



Platt unites values, purpose and partner growth p16

Auxilion CEO opens strategic playbook p22



Partner Week update p4

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THE HEARTBEAT OF THE UK ICT INDUSTRY



3 **Business advice**
Prep for changes to inheritance tax

6 **The Big Goal**
Initiative scores high in social value

14 **Interview**
Start-up MSP makes speedy gains

20 **Channel Forecast**
Turning AI potential into real outcomes

24 **Business Profile**
Allen's acquisition pedigree spurs ETG

26 **Interview**
Workflo gears up for expansion



12 **THE BIG INTERVIEW**

Martial artist kicks Cybit into expansion

CATCH up with triple black belter James Hunnybourne (who was an extra in a Jean-Claude Van Damme film) and how he plans to kick-start Cybit's next growth phase as newly appointed Executive Chairman.

28 **Sustainability**
Gaining the B Corp advantage

30 **Event update**
Meet UK Partner Week Ambassadors

34 **Comms People**
This month's movers and shakers

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Welcome comment



Stuart Gilroy

IF THE Trump administration can teach us anything, it's that best practices will keep you out of trouble, making up strategies on the hoof is not a good idea, and we can see how easily Hitler and the Nazis hijacked Germany. Leaving history aside, we can thank

Trump for shining the brightest light on what not to do and how not to lead. Hardly presidential, hardly smart, no insight and mostly unhinged. It's a recipe for certain failure. Apparently though, Trump is 'smart', but everything seems so easy to him and bereft of complexity. For him, being rational is a mystery. And now the 45th and 47th President of the USA is experiencing huge wake up calls as he realises how much better off he'd be if he'd established a framework of best practices before charging in like a bull in a China shop.

Gaining a firm grasp of the strategic implications of intentions, decisions and actions made, and having an understanding of the risks, opportunities and priorities ahead, is key for any business leader (and President) planning their model. And basing everything you do on a system of interconnected best practices will greatly reduce the chances of personal, team and leadership errors.

But modelling best practices is a challenge. Therefore this summer's Partner Week Summit (9th July, Convene, London) has been structured to help MSP/reseller leaders, and their teams, raise the bar supported by clear direction and confidence as they develop insight and move towards delivering more outcome-based offerings – while building greater trust into customer relationships. To find out more about how the Partner Week Summit could help you improve performance through good practice guidance across sales, marketing, leadership and technical, see pages 4 and 30-31 (visit <https://partnerweek.uk>).

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

To keep up to date with the latest channel news, as it happens, visit www.comms-dealer.com daily

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Owners urged to prep for changes in inheritance tax

Changes to inheritance tax mean business owners could face big tax bills for their families on an illiquid asset.

In the run up to last year's Autumn budget there was intense speculation about changes to Capital Gains Tax and how they would impact business owners. While the increase was not as severe as some predicted, one area that could have a significant impact on wealth were changes to inheritance tax (IHT) rates on business assets and pensions. There has been much publicity around the impact on farmers in particular, but the changes have implications for all business owners and Knight Corporate Finance Director Paul Billingham says it's imperative that shareholders fully understand what these changes mean.

"Shares held by business owners were subject to 100 per cent IHT relief, but from 6th April 2026 this relief is halved to 50 per cent for amounts above £1 million," he explained. "For a business owner holding shares worth £3 million the potential IHT liability increases from £0 to £400,000 next year. The equivalent increase for business assets worth £5 million is from £0 to £800,000.

"This creates a headache for many beneficiaries immediately after the loss of a loved one. The tax must be paid relatively quickly but many will not have the



Paul Billingham

liquidity to pay these sums from cash. This could mean that the business must be sold quickly and vendors may not understand its true value or be prepared for the stress of a transaction process."

Forward planning

Billingham noted that while no one wants to think about IHT, especially before they have retired, business owners should consider getting an up-to-date valuation of their company to understand clearly what the new liability could be, especially given the subjective nature of business valuations.

"Furthermore, pensions will no longer be deemed to be outside of estates from 6th April 2027," added Billingham. "Many business owners have

built up pensions through contributions from their businesses as part of their wealth planning. Given these significant changes we would also recommend business owners talk to a wealth planner who could advise on how to mitigate some of these changes."

According to Ann-Marie Atkins, Managing Partner at wealth manager Evelyn Partners, changes to IHT mean business owners should plan far ahead of selling their business in order to put the right actions in place long before a sale. She said: "Applying foresight to planning and understanding the advantages and disadvantages of approaches will put owners in the best place possible to navigate the new future of tax." ■

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UK Partner Week Summit sets best practice agenda

The inaugural UK Partner Week Summit (9th July, Convene, London) aims to elevate and enable best practice across key MSP/ICT reseller business functions.

The just-announced UK Partner Week Summit agenda has been tailored to provide a springboard for the development of best practice in channel businesses across a framework of Tracks focused on Sales, Marketing, Leadership and Technology. "The first UK Partner Week Summit puts a spotlight on the trends, challenges and opportunities reshaping each of our four Track categories, and provides guidance to help board leaders, department heads and their team members to respond effectively, raise the best practice bar and drive growth," stated Michael O'Brien, Managing Director, BPL Business Media (organiser of the event).

O'Brien also noted that developing a unified strategic approach to raising the operational bar while doubling down on people development is a challenge for business leaders. "The Summit's four interconnected Tracks have been designed to help channel companies address this issue and unlock more value for themselves, their teams and their customers," he added.

Key topics include how to shift the sales conversation to Enhanced Consultancy, boosting the impact of marketing teams, identifying future leaders, nurturing the next generation of talent,



Ian Dunstan

empowering women to realise their full potential, and turning tech experts into growth enablers (visit <https://partnerweek.uk/> agenda for the full agenda).

Team collaboration

Cobalt Managing Director Ian Dunstan (and UK Partner Week Summit Ambassador), commented: "I'll be bringing some of my team to meet business leaders, sales, marketing and tech specialists to spark innovation and growth. UK Partner Week and the Partner Summit is all about celebrating collaboration and the amazing things we can achieve together. Getting your team on board and all paddling the same canoe is key to everyone achieving a common goal."

Confirmed speakers at the Summit include Jason Bevan, the former Head of Creative Development & Vice

President of Marketing EMEA for Warner Bros, and Karen Blackett OBE who was UK President of global advertising company WPP and previously Chairwoman of MediaCom UK, now part of GroupM. She has also been recognised as one of the UK's most influential business leaders by Debrett's and The Telegraph.

"The Summit's objectives, content tracks, insight sessions, interactive breakouts and guest speakers have been brought together to help channel businesses build a resilient and growth focused future in a progressive team, and fun, collaborative environment," added O'Brien.

To find out more about the UK Partner Week Summit and register your interest to attend please visit: <https://partnerweek.uk>

Meet UK Partner Week Ambassadors – page 30

AGENDA SNAPSHOT: Get on Track with UK Partner Week sessions

Sales Track

- Enhanced consultancy – shift the conversation
- Avengers assemble – Transforming sales teams into superheroes
- Selling new stuff – why it's hard, and what to do about it

Marketing Track

- Stand out from the crowd – deliver differentiation
- Click with clients – turn data into customers
- Raise the bar – develop high value propositions

Leaders Track

- Future leaders – nurturing next-gen talent
- Embrace inclusion – empower women leaders

Technology Track

- Turn tech experts into growth enablers
- What's coming down the line, and why it matters
- Go big on differentiation – maximise tech expertise

To find out more about these sessions and to register your interest in attending the UK Partner Week Summit visit <https://partnerweek.uk>

GUEST SPEAKERS



Karen Blackett OBE



Jason Bevan

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What we didn't know about 10 channel leaders – but do now...

Which high profile channel leader jumps out of helicopters strapped to a snowboard? Find out here, along with nine other behind-the-scenes insights into channel personalities.

Vorboss CEO Tim Creswick

I'm a professional racing driver, competing in the GT World Challenge Europe with Walkenhorst Motorsport, driving the Aston Martin Vantage GT3.

Uplands OneTelco CEO Paul Hooper

I am a 5th Degree Taekwondo Martial Arts and personal self-defence instructor. I have my own school and train about 40 students twice a week.

Focus Group CEO Neil Hall

I appeared on Supermarket Sweep!

Traverse Automation CEO John O'Neill

I have studied psychology, hypnosis and the brain for 20 years.

IP Telecom CEO Shena Brien

I spent seven years competing in Irish dancing.

Greg Jones, SVP of MSP Enablement, EMEA, Kaseya

I am a big snowboard fanatic. I started on dry slopes and have been snowboarding for over 20 years, including a lot of heliboarding in Banff where they take you to remote areas and drop you out of a helicopter.

F One Technologies Sales Director Lee New

When I was in Year 5 I wrote a piece about Wembley Stadium that appeared in a book of poems by schoolchildren.

IT Naturally CEO Julie Bishop

In my spare time I am a Street Pastor – a trained volunteer who patrols the streets at night to care for and help people.

Eclipse Wholesale Group MD James Drake

My left foot is half a shoe size smaller than my right foot.

Magrathea MD and Comms Council UK Chair Tracey Wright

I love to ride a motorbike around country roads and woods.

Big Goal scores in social value

The Big Goal has carved a unique position within the ICT industry since its launch 18 months ago, bringing a range of benefits to participating companies alongside substantial social impact.

For readers unaware of The Big Goal initiative, aside from giving footballers in ICT companies the chance to play in a top notch nationwide five-a-side tournament, The Big Goal sponsors enable The Street Soccer Foundation to develop and run Street Soccer Academy programmes alongside clubs in the professional pyramid, utilising football to transform young lives and tackle youth homelessness.



A Street Soccer graduate receives a congratulatory hug from Keith Mabbutt

Industry professionals responsible for CSR initiatives in their business could rightly ask... how can playing football help lift disadvantaged young people out of homelessness or find them a job? So Comms Dealer asked Keith Mabbutt, CEO of The Street Soccer Foundation, to outline the overall effectiveness of the programme. "Our academies equip young people with essential life skills, thereby tackling critical social issues like youth homelessness which not only affects the individuals directly involved, but also imposes substantial economic costs on society," he said.

According to Centrepoin's research report, 'Human Costs and Lost Potential: The Real Cost of Youth

Homelessness', the annual cost associated with youth homelessness is estimated at £8.5 billion, averaging £27,347 per affected young person (roughly the salary of a police officer).

Positive impacts

"The average investment in support of a young person through a Street Soccer Academy is just £500," stressed Mabbutt. "In 2024, the Street Soccer Foundation generated an impressive £12.1 million in social value through its national academy programme, boosting its 2023 social value by almost 700 per cent. Last year, The Big Goal delivered 44 Street Soccer Academies nationwide, positively impacting the lives of 462 young people. 100 per cent of participants said they would recommend

the academy programme to others, and 100 per cent of club partners would recommend the Street Soccer Academy to other football club foundations/ community trusts."

Scott Southgate, Communities Engagement Officer, Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, said: "I have seen how much of a difference the Street Soccer Academy process makes, with progress being made week in, week out. That's why we deliver it."

To see the full line up of this year's teams and fixtures, and a range of videos explaining what The Big Goal is all about, visit www.thebiggoal.co.uk



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It's time to get more strategic

Closer collaboration between vendors and partners unlocks many more opportunities – but how can stronger alliances be forged? Loucerna Director Louise Grant explains.

By fostering stronger, more transparent and mutually beneficial relationships, vendors can transform partners into true strategic allies. This not only leads to higher revenue and improved market reach, but also ensures that customers receive better, more seamless solutions in an increasingly service-driven world.

To succeed in today's service driven model, where partners are offering their own services and solutions to customers, vendors must move beyond transactional relationships and work collaboratively with partners. One of the biggest opportunities for vendors to do this is in co-development and customisation. Many partners, particularly MSPs and independent cloud providers, serve highly specialised markets that require tailored solutions.

Instead of offering rigid one-size-fits-all solutions, vendors should focus on modular, adaptable technology that can be shaped to fit different industry needs. This not only increases adoption but also strengthens vendor-partner relationships by allowing partners to add more value to their customers.

Another key area for improvement is enablement.



Louise Grant

Vendor certification programmes are often based around educating the partner on the technological features of a service or solution. However, as proven by a poll I recently conducted, partners value hands-on, practical learning more than static information exchanges. Real-life scenarios, lab or demonstration environments provide partners with valuable experience that equips them to fully position the benefits of a solution to the customer.

Commercial flexibility
Pricing models also need to evolve to be more flexible. Many partners operate on recurring revenue models, yet vendors still focus on upfront licensing fees and

rigid pricing structures that don't align with subscription-based businesses. Vendors that offer usage-based pricing, consumption-driven models or revenue-sharing agreements will be more attractive to partners looking for financial flexibility.

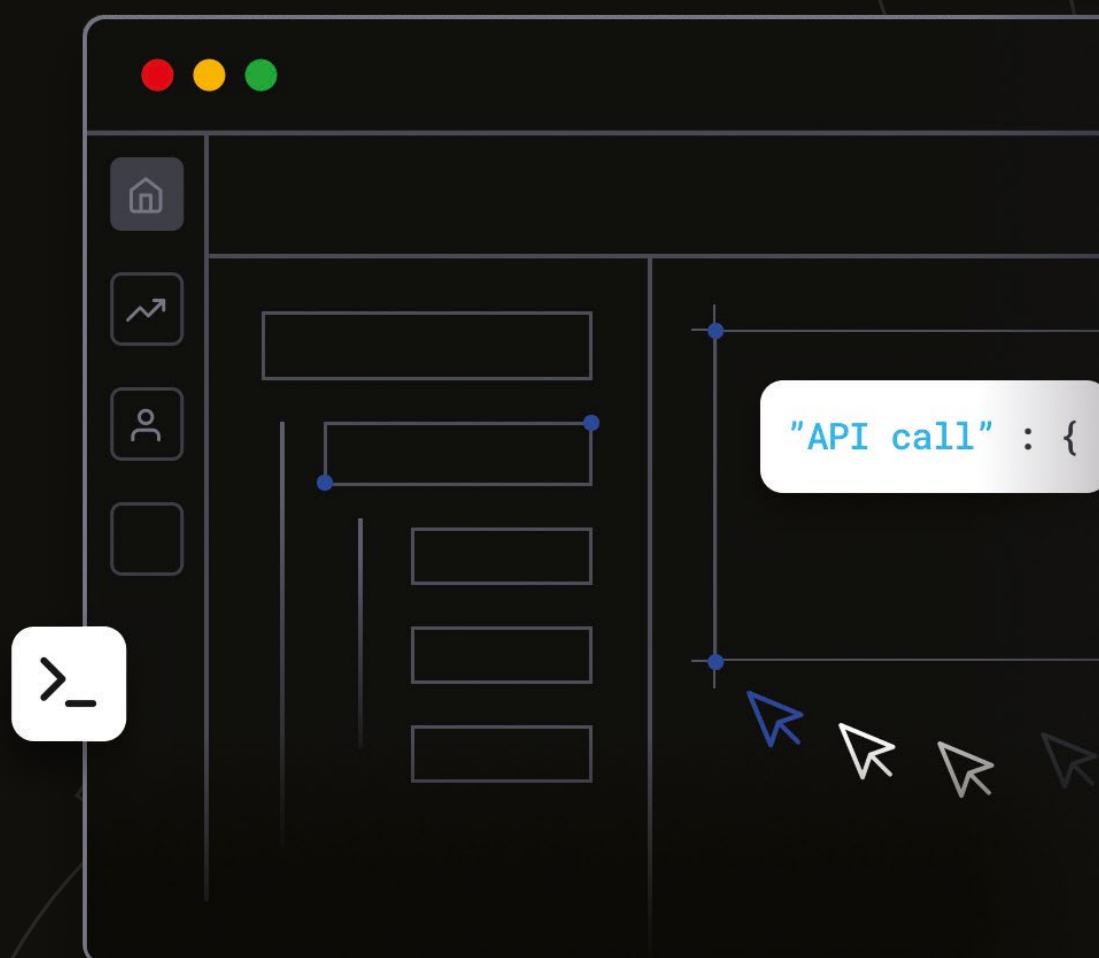
Vendors are in a unique position to encourage partner-to-partner collaboration. As we know, vendors are now often one piece of a larger jigsaw puzzle of solutions that their partners offer to customers. Facilitating partner collaboration to offer complementary services and solutions ensures that vendors add value to their partners and differentiate themselves. ■

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Closing your data gap

Resolving mismatches between business owners' perceptions of their company value and actual value calls for a data-led approach when preparing for a sale, investment or refinancing – which K3 Advantage says is becoming evermore vital as a growing number of business leaders consider their options.

The difference between how a business owner may think their company is performing and its actual performance status is a factor that will likely stymie the growth ambitions of a rising number of business leaders as competition for the attention of acquirers, investors and refiners intensifies, especially in the SME space (including the ICT sector).

Research by advisory firm K3 Advantage confirmed that economic challenges have forced a growing number of SME leaders to consider selling up or take steps to strengthen their finances this year, but many lack the company data needed to successfully underpin these critical actions. Yet over half believe their company is a compelling prospect.

The study of 250 SME founders and owners identified that 41 per cent

are more likely to consider a sale, exit or refinancing in the coming 12 months. There has also been an increase in the number of firms exploring an exit, rising to 14 per cent this year (11 per cent in 2024). But nearly 40 per cent don't see the value of data metrics as being vital to maximising their business's potential, preferring instead to trust gut feelings about how their company is performing.

"Business leaders are leaving themselves open, eroding value by thinking they have all the data they need when they're not even close," stated Sam Phillips, founding Managing Director, K3 Advantage. "But a true understanding of their growth potential, forecast risks and opportunities will position them for a transaction with the strongest narrative."

Phillips also observed that while many business leaders



Sam Phillips

Business leaders are leaving themselves open, eroding value by thinking they have all the data they need when they're not even close

feel their data is supportive of day-to-day operations they're overlooking the true potential of understanding what that data is really telling them. He noted that for a big financial transaction such as a sale, investment or refinancing, over half of the SMEs in the research don't have full visibility of their monthly management accounts for the last three years, and would only be able to provide this information to potential

new partners or investors in part, including P&L, balance sheet and cash flow. "This leads to an inaccurate view of how the business is actually performing as it approaches a significant financial transaction," commented Phillips.

Data-led strategy

Alexander Wyndham, Managing Director, Sun Capital Group (investors in K3 Advantage), stated: "Having

the right data strategy is vital for securing interest from investors or supporting any refinancing. Too many businesses, especially those at the small or medium end of the spectrum, assume that their usual operational data will suffice – but this isn't the case. Too few business leaders think ahead and plan in advance to get the right data and specific reporting in place that's needed to support these significant events. The impact is that valuations can be lower or financing harder to come by. Business leaders must plan ahead."

Wyndham hopes that his clear message will be a wake up call for the circa 50 per cent of business leaders in the survey who claim to have access to meaningful data, but when probed it emerged that 64 per cent don't use a finance system and just 22 per cent deploy a KPI report management system.

Microsoft Partner Iglu Tech Group also underscores the criticality of data to the success of transactions. The firm wanted to acquire Impreza Computer Services and needed a pre-lead to raise capital for the acquisition, in addition to full financial due diligence to cover any risk or opportunity around the purchase and resolve data gaps should they arise. Iglu Managing Director Jason Yeoman commented: "Never more have I relied on data to inform me of the performance of a business that we might be looking to acquire. Data is where the truth sits. Anecdotal information and sentiment remain important, but by removing the emotion you enable more pragmatic decision making." ■

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Martial artist kicks Cybit

Triple black belter James Hunnybourne – who was an extra in a Jean-Claude Van Damme film – is also an expert in kick starting Cybit's growth strategy, characterised as much by societal obligation and responsibility as ambitious fiscal targets, empowering workforces through technology and an all-embracing people-first approach.

Hunnybourne's appointment as Executive Chairman kicks off a leadership revamp that signals a new phase of Cybit's growth strategy. Fiscally, he is forecasting the company to triple in size within five years. And he confirmed that Cybit's priorities are to continue identifying areas where it can have the highest impact and build on providing positive outcomes to a broader addressable audience.

He was attracted to Cybit because of its growth potential, talented people and meaningful case studies across the public and private sectors. "I am proud of the work Cybit has done to help with larger real life issues like knife crime, housing, flooding and health care," he stated. "The work with law enforcement agencies

where our data intelligence solutions have supported a reduction in knife crime, and working with companies and agencies to use better data intelligence to help predict and protect communities against the rising issue of widespread flooding, are just two examples."

Hunnybourne also wants Cybit to be known for caring more about outcomes rather than the solutions themselves. "Our biggest opportunity is accelerating and augmenting people to be more productive, and empowering C-level leaders to make intelligent decisions based on the data locked up in their business," he said. "Our proposition is simple – we augment people with technology. We do not simply make people IT enabled, we make them information enabled."



James Hunnybourne

Our proposition is simple – we augment people with technology. We do not simply make people IT enabled, we make them information enabled

Hunnybourne says this approach can be as simple as giving people the right tools and applications to help them work more efficiently, all the way through to delivering automated actions based on relevant and insightful data that improves decision making, and frees people up from mundane tasks to

focus more on new ways to achieve progress and make a more positive impact.

People-centric

According to Hunnybourne, he will make his own mark at Cybit through others around him making theirs. "I believe in people first and foremost, and try to use my network to

put the right people into the right places so that as a team we deliver on the goals of the company, and enjoy the journey of getting there," he commented. "Life is precious, and if you can create a working environment where people are motivated to do more and are excited by the opportunities ahead – it's



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into new growth phase



where he was CRO. “The main lesson I learnt at IBM is that technology on its own will not deliver a difference, it needs the human factor,” he said. “Moving to Logicalis was about taking that belief and applying it to the development of a successful sales culture.

“While at Softcat, I had the opportunity to build a

People can depend and rely on my attention, time, experience and leadership throughout their journey

Services Division that was truly customer outcome based. Moving to Ultima was about cultural and business transformation, unashamedly eliminating the blockers to facilitate growth, and in the process gaining hands-on experience in private equity stakeholder management.”

Cybit was formed out of the integration of three companies – Cyphra, Technique and Perfect Image – which combined have three decades of IT sector experience – on a par with Hunnybourne. “Over my 30 years I’ve also seen a huge shift in the partner community to meet the changing needs of their clients,” he added. “The speed, complexity, choice and importance of technology in the day-to-day of our customers means we must pull away from traditional fulfilment and lead the technology conversation to

help customers understand the art of the possible.

“For example, the recent fourth generation shift to AI plays nicely into the strength of Cybit, so we will be accelerating the partners we use and the services we deliver in these areas. Very few customers are ready to jump in and prepare for the benefits that AI can bring.

I love the fact that we can help them on that journey.”

Hunnybourne continuously drives home the need for business leaders to harness technology trends for an advantage. Another growth area of importance is security which has been ‘exceptionally strong’

for Cybit, especially among its heavily regulated government customers. “Moving forward, I see more growth coming from our founding principle of solutions that augment people,” he commented. “That can be as simple as putting the right equipment and applications in their hands through to the crown jewels of our business... our data intelligence and AI practice with gives customers the insights and facts they need to make the right decisions.

“With mega-partners out there like Softcat or Bytes, it is becoming imperative to compete in this way. I like the fact that smaller businesses are winning huge contracts. The larger business isn’t always going to the largest player, it can now be as much about skill, capability and the human touch rather than the traditional comfort that comes with size.” ■

Just a minute with James Hunnybourne

Role model: I admire many people, but I don’t role model myself on any of them, I just take the behaviours that fit with the person I am. That said, there are people that have been a strong positive influence on me. My father for example, who taught me to be grounded and hard-working; my mentor Neil Thubron who helped me understand the meaning of ‘only one life’; or Richard, my first martial instructor who taught me about honour, confidence and structure.

Tell us something about yourself we don’t know: I have three black belts from three different martial art disciplines which got me a role as an unnamed extra in a Jean-Claude Van Damme film.

If you weren’t in ICT what would you be doing? I come from a naval family and had a 50-50 direction split when I was young – I could have gone into the Marines. I have the greatest admiration for our Forces, and for anyone who goes above and beyond to help more than just themselves. I always wondered what my life would have been like if I had taken that direction.

Your favourite comedian/comedienne? I like Ricky Gervais and Kevin Hart. But when I was younger, Ben Elton stood out for his wit, speed and the occasional fart joke.

In hindsight: At IBM I would have made a plan earlier. I had no idea if I was moving forward, backwards or sideways on my journey because I didn’t have a plan and I didn’t know the roles I wanted or what I wanted to achieve. I learnt a lot from my mentor later in life at IBM, and this helped crystallise what I was passionate about, my strengths and the life I wanted to live.

Your priorities: Growth, resilience of business, continuing to stay relevant to our customers, and making smart informed decisions.

Best piece of advice you have been given? Learn who you are, what fuels your passion and build a plan to live that every day. You need to find the role that allows you to be yourself. Too many times I hear someone is like X in work and Y outside. If that’s the case they are not being true to themselves.

Biggest career achievement: I loved building the services business at Softcat. I started with two people and by the time I left the team it was way over 100, all new roles or new opportunities created for people in Softcat. It was hard work, but fun and I enjoyed the journey and the awards we won. Softcat had never won a services award before.

What more do you want to see from vendor partners?

I often find that you get out as much as you put in. If you collaboratively set out a plan that is simple, achievable, co-creates value and shows mutual investment in each other and you stick to it, you often get what you need. Having spent half of my career in vendor organisations, I know what’s important to most of them and because of this we often work well together.

Your main strengths and what could you improve on?

I am positive, have insight into people and an ability to keep powder dry. But I bore easily (my team will probably give you a thousand other weaknesses).

Top tip: Get an identity, have proactivity built into your services, and build a robust voice of the customer programme. An annual customer satisfaction survey just isn’t enough to stay relevant.

Start-up MSP makes imm

Coventry-based SolaaS began life two years ago fuelled by a start-up mentality that continues to shape the strategic planning that Managing Director René Wheeler sees as being vital to long-term growth.

It took less than six months for SolaaS to become one of Wildix's best performing partners. The fledgling MSP has been instrumental in helping the vendor secure a foothold in the UK retail sector, prompting Wildix to describe SolaaS as a 'trailblazer', especially in the deployment of its latest technology to combat retail theft. This is a significant achievement for Wheeler who launched his business in March 2023 following a 30 year career in the IT and telecoms sector. For him, striking the right balance between three decades of experience and nurturing a start-up culture will prove pivotal in upending the status quo and giving customers what they really need.

Wheeler had of course built a network of contacts during his career which was critical to the firm's early success, providing a platform for expansion. "As a relatively new kid on the block I have been blown away by the support of my network," he commented. "Most of our success has come from personal referrals

and recommendations. To grow the business I need to build on this."

To achieve his goals, Wheeler will nurture the energy and commitment of his established start-up approach, and continue to break traditional norms as he seeks to position SolaaS as the go-to IT and telecoms provider in the midlands. "We also want to be known as the best training provider for the sector," he added. "Not through putting people on courses, but by nurturing and mentoring young people to be creative and develop ideas that drive technology forward. We want to provide a platform for people to step outside their comfort zone, gain experience and make mistakes – that's how you learn."

Having removed the organisational barriers to creativity Wheeler encourages his people to be brave and flexible in a way that nurtures innovation, ultimately positioning the business to be more receptive to change and embrace new technology such as AI – which could give SolaaS a competitive



René Wheeler

"This is why we have a quarterly business review with all of our customers, which enables us to monitor and adapt according to their needs. This approach helps shape our growth and develop new opportunities."

These reviews are one example of how SolaaS leverages its energy and momentum to challenge the current status of customers with a view to refine their services as required, while strengthening customer interactions and relationships at the same time. "We have a jargon-free approach and make sure all of our customers understand exactly what they are paying for and why," explained Wheeler.

"We carry out an initial audit as part of our sales process and it's scary how many people are paying for services they don't need – or even worse, no longer have. There has to be more end user education and tougher regulations to stop unscrupulous service providers taking advantage of them. The technology should fit the needs of a business, not the other way around."

SolaaS's dynamic approach to reviewing customers is also reflective of its flexibility around commercial terms. "We allow customers to break free from the constraints of long-term contracts and offer flexible 30-day contracts, scalable to allow businesses to be reactive and scale up or down as required – all while keeping a consistent level of support," added Wheeler. "The market is long overdue a change to scalable solutions that adapt to customers' needs on a month by month basis."

Striking the right balance between three decades of experience and nurturing a start-up culture will prove pivotal in upending the status quo and giving customers what they really need

advantage. Wheeler also says that ongoing learning and development is ingrained into SolaaS's agile and adaptable culture, which in turn supercharges the firm's evolving growth mindset.

"From a standing start we have grown to a turnover of just under £700k with a target of £1 million by the end of 2025," he added. "We smashed

our 2024 targets and are well on for this year."

Adaptability is key

In fact, Wheeler says that the biggest factors influencing the evolution of SolaaS are its adaptability and never making rigid, long-term assumptions. "A new solution might be what a customer needs today but may not be relevant in 12 months time," he explained.

mediate gains

At the end of its second year SolaaS had secured more than 3,000 user licenses for IT, telecoms and connectivity services. Wheeler noted that these licenses represent a recurring revenue stream that delivers financial stability and a predictable cashflow, enabling ongoing investments in growth. "The recurring revenue model works," he said. "There is the initial pain of upfront costs which can be a hard hit for a start-up, but

Wheeler's decision to future proof skill sets alongside his dynamic approach to staff development means that SolaaS is more likely to be a front runner in new tech like AI, giving it a competitive advantage. "The world of AI is developing fast and we embrace it," stated Wheeler. "From our support and service solutions to our telephony systems, AI plays an important role in delivering cutting edge

solutions. It touches everything we do and we want to expand on the tools we offer clients."

In the company's short history Wheeler has observed a big shift towards AI, along with businesses wanting more flexibility, moving away from buying and installing software in-house. "The Internet

has enabled a powerful platform for cloud-based technologies," he stated. "Moving to the cloud supports hybrid working and offers convenience and flexibility to meet the needs of modern businesses."

According to Wheeler, winning contracts in this competitive market shows SolaaS's ability to scale while maintaining a customer-first approach. "In terms of evolving our sales, we have worked hard to create strategic alliances, combining digital and in-person approaches to grow our network and sales pipeline," he added. "Our commitment to a start-up mentality, sustainability and customer-centric flexibility will also drive long-term growth." ■

We want to provide a platform for people to step outside their comfort zone, gain experience and make mistakes. That's how you learn

I am determined to follow this model. It's working brilliantly, guaranteeing our cash flow and enabling us to be competitive."

SolaaS has beaten off competition to win contracts with school and college academies, a Coventry city-wide leisure and tourism organisation, as well as commercial and industrial businesses. The company has secured an office in the Coventry Transport Museum, and has grown from a team of one to six since starting up. "We're coping with the workload but I would like to increase our headcount by 25 per cent this year," stated Wheeler. "We've also invested in apprentices to help safeguard skills for the future."

Just a minute with René Wheeler...

Role model: My dad: He always does what he says he's going to do, embraces new challenges and stands up for what he believes in.

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I worked for a TV company when I was 16.

If you weren't in ICT what would you be doing? One of my customers runs an outdoor activity centre for people with learning difficulties. If I wasn't in ICT, I would ask for a job with him.

One example of something you've overcome: My fear of public speaking (almost).

Three ideal dinner guests: Barrack Obama – he inspires me; Margaret Thatcher, to learn more about some of the decisions she made, especially the controversial ones; and the Dalai Lama to uncover his secret to long-term health, and listen to his take on the world today.

Best piece of advice you have been given: If you're not happy with something, don't moan about it, change it.

Your biggest fear: A hip replacement operation.

What was your first job? Selling pay phones into the leisure sector. In those days it was all about door knocking and the telephone book or yellow pages.

Your strong points and what could you work on? My determination and never give up attitude are strengths, but I can overthink and procrastinate.

Your favourite comedian or comedienne: Norman Wisdom.

What talent do you wish had? To play the guitar or piano.

Top tip: Embrace the changes ahead, ensure you are adapting to customers' needs and be ahead of the technology curve. Also, train and develop your team.



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Platt unites values, purpose

Vodafone UK's Head of Indirect Kathryn Platt takes her responsibility as a role model for women in the comms sector very seriously, promoting inclusion and equal opportunities while also making a positive impact on the growth ambitions of channel partners. Here, she shares insights into her own journey, what makes her tick and why she holds the channel in such high esteem.



Kathryn Platt

What was your first job in telecoms? Old-fashioned box shifting selling Motorola, Nokia and Ericsson kit. I then moved to Yes Telecom which was bought by Vodafone in 2006. Over the years I've held various roles, mainly leading our partner sales teams as well as time spent in a commercial role spanning both the direct and indirect side of the business. I have been working in the channel for over 20 years and remain as passionate about helping partners succeed as I did when I first started. I love the entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, agility and drive for success from partners. This got me hooked on the indirect channel.

What is your biggest career achievement? Securing the role of Head of Indirect at Vodafone UK. This position has always been a dream of mine, especially as my experience with partners and leadership has grown over the years. Leading the channel has been a long-term ambition, and achieving this goal has been incredibly fulfilling. It symbolises the culmination of years of dedication, hard work, and I am grateful to everyone who has supported me along the way.

What are your priorities right now? To continue the growth and success we have had in the channel over recent years. Key to this is partner

Those in positions of influence need to use their status as a platform for change that benefits colleagues, customers and society

support, enablement and insight to support growth. This prioritisation is essential to ensure that partners have the necessary resources and knowledge to thrive in the market. By providing robust support and enabling partners with the right tools and insights we aim to foster their growth and success, which in turn strengthens our overall

market position. FY26 is set to be an exciting year for our channel – watch this space.

How far does partner collaboration feature in your planning?

Our recent Partner of the Future research explored the emerging needs of partners and their end customers. The findings showed that all partners would value

greater collaboration with vendors, particularly to drive sales and marketing. We have taken this onboard and are committed to working strategically with our partners, including investing in both capability and support, to help them grow and succeed in the market. My team and I actively seek out and create opportunities to bring together our



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ose and partner growth



the future. This presents a significant opportunity, and our partners are already doing a brilliant job to maximise this. However, partners must build on their unrivalled understanding of the market to work with the right vendors and help bridge the knowledge gap for customers, turning tech into tangible business benefits and return on investment.

What attracts you to Vodafone?

One of the things I love about working at Vodafone is the constant evolution, from a mobile only brand to the acquisition of Cable&Wireless which brought fixed partners into our portfolio, through to the upcoming merger with 3. It's been an exciting journey full of growth and innovation.

In hindsight, what would you have done differently in your career?

I would have aimed to secure the role of Head of Indirect sooner by being more explicit about what I wanted and my timeline to get there. I wasn't always as outspoken about my ambitions as I am today for a combination of reasons, such as not wanting to appear pushy or over confident, not wanting to fail as well as thinking I had to put my career on hold to focus on growing my family. Saying it out loud was the first step to making it happen.

What other factors have influenced your career?

I feel lucky to have had some crucial allies and mentors that nurtured my talent and supported my progress. I have always tried to follow their example as a leader myself. I'm dedicated to helping other women

navigate their careers and achieve their goals by sharing my experiences and providing support. As part of this I'm incredibly proud to sponsor the upcoming Aequitas Network event (www.aequitas.network). I hope I can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive

I hope I can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the industry

environment for women in the industry. More business leaders with influence need to use their status as a platform for change that benefits colleagues, customers and society.

If you could change any area of the comms industry what would it be?

Although the channel sector has made progress in recent years to become more diverse, I often find that I'm still the only female in the room. While there is still more to do from a diversity perspective, I'm proud to say that my team at Vodafone is 50 per cent female. I would like to see a concerted effort among all stakeholders in the industry to keep moving forward, offering new opportunities to people from different backgrounds. Education is a really important part of inspiring a greater mix of people into the sector. It's not just an environment where technology expertise

is needed, but also one where customer-facing soft skills such as account management, marketing and sales play a crucial role in day-to-day operations.

Do you have a role model?

My biggest role model is my dad. He was the operations and sales leader for a number of different crane companies (yes, these things need to be stored and sold!) and worked his way up thanks to an incredible work ethic and ability to listen to what people needed – then helping them get it. He was well respected and known by everyone in the industry and, without realising it, I think a lot of that approach has rubbed off on me.

What's the best and least best part of your job?

The best part is working with my team and partners. I find it incredibly rewarding and energising to collaborate with such talented individuals and see the positive impact we can make together. But balancing my career with being a mum is challenging. I am hugely fortunate to have an amazing husband, a solid support network and a supportive and flexible

work environment, but keeping things perfectly balanced is hard.

The best piece of advice you have been given

Don't sit back and admire problems, do something about them.

One example of something you've overcome

My journey to becoming a parent was not straightforward. My husband and I faced numerous obstacles along the way that were emotionally and physically demanding. After exploring various options we decided to pursue surrogacy. Today, I am incredibly grateful for our daughter and the journey that brought her into our life. It taught me resilience and the importance of perseverance. It has inspired me to support others who may be facing similar challenges, and to advocate for greater awareness and understanding of fertility issues and the impact it has on work and careers.

How do you relax?

Catching up with family and friends over great food. Experiencing a new restaurant or cuisine is a highlight and I love cooking at home. I'm also working to balance my love of food with a good exercise regime. ■

community of partners to gain insights and share ideas.

Where is the biggest opportunity for partners?

Partners have, and always will have, a fundamental role to play in supporting more businesses on their digital transformation journey. According to our recent research, 81 per cent of end users said business interest in emerging technologies has increased in the past six months, and 96 per cent said that emerging technology would be part of their company's vision of

Editor's comment...



A COMMS Dealer survey of channel leaders underlined a critical point made by Kathryn Platt in this interview – that an inclusive workforce is vital. While 75 per cent of MSP leaders in our research believe that their organisation will be judged against a broader set of standards over the coming years, including diversity, nearly half are not taking a lead on the issue of increasing female representation at the top in their business. To find out more download the free Leadership report here: <https://www.comms-dealer.com/whitepaper/gain-advantage-through-leadership>

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Turning AI potential into

AI and analytics solutions are bursting with promise to drive many business and productivity gains for those able to realise what's possible – and enabling customers to harness this potential would be a landmark growth move for ICT resellers and MSPs, according to industry leaders at last month's Channel Forecast insight discussion.

The potential impact of AI and analytics on how organisations operate is huge, and the benefits are not lost on SMEs. "Get on the bus now because every business is going to have to adopt AI and analytics tools," urged Chris Huntingford, Director of AI, ANS Group. "People need to stop looking through the ROI lens and see how these tools are changing the way we work. When we first invested in Microsoft Office, we didn't ask about the ROI on sending an email, but we understood the productivity benefits and how it underpins most of our businesses."



Chris Huntingford

Greg Easton, Head of Business Development at Tollring, believes that AI and analytics represent 'a great opportunity' to find new revenue streams in an increasingly competitive market – and he noted that the barriers to entry are lowering. "To combat complexity vendors have been creating affordable, out-of-the-box solutions that don't require resellers to be AI and analytics experts," he commented. "The challenge for the channel is to bake products into a shrink-wrapped solution that addresses the needs of specific markets."

This also requires a more consultative approach to

An AI component can be infused into any product or service that is data-driven, and that is almost all of them

customer conversations, observed Jonathan McKenzie, Senior Contact Centre Product Manager at 8x8. "Focus on pain points and aligning solutions with business outcomes," he said. "Go on a journey with customers and acknowledge that you aren't just selling AI, you are selling features that solve problems by driving efficiency, customer experience and

revenue growth. Be more consultative and you'll start to see adoption and success rates accelerate."

The right approach

According to Huntingford, AI is often included as an add-on service which he says is the wrong approach. "These tools solve real-world problems and that has got to be the key differentiator," he stated. "The more a reseller

can talk about solving issues in a specific vertical the more successful they will be."

McKenzie underscored the point that this is not about price. "Cheaper solutions won't be enough to motivate people to move in this market," he commented. "Focus on real-world outcomes, understand customer problems and pitch what your solution can do to fix them. You will form strong partnerships with sticky customers that will come back to you as a trusted advisor and discuss other parts of their business development roadmap."

Huntingford also noted that resellers don't need to go into huge depth. "That's our job as vendors," he added. "But by providing the education piece you deepen relationships and eliminate some of the fear holding back adoption. It will be good from an education perspective for anyone in the AI-verse to understand why these tools work the way they do."

McKenzie developed this point further: "I've seen customers purchasing these products wanting responses as to why they operate in a certain way, and their partners need the answers," he said. "Resellers should train themselves on how AI

outcomes work, what they can deliver and what their limitations are. You need that level of education to facilitate a consultative approach. To build on this knowledge base, work with vendors and set up strategic relationships with better integration to deliver strong use cases."

The panellists agreed that the strongest use cases will reveal themselves in the SMB space, where rich veins of data are waiting to be tapped, according to Easton. "There is a misconception that AI is only for large enterprises and big system integrators, but there is a huge opportunity in the SMB market," he said.

"Vast amounts of data are sitting there unused because it's difficult to mine. AI is set to be the tool that cracks that open. Applying context and intelligence enables businesses to get better use of their data, address gaps in their portfolio, see issues within their customer support and service, and build on existing strengths."

The first step is to ensure that data is fit for purpose, and McKenzie highlighted the importance of making data clean, accurate and contextually sound so that systems can be plugged in, learn, and give intelligent and actionable feedback. "The potential is huge, but

real outcomes



Greg Easton

There is a misconception that AI is only for large enterprises and big SIs, but there is a huge opportunity in the SMB market

you need to start small and work closely with customers to make sure the foundations are sturdy," he added. "This is where you can start to make an impact across every level of their business. Don't just jump in and start building a Large Language Model hoping it will work miracles because it won't."

Broad opportunity

What also became clear during the conversation is the remarkable breadth of the AI and analytics opportunity for channel businesses. Furthermore, Huntingford pointed out AI's potential to boost existing UC, CC, CPaaS, voice and digital solutions. "An AI component can be infused into any product or service that is data-driven, and that is almost all of them," he stated.

Mckenzie added: "By plugging AI into all these different data elements you

have a differentiator and you leave nothing on the table for competitors. There are so many ways you can start to put this together. It's about digging into problems and making sure the data can deliver on the back of that. Imagine telling customers you can enable them to drill into existing



Jonathan Mckenzie

Be more consultative and you'll start to see adoption and success rates accelerate

data and see why they are experiencing churn despite no reported issues. These are insights that can transform the customer experience."

Responsible AI

Another key area where MSPs can offer value is talking to customers about ethical and responsible AI. Huntingford noted: "This can apply to any tool, product or service to bring a differentiator to the market. Data responsible AI is going to be top of mind for customers in the coming years which is a foundation you can build analytics into."

Easton noted that ICT resellers and MSPs could prepare their sales teams by aligning them with the technology, making them receptive to new solutions and pointing them towards low hanging fruit, such as customers that are doing even basic call recording and therefore have existing data they aren't deriving significant value from. "The opportunity is to demonstrate the improvement that AI can bring through mining that data more efficiently," he added. ■



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Auxilion CEO opens his strategy

The MSPs certain to come out on top and continue to create value will be those focused on solving customer challenges, embracing change, evolving their growth toolkit and adopting an agile business mindset, according to newly appointed Auxilion CEO Patrick Jordan.

Jordan is crystal clear about the factors shaping Auxilion's ongoing growth agenda, and boosted by a 10 million euro investment his priorities as CEO are equally transparent. "My first jobs are to double down on customer commitments, ensure we communicate with our people about the journey ahead and deliver on the promises we've made," explained Jordan.

He took over the CEO role from Philip Maguire who is now Executive Chairperson, and joined Auxilion in 2024 as COO, bringing leadership experience from Logicalis where he was CRO UK&I and Country Leader Ireland (previously Group VP International Sales). Jordan's experience dovetails neatly with Auxilion, which is essentially an IT managed services company that built up decades of expertise in complementary competencies including IT consulting, resourcing, professional

services, systems integration and IT procurement. "We need to navigate the changing landscape as AI and other technologies and challenges emerge," added Jordan. "Meeting those changes and making the right investments at the right time is how I'll be judged."

Dublin-based Auxilion is part of the IT Alliance Group, an IT services management company founded in 1997. Operating a Tier 2 Service Alliance (T2SA) business model, IT Alliance works with IT, technology and services brands, helping them design, sell and deliver IT managed services, IT projects and business outsourcing solutions. Auxilion launched almost 12 years ago as the direct to market brand geared up to evolve, take calculated risks and move with the times.

"We've always subscribed to the notion that change is inevitable, but it's embracing change and



Patrick Jordan

The most important and impactful inflection points in our organisation's history are those moments when we took risks, pivoted and fully embraced change

seeing opportunity in transformation and evolution that determines growth and success," stated Jordan. "The most important and impactful inflection points in our organisation's history are those moments when we took risks, pivoted and fully embraced change. A willingness to embrace change has been the backbone of Auxilion's success."

Auxilion's primary areas of investment will be the evolution of its managed

services and consultancy offerings in the areas of digital, governance and risk, process modernisation, AI, data management and automation. "Another key focus area will be how we navigate the landscape," added Jordan. "Understanding our customers, the market and the sector's direction of travel is a priority. More immediately, we're investing in recruitment and will be making up to 30 new hires in 2025 across Ireland and the UK. Alongside this,

we'll continue to invest in training and development for our existing workforce."

Key targets

Auxilion currently has around 500-plus employees and contractors and has grown significantly in its key markets, a trend that Jordan says will be accelerated by the 10 million euro cash boost. "We're largely targeting the mid-tier market with customers across a range of verticals, but we have specific experience in financial services, public

Strategic playbook

sector and pharma," he commented. "For example, our IT consulting organisation has supported large financial services and public sector organisations on their digital transformation or change management journeys. The outcome of these engagements is often a new approach to IT managed services. Our success and growth will always be tied to the evolution and investments in our portfolio, our talent strategy and commitment to change."

Jordan emphasised that long-term IT managed services contracts are squarely in his sights, with recurring revenue lending itself to lasting partnerships and a deeper understanding of customers' drivers and motivations. "There is a trend among customers towards the kind of long-term partnership that we specialise in," added Jordan.

"Technology partners that understand the customer and have their future interests at heart are becoming ever more important. This is why we have spent several years reimagining our approach to managed IT services and customer experience. We've also spent the past year evaluating and re-engineering our target operating model to create the foundations and infrastructure for scale.

"However, the tech landscape is changing constantly. Emerging technologies, broader geopolitical factors and our customers' evolving demands will continue to influence our progress. Along with deep integration with strategic partners like HPE, ServiceNow and Microsoft, regular consultation with industry analysts and the boots on the ground mentality of meeting customers."

Adaptability

Adapting to the customer environment will remain forever critical, and Jordan reiterates that success comes from Auxilion's rounded portfolio, service wrap and dynamic approach to the market. But to achieve a leap forward he aims to harness the power of automation and Generative AI to transform businesses. "Increased efficiency will allow people and teams to work on other high value areas," he commented. "We're keen to remain at the forefront of this evolution and are doing interesting research to develop capabilities. New regulations around AI and in other areas also mean we need to stay on our toes and be ready to help our customers remain secure and compliant. Cybersecurity risks are constantly emerging and we need to be vigilant to protect our customers." ■

Just a minute with Patrick Jordan...

Role model: My father who was an electrician. Working with him early on instilled all the values in me that I still consider most important. It also helped me to develop structure, ambition and a disciplined, focused approach.

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I delivered my eldest son unexpectedly at home!

If you weren't in ICT what would you be doing? A professional padel player.

One example of something you've overcome: Running an international business during Covid.

Best piece of advice you have been given: Take time out to take a breath and reflect. Are you on track? Are you doing the right things? What do you need to do differently?

What more do you want to see from vendor partners? A better value add model based on customer outcomes.

Your biggest career achievement? Never giving up and continually working to achieve what I've set out to do.

How do you relax? I play padel and tennis and coach kids' sports. Plus time with my family.

What do you fear most? Not getting a booking for a padel court at the weekend.

What talent do you wish you had: To play the guitar. I'll get to it when I retire.

How would you improve the industry? There's a strong need for eco-partners to come together and co-develop solutions for customers, to bring the best of technology and services together. And sustainability needs to be at the core of leadership priorities.

Top tip: The customer is everything.

Editor's comment...



IN A COMMS Dealer survey of channel leaders, 82 per cent say trust between their business and customers has become more complex. This comes at a time when building long-term relationships with customers is more critical than ever. In his interview, Patrick Jordan underlines how Auxilion serves as a model for best practice in remaining close to valuable clients. To find out more download

the free Leadership report here: <https://www.comms-dealer.com/whitepaper/gain-advantage-through-leadership>

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Allen's acquisition pedigree

Everything Tech Group (ETG) founder and CFO Mark Allen developed a robust acquisition process while at GCI to become one of the channel's most experienced deal makers. Now leveraging his tried and tested expertise in acquisitions at ETG, Allen's strategy has become defined not only by deal numbers but by their pace of execution.



Mark Allen

To say that Allen is an ambitious buy and build supremo who knows instinctively where to play when setting out on an acquisition drive would be to greatly understate the depth and accuracy of his gut feelings, which enable him to quickly identify the right opportunities to go after. And the combination of his sixth sense with near unmatched experience has created a potent force that's propelled ETG from zero to approaching £30 million in four years.

Allen's eyes opened up to the potential of acquisitions as a fast route to growth after becoming Finance Director at GCI Communications in 2005, which at the time had a circa 20 headcount and £10 million turnover. "GCI was a small business that wanted to evolve and grow at pace,

so I quickly established myself as a serious member of the management team and joined the Board in 2007," he stated. "I was at GCI until 2019 and the experience I gained was immense, most importantly helping the then CEO through GCI's first three acquisitions. I became the M&A principal and then led the next 22 acquisitions that built GCI to become one of the largest independent MSPs in the UK which sold to private equity in May 2018 for close to £200 million. The experience I gained through those acquisitions enables me to build Everything Tech Group, finding the right acquisitions and running the whole integration process."

ETG was founded in early 2021 as Managed IT Services Group (MITSG) by Allen and Phil Smith, and with the support of shareholders made its first acquisition in May

Looking ahead, growth opportunities are particularly promising in the expansion of our cybersecurity services

2021 (Manchester-based IT Farm), quickly followed by Nexbridge Communications in August. "This gave us a small platform to work from and with additional investment from Boost&Co we purchased the CSS Group in December 2021 giving us the cloud, voice and MSP capability we wanted," stated Allen.

In July 2022 MITSG acquired Manchester headquartered MSP Everything Tech. Its brand became the group's

moniker and its office the national headquarters. The deal took the enlarged business's headcount to 100 and brought modern workplace capabilities along with 'some serious scale'. "Refinancing to NatWest gave us the ability to make two more acquisitions in Your Office Anywhere and Codus IT before our recent double acquisition of Sire Technology and GibVault," added Allen. "Our portfolio of services and infrastructure now spans a range of complexities

and capabilities suited to all potential target markets, including a new segment of enterprise clients."

Growth outlook

ETG currently generates £24 million turnover with 130 staff, with Allen forecasting circa £3 million additional revenues this year, ten new hires and growth in profitability of £600k-plus. The company services around 800 customers from small-micro firms up to enterprise organisations and global

ree spurs ETG

brands. "All verticals are subject to organic growth in 2025," added Allen. "However, sales cycles continue to be long which is something we hear a lot about in our industry. That

Companies must prioritise innovation, collaboration and customer-centricity

said, we over-performed in our recurring services sales putting us in a great position for the rest of 2025, which is looking to be a good year. Our pipelines are bigger than ever before and the recent acquisitions also have ambitious growth targets."

Migration expertise

Allen noted that ETG has witnessed 'extraordinary success' in cloud services and security solutions. "The ongoing migration of businesses to cloud platforms has escalated demand for our expertise in seamless migrations, robust security measures and continuous support," stated Allen. "Looking ahead, growth opportunities are particularly promising in the expansion of our cybersecurity services. As cyber threats become increasingly sophisticated the need for advanced security solutions is paramount.

AI, Machine Learning and IoT are also key. These technologies enable predictive maintenance, enhance security and offer sophisticated analytics allowing us to execute on strategies of enhanced customer care through proactive management of client infrastructures, while meeting

growing demand for more personalised solutions."

ETG to date has focused on integration and building a scalable platform with the right capabilities. Now, Allen is doubling down on scaling up, future proofing services for customers, and equipping clients with the knowledge, tools and strategies to navigate the evolving technology and cybersecurity landscapes.

"Competitive pressures and shifting customer expectations are also shaping our evolution," added Allen. "Our biggest opportunity is to be leaders in IT services, cybersecurity and pioneers in adapting cloud solutions and tools, such as our GPU which enables Azure Desktop on demand, giving smaller companies access to expensive infrastructure on a pay-as-you-go model." ■

Just a minute with Mark Allen...

What talent do you wish you had? To dance so I don't look like I've not seen my feet before when my wife makes me join her on the dance floor.

Best piece of advice you have been given: Always ask for forgiveness instead of permission. It's much faster.

How would you improve the industry? Get vendors to slow down on the deployment of AI on all their devices and software offerings, and instead focus on helping customers understand the use cases for where they can gain ROI from AI in the first place.

Your greatest strength and what could you work on? I have learned to trust my gut feeling on a deal, which has proved extremely reliable before any due diligence is started. But I don't get in front of customers as much as I'd like.

Today's top three leadership priorities: Innovation, operational excellence and a customer-first approach.

Your biggest career achievement: Leading the transformation of ETG.

The biggest risk you have taken? Starting my own company and asking family and friends for investment after putting everything I own into the business. But I believe in myself and my colleagues. Success is the only option.

A key moment in ETG's development: Growing to a size that allowed us to obtain a high street funder. It shows what a credible organisation and buyer we are. This brings with it buying and serious investor opportunities for the next phase of growth.

How do you relax? I have a Manchester United FC season ticket, but this does not help me relax in the slightest.

Editor's comment...



A COMMS Dealer survey of channel leaders found that innovation is generally accepted as being essential for future growth, but many struggle to deliver new products and services quickly. In his interview, Mark Allen highlights why innovation is a leadership priority requiring action, and his evolving GTM strategy offers a guideline for aspiring MSPs also seeking to scale. To find out more

download the free Technology report here: <https://www.comms-dealer.com/whitepaper/gain-advantage-through-technology>

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Workflo Solutions gears up

Workflo Solutions' ambition to become one of Scotland's leading MSPs took a big leap forward last month with the acquisition of local rival Incovo. Here, Managing Director Michael Field discusses his unfolding growth plan.

The Incovo deal followed three months of negotiations and is the latest in a string of acquisitions including Pyramid IT, TRM, Redwax and MacD IT. "We've achieved strong organic growth and expanded our footprint through acquisitions that have allowed us to integrate new expertise, increase our service capabilities and broaden our client base," stated Field.

Headquartered in Livingston, West Lothian, Workflo Solutions was founded by Field in 2007 with a team of three people working out of a serviced office in Edinburgh. "I was determined to create a business that focused on providing real value to clients," stated Field. "Everything we've done, every decision we've made, has been about service provision and client value. I've always been fascinated by problem solving, and I saw early on that technology could be a powerful tool for creating solutions."

Today, Workflo Solutions specialises in digital

transformation, managed print, IT services and unified communications. It employs 33 people, has a national customer base of more than 1,000 businesses and turnover approaching £5 million with profit before tax also displaying a notable increase. "We currently serve a wide range of clients across multiple sectors and expect this growth trajectory to continue as we work toward our targets for the year ahead," added Field.

Knowing the core purpose of his business, its strategic trajectory and how it's designed to carry on solving customer challenges are just some of the keys to securing long-term growth, noted Field. Taken together, these factors underscore the imperative to innovate and evolve while driving an effective organic and acquisitive scale up programme, he believes.

As part of this strategic mix, Field cited the expansion of Workflo Solutions' service offerings as being pivotal in driving the MSP's growth. "This positioned us as a more comprehensive



Michael Field

By making technology more intuitive, proactive and secure we can help companies focus on growth rather than IT challenges

solutions provider able to meet a wider range of client needs," he added. "Many organisations struggle with fragmented systems, security concerns and a lack of seamless integration between services. Our goal is to simplify IT through smarter automation, AI-driven support and fully managed solutions that remove the burden from businesses.

By making technology more intuitive, proactive and secure we can help companies focus on growth rather than IT challenges."

Key priorities

Fields' immediate priorities are to continue strengthening Workflo Solutions' managed IT and digital transformation services. And over the long-term he aims to expand

the firm's client base across the UK while doubling down further on areas like cybersecurity, cloud solutions and AI-driven automation. "To meet these goals we will focus on continuous innovation, strategic partnerships and building our technical expertise," commented Field. "We're also investing in scaling our infrastructure."



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Workflo Solutions' main technology partners include Kyocera, Microsoft, DocuWare and Gamma. "Going forward, our tech strategy will emphasise automation, enhanced cybersecurity and AI-driven solutions," added Field. "AI is a key focus for us. It's transforming how businesses operate, from

Strong leadership requires a clear vision, a commitment to customer-centric solutions and a culture that empowers teams to excel

automation and data analysis to cybersecurity and customer support. We're exploring ways to integrate AI-driven solutions that enhance efficiency, security and overall business performance for our clients."

Field is building on strong foundations, having met his 2024 targets and on track to achieve this year's objectives. "We continue to grow our national footprint, achieve strong revenue growth and hit operational milestones," he explained. "Looking at 2025, it's shaping up well. We're seeing early success with investments in our service offerings and automation tools. We've also focused on strengthening our internal team and building stronger relationships with partners, which will be essential for our growth."

One of the biggest market shifts Field is tracking is the increasing reliance on AI-driven predictive analytics in IT management. "Businesses want proactive solutions that prevent issues before they happen, reducing downtime and improving efficiency," he added. "AI is also playing a key role in cybersecurity, helping detect and respond to threats in real time. For Workflo Solutions this means investing in smarter monitoring tools, leveraging AI for enhanced threat detection and refining our cloud strategies to

support seamless, secure remote operations. Staying ahead of these trends ensures we continue delivering value-driven, future-proof solutions to our clients."

Adaptive approach

In the short and mid-term Field expects Workflo Solutions to solidify its position by adapting to industry shifts and maintaining a service-first approach. The success of these objectives are intertwined with what he believes to be today's primary leadership priorities, centred on adaptability, innovation and employee engagement. "The pace of technological change means businesses must stay agile and continuously evolve to meet new challenges,"

commented Field. "Strong leadership requires a clear vision, a commitment to customer-centric solutions and a culture that empowers teams to excel."

"For long-term, sustainable success it's essential to invest in people, ensuring they have the right tools, training and support to thrive. Effective leaders also stay ahead of industry trends, making informed decisions that drive growth while maintaining strong relationships with customers and partners."

"Whether it's providing insight into trends or understanding the technical intricacies of a solution, my background helps guide the company's strategic direction and ensures we're always delivering meaningful solutions to customers." ■



Key trends driving the future of technology adoption

In today's hyper-connected world, the pace of innovation has reached unprecedented levels. Businesses are no longer just adopting technology – it's now an essential part of their operations.



Adnan Sarwar
Channel Strategy Lead

That's why we commissioned our Partner of the Future research study, to understand the challenges faced by partners and end users. Through this research, we've identified the key trends reshaping the market, the future of partner-client relationships, and the steps that channel partners must take to stay competitive.

We asked end users which trends they expected to have the greatest influence on their companies over the coming 12 months. A resounding 86% of them told us technology would be a key area of influence; surpassing people trends at 50%.

Our research also showed that 81% of end users increased their focus on emerging technologies in the past six months alone. In addition, a near-unanimous 96% see these technologies as integral to their company's vision for the future.

Emerging technologies open doors to possibilities that were once unimaginable. When deployed correctly, they can drive innovation,

enable experiential marketing campaigns and revolutionise business strategies.

But all this rapid evolution, along with implementation and testing, can create risks such as system vulnerabilities, integration challenges or infrastructure instabilities.

That's where mature technologies come into play. These tried-and-tested solutions, such as secure mobile and broadband connectivity, ensure critical operations run smoothly, while offering reliable scalability. By combining the flexibility of emerging technology with the reliability of established solutions, businesses can create a resilient and forward-looking tech adoption strategy.

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Gaining the B Corp advantage

The rise of B Corps continues to accelerate and the implications of this trend for MSPs must not be ignored, according to Zen's Sustainability Manager Paula Wilson.



Paula Wilson

When Zen certified as a B Corp in September 2020 there was circa 400 such committed companies in the UK. Today, the UK has the largest number of B Corps in the world with over 2,400 businesses certified – and rising. The likelihood of an MSP trying to sell to a B Corp is also on the increase, so MSP leaders would be wise to treat this new dynamic as a priority area. “We see the sustainability agenda come up more and more in sales conversations, both with consumers and businesses,” stated Wilson. “It is great to see that businesses are taking the whole issue of Net Zero more seriously.

“Just a few years ago it felt as though companies were paying lip service to meeting environmental challenges, but this has changed with more corporates placing an emphasis on sustainability. And many of the savvier businesses will switch supplier or disregard doing business with a company that has no sustainability strategy. Our B Corp status and environmental approach

helps get us a seat at the table for new business acquisition, especially in the enterprise space where it’s no longer a nice to have.”

Zen helps some of its channel partners on their journeys to becoming a B Corp and offers support to partners who may not be ready to explore B Corp specifically but want to make strides towards making a sustainable difference. Wilson noted that the process of becoming a B Corp is stringent and took Zen two years to complete. “When we discovered the B Corp movement we saw that it aligned closely with our own values, so becoming a B Corp felt like a natural next step,” she stated. “The most valuable lesson we learned during the process was the importance of continuous improvement. While we’ve always held these values the B Corp movement opened our eyes to the idea that there is always more that can be done.”

As a B Corp, Zen’s approach to partnering and meeting Scope 3 challenges is evolving, so much so that when selecting suppliers

B Corp status serves as a competitive advantage, differentiating us and attracting customers who value sustainability

it evaluates whether they are the right fit and if their values are aligned. “We already collaborate with several B Corps in different areas,” explained Wilson. “For example, we have partnered with B Corp Carma for corporate tree planting solutions and work with B Corp Energise as a strategic consultant on our Net Zero ambitions. In the channel we partner with several B Corps including IDNet.”

Zen drives awareness of its B Corp status through

internal and external communications. It forms part of the messaging when encouraging its people to engage in community volunteering, and Zen aligns its supply chain with its own B Corp values. The company has collaborated with the Digital Connectivity Forum (DCF)’s Climate & Sustainability Working Group (CSWG), which provides a platform for UK telecoms collaboration, enabling the acceleration of individual and industry pathways towards Net Zero through

collaboration, evidence sourcing and providing expert recommendations to Government, regulators and the industry. Zen also participates in the Net Zero Telecoms Steering Group working with others in the industry to highlight areas for collaboration.

Working together

“A Net Zero future can only be achieved through proactive cross-industry collaboration,” commented Wilson. “We can reduce our Scope 1 and 2 emissions

antage

independently and we are making progress in this area. However, we can't reduce our Scope 3 emissions without engagement and proactivity from the rest of our supply chain. For too long we have been relying

We see the sustainability agenda come up more and more in sales conversations

on what Governments and other organisations are doing about climate change. But industry collaboration enables us to share best practice and pave the way for sustainable solutions. In the channel specifically we can look at the circular economy, focusing on sustainable device selection, router refurbishment schemes and minimising e-waste."

New ecosystem

Wilson expects to see the emergence of a community of sustainability-first companies in the channel that prefer to partner with like-minded businesses, in doing so creating a partner ecosystem composed of organisations that prioritise sustainability. "But it is still early days," she commented. "I recently attended a B Corp Festival, a gathering of B Corps from all sectors. It was an inspiring event and industry collaboration in some sectors was clear, but in many areas there are still more questions than answers. The desire to do more was evident so we expect to see even greater cross industry collaboration, and sustainability will

eventually become a critical driver of long-term growth."

This is in large part because being a B Corp creates a significant competitive advantage, attracting a growing number of customers who value sustainability. "This is becoming increasingly significant both in the B2C and B2B space," commented Wilson. "We have consumer customers that have chosen Zen because of our B Corp status, which has also contributed to success in enterprise bids. In the channel we find that the majority of our partners are aligned with Zen's values. These are our truly successful partnerships."

Wilson emphasised that the legally binding B Corp requirements prove that Zen is doing the right thing by the planet and people – not just talking about it. But the process of achieving B Corp status can also be transformative for a business, she noted. "Don't consider this a box ticking exercise," said Wilson. "Instead, go through the process from a development perspective and embrace all aspects of the framework – not just the environment but also people, the local community, ethics and the supply chain.

"This is a great way to identify areas of improvement for your business. During the assessment process you will clearly see the tangible improvements you can make every day as a business. Initially, we advise companies to take a step back and evaluate their current emissions. This will help identify areas for improvement and devise a plan for future action." ■



NetSapiens Presents:
US Channel Trends with Peter Radizeski



The \$13 Lie: Why Cheap UCaaS is a Race to the Bottom

The biggest lie in UCaaS? That the market sets the price at \$13-15 per seat. That's the number floating around from the big national players. But here's the catch: it doesn't include the bells and whistles—no AI, no advanced features, and certainly no customer support worth a damn. Yet, plenty of companies charge 4-5x that price per seat. How? Because businesses don't pay premiums for commodities. They pay for value.

The Two Groups Winning This Game

Two types of sellers have cracked the code: regional UC providers and PBX dealers (a.k.a. Inter-Connects). They're not playing the volume game—they're playing the value game.

1. The Regional UC Provider: Playing the "Local" Card

Two magic words separate a regional UC provider from the big guys: White. Glove. These companies aren't just selling software; they're selling trust and real human support—on-site training, on-site install, and actual customer care. Not an outsourced support line where you spend 30 minutes convincing a chatbot you exist. Local providers don't just claim to have great service—they have Google reviews and reputation to back it up. Reputation means pricing power. If customers trust you, they'll pay accordingly.

2. The PBX Dealer: The Ghost of Telecom Past Becomes the Future

PBX dealers once dominated business telecom. They sold, installed, trained, and maintained systems. When UCaaS emerged, many assumed they were obsolete. Wrong.

Turns out, the skill set didn't die—it evolved. Businesses still want hands-on implementation, training, MACD, and Tier 1 support. The PBX dealers who realized this pivoted and are now charging multiples over the \$13-per-seat nonsense.

Proof Matters More Than Features

Businesses aren't switching UCaaS providers for better features. They're switching because the last provider dropped the ball—missed deadlines, botched installs, lousy support.

That means the best sellers aren't just selling software—they're selling confidence. High ARPU (average revenue per user) means fewer, more loyal customers—and that's just smart business.

The Myth of Hyper-Efficiency

Commodity providers believe the key to winning is scale and efficiency. But here's the problem: the biggest players in the space still haven't figured out how to be efficient at both sales and implementation.

UCaaS isn't plug-and-play. There are multiple moving parts, and getting them to work seamlessly requires humans. That's not inefficiency—that's reality.

Sales 101: Ask Smarter Questions, Close Bigger Deals

There are two types of salespeople:

1. The ones who sell on price.
2. The ones who sell on value.

Guess who wins in the long run?

I once worked on a deal where the customer had seven vendors bidding for their UCaaS business. The winner? The company that nailed the pre-demo meeting by asking the right questions

and actually listening. That meeting translated into a pitch that addressed the customer's real pain points. And boom—deal closed.

Most salespeople skip this step. They rush to close. They push for signatures before understanding actual needs. That's how they end up discounting their price into oblivion.

The Mindset Shift: Sell Solutions, Not Seats

The best sellers don't sell products—they sell outcomes. They position themselves as strategic partners, not just vendors.

UCaaS might look like a commodity, but the best sales teams frame it differently: "Yes, we offer UCaaS, just like hundreds of others. But the way we implement, support, and integrate it into your business is what makes us different. Our goal isn't just to sell you software—it's to make your business better."

That's the game. That's how you charge 4-5x the market rate while competitors race to the bottom.

Bottom Line: Price is What You Pay, Value is What You Get

There will always be customers chasing the lowest price. Let them. They were never your best customers anyway.

The real money is in customers who want quality. The ones who get that a rock-solid UCaaS implementation is worth paying for.

Commodity pricing is a sucker's game. Build value. Sell confidence. Charge accordingly. Warren Buffett said it best: "Price is what you pay. Value is what you get."

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Introducing UK Partner We

The UK Partner Week 2025 Ambassador programme has welcomed four new members dedicated to raising awareness of the inaugural Partner Week (July 3rd-10th) initiative and Summit (July 9th). Here, they share insights into why they've adopted the Ambassadorship mantle and why the UK Partner Week Summit will be pivotal for delegates wanting to develop a best practice operating model while networking with peers.

David Alldritt MBE,
Chairman, FCS

Ambassador



Deciding where you want to be in 2030 and how to drive competitive advantage between now and then are pivotal questions for channel business leaders. Addressing these challenges effectively requires insights that underpin sound decision making – therefore the time is ripe for a new style of channel event that focuses on resolving these important issues.

UK Partner Week introduces a new format that makes it easy for channel leaders to be fully involved in what matters most to them. And the Partner Week Summit will help delegates to better understand these critical issues and get face-to-face with their peers, partners and industry experts. This is why I became an Ambassador for UK Partner Week.

Despite challenging times, the channel excels at finding opportunities for business growth while simultaneously delivering genuine benefit to end user customers. Furthermore, the technology landscape has shifted thanks to the rise of full fibre, All-IP and the rapid development of AI-driven solutions – and UK Partner Week promises some real insights and great inspiration for channel leaders and their teams seeking to follow best practice and deliver real business value. There is no better time than now to make sure your goals are clear and that your business model is optimised to deliver them. ■

There is no better time than now to make sure your goals are clear and that your business model is optimised to deliver them

Paul Hooper, CEO,
Uplands OneTelco

Ambassador



We've always believed that strong partnerships drive better customer outcomes, and UK Partner Week is a great opportunity to champion that message. Being involved as an Ambassador allows me to support an initiative that encourages real conversations, knowledge-sharing and stronger connections within the channel. The success of this industry depends on collaboration.

The channel is evolving fast and we need to evolve with it. Sticking with 'business as usual' isn't an option – and there's no room

for complacency. The Partner Summit offers a chance to step away from the day-to-day, challenge our thinking and engage with others who are shaping the future. The format is built around real-world insight, not just theory, which makes it a valuable space for learning and collaboration.

The Partner Summit offers a chance to step away from the day-to-day, challenge your thinking and engage with others shaping the future

It is important for channel leaders to engage with these core themes and attend the event because growth doesn't happen in a vacuum. The best businesses stay ahead by learning from others, adapting to change and making informed decisions. The Partner Week Summit's focus on business vision, leadership, revenue strategies and best practice benchmarking is spot-on. It's what every partner should be thinking about.

If we want to remain competitive and deliver real value to customers we need to engage with these content themes and apply them to our own businesses. The Partner Week Summit is a rare chance to gain new perspectives, have open discussions with like-minded people and leave with ideas that can make a difference. ■

ek Ambassadors

Ruth Kennedy, CEO,
TalkTalk Business

Ambassador



UK Partner Week is a golden opportunity for channel organisations to strengthen partnerships, share insights and uncover new opportunities for growth. The chance to network, collaborate and learn means leaders can elevate and fortify their strategic visions, which is key to building more resilient and future-ready businesses.

As a UK Partner Week Ambassador, I have the privilege of supporting businesses, partners and vendors on their collaboration journey. Strengthening connections in the partner channel will help us all to unlock greater potential and drive sustainable success. Furthermore, the UK Partner Week Summit is an opportunity to shape the future of the channel. Its themes include identifying future leaders, benchmarking models against best practice and enriching business vision

– all key for delivering significant growth and long-term success. By engaging with the themes, channel leaders will be able to sharpen their business strategies, fortify partnerships and play their part in building a more resilient channel ecosystem. ■

At the UK Partner Summit channel leaders will be able to sharpen their strategies, fortify partnerships and play their part in building a more resilient channel ecosystem

Ian Dunstan,
Managing Director, Cobalt

Ambassador



UK Partner Week and the Partner Summit is all about celebrating collaboration and the amazing things we can achieve together. Networking, having fun, and promoting the power of partnerships are all part of my role in the business, so I'll be bringing some of my team to meet business leaders, sales, marketing and tech specialists to spark innovation and growth. Getting my team involved will show them why we have core values and why we all try to operate in the same way.

Business growth can be incredibly hard and painful. But getting your team on board and all paddling the same canoe is key to everyone achieving a common goal. My goal is to build a team so strong you don't know who the boss is. There is no better way to do this than out of the office in a business and social environment, which is why I am delighted to be a UK Partner Week Ambassador. ■

I'll be bringing some of my team to meet business leaders, sales, marketing and tech specialists to spark innovation and growth

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Get involved in Partner Week

UK Partner Week will help you and your teams

- Enrich your vision for their business
- Identify your future leaders
- Gain practical insights into revenue growth strategies
- Benchmark your business models against best practice
- Network with the wider partner community
- Have FUN!



At the heart of UK Partner Week is the UK Partner Week Summit, a free to attend event for MSP and channel business leaders, sales, marketing, and technical specialists featuring...

- Main stage hosting inspirational keynotes
- Expert contributors and partner panels
- Content streams highlighting real world practices
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- Live studio broadcasting
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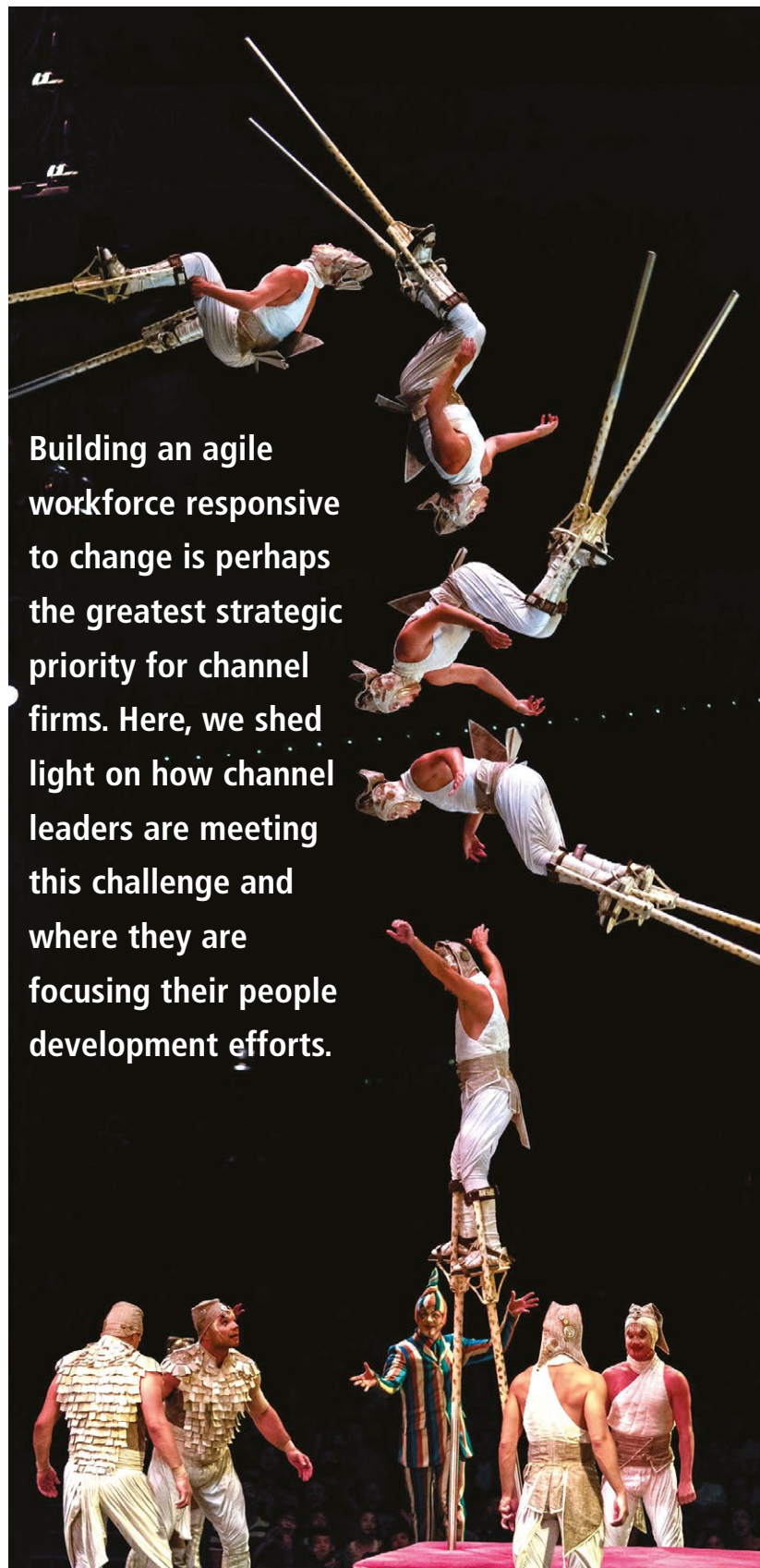
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Developing an agile future



Building an agile workforce responsive to change is perhaps the greatest strategic priority for channel firms. Here, we shed light on how channel leaders are meeting this challenge and where they are focusing their people development efforts.



CONOR CALLANAN
CEO
CORE

A future-ready MSP workforce embraces adaptability and change, leveraging technology to enhance efficiency, productivity and scalability. AI and automation are essential tools, not just for technical innovation but for enabling smarter working and better service delivery. Market challenges, shifting customer demands and economic pressures mean that workforce development must be intentional. Rather than defaulting to recruitment, many organisations, like ours, are upskilling existing teams to respond to change with agility and expertise. Companies that prioritise teamwork, continuous learning and customer-first thinking will be best positioned to navigate industry shifts. Investment in people doesn't always mean expansion - it's about empowering employees to innovate, adapt and drive business outcomes. Long-term success depends on a workforce that is technically capable, resilient, customer-centric and aligned with evolving market needs.



JAMES PHIPPS
EXECUTIVE
CHAIRMAN
WESTSPRING IT

IT'S all about being strategic, flexible and abreast of the latest technological advancements. With the rise of AI in the workplace, businesses are looking at MSPs to implement complex technologies in ways that improve efficiency and productivity. Customers are looking to us to be more efficient, especially after the recent budget announcements. It's about having highly trained but also commercially aware people who understand the customer's business needs rather than just solving their technical issues. We are driving a high engagement culture to react quickly to our changing customer landscape, ensuring we invest significantly in training and career development. We find technical people who can deliver a great client experience with a methodical hiring process that focuses equally on expertise and personality.



NEDJA SANTOS
HEAD OF PEOPLE
AND CULTURE
AUXILION

ORGANISATIONS mustn't lose sight of the fundamentals of talent development and employee engagement despite the lightning speed of change and the disruption caused by emerging technology. It's about creating a strong culture of opportunity, providing access to learning and development and encouraging innovation and internal mobility, especially when engaging with IT or technical employees. They're passionate about technology and are paying attention to the investments, partnerships and IT roadmap decision making their company is funding. It's about demonstrating a commitment to taking risks and making changes, accepting setbacks and giving space for trial and error. There's no crystal ball that'll give people certainty on the future, so the organisations that fund education and professional development, and commit to succession planning and talent calibration, will thrive.



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e-fit workforce strategy



JAY BALL
CEO
FLOTEK GROUP

FUTURE-READY MSP workforces need to be flexible, prioritise customer needs, embrace innovation, leverage data, excel in cybersecurity, collaborate well, scale effectively, stay agile, have strong leadership and focus on competitive advantage and impactful results. Our people development strategies are driven by the high demand for cybersecurity expertise, proficiency in Microsoft technologies and automation skills. We're focusing our investment and development efforts on RPA and AI training and collaborating with external partners to deliver technologies where we lack expertise. This helps overcome the challenge of customers expecting more services without realising the necessary investment.



PAUL GUEST
GROUP OPERATIONS
DIRECTOR
ORBITAL10

IN a rapidly evolving digital landscape, businesses that prioritise skills in AI, automation, cybersecurity and data analytics will gain a competitive edge. Market demand for seamless digital transformation and outcome-based solutions is driving people development strategies. Customers expect proactive, intelligent services that deliver tangible business value, pushing businesses to upskill teams in consultative engagement, solution design and next-gen tech deployment. Forward-thinking organisations will equip teams with the skills to navigate evolving technologies and remain at the cutting edge. Talent acquisition and retention remain pressing concerns. Developing leadership capabilities, enhancing career progression pathways and embedding a proactive, change-ready mindset is key.



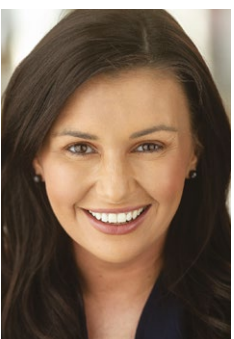
RICHARD SCOTT
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STAFF who are ready to embrace change, whether that is with new products, new processes or new systems, are critical to success. By upskilling staff and enabling collaboration across teams and departments, people power can be maximised for a competitive advantage. The biggest challenge is linking disparate ordering systems across suppliers to save time. We are investing in applications and AI technology to handle the manual, routine processes that are done several times per day. This will speed up how we operate, freeing up staff to concentrate on higher value work. Our staff are our most valuable asset and we want to ensure they are used in the most efficient way possible.



ANDY BEVAN,
HEAD OF CLOUD
SPECIALISTS
WAVENET

TO thrive in a highly competitive market MSPs must maximise the value they derive from their people. Taking the lead from the needs and aspirations of their chosen markets, MSPs are investing in developing their staff in cyber, AI and cloud infrastructure skills. By staying ahead of the technological curve through upskilling programmes, targeted certifications with key vendors, and encouraging self-development, MSPs cultivate a highly capable workforce. Structured career path progression, leadership programmes and providing the freedom to innovate ensures a satisfied, loyal workforce, building expertise and minimising staff churn. This approach promotes a sense of ownership and motivation, driving employees to contribute more effectively to the company's goals.



KATIE WILLIAMS
CHIEF PEOPLE
OFFICER
FOCUS GROUP

THE ability to pivot quickly in response to emerging technologies and client needs is paramount. Customer demand for advanced digital solutions and seamless service delivery is driving our people development strategies. We're investing heavily in upskilling our teams in data analytics, cybersecurity and AI integration, notably with tools like Microsoft Copilot to enhance productivity and innovation across the business. Our biggest focus is on attracting and retaining top talent in a competitive landscape. We're prioritising career development, flexible working and creating a supportive, inclusive environment. We've hired more HR business partners allowing us to focus on career frameworks, define banding levels and provide clearer paths for promotions. We've also launched internal training programmes such as our Sales Academy and Management 101, which equip our people with the skills needed to grow and succeed within the company.



MARK PILLOW
MANAGING DIRECTOR
VOIP UNLIMITED

CURIOSITY is an important trait of a future-ready channel workforce – constantly questioning how we do things, whether there's a better way and what customers truly need. Translating complex product capabilities into real-world solutions is critical, ensuring resellers and end users can extract real value. AI is a prime example as there is still a gap in understanding how to apply it effectively. Investing in upskilling and technical expertise helps businesses bridge that gap, ensuring teams can adapt quickly and deliver solutions that matter. Another key focus is making information accessible so the right people have the right insights at the right time. Competitive advantage is about enabling teams to apply knowledge to solve complex customer challenges.

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Nebula hires top engineer



Shalini Kaushik

PLATFORM-as-a-Service vendor Nebula has appointed Shalini Kaushik as Head of Engineering. She brings nearly two decades of engineering experience and joins from Sycurio where she spent six years as VP of Engineering, running development lifecycles for PCI software solutions. Prior roles include six years as a senior QA head at Phoenix Business Solutions and a near seven year spell at Accenture. CEO Howard Stevens stated: Shalini's wealth of experience is a fantastic asset and we look forward to seeing the positive effect her arrival will have across the 200,000 users who rely on Nebula's products every day." Kaushik added: "Ambitious software companies thrive on ambitious engineering roadmaps. It's going to be a big year for us, our partners and our customers."

FINANCE leader Ed Brookes has joined BGF-backed Celerity as CFO. He brings 20-plus years experience in financial leadership including stints at Native Places and Andrew Page. "Ed's experience in building scalable financial systems, driving organisational change and supporting M&A activity aligns with our strategic goals," stated CEO Craig Aston.

Sanderson enters BCN as new COO

A KEY focus for Mike Sanderson as he takes the Chief Operating Officer role at BCN is to double down on driving operational excellence. Sanderson moves from technology and engineering consultancy BJSS where he was Regional Director. BCN CEO Rob Davies commented: "As SMEs increasingly seek to collaborate with MSPs for digital transformation and IT management, we recognised the need for a leader with the right operational expertise and drive. Mike is that leader and his experience will be instrumental in supporting our business growth."



Mike Sanderson

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AWARDS SUCCESS





The differentiation dilemma

Reflecting culture and values came out as critical during the session. Julie Mills, CEO at Support to Win said: "You want to read an entry in the tone of the entrant. A good submission will get under the hood of a company to showcase its identity." This can include an honest look at the lessons learnt on the way to success, said Richard Scott, Sales Director at Start Communications. He added: "Where relevant, we highlight where things didn't go right but we pivoted quickly. Judges know things don't always go smoothly and this makes it more personable."

unique as it's in the fabric of how we operate," she added.

Conveying a company's voice can be done through supporting information such as testimonials and visual aids. Gareth Pritchard, Head of Comms, PR and Events at Giacom added: "Try to illustrate the points you are making in the body of the entry and bring them to life. A great bit of supporting information can leave a lasting impression for judges inundated by text."

Paul Hooper, CEO at Uplands OneTelco



Key to achieving an authentic voice is engaging the appropriate stakeholders. Elizabeth Sparrow, Founding Director of Blabbermouth Marketing noted that entries can misrepresent the value of a project if the author wasn't directly involved. "Engage the people who led the project," she said. "They will enthusiastically talk about the unique elements that led to success." She points to the value of bringing in an outside perspective. "Wrapped up in our own worlds we forget what we are doing is

noted that differentiation can conflict with authenticity in less successful entries. "Some may try and shoehorn in differentiators that don't reflect the truth," he said. "Don't start to fabricate elements to impress judges. Be authentic." AI is another threat to award authenticity. Candice Cunliffe, MD at F6 Agency, added: "Increased use of AI has unfortunately led to more generic entries. Utilising AI is great but weave in a brand story, value proposition and package it beautifully."

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