide the VSmart cloud-based service which is compliant with the EU legislation Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) expected to come into force in January 2017.

Under the new rules financial organisations and their employees will need to record and store all calls related to 'firm business' for a period of at least five years.

This includes internal as well as external calls, plus texts and all other types of messages.

VSmart operates on any mobile network and integrates with in-house recording machines. The launch of a mobile voice recording system follows Zest4's introduction of M2M solutions last year.

Mandy Fazelynia, Operations and Business Development Director at Zest4, said: "Adding mobile voice recording and M2M to our portfolio ensures that our partners have access to complete UC solutions."

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### SHORT CALLS

Atos has appointed Jon Pritchard as CEO of Unify which it acquired in November last year. Pritchard, who was previously Unify's Executive VP Channels, will also join the Atos Executive Committee. He has 25-plus years industry experience including a stint as President at Comstor where he led the \$2.5bn channel IT business which operated in 40 countries.

Invosys has raised £2,000 for Francis House Children's Hospice following a year of charity events. "It's a part of our ethos to give something back to the community and we are delighted to be working with Francis House this year," stated Dan Fish, HR Director.

Gamma picked up Polycom's Reseller Partner of the Year award during the vendor's TEAM Polycom annual partner conference held in Nashville. Andrew Robinson, Head of Hosted Sales at Gamma, said: "Our partnership has solidified mainly due to Polycom's commitment to the SMB sector through the development of its VVX range of handsets."

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# Castle Street acquires C4L in £20m buy

CASTLE Street Investments has acquired C4L for £20.2m, paying £14.2m in cash with the remainder covered by the issue of 18.4 million shares at 32.5 pence per share.

C4L's Chairman Matt Hawkins will join Castle Street's board as CTO, while Simon Mewett, C4L's CEO, takes the COO role. The deal follows Castle Street's acquisition of Selection Services Investments in January.

C4L's trading in the three months to 31st January 2016 delivered an annualised turnover of £14m and run rate EBITDA of £2m.

C4L owns and manages a network infrastructure and data centre assets with 45 staff based in Bournemouth and Docklands. It provides services to 800-plus customers and over 90% of its revenues are recurring.

Andy Ross, CEO of Castle Street, commented: "C4L combined with our acquisition of Selection Services demonstrates the progress we are making towards becoming an integrated IT services and cloud provider.

"C4L has a next generation infrastructure which has been well invested. Allied to a successful business with high levels of recurring revenue it offers strong growth opportunities.

"The enlarged customer base and product portfolio strengthen our position in the industry."

Castle Street said the acquisition will be immediately earnings enhancing and, in line with the company's strategy, will facilitate a broader integrated service offering to a larger client base while focusing on delivering higher margin services.

Castle Street Chairman Jonathan Watts stated: "Matt and Simon have done an excel-



Andy Ross

lent job in building C4L. We look forward to their contribution as we execute on our growth strategy."

MXC Capital acted as lead adviser to Castle Street in originating and executing the deal.

Peter Rigg, Chairman of MXC, commented: "The board of Castle Street has a clear fix on the market opportunity and we have great confidence in its ability to deliver."

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## Exclusive beefs up revenues

ORGANIC growth of 31% along with acquisitions have propelled distributor Exclusive Group to total revenues of 1.04bn euros for 2015, hitting the 1bn euro target nearly two years ahead of plan.

"We have retained and extended our value added model on a global basis," said CEO Olivier Breittmayer.

"Since the start of this journey we have doubled revenue every two years with a strategy blending together accelerated organic growth with hand picked acquisitions."

A strong performance in the Nordics and Baltics drove revenue growth of over 40%; France and Africa demonstrated healthy returns, growing 33% and 63% respectively.

In the southern region (Iberia, Italy and Turkey), collective growth of 41% was achieved despite a slow economic recovery and other challenging factors.

The UK continues to report healthy trading and solid sales momentum with over 55% annual growth. The DACH region has a consolidated growth of over 26%.

## Name change brands Oak as true innovator

OAK Telecom has underlined its status as a forward-thinking UK software house with a name change to Oak Innovation.

"Everyone knows us simply as Oak and that will continue," said joint CEO Phil Reynolds. "However, we feel that the new formal title is a more accurate description of what we actually do, and what we don't do is sell phone systems as the word 'telecom' implies.

"We design, develop and support our own solutions, and specialise in call recording and

reporting for all types of businesses and contact centres.

"We are increasingly providing solutions for mid-market opportunities. The new name reflects who we are now and where we are heading."

The name change coincides with Oak's acquisition of the Adaptive suite from New Media Software, including progressive and predictive diallers, SMS and email messaging. Reynolds says that the addition of Adaptive will open up new opportunities for the channel. **See page 20**

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# Cisco makes ShoreTel's big Jasper move on integration



Chuck Robbins

CISCO has swooped on Jasper Technologies, snapping up the IoT specialist in a \$1.4bn deal.

Jasper's cloud-based service platform automates the management of IoT services across connected devices for more than 3,500 enterprises worldwide, working with 27 service provider groups globally.

Cisco will build on the Jasper IoT service platform and add new IoT services such as enterprise Wi-Fi, security for connected devices and analytics.

Chuck Robbins, Cisco CEO, said: "Together, we can enable service providers, enterprises and the broader ecosystem to connect, automate, manage and analyse billions of connected things, across any network, creating new revenue streams."

Jahangir Mohammed, Jasper CEO, commented: "IoT has become a business imperative across the globe. Enterprises in every industry need integrated solutions that give them complete visibility and control over their connected services, while also being simple to implement, manage and scale.

"By coming together, Jasper and Cisco will help mobile operators and enterprises accelerate their IoT success."

Mohammed will run the new IoT Software Business Unit under Rowan Trollope, Cisco Senior Vice President and General Manager, IoT and Collaboration Technology Group. The acquisition is expected to close in the third quarter of fiscal year 2016.

SHORETEL has ramped up its interoperability and integration play having expanded its Innovation Network and renamed it TechConnect.

The revamped programme follows the launch of ShoreTel's Connect solution for onsite, cloud and hybrid UC deployments, and builds on the vendor's Innovation Network of 1,500 developers and 110 technology partners.

Attributes of the new programme include a more efficient certification process, new remote test and preparation capabilities, no membership fee for technology partners self-validating with the third-party test organisation, and additional marketing opportunities.

ShoreTel is also working closer with an independent third party testing and services firm to increase test capacity and provide remote test preparation capabilities via the cloud.

"We are building a vibrant ecosystem of partners that will extend the value of the ShoreTel Connect solutions," said Mark Roberts, CMO of ShoreTel.

"We are seeking complementary solutions with a focus on vertical applications that create greater value for custom-



Mark Roberts

ers through interoperability and integration with tools and applications they use daily."

The TechConnect scheme is made up of three member tiers – Developer, Technology Partner and Technology Alliance Partner.

## SHORT CALLS

Welsh IT company SA1 Solutions has set up a comms arm in response to customer demand for a single source IT and telecoms provider. The sister company is known as SA1 Telecoms and offers a range of business services including telephone systems, VoIP, mobiles, leased lines and fixed lines.

Swyx closed the year with a year-on-year sales increase of 40% (33m euros revenue) and in 2015 added 40 new international cloud partners. Growth in sales markets such as the Netherlands, UK, northern Europe and other regions augmented Swyx's strong performance in Germany, its core market.

TIMICO Technology Group's CEO Tim Radford (pictured) had already made his mark in the world of horse racing but having the Timico name etched into the Cheltenham Gold Cup marks a new height. Radford's family has long been associated with horse racing as owners of frequent runners Knock House, Somersby, Calgary Bay and Racing Demon. Timico secured sponsorship of the Cheltenham Gold Cup late last year when the opportunity became available for the first time in 36 years. Radford said: "It's an honour to have been chosen as the new sponsor of the Cheltenham Gold Cup and seeing the Timico name emblazoned on such an iconic symbol of jump racing is truly fantastic." The Cheltenham Gold Cup is considered to be the highlight of the annual Cheltenham Festival held in March.



## SHORT CALL

Excalibur Communications has expanded its IT service with the acquisition of Chippenham-based IT firm Devision for an undisclosed sum. Excalibur CEO James Phipps commented: "The acquisition brings us new customers in some exciting new sectors, together with highly skilled members of the Devision team." Previous buys saw Excalibur acquire IT businesses Bridge Solutions and Emnico Enterprises.

# Data centre boost BroadSoft buys

SOUTH West Communications Group has extended its influence in the hosting market having invested in a 10Gbps direct connection to what is said to be Europe's largest data centre.

The move has created a multi-data centre infrastructure linking swcomms' own data centre with a facility in Newport, south Wales.

John Holdstock, swcomms' ICT Director, commented: "The new 10Gbps link allows for very low latency connections for our customers and access

to many of the world's tier-1 service providers."

The data facility's main building measures 750,000sq ft. It has its own private connection to the National SuperGrid delivering 90MW, low cost power generated from 100% renewable sources.

swcomms provides co-location, managed server, DR, business continuity and Internet bandwidth solutions.

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BROADSOFT is on a mission to shake up the cloud-based contact centre market with the acquisition of Transera. Its omni-channel and data analytics software will be integrated with BroadSoft's BroadWorks and BroadCloud solutions.

Michael Tessler, CEO of BroadSoft, stated: "The multi-billion dollar contact centre market is ripe for cloud disruption, and we now offer service providers a single stack solution with the flexibility to scale from SMB to large enterprise."

Prem Uppaluru, Chairman and CEO of Transera, has been posted to the role of General Manager and VP of BroadSoft Cloud Contact Centre.

Uppaluru added: "Cloud is rewriting the rules when it comes to how businesses can deliver a superior customer engagement experience through simplicity, on-demand scalability and advanced analytics."

Gartner placed Transera as a Visionary in the 2015 Magic Quadrant for Contact Centre as a Service, North America.



# Mitel unveils 5G platform

MITEL has invested in a 5G cloud connectivity platform and expanded its senior mobile management team against a backdrop of heightening global demand for 4G LTE services.

According to Ovum, global LTE subscriptions surpassed the one billion mark during the final quarter of 2015 with strong double-digit growth expected over the next five years.

"In the past 12 months, Mitel has been gaining traction in the mobile space and picking up speed as adoption of 4G LTE services accelerates," commented Rich McBee, President and CEO of Mitel.

"In November we reported that Mitel's global footprint of mobile customers expanded from 17 to 31, an 82% increase in six months."

Pardeep Kohli, former CEO of Mavenir and current President of the Mitel Mobile Division, becomes President of Mitel 5G Cloud Connectivity and will lead all activities asso-



Rich McBee

ciated with Mitel's 5G investments. "Wireless connectivity is now an essential aspect of everyday life, but we've only just scratched the surface of the economic and social impact it will have in the future as mobile technology continues to advance," said Kohli.

"Mitel's 5G platform is focused on building that future by providing the software to enable billions of mobile devices to access mobile cloud services in a flexible, cost-effective manner."



LILY Comms scooped a brace of awards at Pragma's annual Partner Conference held last month at Whittlebury Hall near Silverstone, collecting the Phone-Link Reseller of the Year and Overall Reseller of the Year gongs. Other winners on the night included Focus Group, BDR, Rydal Communications, Intellia, Cloudsource Technologies, Ikonix Telecoms and 5G Communications. "This year's conference was our most successful event to date," said Pragma Director Will Morey. "The awards give us an opportunity to highlight some of our partners who are driving innovation in the industry, showing increased growth in revenue and helping Ericsson-LG to grow market share." Lily Comms MD Chris Morrissey commented: "Adding these wins to our hat-trick of Comms National Awards means we have won ten industry awards over the past two years. The conference was eye opening, the evening was a joy and the entertainment was fantastic." *Full conference report on page 36*  
Pictured: Lily collects the Overall Reseller of the Year award.

## SHORT CALLS

**Improving** the customer experience through strategic partnerships is key to growth, according to TeleWare which is planning to deliver this message firsthand to delegates at its upcoming Partnering for Growth event on March 10th at the Royal Society of Medicine, London. "Customer experience technology is crucial to future growth plans," stated Steve Haworth, TeleWare's CEO.

**A £2m** expansion of Node4's Northampton data centre increases its existing 360 rack footprint to a total of 760 racks spread across three data halls. Rik Williams, Head of Data Centre Operations, Node4, commented: "Our Northampton site is a core part of our business and it is vital we continue our investment and presence in the region, especially as the data centre is just an hour away from London."

**A new** application called Quantify Insight from Red Box Recorders proactively monitors the recording system and associated telephony and IT infrastructure, displaying system health and performance on a live dashboard and providing warnings and alerts. The monitoring tool is included as standard with Red Box's core channel recording package.

**8x8** has been awarded Best Supplier of the Year at the inaugural Recruitment Directors Lunch Club awards staged at London's Hippodrome. Gary Pryor, Enterprise Sales Director, 8x8 UK, said: "We now work with a variety of recruiters of different sizes, demonstrating that we're able to provide a flexible and effective solution."

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# Samsung mobilises wire

Samsung's ambition is to displace market rivals by de-cabling the future of on-premise telephony with the launch of a new all-in-one pure IP wireless telephone system.

The on-premise pure IP telephony market must evolve into an all-wireless world rather than continue down the route of cables, according to Samsung, which set the revolutionary ball rolling with the launch of SCM-Compact (an appliance-based version of the larger SCM-Express system) to 100-plus partners at the Belfry on February 24th. The craving of any competitive business is to identify and champion its difference from market rivals, so telephony vendors should beware of Samsung's latest innovations. Despite its common field of endeavour with the competition, the Korean vendor's wireless primacy is a vivid contrast to the industry standard.

It's hardly surprising. We are living through a time of widespread mobility and according to Samsung it is at the forefront of one of the most exciting periods in the history of communications, bringing to life significant opportunities for resellers. By its own definition, Samsung is a 'wireless communication platform provider' closely aligned to the projections of industry watchers such as IDC which calculates that 75 per cent of the western European workforce will be mobile by 2018.

The persuasive arguments of comms analysts who predict impending wireless domination are reflected in Samsung's rich blend of mobility based on the WE VoIP application. "The

workforce is becoming more mobile and there is a requirement for business communications to follow that trend," commented Wilf Wood, Senior Product Manager at Samsung Enterprise Networks.

"There is growth in flexible working from remote locations, with more hot desks and more people flowing in and out of offices. Organisations must adapt to having a disparate workforce that uses mobile as the main source of communication. The SCM-Compact meets these requirements, allowing employees to work remotely while businesses retain control of call costs, call recordings and call analytics. The system also integrates with smartphones and offers seamless handover from Wi-Fi to GSM and from desktop phones to mobiles."

Samsung appears to have opened a new front in pure IP telephony for SMEs. In large part it lies in articulating the benefits of a wireless-first approach to this segment and unlocking the potential of a significant addressable market. There are 5.3 million businesses in the UK of which 90-plus per cent have less than 250 employees.

The SCM Compact sits comfortably in this space, scaling up from 16 to 512 extensions, its sweet spot being 16 to circa 300 extensions. This means Samsung resellers are able to approach 76 per cent of the UK market. Not bad for



Wilf Wood

## The workforce is becoming more mobile and there is a requirement for business communications to follow that trend

a 44m tall rack mounted unit. Its big brother, the SCM-Express, scales to 3,000 extensions, giving Samsung partners access to 95 per cent of the total addressable UK market with just two systems.

The systems are part of a continuum, belonging to the Samsung Communication Manager (SCM) family as a complement to OfficeServ and the vendor's hybrid range. OfficeServ's IP phones

and applications all work with the new additions. And resellers will have little trouble installing the system using two bundled starter packs. Their implementation is straightforward and cost-

# less revolution

effective for resellers, eased by a configuration wizard and based on a Wi-Fi network with wireless access points and wireless handsets. The outcome is a highly resilient voice and data network and a full UC solution with options for productivity applications, formal and informal contact centre applications, conferencing, messaging, presence, call analytics and call recording (and more).

## Out of the box

The starter packs include the chassis, 16 user licences, rack mounted hardware and a power cable. That's it. The second starter pack includes two voicemail licences. Both form the foundation for further deployment options. The system is wrapped by an ecosystem that includes the WE VoIP mobility solution with enhancements, comprehensive security measures, gateway control, expansion modules that support high density analogue extensions, full iOS support and a broader selection of APIs encouraging more feature rich applications from third parties. The system caters for all of the traditional trunks but is natively designed for SIP trunking with support for multiple SIP trunk providers.

Samsung is right to champion wireless not cables. Of course many customer premises are sensitive to the intrusion of cabling, such as listed buildings. And a sensitivity to legacy cabling in many organisations has prevented them from pressing ahead with upgrade opportunities.

Now it's time to play the wireless trump card, again. "One of the main barriers to providing an IP system, especially at

the small end of the SME market, is legacy cabling," commented Peter Law, Enterprise Networks Sales Manager. "Installing cabling to support a new IP system can be cost prohibitive, but we have overcome that objection by using wireless connectivity. Smaller companies are starting to connect their telephony through standalone wireless access points. This opens up a new market for dealers. Going wireless means faster installations, the efficient use of engineering time and more productivity."

Law singled out other markets that offer rich targets, highlighting that the new system's design is a crucial determinant of success in small formal contact centres, a segment that also illustrates the extent to which Samsung is prepared to back up its wireless vision with physical action in support of partners.

"There is an opportunity in formal contact centres with Samsung SCM-Compact," he added. "Each agent requires two SIP trunks, as well as trunks for queues. As an example, a 30 agent contact centre would need 60 SIP trunk licences and perhaps another ten for queues. The SCM-Compact has 128 SIP trunks built-in with no licences, representing an immediate cost saving, and there is no need for MGI licences. It's a specialist sale but we will help qualify, demonstrate, sell and close deals, and help install and maintain the systems when needed."

The audience reaction to Samsung's product launch displayed an immediate awareness of its potential,

with training courses fully booked by 36 companies within minutes of opening for registration. More training dates will become available, and they come with a clear message that Samsung is also targeting system replacement opportunities with rivals squarely in its sights. ■

## Partner reaction...

RESELLERS can deploy this pure IP solution with Samsung WLAN and negate the need to install costly structured cabling on site. This will become a single vendor office-in-a-box solution that will help resellers increase wallet share and promote end user lock-in. **John Bird, Head of Systems and Support Services, Exertis Enterprise, UC**

THE new SCM-Compact should offer us a good platform to churn our legacy base, and Samsung's wireless-first approach could also provide a significant sales opportunity, enabling us to deliver a desktop telephony experience without the need for wired LAN infrastructure. **Philip Donigan, Sales Director, STL Communications**

SCM-Compact offers low TOC, scalability, easy management, mobility and enhanced system resilience. Particularly impressive is its ability to connect desk phones as well as mobiles wirelessly and seamlessly, delivering an end-to-end pure IP solution. **Richard Carter, Group Sales and Business Development Director, Nimans**



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# Empowered by mobile

The countdown to Gamma's launch of a 4G business mobile service has begun. Here, Rob Davis, Head of Converged Products, explains how the company is exploiting the core mobile network infrastructure that it acquired in 2014 and discusses the big opportunities for partners.

**A**head of Gamma's much anticipated business mobile launch the company has been busy briefing channel partners on its plans via a series of events leading up to its annual roadshow this month. "Our main aim is to help more channel partners to be successful selling Gamma Mobile than the 153 MVNO partners who are doing so today," explained Davis. "Gamma Mobile is critical to our long-term strategy to deliver converged fixed and mobile services to businesses, and we believe we are the only provider in the UK that has this capability exclusively for business use and designed to give our channel partners an edge in this market."

Gamma Mobile has been an important part of Gamma's telecoms services since 2007 but the acquisition in 2014 of a complete mobile core network has taken things to a new level, giving Gamma a full MVNO capability and total control over all calls, texts and data from mobiles in exactly the same way Gamma controls the calls and data for its fixed services. The acquisition and integration

of the new mobile core is a multi-million pound ongoing investment but Gamma's values remain the same.

"What has stayed constant since 2007 has been the focus on giving channel partners full ownership and control over the mobile contract with the end user, service wrap, pricing and profit they want to make," commented Davis. "This means our channel partners can provide a better service to their customers and, unlike the typical channel-based mobile dealer offerings from the big mobile operators, channel partners get from Gamma the full value of the mobile contract as a business asset."

In the first release of the new mobile service Gamma will include voicemail with options for separate messages inside office hours and outside office hours as well as much longer storage of messages. "We believe we are the first to offer a dedicated business mobile service in this way and we have plans to provide many more business-specific features in the future," added Davis. "Our



Rob Davis

channel partners will also see similar portals, billing feeds and support tools to their existing ones but with the advantage of a better service for their end users with new features like 4G and business-class voicemail built-in as standard."

### Flexibility

Gamma provides a range of both bundles and pay-as-you-use options so partners can either take pre-built bundles or build their own. "This gives our partners the full flexibility to deliver what their business customers want rather than being tied into what the large mobile operators want to force business customers to take," added Davis. "We aim to keep our wholesale pricing as low as possible for channel partners and allow them to generate the healthy margins

they need from mobile and provide the quality service wrap that businesses expect.

"We have worked hard to make the portal, billing and knowledge base tools that partners use to manage and control the new service almost the same as the current service, so our partners will find it easy to use. However, there has been an extensive project behind this to integrate the new core with Gamma's existing fixed network core. This has involved more than 44 staff on the project over an 18 month period and required new agreements to be put into place with more than 25 different suppliers.

"The biggest challenge has been getting all of this core network and systems development work done

without impacting the simple and easy-to-use way we allow our partners to manage and control the Gamma Mobile service."

According to Davis there is a significant build up of demand for what Gamma can offer the market as a full MVNO. "We intend to provide a wide range of enhancements to the service and are currently talking to partners about what they would value most to ensure we can continue giving them an edge in the market," he added.

Davis believes that Gamma has also gained an edge because of the current dynamics of the mobile market in terms of M&A. "There is much change planned with many large mergers and acquisitions," he explained. "This creates a great opportunity for us and our channel partners to focus on the important task of delivering great products and services for UK businesses while the larger operators' attention is consumed with internally-facing merger and integration activities that take many years to get right."

Gamma's ability to knit together its fixed and mobile technologies combined with its flexibility and focus will provide a springboard for partners wanting to leapfrog their competitors, says Davis. "Our size and agility means that from 'flash to bang' we can bring products to market more quickly than other network providers," he said. "And our relationships with our partners, who are closet to their customers, provide us with great feedback on what the market requires enabling us to produce innovative and relevant products." ■



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# Hobby wakes up industry

A cloud telephony reseller's greatest ally is the intransigence of their cloud-averse counterparts, according to NFON UK Managing Director Rami Houbby. Here, he issues a wake up call to diehard traditionalists who are 'sleepwalking' through an unprecedented industry transition.

**A** sign of the times is the level to which cloud telephony proponents have turned up the volume of their calls for comms and IT resellers to stop in their traditional tracks and take stock of what is happening around them. Another is the growing strength of newcomers such as NFON UK which have quickly flourished in what is still a fledgling but burgeoning market. The company

has blossomed under the leadership of Houbby for the simple reason that his proposition and channel strategy works, and he urges non-cloud players to take on-board his clear message.

"This decade's defining challenge for resellers is the imperative for them to examine their own business models, their cloud and virtualisation skills, their portfolio of vendor suppliers, and the way they train and remunerate sales staff," stated Houbby. "There is a big shift towards the subscription economy but many in our industry are sleepwalking through this transition. They must understand the challenges they face and the opportunities at hand. My advice is to grasp that nettle now on their own terms."

The most significant aspect of NFON UK's growth has been the expansion of its partner base which is reflected in the firm's overall performance since its UK operations began in 2013. "We've always been 100 per cent committed to the channel," commented Houbby. "Our partner growth exceeded 160 per cent last year and our customer base grew by over 300 per cent. We have also increased our team threefold and moved into a larger office. NFON UK has been geared for high growth since day one and we don't intend to take our foot off the gas."



Rami Houbby

Since introducing this in September 2013, NFON UK has not lost a single partner or end user customer. But its biggest opportunity is to capitalise on the seismic market shift around IT consumption. "The supply chain simply has to keep up with the way demand is going," explained Houbby. "It's interesting to look at our partner base and see a near 50/50 split between those traditional comms resellers whose evolution we are supporting, and those other partners who seem far less encumbered by the brave new world of cloud but perhaps don't have the experience with telephony."

Aside from the broad market evolution toward cloud-based IT infrastructures and new consumer-like IT consumption models – and the knock-on effect this has on the whole IT channel and supply chain – other factors influencing NFON UK's outlook include the market acceptance of UC which is driving greater demand for integrated communications channels and media.

"Enterprise customers trust cloud services and have an appetite for them," commented Houbby. "This reached a tipping point during the last 12 months. NFON and our partners find it increasingly easy to discuss cloud opportunities with business customers who have overcome cloud inertia."

Last year also saw NFON UK expand into new markets such as Government, large enterprise and white label telecoms providers with successful signings of its first large scale distributor, wholesaler and white label partners.

#### Opportunity

"There is a window of opportunity for resellers to take advantage of cloud telephony," said Houbby. "Foresighted VARs and SIs have spotted that the wind has changed in terms of IT and comms consumption.

Business people want 'as-a-service' on-demand IT, and they'd rather put technology spend on the P&L account than have truckloads of capital assets loitering around on the balance sheet. Most of all, they don't want to be made a fool of by a static one, three or five year contract for a technology need that is evolving so quickly."

A key component of NFON UK's channel strategy is its 30-day contract which has engendered long-term partner and end user loyalty.

#### NFON UK Timeline

**Autumn 2013:** Official launch of NFON UK and partner programme rollout

**Spring 2014:** Recruited the initial core partner base and expanded the team to support growth

**Summer 2014:** Attained G-Cloud 5 UK Government certification and secured high profile customer wins including Prodrive

**Autumn 2014:** Restructured the partner programme and hired additional staff in pre-sales support and business development

**Winter 2014:** Signed up 50th reseller and Skype for Business integration capabilities introduced

**Spring 2015:** Embarked on an education campaign to engage 5,000 partners

**Summer 2015:** Relocated to new offices to accommodate a tripling of the workforce and revenue in one year



# ry sleepwalkers

According to Houbby, NFON offers a 'true' cloud telephony solution, flying the flag for data protection, reliability and certified sound quality. "It is thanks to this, as well as our 160-plus intelligent features, simplicity, cost-effectiveness and fundamental security features, that NFON has become a successful provider of cloud telephony solutions across 14 European countries," he added. "End user customers can use over 70 device models from different manufacturers with their NFON Cloud Telephone System. These include IP and DECT phones, headsets, conference phones and fax gateways etc. They require no complex configuration, it's just connect and go. We also offer a series of separate add-ons and solutions to drive more value."

## International growth

NFON was founded in 2007 in Munich and originally focused on the German region before quickly growing its international market share by successfully promoting its cloud telephony proposition across all enterprise sectors. "It's the market evolution that's capturing everyone's imagination," said Houbby.

He has witnessed a large number of newly formed post-cloud resellers and other players (such as ISPs and IT-centric VARs) diversifying onto traditional comms territory. "Their lack of legacy seems refreshing to many end users who just want a simple, transparent way of procuring high quality and flexible IT services," added Houbby, who is appealing to a broad range of resellers by targeting specific activities and messages to each segment.

"The objective is to educate and turn these communities onto the opportunities of cloud telephony," explained Houbby. "For comms specialists, this means adding NFON to their portfolio first and foremost rather than supplant other non-cloud providers. For non-comms resellers, it's virgin territory. This is a rich vein of opportunity because the infrastructure-less, no-hassle install attributes of a cloud solution are biased towards resellers who don't have the technical or sales heritage of their comms-centric peers."

As well as the NFON Cloud Telephone Solution the company provides training, marketing collateral, sales and technical support. "Partners receive everything from the kit to the billing if required," said Houbby. "They don't even need to hold any handset stock, while self-install, infrastructure-less deployments means limited time on-site. Free lifelong updates to the platform keep end users and partners at the forefront of technology. It's crucial that we continue to grow our partner base in this methodical and sustainable fashion, always investing in partners rather than 'adding them to the pile'. Managing our growth with the right people and resources is critical to this objective."

Houbby noted that leading NFON UK from scratch to mover and shaker hasn't been plain sailing. At times it's involved the stresses and strains experienced by a true start-up. "Our journey is a big achievement because we've won hearts and minds," commented Houbby. "Usually, technology is all about whether the solution works and its cost, but cloud

## Just a minute with Rami Houbby...

**Role model:** Bob Metcalfe, inventor of the Ethernet Local Area Network. His intelligence and brilliant communication combined with modesty and approachability has always inspired me

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

I lived and studied in Montreal and was one of the top swimmers on my university team

## What talent do you wish you had?

To be an inspiring public speaker and writer

## Industry bugbear:

We are still a male-dominated industry

## What do you fear the most?

Bungee jumping. It was scary before, all the way down and for days afterwards

## How would you like to be remembered?

Honest, hardworking guy whose positivity and conviction woke the entire UK IT and comms channel up to proper cloud telephony

## One example of something you have overcome:

Moving to Canada in my early teens was exciting, but it came with a big challenge. I had to learn French very quickly

## Your greatest strength and what could you improve on?

I'm calm, fair and a clear communicator, and have deep knowledge of technology and business. But, I can work on my impatience. I like to have everything yesterday

telephony is very different. People feel strongly about traditional communications versus today's technology, and they generally don't like to face the truth about our changing times." ■



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# Entanet marks 20 years

During 20 years Entanet has matured into a considerable industry presence, delivered impressive growth and turned its achievements to the channel's advantage, according to CEO Elsa Chen.

**L**et's mark Entanet's 20th birthday by celebrating all long-term channel partnerships. And the best way to honour the pillars that underpin successful relationships – while giving due credit to the founding principles of channel commitment and trust advanced by Entanet and upon which the company's reputation depends – is to assess the wholesale communications provider's journey from inception, and emphasise the role of partnerships in its ongoing success.

After 20 years we can expect more strategic developments based on the tenet that a channel provider can only succeed in cooperation with partners and the nurturing of a company culture that reflects its core values. Entanet has shown us this, and according to Chen things will always remain that way. "Long-term success lies in the culture and reputation you build for your business," she said. "A company cannot survive for 20 years without strong buy-in from its people and customers. Our journey has not been all rosy, but we've been blessed with support from our people and customers during challenging times because

we are a genuine, honest and committed business."

Entanet has grown organically into a £32 million organisation with over 100 staff, its own national MPLS network and an established community of channel partners. It provides resale and wholesale partners with broadband, Ethernet and leased line connectivity, IP VPN solutions, VoIP and traditional telecoms and hosting and colocation services.

"Over the last two decades we have seen significant advances in the communications industry and fundamental changes in the use and adoption of technology," said Chen. "Connectivity has become absolutely critical to the operations of almost every commercial and public sector organisation. We need to remain at the forefront of innovation and make sure we arm our channel partners with the latest competitive services and support tools to meet not only today's but also tomorrow's market demands."

Entanet is institutionally channel focused and its partner-driven expansion is corner-stoned by trust. "Trust is the foundation of



Elsa Chen

everything in the principle of serving channel businesses," added Chen. "Plenty of wholesale providers urge their customers to place their trust in doing business with them. I simply don't see how that's possible from a channel reseller's point of view when these so-called wholesale providers also have retail divisions that are possibly selling to the same group of end users.

#### Channel focused

"That's why we're solely committed to the channel. It's a bold strategy to take, especially when the increasing margin pressure in the marketplace can make reliance on channel partners risky. However, in asking our channel partners to trust in placing their business reputation in our hands, we equally trust in their ability to win business in return."

With the building blocks of trust firmly cemented, Chen's

sole focus is about enabling and empowering partners to win. "Adaptability is one of our key strengths," she added. "We're not bound by bureaucracy and red tape, we're a business built to be responsive, flexible and adaptive to market changes, technological developments and most importantly of all, our customers' needs. In the meantime we retain the market influence, position and stature to have a significant voice with our suppliers."

Of course there have been many milestones along the way, such as being the first communications provider to deliver certain key 21CN products to the market. "However, our best achievement has been to remain 'the business next door' while growing as substantially as we have," said Chen. "Responsiveness and adaptability can easily be lost as a company grows

and we're proud that we remain approachable and easy to do business with. It sounds simple but it takes a lot of effort and commitment from us to ensure we don't become a victim of our own success."

Entanet will plough additional investments into its network and intends to work more closely with partners. Chen also indicated that a number of channel initiatives will be launched this year. "Our investment programme continues in 2016 to support several key developments – further investment into our network and infrastructure to continue the advancement of our technical resiliency and capability; future-proofing our adaptability with further development and integration of our systems and customer portals; and serving our customers with well trained people by continuing our skills and competency programme etc. Above all, it's about working with our partners even more closely and proactively to ensure we remain their choice of supplier for quality."

Having rightly beaten the drum about Entanet's cause and ambitions, Chen offered some nuggets of advice for new businesses starting out in the channel. "Find your niche," she said. "A 'me-too' business won't survive in this industry. Also, choose your suppliers wisely. Your reputation relies on their support and customers aren't forgiving of blips or outages when their entire business operation depends on the stability of their connectivity service. You only have one chance to prove yourself, and you can be sure your customers won't tolerate any disappointments." ■

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# Frisby's caught by Cobweb

Two hearts beat within the Cobweb Solutions breast. One is older, deeply experienced and entrenched in its core specialisms. The other is visionary, pioneering, ambitious, youthful, cutting edge and gunning for more growth in partnership with resellers. Setting the drumbeat and leading the charge is industry aficionado and Ex-Microsoft lead Michael Frisby who last month took hold of the reins as Managing Director. Here's his plan of action.

**F**ew Christmas presents, no matter how jaw dropping, have the power to determine the course of a young person's future career. But the minute Frisby unwrapped a Commodore VIC-20 the writing was on the wall, indelibly so once

his father's colleague, an IT manager, wrote a version of Breakout for him in two hours. "From that point I was hooked," stated Frisby. "Throughout my education I focused on pursuing a career in technology, studying IT at GCSE and A-Level and completing a degree in computing at Loughborough University."



Michael Frisby

## Lesson learnt

TO BE bolder and more ambitious when setting goals. Asking a team to deliver a 10x increase in results versus smaller incremental improvements changes how people approach the challenge and brings about more creative solutions. Even if the team *only* delivered a 5x improvement this would be significantly more than achieving an incremental 10 per cent year-on-year growth target.

Frisby built his programming skills initially in Pascal and Visual Basic, working for HP, PA Consulting and then moving to Microsoft in 1996. "My early projects included working on a Heathrow Terminal 5 capacity planning model at HP, and building the first version of Tesco.com in 1996 when I worked for Microsoft Consulting Services," he recalled.

Shortly afterwards, Microsoft created an Internet Customer Unit which Frisby joined, transitioning into a sales

and business development role, working with early ISPs, dotcom content providers and hosters. He went on to work with fledging ASPs and among their number was Cobweb. He joined the firm in 2003 as Sales and Marketing Director but in 2008 returned to Microsoft to work with European operators on B2C and B2B services. Frisby remained on the board of Cobweb as a Non-Exec Director.

Between 2010 and 2015 Frisby played a blinder, building the Office 365

Syndication business from nothing to one million users. "This is my biggest career achievement to date," said Frisby. "It involved the recruitment of major western European operators including Telefonica, Vodafone, Telenor, TeliaSonera, KPN and Telecom Italia, and then building a great team that worked with those partners to develop their cloud services portfolios, go-to-market strategies and associated execution."

So when Frisby explains his forecast for Cobweb, envisaging thousands of

channel partners reselling hundreds of different cloud services to their customers, it would be wise to take note. "We will get there by focusing on our core capabilities and expertise in delivering a range of both hosted and third party cloud services, along with supporting and building out our network of channel partners," he stated.

Immediately before rejoining Cobweb last month Frisby was responsible for Microsoft's SMB Managed Reseller channel across

# Cobweb's Microsoft credentials

western Europe, driving the transition to selling cloud services. His efforts and considerable experience in these matters are now being leveraged to the full at Cobweb, a fast growing value added cloud aggregator with annual turnover in excess of £10 million, increasing around 20 per cent year-on-year. Significantly, over 94 per cent of Cobweb's turnover is contracted recurring revenue.

"We are building on our heritage as a long-term Microsoft partner alongside other cloud service vendors such as Symantec and Acronis," commented Frisby. "Our key proposition draws on Cobweb's near 20 years experience and capabilities in hosting and selling cloud services to enable any IT reseller to be a successful cloud solution provider."

Frisby's appointment seems to have opened a new front in cloud service provision, largely based on innovation, scale, experience and partnerships, and his current strategy is three pronged. "The first is to accelerate the recruitment and development of the partner channel," he emphasised. "Secondly, I will focus on expanding the portfolio of cloud services for delivery through the Cobweb marketplace. And we will enhance our existing go-to-market and customer lifecycle management services for partners. Over the last six years I've worked with partners both large and small, enabling them to build new cloud service sales capabilities. I am bringing this experience to Cobweb."

Cobweb's status as a 2-Tier Indirect CSP Partner and the largest independent

Hosted Exchange provider in Europe was the magnet that pulled Frisby towards his new leadership role. He will undoubtedly labour valiantly to deliver on his ambitions, no matter how complex the task in hand. But the original premise behind Cobweb was simple – to enable businesses to take advantage of the Internet revolution in the traditional IT landscape. The company was founded in 1996 by Executive Chairman Paul Hannam and Julian Dyer, specialising in Internet connectivity and web hosting services.

## Hosted Exchange

The following year Cobweb launched a free B2B ISP service, partnering with the Federation of Small Businesses. In 1999 it developed a Hosted Exchange offering and created the Blue Yonder joint venture partnership with ntl:Telewest to provide hosted IT services to SMBs. Cobweb subsequently purchased control of the joint venture from Telewest in 2007, and passed the 100,000 Hosted Exchange user milestone in 2013.

"We have now expanded our user base in Hosted Exchange to more than 140,000 individual mailboxes spread across over 6,000 different businesses, making us by far the biggest provider outside the US," commented Frisby. "The customer profile has also changed. There was a time when micro-businesses would mainly consume our services, but over the past few years businesses of all sizes have adopted Cobweb's portfolio.

"The shift from being a traditional Hosted Exchange provider towards holistic

solutions has been a fundamental change in the company over the last two years. This has allowed Cobweb to be a more business focused advisor to our customers, looking at the bigger picture. This transformation means we can advise and implement a range of services to create solutions that meet business needs and in turn help support our customers' growth and aspirations through liberating technology."

This approach could precipitate the sort of revolution the market is crying out for, hopes Frisby. And his priority is to develop more industry specific solution bundles to make it easier for channel partners to provide a complete cloud-based solution. An area of immediate opportunity is

## We will be intense in our efforts for excellence in execution

around the Internet of Things (IoT) and leveraging cloud platforms such as Microsoft Azure with solutions to help organisations maximise efficiency and provide greater customer insights.

"Many people have heard of the IoT, Big Data, cloud analytics and machine learning, but they aren't sure how to take advantage of them for business success," said Frisby. "We want to build a portfolio of solutions from ISVs and solution providers that will enable any IT reseller to take a slice of

the significant opportunity in these areas. Cobweb has always had a partnership approach. The main challenge and opportunity is to grow our network of channel partners within the UK and across Europe. All IT channel partners have existing relationships with many of the large traditional IT distributors. The opportunity for Cobweb is to present our value add cloud aggregator proposition and help them transition to a cloud-first model."

Over time, more and more IT services will be delivered from the cloud, and according to Frisby there is no compromise for resellers and SIs. "They must evolve from being a provider and implementer of these solutions to helping customers maximise the benefits they deliver," he commented. "Mobility and the cloud represent a big opportunity for organisations to change the way they operate by increasing efficiency and flexibility for employees and delivering better experiences for customers.

"Evergreen cloud services will mean the end of one-off upgrade projects. Resellers need to evolve their customer engagement, revenue and profit models to deliver ongoing value and services to end users. Those that make this transition and help customers to unlock the value of their IT investments will be the most successful."

Few companies purely see a gleaming landscape ahead, but Frisby is emblematic of Cobweb's approach towards a brightening outlook for workplace flexibility, underscored by his belief that 'work is something I do, not

a place that I go'. "This is true for more organisations and driven by mobility, cloud services and the IoT," he said. "Our mission is to enable partners to help more customers take advantage of these trends. I don't believe in silver bullet solutions, but rather a continuing focus on doing the right things, in the right way, a little bit better every day. And we will be intense in our efforts for excellence in execution." ■

## Just a minute with Michael Frisby...

**Role models:** Stuart Pearce, Nigel Mansell, Ian Botham and Lewis Hamilton. All characters with a never-say-die attitude and who win through a combination of skill, talent and passion

**What talent do you wish you had?** An ability to sing

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

**Three ideal dinner guests?**

Sir Clive Woodward, a great team builder. Bill Gates because I am passionate about how technology can help individuals, companies and society. And Stephen Covey: His '7 Habits' philosophy has shaped the way I approach life and business

**Your greatest strengths and what could you improve on?** I have drive, passion and the ability to blend the technical and the commercial to create business success. I could however work on my patience. Although having three young children has definitely helped with this!

**Top tip for resellers:** Focus on how you can help your customers to be more successful and maximise the benefits that today's IT solutions deliver

# Ericsson-LG targets top th

Ericsson-LG has unequivocally re-established its credentials in the UK, made remarkable progress in regaining market share, continued to innovate its portfolio, beaten a path to the mid-market and beyond, and built a new project with the iPECS Cloud platform – and there is no lack in ambition and belief to become a top three UK vendor.

Occasionally in comms the stars align. Ericsson-LG is an innovative vendor with a globally recognised brand and Pragma a model modern distributor. Their pairing in 2012 was a response to Ericsson-LG's diminishing UK market share. Pragma, a start-up at the time with support from Ericsson-LG, had unleashed a new channel force, clearly evident during its annual Partner Conference staged last month at Whittlebury Hall with 140 delegates in attendance.

In the UK market Ericsson-LG's confidence has soared to a ten year high, and the Pragma 2015 scorecard report is just as encouraging, explained Managing Director Tim Brooks. He said Pragma's targets for last year were largely met. The distributor grew its SME business, increased its presence in the mid-market, maintained a policy of controlled distribution and improved support operations.

The fifth objective, the launch of iPECS Cloud, required more effort than first thought and work to simplify the interface and user portals put the brakes on planned progress. But this 'box' has now been emphatically ticked with the launch of a fully featured, multi-tenanted and reseller-

centric hosted solution (more on this later in the article).

To recap, following a period of decline Ericsson-LG is gaining ground in UK territory. In what is said to be a flat or declining on-premise market the vendor grew top line sales last year by 30 per cent, with unit and application attachment sales achieving higher percentage growth, reaching 50 per cent in some cases. The numbers speak for themselves: During the last three years Pragma partners have delivered more than 7,500 iPECS systems and 85,000 handsets. "It feels like we're only just getting started," stated Brooks.

In MZA's 2014 UK PBX market report Ericsson-LG's share grew from one to four percent versus 2013. In the sub-100 user market its share increased from three to seven per cent, placing the company in the top five vendors in the UK. Considering the strong performance shown by Pragma and its channel partners last year their expectations for another stand-out advance in MZA's next report are high.

Globally, Ericsson-LG now features in Gartner's top ten vendor rankings having moved up a position on last year, but a closer look at the numbers reveals that Ericsson-LG was one of only



Ahed Alkhatib

## Vertical market success is differentiating our proposition and changing the DNA of our organisation.

four vendors that grew their business organically. "Our ongoing challenge is to change perceptions about Ericsson-LG," stated Brooks. "It's not simply a SME vendor, it provides solutions that scale into the mid-market and large enterprise."

### Enterprising business

To prove the point he cited a landmark deal won by Focus Group involving the first UK implementation of iPECS-CM, installed for a FTSE 100 company. Focus beat off competition from major vendors to bag the prize. The initial deployment supports 2,500 users in the organisation's head office. "We had to deliver proof of concept with multiple SIP trunk connections into a number of fixed and mobile service providers," explained Brooks. "It also

required three different QSIG connections into different legacy platforms, and had to work seamlessly and uninterrupted for three months to show that we could deliver the solution."

Key objectives this year are to drive more growth in the on-premise business and establish iPECS Cloud as the 'hosted solution of choice'. "The cloud is an important component that completes our portfolio but we're confident the market will continue to demand on-premise solutions, so there is ongoing investment from Ericsson-LG in this area," stated Brooks.

Ericsson-LG is entrenched in its CPE strategy and there is no obstacle to investment and innovation in the on-premise portfolio despite

the cloud-heavy assertions of industry analysts whose occupational hazard is reading too much into new technologies, but the truth will challenge their expectations. Even as the on-premise PBX era is declared near-dead, CPE is far more influential than predictions suggest. And when it comes to sizing up the UK's on-premise PBX market never take a fact from a cloud-mesmerised analyst.

Every industry spawns its hype and myth, but the idea of a collapsing on-premise PBX market is a flagrant dodge of the facts and the madness of our time, according to Ahed Alkhatib, Head of Enterprise Solutions International Sales, Ericsson-LG, who is taking a stand to provoke a sane debate based on Ericsson-LG's sales figures. He said: "Any analyst you talk to says the PBX market is flat or in decline. They tell us not to expect growth. They are wrong. Our UK partners have executed and delivered growth in a market that every analyst tells us we shouldn't. Last year was the best performance for Ericsson-LG in the UK market in ten years. We are recovering our position, we have been here before, and we will accelerate further."

Alkhatib argues that rival vendors have made a great miscalculation in falling under

# Three vendor ranking in UK

the sway of cloud biased analysts, weakening their grip on traditional markets. "Other vendors have taken their eye off the premise-based solution business, but we are actively investing and planning to grow in this segment," he said. "Cloud is a priority, but it won't hit the penetration rates many analysts predict. History has shown us that technology transformation does not happen fast."

Far from keeping its nose in the trough of a diminishing market Ericsson-LG is feasting on what's really happening and realising the wider benefits of customer acquisition. "Growing from three to seven per cent doesn't tell the whole story about what our UK partners achieved last year," added Alkhatib. "With regard to unit sales the number of customers we touched was significantly more than 30 per cent. This is the future of our business, creating up-sell and expansion opportunities. There was a time when our ambition was to be a top five UK player, now we want third position."

"Last year we saw phenomenal growth, outstripping every industry benchmark. In terms of year-over-year percentage growth the UK team is outgunning every other market in the world where Ericsson-LG operates. Nobody is growing at 30 per cent in this market space. This year it's all about taking a leadership position and we have the capability to do that by working together."

Setting out an organic expansion agenda is one thing but there are potential growth areas that need to

be worked on. "The growth engine in our business is driven by UC and application attachments and mobility integration," commented Alkhatib. "This is an area that needs attention. UC should not be an up-sell or bolt-on addition to the base value proposition which is telephony. UC has to be bundled as part of our go-to-market and we are working with Pragma to do this and simplify the proposition. We also need to incorporate other applications and enable resellers to sell the whole solution."

#### Golden opportunity

The vendor is also responding to a golden up-market opportunity by sticking to the principles of heritage business and scaling up its growth ambitions in more lucrative segments. "Vertical market success is differentiating our proposition and changing the DNA of our organisation as we move from a SME play and focus on big deals in verticals," said Alkhatib. "Our business is transforming and moving up the value chain. New solutions require a different engagement model, a much higher touch, a proof of concept, a demo, more frequent visits potentially, this is all part of the transformation. Investing in the capability to do consultancy and solution-based selling is paramount."

Alkhatib has rightly identified leadership ambition as a strength. Just as critical is the vendor's technology strategy which also ranks as a great empowerment. Investment areas include web conferencing and video conferencing, WebRTC, integration with the likes of Google and Microsoft (players that own the desktop and

## In terms of year-over-year percentage growth the UK team is outgunning every other market in the world where Ericsson-LG operates

operating system) and mobile UC. "Our Ericsson heritage and wireless capabilities mean that mobility integration in the enterprise is a big thing for us, not just the integration, it's about the whole ecosystem around mobile," stated Alkhatib.

Among the new ranges of handsets, devices and clients launched at the conference one newcomer deserves particular mention. The 9071 Android-based application terminal has functionality that may, at first sight, prompt some resellers to scratch their heads. For example, Near Field Communication (NFC). "Think of the apps we could deliver with these interfaces on the terminal," added Alkhatib. "We're also working on more capabilities from an app perspective on this device, such as IoT."

Let's not be under any illusions here. Launching iPECS Cloud is a big deal. Ericsson-LG's and Pragma's joint response to feedback from partners is a complementary product to

its premise-based solutions. Will Morey, Director and co-founder of Pragma, explained: "Cloud evangelists say that the PBX is dead and cloud is the only option. We all know that isn't true. But cloud is showing healthy growth and our partners expect an increasing proportion of their customer base to move to the cloud over the next few years. So we've made significant investments in taking iPECS-CM and turning the product into a fully virtualised feature rich and reseller friendly cloud platform."

"We needed to wrap infrastructure around the platform to make it rock solid, reliable and resilient. We own our own core and can absolutely lock it down to deliver a stable environment. We deployed best of breed technology from Ericsson-LG, Cisco, Juniper and HP servers, all sitting in a Telecity data centre in the heart of London Docklands with excellent connectivity and fully duplicated. The investment has been huge for Pragma and Ericsson-LG, and it's an absolute priority for us."

Ericsson-LG's on-premise and virtualised PBX is really one solution separated



Will Morey

**The investment has been huge for Pragma and Ericsson-LG, and it's an absolute priority for us.**

only by a delivery model. But deciding on cloud or on-premise shouldn't be a question of left or right. "Importantly, resellers can talk to customers about how iPECS can address their issues, improve customer satisfaction, operational efficiency and reduce costs," added Morey. "That needs to be the primary conversation, not 'do you want cloud?'."

Ericsson-LG has support hubs located around the world and Pragma has constant access these, enabling the distributor to provide 24/7 monitoring and offer this to resellers as a chargeable service. "In the mid-market there are more critical environments. We see 24/7 support as essential," added Morey.

On the subject of support, more office-based account handlers will work alongside business development managers, and Pragma will ramp up its training this year with a number of initiatives including educational videos. Pragma is also developing an iPECS certification programme that will launch globally with iPECS Sales Professional and iPECS Technical Professional certification fully recognised.

Pragma's Partner Conference this year confirmed what its partners have long known, that Ericsson-LG is a real contender in the global arena, it wields a growing influence on the UK battleground, and with Pragma's and Ericsson-LG's stars aligned with a stellar line up of channel partners anything is possible. Who would bet against Ericsson-LG achieving its ambition to become the third largest vendor in the UK? ■

# Clear strategy pays off

Overline Managing Director John Davis's strategic plan is based on clear vision and product diversification combined with well-managed business change, and it should goad the less ambitious to follow his path.

**D**avis's drive and strategy to take Overline to the next level is based on a close reading of the market, the flexibility to react to the needs of end users, an ambition to grow, happy staff and the ability to make the right call when it matters most. "I attribute the success of Overline to making good business decisions at the right time," stated Davis. "The idea was to create a one-stop business in terms of telecommunications, and step by step we have built a portfolio that includes telephone systems, CCTV, access control, telephone network and services, broadband, and we now have our own mobile network.

"There is a growing requirement for greater flexibility in working environments which is creating the need for all communication devices to be linked from home to office, so the mobile market seemed the obvious choice for investment. It was this decision alone that enabled Overline to grow and subsequently merge the head office and sales office in October 2015 into a new modernised head office."

Sussex-based Overline currently employs 50-plus staff with a turnover of more than £5 million. Its customer base numbers over 5,000 and is mainly composed of SMEs, but Overline also works with large national organisations such as Brighton & Hove Football Club and the Adur & Worthing County Council. "Our priority is to ensure that we are providing customers with a service that is consistently high and reliable," added Davis. "This ultimately starts with a happy and valued workforce. Overline has always nurtured talent. We aim to hire people who are motivated and goal orientated, and we favour potential over experience. We also try to create a work environment that is both encouraging and open so that our staff feel comfortable sharing ideas."

Overline was formed in 1995 by Davis and Jason Young who met while working for another telecoms company. "I always had the aspiration of owning my own business and after gaining knowledge of the telecoms industry and when the opportunity arose we started Overline Network Consultants," recalled Davis. "Initially, Jason and I were covering



John Davis

all aspects of running the business, from selling, sourcing telecom equipment and services, networking, administration, financial duties, and as the business expanded, recruitment.

**Key objectives**

"Our aim is to continue to grow and expand and this year we have invested in sales, account management and customer service training. Initially this can be time consuming and expensive, but in the long run the rewards become evident in our staff's abilities and the culture we have nurtured.

Overline has always run staff incentive schemes, team building days and we participate in charity events as a company."

Overline has witnessed growing demand for cloud solutions with many companies seeing the cloud as the main future technology. "Undoubtedly, telecoms will move more in this direction," added Davis. "Overline is already on board and following this trend with our product offering and we will continue to invest as we move forward with this market."

With cloud-based options becoming ever more popular among a more discerning population of end users, and mobility also rising up their agenda favourably, Davis has shown a keen appetite for keeping pace with the times. And he serves as a reminder that standing still is not a viable option. "The need for a more integrated, faster and seamless service continues to determine the products and services Overline selects," added Davis. "Having a carefully chosen range of products enables us to accommodate all types of businesses, ensuring their requirements are met.

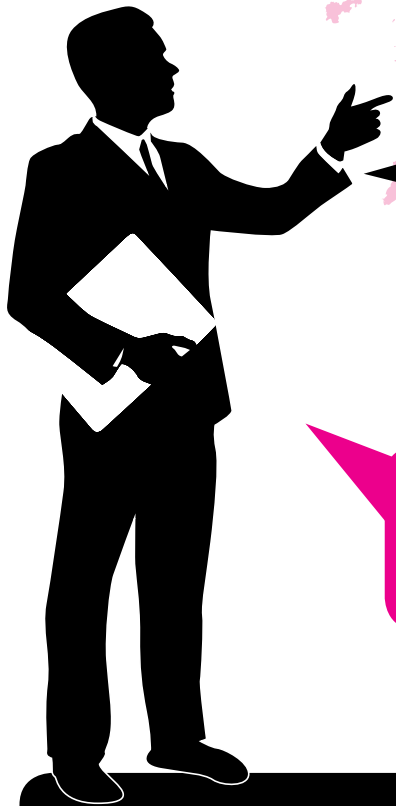
"The need for end users to deal with one company for these services has been a major influence in shaping our portfolio development and overall approach. We have built Overline from the ground upwards and the company is a true reflection of the hard work, dedication, persistence and commitment of our staff."

**Just a minute with John Davis...**

- Name one thing you could not do without in your job:** Loyalty
- What possession could you not live without?** My motorbikes: They provide me with a great sense of freedom and adventure
- What talent do you wish you had?** Telekinesis
- What do you fear the most?** Time wasted and opportunities missed
- How would you like to be remembered?** Reasonable, practical, fair and mildly obsessive
- How do you relax when not working?** Racing motorbikes



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# Cloud: It's time to tighten

A round table debate hosted by Six Degrees Group in association with Comms Dealer tested the channel's ability to deliver single instance PBX virtualisation. Six Degrees argues that there is too much loose talk around the cloud and the value of hosted propositions cannot always be taken at face value unless clear lines of definition are established between SaaS-based hosted telephony and fully virtualised PBXs.



**T**alk of the channel's power to transform end user organisations with vanilla SaaS-based hosted telephony solutions is sheer industry vanity, according to Campbell Williams, Group Strategy and Marketing Director at Six Degrees Group, who says a 'lift and shift' approach to virtualising single instance PBXs in a cloud-based infrastructure environment is the real game changer and by far the biggest mid-market opportunity. But as long as resellers and SIs are unwilling to offer themselves to this end, the chances of them succeeding in the multi-tenant SaaS world are minimal, claims Williams, who has labelled the current state of the market as 'Third Generation Convergence'. "Voice and data convergence began with VoIP when there were low expectations for its success, but it took off," he explained. "Then we saw voice over IT as organisations moved their PBXs onto

industry standard server platforms running alongside other applications. Now we are seeing demand for PBX and IP PBX instances to be moved into the cloud."

Therein lies an industry problem. Conversations about cloud-based telephony are generally interpreted as signifying an IP Centrex type environment, but that's only ever been ten per cent of the market, noted Williams, who believes that the industry needs a targeted response to this confusion in the language of hosted telephony. "In the past, comms resellers have mainly supplied on-premise systems, single instances that give customers their own slice of the world," he stated. "Now, customers are asking for their CPE to be virtualised in a cloud-based infrastructure environment because that's how they are running the rest of their IT.

"Is the channel prepared for customers who want to

virtualise their PBX equipment on, for example, Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure or a VMware private cloud? Does the industry have those skills and do sales people have those conversations? Larger players in the channel may have these capabilities, but most don't. It's important to differentiate the single instance virtualisation of PBXs from reselling someone else's hosted multi-tenant platform. That's never been mainstream and it's not where we see the IT market."

#### Ahead of the game

The best argument for resellers and SIs to stay ahead of the game is to formulate an authoritative solutions practice in partnership with IaaS partners such as Six Degrees Group which has taken a leadership role in the mid-market virtualisation space. The company works with industry heavyweights such as Softcat, Advanced 365 and Dell, and its objective is to further develop

## Customers are asking for their CPE to be virtualised in a cloud-based infrastructure environment because that's how they're running the rest of their IT

its partner engagement with a strong emphasis on the mid-market opportunity supported by a major funding boost to drive growth.

"We have a large ISV channel but want to work with a small number of additional channels that want to go on the cloud journey," added Williams. "They may be at an early stage and need a partner to provide a full stack of services, or they may have capabilities in-house but need data centres in which to build cloud solutions."

The impact of virtualisation is already strongly felt. Its

spread is predictable and according to Ricky Nicol, CEO at Commsworld, the virtualisation of IT and voice is unstoppable. To think otherwise would be like trying to hold back a tsunami with a little finger. "We're seeing staggering growth in our network coming from IT support companies," he commented. "The critical aspect for an IT director is the stability of the umbilical cord that links them to the cloud. We've supplied 2,000-plus telephone systems and recently sold one with 10,000 phones on a virtualised network. Voice is critical, it has to work,

# Up on hosted loose talk



and the umbilical cord is also critical. Companies are now driven by technology and cloud services. When customers buy a telephone system from us it will always be virtualised."

Perhaps the most significant aspect of virtualisation and the adoption of IaaS has been the speed with which end users are demanding it. Responding to this demand Azzurri built its own hosted platform to provide services to customers. "It supports 10,000 seats with 6,000 more in the pipeline over the next quarter," explained Rufus Grig, CTO at Azzurri. "We have a VMware platform with Mitel software and plan to introduce Skype for Business and Avaya IP Office. Because of our voice background there were many new tricks to learn in terms of VMware."

Alternative Networks has a long history of selling branded boxes but more recently moved to

virtualisation, building its own platform and operating various data centres and a network to connect them. "We're still scratching the surface in terms of use cases for the technology and platforms we have," stated Justin Collins, Business Development Director at Alternative Networks. "Whenever I speak to customers they want to use our platform for something slightly different than when we conceived it."

The days of predictable market demand are over and the drive for virtualisation has left no time to stumble through technological evolution. Solar is another 'old world' PBX reseller that has grabbed the bull by the horns and is now undergoing a business transformation that has been prompted by customer push combined with leadership observations of the changing market. "It's time to take the PBXs we support on-premise and virtualise them as a private cloud offering," commented John Whitty, CEO at Solar. "Our smaller customers may move to a multi-tenant platform. I come from a managed service background and we're in the process of evolving Solar into a managed service provider. The question is whether we build our own infrastructure to host PBXs in the cloud, or whether there's no need for that investment and we focus on selling."

Strategies, knowledge and skills have to be constantly updated, but the resources available may not be enough to align with the evolving requirements of end users who understand how technology can change working practices. "IT

departments are shrinking, meaning that organisations want to procure more IT as a service and the buyers have outcomes in mind," commented Williams. "They know how they want to manage their technology, and suppliers that cannot respond to this agile approach will be left behind. SIs that align their strategies with the needs of customers will be taken in the right direction. But if all they can talk about is on-premise and capex they are vulnerable to the inroads of rivals with the flexibility to assess where end users are on their journey and can handhold them towards the brave new world."

#### Pull-through

Collins first noted this trend towards end user pull-through with tablet computing and BYOD, along with the advent of more stakeholders in the buying process. "Now it's harder for a sales person to identify who they should be targeting," he added. "They may be in a meeting with someone who is notionally a decision maker, but in most companies there is a layer above them who are not technical but set the general direction of the company. In our experience, they can have strong opinions about the cloud, whether it should be used and to what extent. It's a challenge for people on the front line to know who is making the decisions."

The difficulty is a lack of any previous narrative. The industry really is blazing a trail and the go-getters are determined to press ahead with a new generation of customers and technology. Pat Botting, co-founder and Managing Director of Freedom Communications

(established 27 years ago this month), for a long time operated as a traditional dealer selling PBXs but more recently invested in the data and UC environment. "We've moved to a consultative approach rather than a product sale," he stated. "Larger organisations are happy to invest in consultancy and proof of concept. Our revenues are moving away from product towards professional services. Customers want a safe pair of hands to lead them to the new world, and they pay for the expertise rather than worry about the cost of the product. The value customers gain from this consultation is the way forward."

A common theme of the round table debate was the vulnerability of many resellers and SIs to pressure from IT buyers who have done their homework, are driven by outcomes but need help to realise the change they desire. Buyers are more sophisticated, they use the Internet and peer groups to inform their buying decisions, and they can be over 70 per cent of the way through a traditional sales process before even engaging with a supplier. "Buying behaviour is based on research and reputation far more than the views of a sales person," noted Williams. "The industry doesn't fully understand digital buying behaviour. This will potentially put some resellers out of business if they are not aligned with their buyer's preferences."

Industry trends demand action, and any thinking person must know that the only response to these challenges is a well-equipped sales and engineering force. But standing across the path

of action are skills shortages in areas such as UCaaS. "Our conversations with customers are not about products, we discuss business processes and how they need to look in the future," stated Steve Ellis, Managing Director at 365iT. "Technology is the enabler. We see organisations that in the past would have wanted an on-premise refresh now opting for opex. But we have a problem finding UC skills. We are now trying to get apprentices into the company."

The lack of UC skills in the industry, both sales and engineering, exposes the channel's fragility, and Six Degrees's campaign to bolster partners with know-how and full support is a

**Continued on page 42**

#### Bites from the table

"We're supposed to be the experts, so it's the job of sales people to educate the customer."

**William Rowland, Director, Connexis**

"We grow our own engineers and sales people, and look for talent not experience. You have to be committed to finding the right people and training them, and they have to be committed to a career with your business."

**Ian Vickerage, President, ScanSource Communications, Europe**

"No matter what you're selling, customers will be buying more 'as a service' rather than capital expenditure."

**Steve Ellis, Managing Director, 365iT**

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**Continued from 41**  
responsibility that should be applauded. Mark Roach, Head of Channel at Six Degrees Group, explained his strategy. "We already have a channel team and are now formulating a new approach to expand our partnership activity with resellers and SIs in the mid-market, and developing our on-boarding process and partner engagement model. We conduct workshops with partners to better understand their plans and requirements, and we follow these up with a plan of education linked to how we tailor packages for partners. We blend our portfolio with theirs and understand how UCaaS sits in the overall strategy."

Six Degrees's network of channel support specialists play a crucial role in helping partners change business models based on well-directed strategies designed to help mid-market organisations, those with 200-500 seats upwards, overcome their problems. "These companies have legacy challenges, multiple applications, a complex environment, security concerns and compliance issues," explained Williams. "They want sales people who understand their business and the direction its leaders want to take. Sales consultants must leverage horizontal skills to build a technology environment that will keep the customer's business running, secure,

## Companies have legacy issues and want sales people who understand their business and the direction its leaders want to take

and compliant with industry regulations where necessary – and do it for a price that is reasonable."

To this end Six Degrees Group has developed a thriving ISV channel. Its partners take applications, then do some development work around them and layer on infrastructure elements using Six Degrees' data centres and networks. "There may be a minimum of 20 applications in a medium sized enterprise, but we know some with 90-100 applications," said Williams. "Our partners don't talk to customers about infrastructure and plumbing, they want to sell 'application down'. By default they get the platform, the infrastructure, the network, the desktop, the devices etc. Their engagement with the end user is based on keeping their business

running, understanding what keeps them up at night and providing virtualised solutions that make them sleep better."

What industry messages should be drawn from this round table discussion? Communications technology has rarely enjoyed greater status and customers are in thrall to the possibilities. So this is no environment in which to peddle spurious expertise. But to thrive in one of the most innovative sectors is fraught with challenges, and there is no place for patchy remedies to the industry obstacles discussed. And with virtualisation accelerating at great speed, there is no time to lose. "Does the channel have the skills to lift and shift?," asked Williams. "If you don't do it, someone else will." ■

### Bites from the table

"We have been distributing VoIP hardware for 15 years and deliver provisioned handsets to end users on behalf of service providers. We're starting to see PBXs going into the cloud."  
**Darren Garland, Managing Director, ProVu**

"We've moved into the IT market because that's what our customers want us to do."  
**Neil Barrall, Managing Director, Telecoms World**



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# How Denwa brings a touch

Denwa's Chief Executive Rob Scott discusses the thrill of being a young comms engineer, working in Japan, selling his first system on eBay, surviving the recession with aplomb, being at the leading edge, success in the enterprise space and celebrating ten years in business.

**A**t the age of 19 Scott (a trainee telecoms engineer at the time) was well on the way to becoming a dab hand at putting in Avaya Index and Inter-Tel Axxess systems. He relished the freedom of being his own boss, on the road, and welcomed the variety that characterised each working day. Yet an irresistible case of itchy feet combined with a questing for wider experiences prompted Scott to head east towards the land of the rising sun, oriental Japan. "I wanted to travel beyond the UK so sent my CV to all of the Inter-Tel branches around the world," commented Scott. "Only one responded – Inter-Tel Japan."

He ultimately worked in Tokyo for two years and set up a firm that traded in a small way, but nevertheless Scott made his mark. "I was the first person to make a bilingual music on hold production for the Japanese market," he said. "The expat businesses loved it."

It's worth mentioning at this point that 'Denwa' is Japanese for 'telephone'. And answering the call for more travelling experiences Scott headed to Thailand in 2004 to plan his next move and left two days before the tsunami on 26th December. "Something told me my plans had to be executed, and there was no time to waste," he added.

Alighting in the UK Scott took up a 'filler' job before quitting to sell phone systems on eBay. With one sale under his belt, Denwa was established in 2006. "At this stage I had no sales experience, just a 'back of a fag packet' spreadsheet on how much I needed to sell to keep the bills paid," recalled Scott. "But I joined a local networking club, talked to people who offered advice, and subsequently sold more systems."

This year marks Barrowford-based Denwa's 10th anniversary and Scott is now in a position of authority to offer sound observations and advice to those who need it in the industry. "The UK comms market is ripe for disrupting," he said. "Smaller resellers have the power to deliver much better service levels than the big guys. And as cloud continues to change the way we deploy and support systems, it's going to be more about account management than ever before. Service is our golden arrow."

As a relatively traditional comms dealer that is switching from PBX sales to pay monthly cloud solutions Denwa's challenge is accommodating the change in cashflow. "At present, monthly billing services are about 50 per cent of our revenues," said Scott. "We see this changing significantly over the next three years."



**Rob Scott**

## It's more about account management than ever before. Service is our golden arrow

The importance of billing services to Denwa emerged when the recession hit soon after the firm was established. "Businesses suddenly stopped buying and it was all about saving

them money," noted Scott. "Luckily I had the foresight to start my own billing early on, so when companies wouldn't buy a new system I typically managed to save them money on their call charges."

Denwa has always supplied small and medium businesses, originally with phone systems, maintenance and minutes, but has dramatically shifted into cloud solutions. More recently Denwa entered

# ch of the orient

the enterprise market and is developing its share in this segment with customers such as Max Spielmann, Timpsons and Motability. In December last year Denwa secured a place on the G-Cloud 7 Government Framework, winning both lots it bid for – PaaS focusing on UC, and SaaS with a bias towards SIP-based solutions.

Being awarded a place on the G-Cloud 7 framework was a significant step towards Denwa achieving its growth targets following Rosebud funding through Enterprise Ventures last year, its largest investment to date amounting to £367,000 in support of working capital. Part of Scott's master plan is to expand the workforce by another 20 people over the next two years. "People are our greatest asset and we are currently 30-plus strong and looking to grow via our 2016 recruitment campaign," he commented. "We will expand our sales and technical teams in line with growing business demands."

## People power

"Everyone is behind Denwa. We're a team of young, energetic individuals who are focused on business success and growth. Reward and recognition are key to our success. We invest a large portion of our profits each year into showing our team how much we appreciate their hard work, including trips to Dubai, Tokyo and Vegas. This way we will go from strength to strength, growing and developing our teams as we go forward. A few years from now we'll be doing some big numbers for sure."

Scott prides himself on Denwa's 'quirky' approach

to business and how staff stamp the firm's personality on all activities. "Our team DNA gets us where we want to go quickly, and our value proposition is our business agility," he said. "This also underpins our product knowledge and service levels. We've been quick to respond to changing market conditions and with the move to UCaaS we were ready much earlier than many of our competitors. This year will see us launch several new cloud-based products such as MiCloud Office and MiCloud Analytics from Mitel."

Gaining an early mover advantage in new areas of the market is paying off, but not without some associated challenges. "Launching our enterprise sales team has been a major part of our strategy in the past two years," explained Scott. "We've won some major accounts and our traction in this space is growing month-on-month. The challenge is evolving our workforce to accommodate these large accounts, not just in terms of knowledge but also geographically."

Getting to grips with, and harnessing, revolutionary technology is another challenge, made worse by the seeming intransigence of those whose job it is to bring new innovations to market. "WebRTC is a serious game changer for us all," noted Scott. "But many of the major vendors haven't got off the starting blocks yet. I'd like to wake up the vendors and get them to rewrite their software in the cloud as soon as possible."

"They can be too slow and appear to be satisfied with an uncomfortable adaptation

of the traditional interface. End users are often frustrated with the speed of R&D in the communications industry, and failure to launch in the cloud properly will result in resellers switching to smaller, nimbler vendors that can offer fresh looking and feature rich cloud products and services."

## Just a minute with Rob Scott...

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

Among family and friends I'm known as the Sambuka Fairy (I love sharing a bottle or two!)

### What talent do you wish you had? To sing

**Role model:** My CEO from Inter-Tel Japan, Michael Bell, the coolest entrepreneur I've ever met

**What do you fear the most?** The threat of terrorism to the innocent, hard working people of this world

**One example of something you have overcome?** My fear of the sea by learning to scuba dive and swimming with sharks

**What possession could you not live without:** My wellies, I wear them every day

**Key career achievement:** Never looking back

**Top tip for resellers:** Take care of your customers or someone else will

**Your greatest strength and what could you improve on?** My main strength is my generosity, which is also what I need to work on as it sometimes gets me into trouble!

**Denwa's company culture in a nutshell:** Fresh, fun and energetic. We like to think we're the Apple of the communications industry

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# Essential value creation

Annuity revenues are the essence of true value, growth and longevity in business, argues Steve Ellis, Managing Director, 365iT.

**A**s for buying and selling IT companies Ellis has been there and done it before, more than once. However, not satisfied with a string of past successes he is busy building on his latest investment made two years ago, this time 365iT, a PE-backed mid-market managed services provider specialising in UC and building annuity revenues. "The comms element of the IT industry is new to me, but my previous experience in creating shareholder value in mid-market focused managed services organisations, particularly those backed by PE and having external shareholders, has helped me in my new role," said Ellis.

His IT industry career began in 1988 at IBM as a salesman, but more lucrative opportunities in selling automation systems to the manufacturing industry caught his eye. "I soon learnt that I was most comfortable in smaller company environments, and after working for a couple of SIs I started my own business in 1999 with two work colleagues. Within 12 months of starting up we purchased the company we previously worked for and created a business turning over £60 million."

Two years later the business was carved up and sold off

in slices. Ellis acquired the infrastructure division via an MBO backed by Private Equity in 2003, and sold it in 2005 to Logicalis for over four times the purchase price. During this period Ellis's Midas touch was again evident following the acquisition of three other IT companies with a combined turnover of over £100 million by the time he left in late 2006.

"A year later I invested in a managed services business called AssurIT which specialised in providing cloud-based solutions on the IBM iSeries platform," recalled Ellis. "In 2011, myself along with other private individuals provided the funding to purchase a reseller business and merged it with AssurIT to create APSU. I successfully exited this business in 2014 when an MBO was carried out with backing from BGF."

Ellis, who has also been a Non-Executive Director and Chairman of a number of IT services businesses in the UK and abroad, is especially interested in helping companies grow by increasing their turnover and profits from annuity revenue streams. Sticking to this policy is a preoccupation at 365iT, which is part of a combination of companies that were acquired by 365iTechnology between 2007 and 2009. The acquisitions brought



Steve Ellis

together a broader technology offering.

"Impera Data was one of the first companies to provide cloud-based back-up solutions," explained Ellis. "Dynax offered infrastructure solutions including servers, storage, virtualisation, DR, thin client and software. Secure Networks brought a range of security products and services to SMB customers. And 5i was a channel services company specialising in Cisco communications and networking. Each of these organisations provided consultancy, implementation services, product fulfilment and support in their specialist areas."

In 2011 they were merged and a single management team integrated the business to establish an organisation that could deliver fully rounded managed IT services to corporate customers. "The amalgamation of these

businesses has enabled us to provide an end-to-end solution," stated Ellis. "Our customers take great comfort in the fact that they have a trusted partner across the entire IT spectrum instead of maintaining multiple supplier relationships. They tell us that this provides intrinsic value to them."

#### Partnerships

365iT's base of circa 510 customers are predominantly mid-market organisations, and the company generates approximately 20 per cent year-on-year growth with annuity growth of 10 per cent. Of its 55 employees over a quarter have been with the business for 10-plus years. Staff loyalty is reflected in strong vendor partnerships, most notably shown by the appointment of a Cisco Alliances Manager to manage this strategic partnership. "We offer a broad range of technologies across multiple vendors such as Microsoft, Cisco, WatchGuard, IBM

and Enghouse Interactive, differentiating our approach to the market by being specialist and consultative, which in turn allows our customers to differentiate themselves through the adoption of technology," said Ellis. "We are constantly evaluating new technologies and how these can support our customers' growth ambitions. For example, embracing workforce transformation and seeing how this can be achieved."

Ellis also pointed out that a priority is to continue to evolve the managed services offering while identifying new areas where he can bring complementary services to the existing portfolio and also build annuity revenues. "With cloud adoption becoming more prevalent, together with technology drivers such as mobility, web conferencing and telepresence, the demand for connectivity globally has grown significantly," added Ellis. "With our help customers are able to take advantage of specialised services and grow into new technology areas that improve the customer experience – but without upfront capital investment.

"Our business has witnessed a tremendous shift in the growth of annuity and managed services revenue. As the industry sees cloud adoption grow and customers continue to demand consumption-based models it is important that we reflect this not only directly through our portfolio, but also at an operational level, looking at how we can facilitate this transition across the business. Our biggest opportunity is to focus less on reselling and more on providing annuity-based solutions." ■



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Pete Tomlinson, Director of Sales, Marketing and Product at Eclipse.

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This year, the Awards finals day on May 5th will be 'double fun' as we'll also be celebrating Comms Dealer's 20th anniversary with a spectacular after show party, giving your teams the chance to really let their hair down!

Comms Dealer is once again delighted to have the support of Eclipse, who are sponsoring the awards for the third year running and Pete Tomlinson,

Director of Sales and Marketing, urges channel people to get involved.

"I am a passionate supporter of this awards process because it gives us all the chance to recognise and reward our teams who spend their time making life easier and better for our customers. Their collective hard work, positivity and pride are what make the channel such a privilege to be part of."

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*NIGEL SERGENT  
Editorial Director, Comms Dealer*



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**TOM METCALFE**  
**CHANNEL TELECOM**

“Having been recognised as Service Provider Marketing Team of the Year 2015 was a terrific accomplishment and something we are incredibly proud of. We always try to

be as innovative and creative as possible with our marketing and for those efforts to be acknowledge is enormously gratifying. The CDSA’s are a fantastic event with the award taking pride of place in our office.”



**CHRIS GOODMAN**  
**FOCUS**

“Winning the Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards in 2015 was a great accomplishment. The award is a fantastic way to demonstrate to both aspirational salespeople and established performers,

that Focus Group is a business offering a platform to achieve great things both individually and as part of a successful team. It makes people want to work for you, and that is priceless!”



**PAUL TAYLOR**  
**VOICEFLEX**

“The Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards is one of the highlight events of the channel and we are very proud to be a winner of the 2015 awards. It is important that we continue to

recognise the hard work and achievements of staff and celebrate their accomplishments. It is always a pleasure to share success and network with colleagues at an enjoyable and entertaining event. ”



**CHARLES AYLWIN**  
**8X8**

“The Comms Dealer Sales Awards are a great opportunity for the industry to take stock of the fantastic work across the year. The awards recognise the best in our industry and how

the Channel has continued to grow and adapt to the changing business environment over the last year. We always look forward to this great event and to celebrating another brilliant year in 2016 with the best people in the channel.”



**ANDY GRANT**  
**BOWAN ARROW**

“These awards enable us all to stop take a breath and celebrate both the team and individual sales and marketing successes from the past 12 months. The awards cover a variety of categories that allow us to recognize many outstanding

sales and marketing achievements. Every year the dynamics of our industry change, our customers’ requirements change and our approach to sales and marketing change but our sole focus remains constant: helping our customers to assess the best technology options for their business.”



**SIMON LONGFORD**  
**BERRY TELECOM**

The Berry Telecom team were thrilled to receive the ‘Sales Team of the Year Awards’ for its revenue category and as overall winners. The awards have given Berry confirmation that its sales strategy and

service levels are recognised as leading by our own high performing industry. We can now more easily quantify and communicate to our customers, and prospective customers, the level of performance and service Berry provides.”



**VINCENT DISNEUR**  
**UNION STREET**

“The Comms Dealer Sales Awards is unquestionably one of the highlights of the industry calendar, never failing to attract the channel’s biggest names and providing the perfect opportunity to meet and engage with industry colleagues in a vibrant and friendly atmosphere.”

## THE CATEGORIES

With a full range of supplier and reseller awards up for grabs, competition for places in the final shortlist will be as stiff as ever. Here are the categories:

### Reseller Categories

- Reseller Sales Team of the Year (businesses up to £2.5m turnover)
- Reseller Sales Team of the Year (businesses £2.5m- £7.5m turnover)
- Reseller Sales Team of the Year (businesses over £7.5m turnover)
- Best Marketing Campaign

### Distributor Category

- Channel Account Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Campaign of the Year

### Vendor Category

- Channel Account Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Campaign of the Year

### Service Provider Category

- Channel Account Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Team of the Year
- Channel Marketing Campaign of the Year

### Best Channel Marketing/PR agency

### Overall Sales Team of the Year

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# Tackling toll fraud: Is the

Strong carrier led counter fraud measures combined with a tightening up of standard anti-hacking processes, along with end user education and a channel rally in support of greater industry collaboration could bring a new dimension to clamping down on fraudsters. Big strides have been made in the war against phone hackers, but far more ground can be gained by advancing a policy of industry collaboration.

**T**he Communications Fraud Control Association's latest worldwide comms industry survey estimates 2015 fraud losses to be \$38.1 billion, down 18 per cent from 2013. But the issue remains a hot potato with much still to be achieved in the war against fraudsters. One industry body taking decisive action is ITSPA which is making big strides in tackling both the financial and reputational damage caused by telecoms fraud. "We engage with the industry, experts and law enforcement agencies to ensure that best practices for fraud prevention, reporting and recording are documented and distributed to interested parties," explained David Cargill, Chair of ITSPA's Operations Working Group.

Toll Fraud, where fraudsters use compromised IP PBXs or IP-phones to make calls to international destinations for the purpose of carrying voice calls for free is declining as international termination rates reduce. However, International Revenue Share Fraud (IRSF), where fraudsters call revenue share numbers they control in countries like Latvia, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea etc is increasing exponentially. "Fraudsters are actively scanning the Internet for targets 24x7,"

added Cargill. "Once targets are identified they run through a sequence of automated steps that are fine tuned to the device they want to compromise. Typically, fraudsters will find an IP phone or IP PBX that is not secure and then harvest the SIP credentials (username, password and proxy address) to make calls on that account from an automated system abroad."

Losses by UK telcos to fraud are substantial, but most go unreported as businesses deal with the cost and consequences internally. "ITSPA is working to improve this through a joint initiative with Action Fraud to encourage service providers, resellers and customers to report fraud online using the ITSPA Action Fraud Reporting Instructions," said Cargill. "Resellers need to understand how these frauds occur and also check deployments using a scanner or penetration testing tool, either themselves or using a third party. Resellers should also ensure that calls cannot be connected to known IRSF numbers and be able to block access to new number ranges as they become known."

Remote zero touch phone provisioning enables service providers and resellers to roll out services rapidly, but the provisioning server is a high



Simon Woodhead

**"Toll fraud costs are only limited by effective controls and prompt action. And the death of, or severe damage to, an otherwise healthy business can occur in minutes."**

value target for fraudsters so extra care must be taken to ensure the service and the servers it's run on are secure and hardened, pointed out Cargill (ITSPA's Provisioning Best Practice Paper discusses the key elements of secure provisioning). "Organisations such as TUFF, Financial Fraud Action UK, Action Fraud, ITSPA and FCS all have initiatives in this area but we could do with a joint committee to represent all the various telco interests to the law enforcement and legislative communities," commented Cargill.

That said, the biggest security threat is a lack of proper engagement with the issue, according to Simon

Woodhead, Managing Director of Simwood, who is on a mission to turn apathy into action and is driving his agenda with what could be the strongest piece of fraud research to date. Simwood's VoIP Fraud Analysis 2016, published in January, is an update to a document first published two years earlier. Its findings have been presented in many forums, both public and private, and the 2016 document was much anticipated, containing deep insights into all aspects of toll fraud, and it serves as an information resource for the industry.

"Toll fraud, in particular dial through fraud, is one of the biggest risks facing

businesses operating in the VoIP space or for end user organisations with IP-enabled PBXs," stated Woodhead. "The costs are only limited by effective controls and prompt action. And the death of, or severe damage to, an otherwise healthy business can happen in minutes. Diligent service providers realise that their success depends more on minimising actual risk than maximising theoretical margin. A good value high quality carrier can provide a comprehensive portfolio of features to avoid or contain the cost of toll fraud."

International revenue share fraud is the primary concern of Ben O'Leary, Revenue Assurance Manager, Gamma. "We rarely see voicemail dial through frauds which used to be abundant, but there is a greater variety of direct PBX hacks," he warned. "The simplest preventative steps are the most effective. Resellers need to understand these and be prepared to talk about fraud risk controls as part of the sales conversation.

"We have had great success with our automated monitoring and capping services on our IP products, reducing the average cost of a fraudulent incident by around 40 per cent over the past three years. No one can promise a

# industry doing enough?

watertight communications environment. However, experience shows that our customers are significantly better protected if they move away from a PBX solution to our hosted IP service where we have visibility of the entire environment."

Unless the authorities become more effective at catching the perpetrators of fraud, the only option is to ensure it becomes ever less profitable, believes O'Leary. "Communication within the industry about monitoring techniques and stopping the flow of funds will be important over the next five years," he said. "The EU regulatory roaming data cap is a useful model and addresses the same basic problem, cutting off unwanted traffic. To address fraud, a similar regulatory requirement could be that all networks must offer the ability to bar any services at an agreed industry-wide threshold on an opt-out basis."

Communicating the risks of fraud is the first step to reducing them. "A sales manager once said to me that no one wants to mention fraud when making a sale," added O'Leary. "If your competition focuses on all the positives and you leave the customer thinking about the negatives then you'll lose the deal. This approach does not serve the customer or the industry well. By partnering with the right network and understanding the basics resellers can turn fraud risk management into a sales strength."

Firstcom Europe reports no incidences of toll fraud this year but it usually sees on average one a month, and

sometimes they occur more frequently. Toll fraud and network security continues to be a key area of concern for the company as a service provider, but despite the temporary lull Chris Harding, SIP Encrypt Product Specialist, does not envisage the problem going away any time soon. "Wherever there is an opportunity fraudsters will look for ways to profit from it," he said. "We primarily see PBX dial through carried out remotely by opportunistic hackers to premium rate numbers in order benefit from revenue generating fraud. Quite often the premium rate numbers are overseas."

## Strong measures

Firstcom Europe provides anti toll fraud measures in the form of spend threshold dead stops and irregular activity alerts. "But we always caution customers and partners that fraud monitoring is not fraud prevention," stated Harding. "Thresholds and alerts will minimise losses and we also encourage partners to be vigilant with strong passwords across PSTN lines and voicemail systems, and to educate their customers about access rights and the importance of passwords."

"With hackers getting more and more adept at taking advantage of the latest technology and software to identify insecure systems and crack the password, we did an experiment of our own to get a scope of the problem. We used a well known piece of scanning software and found 160,000 open IP addresses on a randomly selected class A IP range. In order to provide a watertight comms environment partners could deploy an additional

call encryption device to act as a firewall and effectively camouflage the IP address."

Harding welcomes collaboration in the channel to address fraud but he believes there is potential for conflict due to confusion over who along the supply chain bears the financial responsibility when toll fraud occurs. "As we are all ultimately on the same side, the industry could consider a policy whereby charges are not passed on in proven cases of toll fraud, meaning that the revenue stream never reaches the perpetrator," stated Harding.

"Obviously, this would work for domestic calls only as international carriers must be paid regardless of the fraud. A complete industry fix would be for the major carriers to not pay their international bill for fraudulent use. This would close down the services overnight. More often than not anti-fraud measures are aimed at the symptom rather than the cause. One way of getting rid of premium rate number scams would be to scrap revenue generating

numbers altogether so there is no profit to be had."

The importance of vetting potential clients should not be underestimated, according to Tony Martino, Managing Director, Tollring. "Fraudulent clients can rack up costs quickly then 'disappear', so resellers need to proactively monitor behaviour and usage with the ability to turn off a service quickly," he stated. "Remaining agile and dynamic is imperative in this market. And as fraudsters become more sophisticated in their methods, so must fraud monitoring tools evolve."

Martino supports the argument for more collaboration and coordination among carriers to identify and stop fraudulent activity. "In other areas of the market such collaboration exists to strengthen protection against computer viruses and bad credit, for example," he stated.

Channel Telecom Managing Director Clifford Norton has also called for greater collaboration, but his personal crusade has so far

fallen on deaf ears. "I have tried to get the industry to talk to each other," he commented. "I have even invited some of the larger companies to discuss this in an open forum. Out of the 20 asked two responded. I have reported it to all the official bodies and even provided proof of certain people and companies actually committing the fraud. The police are far too busy and the regulatory bodies have little or no power. The only real way to get the industry heard would be to get a good group of telecom companies together and lobby our concerns to the Government. This would of course need to be backed by various politicians."

Not surprisingly, toll fraud ranks as a top priority for Channel Telecom. "It is our partners and customers that have to pay the bill, and so do we when the customer refuses to pay or leaves us feeling we could have done better," added Norton. "Why, when a carrier sees or monitors such strange behaviour do they not cease the service themselves? And in the case of premium rate fraud who gets the payments and makes a profit from this?"

"We bar all premium rate calls unless the customer agrees to having them not barred. We download CDRs from the carriers every four hours, so normally within five hours we will stop incidences of fraud as best we can. But the future should see carriers take more responsibility and not argue over which numbers are premium rate and which are not. They should also offer better barring options. The industry's general response to these issues is poor." ■



Chris Harding

**"We always caution our customers and partners that fraud monitoring is not fraud prevention."**

# Provista takes a view

Stuart Little, Director of Scotland-based Provista UK, discusses the company's bright prospects as an ambitious network-focused professional services organisation with its sights set on larger rivals and expansion south of the border.

**G**etting under the skin of computers at an early age piqued Little's imagination and ambition, prompting him to study for an ONC in electronics ahead of a planned career in the RAF. With flying colours Little achieved full marks in the electronics entrance exam but he was diagnosed with a hearing problem, a turn of events that led to him going back to college where he completed a HND before securing a job with Standard Telephones and Cables commissioning equipment that digitised the BT network during the early 1990s. "From there I moved to a company that installed X25 packet switched networks for some of the major banks," he commented. "I became deeply involved in data communications for the enterprise."

Then Little became a consultant engineer with Cisco Partners and achieved certification for Cisco and other vendors. With this experience under his belt Little and two co-founders set up Provista UK in 2006. Today the company operates out of offices in Hamilton, Aberdeen and Birmingham, has big plans for expansion

south of the border and currently employs 30 staff. "Provista UK was initially established to deliver a cloud network monitoring and management service for Cisco IP telephony services," explained Little. "From the outset we had a rack in a colocation data centre and signed up a couple of customers, both large universities. We delivered proactive monitoring and completed all add-ons, moves and changes from a managed office and our homes for the first few months.

"We expanded with another three customers in six months and within a year we moved into our first office. Customers asked for Cisco upgrades so we signed up as a registered Cisco partner. From that point onwards Provista has grown organically year-on-year and moved through all of the partner levels and to larger offices. We are aiming to achieve Cisco Gold Partner status within the next couple of months, which is the highest partner level and would make us the only Cisco Gold partner with a HQ in Scotland."

In May last year Provista was named Cisco's Partner of the



Stuart Little

Year in Scotland for 2015, the first time this status has been awarded to a Scottish-based organisation in ten years, previous winners being the likes of British Telecom, Virgin Media and Capita IT Enterprise Services. "We are proud of this achievement as it underlines the quality of our Cisco solutions and the investment in Provista to win this award," added Little.

#### Financial strength

Provista is self-funded, debt free and has re-invested profits to drive organic growth, projecting revenues of £7 million this financial year and targeting £10 million within the next two to three years. "We are currently investing in staff, our Cisco partnership and forecasting growth, enabling us to invest more in future expansion," added Little. "We spend a lot of time recruiting and training to get the highest possible skills and this is our biggest

challenge. Our strategy is to stay focused on the customer and continue providing best quality services. This can only be achieved by continuing to invest in Provista staff and developing our current employees."

Provista also has relationships with Avaya and FortiNet, to name just two, and works across all architectures – security, data centre, collaboration, wireless, as well as LAN and WAN networks along with a rich portfolio of services. According to Little the company is geared up to execute against larger rivals by leveraging its flexibility. "It is crucial for us to allow Provista to grow organically and not to lose our agility, flexibility and customer service," he added.

Provista has strengthened its security expertise, data centre and cloud offerings, and continues to build on

elements of the portfolio with new products and services such as cloud video for the enterprise. "We assist our customers in leveraging all of the benefits of a secure and unified network infrastructure environment, including operational cost savings and enhanced business output," added Little.

"The industry is evolving to a services model and the suppliers that do not embrace this will struggle. There will always be a need for infrastructure but the model of delivery is changing and technologies such as SDN will become the norm. This is an opportunity for smaller more adaptable organisations such as Provista that can embrace technologies quickly and offer them to customers with a quality service wrap." ■

#### Just a minute with Stuart Little...

**One example of something you have overcome:** Shyness when young. Now I am happy to speak and present to an audience

**What do you fear the most?** The event I do not see coming that could be a risk to Provista's future, such as a major shift in the market or a political event that changes things overnight

**What talent do you wish you had?** To be more flamboyant and excite people when public speaking

**Lesson learnt:** I would have started my own company earlier and hired that person who was slightly above my budget but had the best CV. That pays in the long run

**Top tip:** Hire the best staff and look after them as they make the difference

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# Channel by definition

Channel Telecom owner and Managing Director Clifford Norton reflects on a 'whirlwind' year in which turnover jumped from £7 million to £10.5 million and channel partner numbers rose by an additional one hundred.

**A** blinding winter sun illuminates the headquarters of Channel Telecom in fashionable Buckhurst Hill, Essex, on the morning Comms Dealer meets up with Norton. The entrepreneur's outlook, in respect to the recent progress and future potential of the network services company he founded three and a half years ago, is equally bright and it's a confident, optimistic Norton who sits down to outline the rapid growth and future of his business over an express lunch.

Norton's 'to do' list would stretch from the table to the kitchen and beyond but his 'task completed' items are getting struck off at a pace and he enthusiastically reflects on a highly successful year. "It's been a whirlwind but enormously gratifying and a lot of fun," he said. "We've grown our turnover from £7 million to £10.5 million in 12 months and added over 100 partners."

It's a dramatic increase which Norton puts down to a simple philosophy – being channel-only and 100 per cent partner focused. "In business I care about a lot

of things, but I am mostly passionate about being totally committed to my reseller and dealer partners," he added. "I think there are only a couple of us left that only do channel. I don't agree with people that run a channel and then have a direct sales force. It just doesn't work. You take some of our big competitors out there, they're going into deals with their direct people offering cheaper rates than you can get it wholesale. How or why is that fair?"

Norton says he now has 150 resellers and 150 dealers on his books who come from every type of business sector from office removal businesses to IT companies and PABX specialists, but he firmly maintains he values and respects them all, regardless of their size and the amount of network business they run through Channel.

"We have a vast range of partners and another thing I am obsessive about is loyalty," added Norton. "If we have a partner that gives us one deal a year and it's a nice sizable deal, we are not going to say after six months, 'you have not given us any



Clifford Norton

more business so we are not paying you'. We'll carry on paying them whereas a lot of the other channel companies would say 'if you don't deliver us a minimum amount, we won't give you any more commissions'. I think that's a disgusting way to treat a partner.

#### Partner loyalty

"I have got some partners with one customer who is paying them substantial amounts of money every month. Why should you want to ruin that relationship? And that partner or that customer will recommend us to someone else. You know it will eventually happen."

Over the last 18 months Channel has thrown itself wholeheartedly into industry activities, sponsoring and entering the Comms Dealer Sales Awards, The Comms National Awards and

seminal partner recruitment events like Margin in Voice & Data and Comms Vision. This almost total channel involvement and continual marketing has paid off in spades, as Norton confirmed. "In truth we are queuing resellers up at the moment," he commented. "We are currently taking on four or five resellers a month, sometimes more, and at least three take a billing system which we can turn around in a week and then it's just about transferring the bases over.

"Our marketing team, which won the Comms Dealer Sales Awards Best Channel Marketing Team last May, is also happy to assist partners with their own marketing and we continually run lead generation end user campaigns with leads going to the nearest reseller or dealer."

Norton says he has ploughed all profits into ramping up reseller support and training and will continue to do so as he develops the company's mobile, data, Ethernet and hosted offerings through the likes of BT Wholesale, Virgin Business Media, Virtual 1 and BroadSoft, all wrapped up into a billing suite powered by Union Street.

"We give a free billing system to every bureau biller that comes on board," commented Norton.

"We set them up with their own unique billing system with Union Street so it's not a partition of somebody else's. This gives them independence and the freedom to transfer to another service provider in the future if they so wish."

And there will be no let up on partner incentives and events which Norton maintains give Channel the edge over competitors. "I honestly believe we have increased our partner community by 45 per cent because of our marketing combined with the fantastic events we run like golf days, events at the House of Commons, Formula 1 race days, ski trips, quarterly partner dinners and our annual partner awards dinner, which is a massive event for us.

"The big suppliers used to do all these but very few seem to do it these days. Partners spend so much time running their businesses I think they deserve and appreciate a special day out every now and then."

Norton thinks it's time the channel was more exciting again. He could just be the man to make it happen. ■



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# Will the workplace soon



LORRIN WHITE  
TOTAL

“ It’s about how you work best as a team. If not, it’s about finding an entire work force that all work exceptionally well remotely, and we’d need a miracle for that. We all know some people can work very effectively at home, others need the structure of a working office. Technology doesn’t yet account for those differences in behaviours; it’s still about management of individuals and their interactions. ‘Have you got a minute?’ grabs are often far more valuable than the ‘you will need to book in for a half hour conference call’ sessions. Productivity remains at a high because of human interaction and our ‘off the cuff’ ingenuity and agility. ”



JOHN PETT  
CHESS

“ We believe businesses need to achieve the right balance between home and office working. Flexible working practice can increase employee’s happiness levels whilst we pride ourselves on the unique culture we have developed at all of our office sites across the country. We were placed 3rd in the 2015 Sunday Times Best Companies to Work for list and we achieved this by being an energetic, hard-working, success driven, fun and exciting place to work that attracts, retains and inspires people. With the right technology implemented businesses can ensure productivity, allow easy collaboration and protect sensitive information when people are on the go. ”



It is predicted that working patterns are likely to change inexorably over the next few years as connectivity and mobile communications technology and hosted platforms improve. Working 9-5 will be a thing of the past and people will no longer be ‘chained’ to their desks enduring traffic congestion and transport nightmares to attend meetings and engage with co-workers and management. Productivity hurdles will be overcome and collaborative working will become slicker and far easier to implement.



KARL ALDERTON  
COMMS SUPPLY

“ One of the great things about technology is that it provides people with choice. Whilst a ‘traditional’ workspace is right for us at the moment, this approach wouldn’t make financial or practical sense for many business telecoms end-users. Hosted telephony solutions allow businesses to adapt their working processes without unnecessary fuss or cost and enable seamless communication and collaborative working. For example, we work with a large holiday company which employs more than 200 staff based at 18 different sites – including at home locations. For them, having one large call centre would be costly and they would struggle to find the talented local people that they need. ”



TERRY O'BRIEN  
DAISY GROUP

“ On average, we probably spend more time at work with our colleagues than we do with family and friends. For that reason, I believe that work is much more than “what you do” or “where you do it”. Being able to do your work anywhere and at any time is becoming much more important in terms of being productive, efficient and striking a good work-life balance. Having said that, I think it’s important to have a sense of belonging and community – a togetherness and enjoyment of being with the people who you spend the majority of your time with. It is as important, if not more important than ever before and the office environment remains key to achieving this. ”

This is likely to result in a complete change in working practices and new thinking on flexible working, which is now built into UK Employment Law. All employees have the legal right to request flexible working as long as they have worked for a company for 26 weeks.



HENRY WEST  
ECLIPSE

“ The two should work in parallel. Building relationships is easier face-to-face but maintaining customers, consistently delivering good service and working in partnership are things that can be done from anywhere with today’s technology. Over 20% of the KCOM Group work ‘offsite’ but also have the choice of 11 offices across the UK where they can come together and collaborate. I’m in the Exeter and Bristol offices a couple of days a week but the rest of the time I’m on the road visiting partners. It’s about creating a culture of trust and understanding that as long as your workforce is in the most suitable place for them to do their best work and keep customers happy, you’re winning. ”



ADAM CRISP  
FIRSTCOM EUROPE

“ Whilst flexible working is here to stay and plays a big part in improving morale and reducing stress, the traditional office will not completely become a thing of the past. We try and take a balanced approach by adopting a “give-take” company culture that values the different needs of the individual and the role. In our experience the downside for an employee working remotely is that they can start to feel isolated. From an employer’s perspective, building a company culture and employee engagement can be challenging when staff are dispersed. We encourage one day a week in the office for mobile workers. Interaction and camaraderie are just as important as productivity. ”

According to the Institute of Leadership and Management, 94% of UK organisations apparently now offer staff some form of flexible working and 73% of managers say that their organisation is largely supportive of it. Indeed, employers believe that promoting flexible working makes good business sense, bringing greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency. These



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# Can be a thing of the past?



MARTIN TAYLOR  
CONTENT GURU

“ It takes more than technology to enable homeworking, it takes a flexible-working mindset. Companies that have implemented homeworking within their contact centre operations, for example, say that adopting virtual recruitment, training, communications and coaching practices - as well as adjusting business processes to make them more suited to the virtual world - are just as important. While some of these companies use homeworking as a reward for loyal and hard-working agents, others say that it's something that must suit the individual, with many choosing to homework because it affords them the opportunity to fit in work around their other daily commitments. ”



PAUL BURN  
NIMANS

“ Flexible working, inspired by the latest advances in technology is obviously a good thing for businesses and their staff. But there is still a place for traditional workspaces where people can interact, share ideas face-to-face and indulge in office gossip. The mobile office has been around since the laptop was a boy in respect of the ability to work on the move. Mobile convergence is a gateway to be able to perform ever more powerful tasks. But one of the challenges of a mobile office is a lack of human interaction. That's sometimes the bit that gets overlooked although video conferencing technology is helping improve this. It's a question of balance. ”

include savings on overheads, the chance to have extended operating hours, the ability to attract a higher level of skills, the opportunity to reduce recruitment costs and sickness absence plus create better job satisfaction and staff morale.

Conversely, new research, commissioned by Virgin and carried out by YouGov, has discovered that more than three quarters of office workers are not allowed to work remotely as often as they would like to and only 7% of those asked said they were allowed to do so on a regular basis.



ANNIE TURNER  
OAK INNOVATION

“ As a company known for innovation it would be short-sighted of us not to stay abreast of current trends around flexible working. For some areas, logistically we need our people to be on-site, whereas some roles can be carried out effectively from home when the need arises. We look at what works best for the business as a whole. However, we do still favour the traditional model as we feel it best supports our company values, providing a supportive working environment and promoting teamwork which stimulates creative thinking and ideas sharing. That works for us at the moment but we will be ready to adapt as always. ”



TONY MARTINO  
TOLLRING

“ We have a mix of office-based and remote staff; some roles currently work well for us as office-based, such as order processing, finance management and key helpdesk support staff – mainly due to the benefit of internal collaboration. We feel these roles will evolve in line with collaborative working becoming slicker. Our aim is to build a culture of personal responsibility. We are of course fortunate to be able to use our own analytics and recording tools, which enable us to collaborate and to be productive. With the right technology in the right place at the right time, people can do their jobs properly, access key information and deliver improved business outcomes. ”

Of course there are some work environments where flexible working is totally impractical and there are still employers who genuinely like the concept of an office culture or 'ideas factory' where people can build up a positive 'winning' environment.

So, do channel companies encourage the ethic 'work is what you do, not where you do it', or do they believe there is still a place for traditional workspaces where people can interact, share ideas face-to-face and indulge in office gossip around the water cooler? It would appear most favour a mixed bag.



PAULA SIMCOE  
SIPHON

“ A vibrant environment that encourages the active exchange of ideas, delights in the dialogue of problem solving or is simply set up for socialising, will always have its place. However, the keys of technological advancement that have been unshackling knowledge workers have delivered another benefit that's often overlooked: the empowerment of different personality types to choose the surroundings they need to do their very best work. For many people that may be a home office where some solitude is conducive to creative thinking, strategic planning or data analysis. This is where cloud-based unified communications and collaboration (UCC) help calibrate the balance between performance and productivity. ”



TOM METCALFE  
CHANNEL TELECOM

“ Personality is a huge contributing factor. Many people, myself included, quickly become bored of mundane tasks and daily routines. Offering flexible hours or a varying work environment is a fantastic way to keep staff engaged, interested and happy, therefore hopefully productive. The technology is certainly available for people to work from anywhere but a lot depends on the type of business you are running and the type of office culture you have developed. Not everybody can stay focused outside of the workplace so I think there is certainly still a place for the office environment; many enjoy the structure and sociability of it, but not everyone. ”

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# CityFibre for Hughes McGrath to head cloud



Caroline Hughes

CAROLINE Hughes has joined CityFibre to lead its Wholesale Channel Marketing and Engagement programme. Her appointment follows an 18 year stint at BT split between BT Retail's Consumer Division and Openreach where she became Head of Marketing before leaving in August 2015 to operate as a telecoms and technology marketing consultant – an early client was CityFibre.

"I met members of the senior team and was blown away by their energy, passion and vision," said Hughes. "I simply didn't want to work with any other client. So when CityFibre offered me a permanent position it was a no-brainer. For years, UK CPs have said they want choice. Thanks to CityFibre's alternative pure fibre network that choice now exists in many cities across the UK with many more to follow.

"I'm eager to help more CPs embrace what we're building, make the most of the choice we represent and be at the heart of a very different connected future for Britain. We don't just

provide active products to enable this, we're also the UK's only wholesale provider of dark fibre. An important part of my job is to help more CPs understand how they can make use of our dark fibre product in whatever way works for them. As a telecoms marketer, working for a company with such strength of purpose and the ability to change the face of infrastructure provision in the UK is a dream come true."



David McGrath

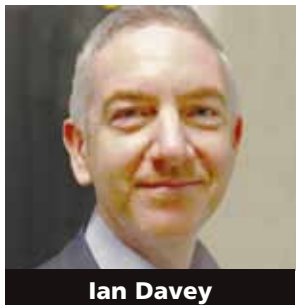
UNION Street Technologies has named David McGrath as Head of Cloud, a newly created role. His remit is to set the direction of Union Street's cloud strategy, including

the development of aBILLity Cloud, a hosted variant of the aBILLity billing platform. McGrath brings over ten years experience as a Senior Solutions Consultant for a managed hosted solutions provider and has worked with clients operating in regulated sectors. He has also worked in the telecoms billing industry.

Managing Director Tony Cook said: "David possesses wide ranging first-hand experience of designing cloud environments and of the reseller model. He will be pivotal to ensuring our solutions are cloud friendly, built on best practice and with a high focus on fault tolerance and data security."

McGrath added: "Union Street presents me with an exciting career challenge and I look forward to working with clients on cloud solutions that make them more productive and profitable."

## Also on the move...



Ian Davey

IAN Davey has been appointed Sales Director of distributor Mayflex, joining from Ingram Micro where he worked for 10 years as a Senior National Account Manager, then as Head of Sales and General Manger, and

most recently as Sales Director with responsibility for over £800m of sales. Andrew Percival, Mayflex Group Managing Director, commented: "Ian has a wealth of experience, qualities and skills that are vital to assist Mayflex with our projected growth over the next financial year."

AZLAN has appointed Mark Robinson as Marketing Manager for its Enterprise Software and Technology and Services practices. He joins from Microsoft where he spent 18 months as part of the OEM Partner Marketing team. Previous roles include

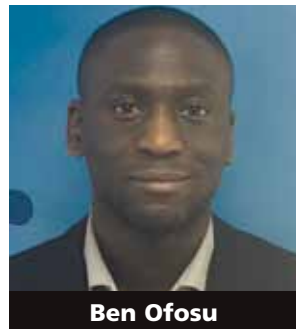


Mark Robinson

stints a HP in PC systems marketing and two years at channel marketing agency Outbound. Sara Gemmill, UK Marketing Director, said: "We are investing in solutions marketing and helping partners to promote their capabilities and

generate qualified leads. Mark is a valuable addition to our team and will be working closely with vendors and resellers to provide the focus and support needed to deliver positive results."

## Ofosu drives Zest4's sales



Ben Ofosu

WHOLESALE comms provider Zest4 has expanded its Channel Sales Management team with the appointment of Ben Ofosu. He brings seven years account management experience in the IT and telecoms

industry and previous roles include stints at YES Telecom, Vodafone and Nimans Network Services. "Ben's experience will enable resellers to access complete UC solutions, including M2M, mobile, hosted telephony, broadband and IT services," said Operations and Business Development Director Mandy Fazelynia. Ofosu added: "The role will also enable me to further enhance my own skills and experience, which will help me to build strong and long lasting relationships for Zest4 in the future."

DEANA Harvey has joined Entatech's Fujitsu focused southern office 'Entaprise' team as Enterprise Specialist. She brings 25-plus years experience within the IT industry, mostly in distribution. Harvey will work closely with Entatech's Fujitsu Enterprise Product Manager, Stephen Cownley, to bolster Fujitsu's market presence. Stewart Honeywill, Sales Office Manager, said: "With Deana's experience in distribution, IBM and DELL, her appointment can only strengthen our team."

## Frisby signs up as Cobweb MD



Michael Frisby

COBWEB Solutions has appointed Michael Frisby as Managing Director. He joins from Microsoft and will work with Ash Patel, Director of Business Transformation to capitalise on Cobweb's enhanced status in the Microsoft Cloud Solution Provider

Program as an indirect 2-Tier partner. Frisby will spearhead Cobweb's transition to a value add cloud aggregator. At Microsoft Frisby was most recently responsible for driving the transformation of the SMB Managed Reseller business across western Europe to a cloud-first model. Paul Hannam, Executive Chairman, Cobweb Solutions, said: "Michael's experience will accelerate and cement Cobweb's global position as a cloud aggregator as we move into new territories."

Frisby added: "Cloud services and Microsoft's CSP program are driving a significant disruption across the IT channel." See page 34

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ISSUE THREE

March  
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Dominic Parkes

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