



Greg Mesch: The architect of a pure fibre future P24

Harris on why cloud UC could come to dominate P26



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## Merger 'the game'

Food' claims Gamma's CEO Bob Falconer's £12.5bn takeover of EE.

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BT's CEO Gavin Patterson commented: "The combined BT and EE will be a digital champion for the UK. Consumers, businesses and communities will benefit as we combine the power of fibre broadband with the convenience of leading edge mobile services."

Following completion of the deal Deutsche Telekom will gain 12% of BT's shares and Orange 4%. A representative of Deutsche Telekom will be appointed to the BT Board.

More industry reaction – p28

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**Comms People**

This month's movers and shakers



# BT-EE uber merger 'changes the game'

**'THE game is about to change for good' claims Gamma's CEO Bob Falconer following the CMA's go-ahead for BT's £12.5bn takeover of EE.**

**SPECIAL REPORT**

The deal brings together the UK's biggest fixed line provider and largest mobile telecoms business and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) gave clearance for the acquisition based on the belief that there will be limited overlap in retail markets and no significant lessening of competition arising from the acquisition.

"BT has clearly stated its ambition to leverage the acquisition to accelerate the sale of

converged fixed-mobile services," stated Falconer (pictured).

"From the channel's point of view it is hard to see how this is anything other than both a reduction in the choice of suppliers and a strengthened competitor in the retail market.

"The channel can therefore expect to compete against converged offerings from BT in the business market and to have 'incentives' to buy both fixed and mobiles services from BT at a wholesale level. The game is about to change for good."

BT's CEO Gavin Patterson commented: "The combined BT and EE will be a digital champion for the UK. Consumers, businesses and communities will benefit as we combine the power of fibre broadband with the convenience of leading edge mobile services."

Following completion of the deal Deutsche Telekom will gain 12% of BT's shares and Orange 4%. A representative of Deutsche Telekom will be appointed to the BT Board.

**More industry reaction – p28**

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EDITOR'S COMMENT



Stuart Gilroy

SPRING is in the air so the subject of routes to growth is an apt one this month. In this issue we highlight and explore some of the strategies that a diverse group of comms companies, large and small, are pursuing to achieve business expansion this year.

Acquisitions are the flavour of the month, with BT-EE not surprisingly grabbing

the headlines (see page 28). Also in acquisition mode is CityFibre which has, at a stroke, greatly advanced its plan to become an alternative pure fibre infrastructure provider following its purchase of KCOM's national fibre assets (excluding Hull and East Yorkshire) for £90 million. We got the inside story from the company's tenaciously ambitious CEO Greg Mesch (see page 24).

While acquisitions dominate the news, other growth factors, such as going back to business basics, are also explored this month. For example, Cardiff-based TWL has undergone a two year business fitness programme and is now pushing forward with an expansion plan based on organic and inorganic growth (see page 44).

Meanwhile, fast growing SIPHON Networks is advancing a reseller engagement strategy that aims to catalyse the cloud UC market, bringing new growth to partners (see page 26). And Oxfordshire-based VoIP.co.uk's rebrand to Firstcom this month is the latest strategic move by Managing Director Adam Crisp who also pins his growth prospects on nurturing long-term meaningful strategic relationships with partners (see page 36).

Sticking to a policy of giving customers exactly what they want and need both pre and post-sales based on consultancy is Comms Supply's primary route to sustained growth, as well as a 'get it right first time' approach (see page 48). Aside from these company profiles, Comms Dealer's news pages are also brimming with growth stories that will hopefully inspire more of the same.

Stuart Gilroy, Editor

# Annodata spurred by 20% profit leap

ANNODATA'S hopes of realising its £100m revenue target by 2017 have been spurred by a 20% jump in profits.

The MSP's annual financial results for the year ending 30th June 2015 also show revenues of £68.9m, up from £57.4m a year ago.

Annodata has been boosted by the acquisitions of IT infrastructure provider Keltec in November 2014 and wide-format print specialist STS in January 2015, strengthening its service portfolio to include cloud hosting and ICT capabilities, and creating opportunities to cross-sell between the respective customer bases.

Joe Kelly, Annodata's Group Finance Director, said: "This has been a particularly good year for Annodata and now that Keltec has been fully integrated into the business we are in a strong position to replicate that success in the year ahead.

"Annodata continues to maintain a strong balance sheet with no bank debt, which gives us the room for manoeuvre we need to remain agile and independent in the face of fast-changing market conditions."

Annodata made a number of changes to its senior manage-



Martin St Quinton

ment team last year. Group Sales Director Rod Tonna-Barthet became CEO. The company also appointed a new Finance Director, Group Sales Director and Commercial Director.

Martin St Quinton, Non-Executive Chairman, stated: "The past financial year has been one of the most significant in Annodata's 28 year history, marked by solid growth, acquisitions that have expanded Annodata's portfolio of services, a spate of large new business wins, and a number of strategically important appointments to strengthen our senior man-

agement team – all things that have helped to contribute to our continued success.

"Businesses across the board are trying to streamline the number of suppliers they work with down to a trusted few, and our customers increasingly want us to take on ever greater portions of their IT estates.

"This is where we see the greatest growth potential. Our focus will very much be on growing the cloud, managed services and ICT parts of the business, and I have every confidence that we will maintain our healthy growth rates."

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COMMENT: MONEY TALKS



Richard Carter

DID you know a new £1 coin is being planned, hailed as the most secure in the world? The Bi Metallic 12 sided coin is due to become legal tender early next year and its impact will be significant for payphones, vending machines as well as general daily life. The Royal Mint estimates that around 45 million existing coins are now forgeries, prompting the new version. But with growing developments around contactless payments surely the days of having cash in our pockets are

numbered? In the future there will be even less reliance on physical cash as our mobile phones become virtual wallets, paying for goods and services directly in shops and restaurants and also online, as many of us do now.

Times are undoubtedly changing and I think M2M will lead to putting coins in vending machines becoming a thing of the past. Also, electronic transactions are a much more efficient form of payment for consumers and also vending operators who won't have the chore of counting hundreds of coins each week and tallying balances.

The arrival of a new £1 coin will also affect tens of thousands of payphones across the country, but this is another area with increasingly limited use. I can't remember the last time I used a payphone to make a call. It must be at least 15 years ago.

With the explosion in mobile phone technology the days of traditional payphones seem numbered, although they will always have a place in some locations such as hospitals, prisons and holiday homes.

Looking ahead, we will undoubtedly need less cash in our pockets, whatever the design of the £1 coin.

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

# Exclusive becomes 1bn euro business

EXCLUSIVE Group's acquisition of Singapore-based VAD Transition Systems has catalysed Group revenues beyond 1bn euros and strengthened its foothold in the APAC region.

Transition Systems, a cyber security and infrastructure VAD, is the largest acquisition made by Exclusive and takes the company to 1,200 employees while adding 18 offices in eight countries including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Exclusive Group already has offices in Australia and New Zealand and 25% of total revenues will now come from the APAC operations.

Olivier Breittmayer, CEO, stated: "Transition Systems is a large, influential regional player with similar business DNA to our own, as well as having important vendors, technologies and a strong value adding culture in common.

"This acquisition adds significant capabilities to our overall proposition. Our partners around the world now have greater in-country presence to support global projects across Asia, while our Asian reseller partners have the full spectrum of Exclusive Group services to



Olivier Breittmayer

support their deals into more than 100 countries worldwide."

Jonathan Juay, Group MD of TransitionSystems, added: "This marks a significant opportunity for our partners, customers and people as we become part of

the global Exclusive family. We are looking at starting BigTec, Exclusive's hyperconvergence business unit, into several countries here, and exploring synergies with Exclusive vendors and global SIs."

## comms dealer

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COMMENT: STRATEGIC TALK



Alex Tempest

AS WE enter an era of digitalisation, businesses have greater potential to explore, connect and grow than ever. But all too often organisations are unsure of the vast opportunities for growth the adoption of digital technologies can bring, or how to go about improving their systems and processes.

If businesses are to embrace digitalisation, it is more crucial than ever

to have a digital strategy, and the implementation of this strategy comes hand-in-hand with the requirement for digitally skilled employees, and a resilient network. However, according to digital inclusion charity Go ON UK, more than 1.2 million SMEs don't have the basic digital skills that will enable business growth.

The role of the partner channel here is key. As trusted business advisors, partners can help ensure businesses have an effective digital strategy and provide the advice and support necessary as they prepare for a digital overhaul, including pointers on how to train staff.

The inevitable rise in traffic from digital services means customers will require greater bandwidth, as well as the flexibility to continue to evolve and adapt to the increasingly competitive market. It is therefore vital that the benefits are fully explained and the best approach encouraged.

It's also key that society as a whole embraces the digital revolution that will drive growth in the wider economy. Passionate about this approach, TalkTalk is a founding member of Go ON UK. Ultimately, by adopting a digital strategy, investing in skills and a reliable network, businesses and Government alike can foster the creativity and forward thinking workforce that the UK prides itself on and ensure that Britain remains at the forefront of the digital evolution.

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

# Lifesize goes independent



Craig Malloy

LIFESIZE has split away from Logitech and is operating as a fully independent company backed by \$17.5m in funding from three Silicon Valley venture firms, Redpoint Ventures, Sutter Hill Ventures and Meritech Capital Partners.

The firm is now positioned as a high growth cloud-based video collaboration and meeting platform operation with the \$7bn global conferencing market squarely in its sights.

Lifesize has undergone a business transformation to address the video collaboration and meeting platform market with the launch of Lifesize Cloud (its cloud-based video collaboration service) and an integrated approach to connected cameras and HD phones.

Craig Malloy, CEO and founder of Lifesize, said: "As an independent company we can invest more meaningfully in our product roadmap and be more responsive to the market and our customers."

Logitech will retain a meaningful interest in Lifesize. Guerrino De Luca, Logitech's Chairman, added: "Together with our three co-investors we determined that the capital, SaaS industry expertise and growth focused approach would be key ingredients to realising long-term value."

Lifesize plans to use its infusion of capital to drive demand generation and customer acquisition, invest in engineering headcount and strengthen the alignment of its brand.

## GCI gears up for UC

GCI has sharpened its focus on managed UC provision and under the leadership of incoming CEO Adrian Thirkill the company will develop a Centre of Excellence for UC that builds on its Skype for Business pedigree, its standing as a Microsoft Gold Partner for Communications and Hosting, Vodafone Platinum Partner status and Broadsoft expertise.

Thirkill stated: "Customer demand for affordable per user, per month managed UC services is growing exponentially and now is the time for GCI to step up to the plate.

"Many organisations are in a pre-UC world, or one where selected disparate UC functions are employed to a limited capacity but not integrated. Our intention is to set the benchmark in managed UC services in a market worth £14.7bn globally."

### SHORT CALL

Venus has introduced white label marketing to its Partner Programme, allowing resellers to add their own branding. "White label marketing is one of the best ways to support our partners," stated Director Brian Iddon.

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COMMENT: DIVERSIFICATION



Pete Tomlinson

I LOVE this time of year: Roy Charles Amara was one of the first people who could have been called a tech futurologist. Born in 1925 he worked as a researcher at Stanford and then as Scientist and President of the Institute for the Future. He also coined Amara's law which says, 'we tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short

run and underestimate the effect in the long run'.

One of the reasons I love this time of year so much is that it's budgets time. It's not that I'm addicted to spreadsheets, but it's a great chance to step back, look at the progress you've made and the five-year plan ahead.

Growth is the inevitable result of having a great set of propositions, targeted in high growth markets, marketing and selling them well, then backing them up with exceptional service. The two biggest mistakes I see made at this time of year are thinking you can keep doing more of the same forever, or getting too excited about the impact a new service line will have on next year's numbers.

Four years ago Eclipse was pretty much an ISP and was 80 per cent broadband. Today, we still offer ISP services, but 70 per cent of our sales revenue is from some form of managed service. We were never going to see this kind of growth by staying in one mature market.

However, I also don't mind admitting the first year of offering any new service takes some time for it to get traction, and we didn't hit all of our targets for shifting the product mix. However, as our own diversification shows, in four years you can completely transform a business.

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

• 24 SEVEN Communications' Managing Director David Samuel is a dynamic comms entrepreneur ready to stamp his mark on the reseller channel. Here's how... (p34)

# Pinnacle's in rebuild form

PINNACLE Technology Group's plans to snap up Ancar B and The Weston Group for £5m were revealed alongside the posting of its results for the year to 30th September 2015.

The figures suggest progress on Pinnacle's acquisition strategy, the reduction of operational costs and they reflect the Group's efforts to address legacy issues. Revenues of £7.9m were reported for the period with recurring revenues remaining at 85%.

Overall losses were £1.3m, marking an improvement on the £1.8m loss reported in 2014.

Operational costs were also reduced, but legacy issues continue to act as a drag on the business and contributed to an EBITDA loss for the year. A positive cash balance at year end of £641k was realised.

In March 2015 Pinnacle was boosted by a strategic investment made by AIM quoted merchant bank MXC, which was also appointed M&A advisor to the company. MXC is now taking a significant stake of 25% in the business, alongside major investments in Pinnacle from other institutions.

In December 2015 Gavin Lyons was appointed Executive



Gavin Lyons

Chairman of Pinnacle and is a partner at MXC Capital. He was previously the CEO of Accumuli. Pinnacle also announced the appointment of Ian Winn, formerly COO at Accumuli, as Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director.

The duo led a buy-and-build journey through to the sale of Accumuli to the NCC Group in 2015 for £55m.

Pinnacle CEO Nicholas Scallan is leaving at the beginning of April after two years, and will not seek re-election at the next AGM.

Former Chairman James Dodd commented: "With the acquisitions of Ancar B and The Weston Group the business is in a much better position to push on and take advantage of the market opportunity that exists, namely providing IT-as-a-Service to SMEs."

SHORT CALLS

**Voip.co.uk** has rebranded as Firstcom in a move that reflects its evolution since it was founded in 2004. Adam Crisp, MD, said: "The 2014 acquisition of Firstcom in Denmark and subsequent expansion into Europe has allowed us to broaden our product portfolio and strengthen our in-house engineering team. Our new brand identity is the next logical step for us." *Full story on page 36*

**RDC** has bagged ShoreTel's 2015 Circle of Excellence Award in the Global Theatres category for the second year running. Adrian Hipkiss, VP of EMEA, ShoreTel, commented: "Each year less than one-half of one percent of all partners earn this distinction."

**Nimans Network Services** has launched a new audio conferencing solution that offers resellers good revenue potential, says Mark Curtis-Wood, Head of Network Services. "Resellers can provide secure conference services based on straightforward adoption, with immediate set-up and access to provision, amend and manage services through our portal," he said.

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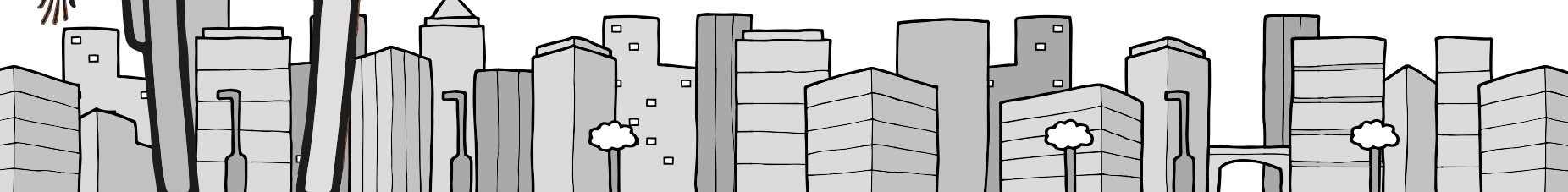
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COMMENT: MARKETING MATTERS



Elvire Gosnold

ARE you sticking to your New Year's resolutions? Even if you have lost interest in your lifestyle resolutions, there is still time to set a few simple action points to steer your 2016 marketing activity in the right direction. If we all had a few marketing resolutions, 2016 would be a calmer and more fruitful year for us all. Resolutions should be easy to understand, easy to remember and easy to relay to your team. Here are a few that will keep your marketing activity focused for 2016.

**Identify your USPs:** It is imperative

that you know what makes your business better than the rest. Marketing activity is so much more effective if you know what your strengths are.

**Promote your USPs:** You may know what your unique selling points are but does everyone else? Make sure your team is actively promoting your USPs and ensure the business as a whole is focusing on the same strengths.

**Be social:** Ensure your social media pages are up-to-date and on-brand. Set yourself and your team a goal to post on social media once a week. However, the content must be informative and professional.

**Don't forget your customers:** It is easy to get carried away with new client meetings so remember your loyal base. Regular and informative communication with your existing customers effectively increases cross-sell and up-sell opportunities and can dramatically reduce churn.

**Update your website regularly:** Your website says so much about your business. Even if visitors are on there for just a few seconds they will form an opinion on your company. Out of date offers, broken links, cheesy photos and old logos all give a poor impression.

**Elvire Gosnold, Director, Blabbermouth Marketing**

# CityFibre launches Bristol Gigabit City

LESS than a month after acquiring KCOM's national fibre networks (excluding Hull and East Yorkshire) for £90m CityFibre has begun to commercialise them with the launch of a Bristol Gigabit City project in partnership with local ISP Triangle Networks.

"This is the first of many new Gigabit City launches to come on our expanded footprint of 36 cities across the UK," confirmed Greg Mesch, who is the CEO of CityFibre.

Triangle Networks is committing a minimum of 100 new customers on the network by year-end and will collaborate with CityFibre to urge businesses across the city to connect to the pure fibre network and take advantage of Gigabit-speed-as-standard services.

The network will complement Bristol's Smart City strategy which has already made the city a test bed for innovative digital projects.

These projects include Bristol university's city-sensor network called Bristol is Open, a laboratory exploring big data solutions to problems such as traffic congestion and air pollution, as well as trialling driverless car technology.



Greg Mesch



Paul Anslow

Mesch added: "Bristol is already a UK leader in digital innovation but its business community has not yet had the opportunity to take full advantage. This project provides that opportunity and there is nowhere more exciting to begin our latest project.

Paul Anslow, MD at Triangle Networks, commented: "We have been watching demand for ultra-fast services grow exponentially in recent years and this project has the potential to unlock a tide of demand for faster, more resilient and more affordable services.

"As this is a pure fibre network, Triangle will be launching services that are Gigabit-speed-as-standard, far faster than those

possible on FTTC networks that are still restricted by the limitations of copper wires.

"This enables businesses to stop concerning themselves with bandwidth restrictions and start to make the most of new ways of working that will improve their experience and drive the bottom line."

Bristol Gigabit City launches this month with a city-wide marketing campaign to raise awareness of the benefits to businesses from the Gigabit speed services on offer, enabling CityFibre to map demand for local network expansion projects. **See page 24**

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

# ICUK celebrates with upgrades and giveaways

ICUK marked its 15th year in business with the launch of version 15 of its Control Panel portal, a celebratory cash reward for staff, the expansion of its network and a promo for channel partners.

The latest version of ICUK's platform offers partners free PSTN and ADSL activations plus a number of new features and enhancements.

Neil Barnett, Head of Business Development, commented: "A common barrier for partners are the upfront installation



The ICUK team celebrate 15 years in business

costs with telephone services and broadband, especially when attracting new customers who might be on a tight budget.

"Our free line rental installation and broadband offer eradicates this problem and gives our partners an edge."

The company has also expanded its network infrastructure and upgraded its MPLS core to 20Gbps.

Tim O'Donovan, Technical Director, stated: "We've added more POPs in central London giving us access to more carriers and greater capacity.

"This year we plan to continue driving this expansion, allowing our partners and their end user customers to tap into the best possible resources for their broadband, hosting and Ethernet connectivity."

ICUK has achieved year-on-year organic growth based on a wholly technical bias and no sales team, and currently has circa 100,000 end users.

Founding Director Paul Barnett explained: "ICUK is made up of highly skilled technical people, developers and support staff, all dedicated to driving the constant development of our wholesale platform.

"We have always believed that if we can make something better the sales will naturally come, and they have."

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COMMENT: TRAINING MATTERS



Julie Mills

IT IS ESSENTIAL that businesses invest in developing the leadership potential within their own talent pool. Such an investment not only helps to retain key people, but also helps them to grow and further benefit the organisation. Only by developing and growing an existing talent pool will the outstanding

business leaders of tomorrow be created. Investing in talent through executive coaching is a proven method of helping businesses to get ahead, and stay ahead, in the marketplace. But what makes a great coach and how can they develop your stars of tomorrow?

A great coach should provide a platform that helps people understand the purpose of their role, why they are employed and what they can bring to your business. A professional coach should put a spotlight on what motivates and drives individuals, and help them to understand how to get the best from themselves.

It's also important to equip tomorrow's leaders with the skills to help them get the best out of other people in their teams. Some of these skills are not even on the radar screen of many businesses.

Notably, how to listen and communicate effectively, and how to pick up and use 'silent language' are skills often overlooked. Similarly, operating at board level is not a natural skill, so providing tomorrow's leaders with these skills and tools is essential if they are to succeed.

Coaching can be the key to nurturing and developing the leaders of tomorrow, and if you can't spend the time to do it yourself, then you should look for someone who can.

**Julie Mills, Director, Train to Win.tv**

• COMMS sector M&A activity reached standout levels last year, observes Marcus Allchurch, Partner at Acuity Advisors, who explores the driving forces and their implications for 2016. (p30)

# Eison snared in ANS move



Scott Fletcher

ANS has swooped on acquisition target Eison, snapping up the £7.5m Manchester-based IT service provider that boasts a recurring revenue base of circa £5.3m. The deal creates a £60m business with 250-plus staff.

Eison, which was established in 2006, designs, implements and supports network, data centre and mobility solutions for organisations worldwide, and was ranked 75th in The Sunday Times Tech Track 100 in 2014.

Scott Fletcher MBE, Chairman and founder of ANS, commented: "This acquisition will underpin our hybrid cloud and data centre strategy, allowing us to embrace the opportunities for intelligent WANs and Software Defined Networking.

"As user mobility and adoption of public and private cloud

platforms increases, it's ever more important to understand the journey that data takes from the cloud all the way to the end user device.

"This acquisition gives us the additional expertise to ensure that our networking solutions are innovative and robust."

Paul Shannon COO, added: "The operational synergies and opportunities for cross selling into both customer bases are exciting. This partnership allows us to continue to reinvent ourselves and bring business value IT to our customers."

Founders and Directors at Eison, Jamie Coan and Richard Peck, will remain with the organisation post-acquisition.

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# Daisy aids Yorkshire flood firm

DAISY Group's Business Continuity division threw a connectivity lifeline to customer SuperBreak Mini Holidays when the River Foss burst its banks over Christmas.

The flood disconnected the York-based holiday firm, but after being notified of the outage just before midnight on 27th December Daisy's Wakefield Business Continuity Centre was prepared for the arrival of 25 SuperBreak employees at 9am the following day.

SuperBreak Mini Holidays CTO, Tim Wadhams, said: "An extreme set of circumstances forced us to vacate our office but the Daisy guys made it a relatively pain-free process."

Staff returned to their office after four days at Daisy's Business Continuity Centre.

Daisy's MD for Business Continuity, Mike Osborne, commented on the rescue effort: "This is just one example of how important it is for businesses to plan for the unexpected.

"The few days after Christmas can be a busy time for the travel and hospitality industry.

"Without a business continuity plan in place SuperBreak would have suffered, both in bookings and reputation."

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# GCI switches leader ahead of expansion



**Adrian Thirkill**



**Wayne Martin**

A BOARDROOM reshuffle involving significant new appointments has positioned managed service provider GCI for an ambitious period of market expansion based on a three-year growth agenda.

Former EasyNet Global Services MD Adrian Thirkill joins GCI as CEO – the post previously held by company founder Wayne Martin who becomes Chairman. Thirkill was instrumental in EasyNet's £402m sale to Interoute.

Martin commented: "There comes a point in every business where we need to make a leap to the next level.

"Since GCI was established in 2000 we have grown rapidly through a mix of organic growth and strategic acquisitions.

"The injection of fresh blood and raw energy is exactly what's needed. I am placing the business in the best possible hands for the next stage of GCI's journey upwards."

Thirkill added: "I see a huge untapped opportunity in GCI and its sales channels. It has a proven, well-invested and scalable platform."

In another telling move, Phil Hambly, previously with

InTechnology and SAS Global Communications, joins GCI as Marketing Director.

According to Hambly the 'transformational impact of the millennial generation's appetite for new ways of communicating' will catalyse the cloud and the managed services market.

"Our objective is to grasp the moment by focusing our organisation without losing the agility for which GCI has become known," stated Hambly.

GCI's growth strategy is supported by the Business Growth Fund (BGF), GCI's equity partner. BGF investor Gurinder Sunner commented: "Our engagement with GCI has been about providing the financial muscle and broader support necessary to ready GCI for its next growth phase.

"Industry analysts cite huge potential in the cloud and managed services sector. We believe that GCI is in the right place at the right time to benefit from the growing demand as organisations transition from legacy infrastructure to cloud-based technology stacks."

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# Adoption of cloud UC set to skyrocket

CLOUD UC market penetration is set to triple in the large enterprise segment, grow 7-fold in the mid-market and almost quintuple in the small business segment by 2020, according to a sample of influential delegates who attended BroadSoft's 2015 Connections conference.

They expressed views on the adoption of cloud and mobile UC solutions, the competitive landscape and how far OTT team messaging and collaboration applications are disrupting established business productivity tools such as email.

The survey deduces that UCaaS and hosted PBX market penetration for new lines shipped could increase nearly six times to 41% over the next five years, with the shift from premise to cloud UC underway in all market segments.

UC will become increasingly mobile, according to respondents who believe that 42% of UC interactions for businesses of all sizes will occur via mobile devices by 2020, while 33% of small businesses will opt for mobile-only UCaaS/hosted PBX solutions, potentially making desk phones redundant in such circumstances.

OTT integrated messaging and collaboration applications will disrupt the business email market, reckons 83% of respondents, with just 16% expecting email to remain the primary business messaging tool.

"BroadSoft believes that these new OTT solutions, when deeply integrated with UC and business applications, will offer service providers a differentiated value proposition and access to a large and growing market opportunity with attractive margins," said BroadSoft CMO Taher Behbehani.



Taher Behbehani

"Enterprise UCaaS is proving disruptive and this opportunity is not lost on service providers and industry leaders as 92% of survey respondents rate UCaaS/hosted PBX as their preferred technology solution strategy, while only 8% are leading sales efforts with a premise-based PBX."

BroadSoft has over 700 customers in 75-plus countries. According to industry analyst firm Frost & Sullivan, in 2015 BroadSoft held 41% of the global UCaaS market share.

## Growing demand for data recovery options

KROLL Ontrack has witnessed a 54% spike in demand for its data recovery and ediscovery services in six months and resellers are also capitalising on cross-selling opportunities.

Phil Bridge, MD for Western Europe, commented: "Our resellers tell us that demand for third party data recovery services continues to grow, and 90% of our partners say that their clients purchase additional products and services as a result of working with them on data recovery projects."

## Emerging voice tech on the up

THE emergence of Voice over WiFi (VoWiFi) and Voice over LTE (VoLTE) will be a prominent feature this year, claim punters at Deloitte's TMT practice in their 2016 telecoms trend analysis document.

By the end of the year, about 100 carriers worldwide will be offering at least one packet-based voice service, believes Deloitte, double the amount year-on-year and six times higher than at the start of 2015.

According to Deloitte, the number of Gigabit per second (Gbit/s) Internet connections will rise to 10 million, a tenfold increase on 2015.

Ed Marsden, Partner and Telecommunications lead at Deloitte, commented: "Evolving usage patterns and increasing demand for greater bandwidth may accelerate the supply of Gigabit Internet."

"Video streaming in 4K resolution will be a key driver for improved data connectivity speeds in the coming years."

Looking further ahead, Deloitte's punters estimate that there will be approximately 600 million Gigabit tariff subscribers by 2020."



Phil Bridge

"As well as driving extra revenues, more than three quarters of our resellers believe that offering data recovery services builds customer loyalty and reduces churn."

# Satellite firm boosts Wales

ISP Satellite Internet is playing a lead role in bringing super-fast connectivity to broadband deprived areas in Wales.

The firm, a registered supplier for the updated Access Broadband Cymru (ABC) voucher initiative, has underscored the key role played by satellite broadband in the scheme.

Satellite Internet MD Mike Locke said: "Even in today's access dependent age, numerous properties across Wales and the rest of the UK still don't have reliable high speed Internet, leaving both residents and workers unable to access vital online services."

"We are illustrating the viability of satellite Internet connectivity for the final 5% of properties in the entire UK."

To be eligible for the voucher scheme a premises must currently receive broadband speeds of less than 24 Megabits per second. It is estimated that over 100,000 premises now meet the new qualification criteria.



Mike Locke

"The beauty of a satellite-based Internet solution is that it can be provisioned at any location where there is a clear line of sight to the southern sky," added Locke.

"This allows it to offer a fast and robust connection to reach those areas where it is unfeasible to deploy any other Internet delivery technology."

Satellite Internet also supports ISPs and resellers in Wales who, if registered on the ABC scheme, can offer its services to qualifying properties.



THE role played by Avnet in driving Cisco's growth in the data centre market earned the distributor Cisco's EMEA Data Centre Distributor of the Year 2015 award. The accolade also marked the fifth anniversary of their partnership. Miriam Murphy, Senior VP, Avnet Technology Solutions, North Region, EMEA, said: "We have evolved into a specialist data centre solutions distributor, offering an integrated set of converged solutions that have helped our channel and vendor partners grow profitably."

Joint Avnet and Cisco partners also benefit from Avnet's SolutionsPath methodology that includes business intelligence tools, education and lead generation resources designed to help partners grow their businesses and enter new markets.





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# Openreach's CEO steps in Solutions in minutes not hours



Clive Selley

BT'S Clive Selley – currently CEO of BT Technology, Service and Operations (BT TSO) – is poised to take over the Openreach reins as CEO following the departure of Joe Garner who is leaving to become CEO of Nationwide Building Society. The handover will take place this quarter.

Selley, who is also Group CIO, has held a number of senior positions at BT in the UK and overseas, and specialises in networks, software development, IT and engineering.

As CEO of BT TSO Selley is responsible for the firm's core networks and IT systems across the globe including TV, mobile and conferencing, and BT's research and development arm at Adastral Park in Suffolk.

He is also responsible for 12,000 staff, 8,000 contractors and a multi-billion pound budget, and chairs BT's cyber security council and has deep knowledge of regulatory affairs.

Commenting on his appointment Selley said: "Customer service is a top priority of mine and I am committed to delivering further improvements by working closely with all industry partners who rely on our network to serve their customers."

Gavin Patterson, BT Group Chief Executive, commented: "Clive is a hugely talented individual who supports our vision for the UK's digital future and will play a key role in ensuring that businesses, consumers and communities receive the services they need."

SPLICECOM'S just-launched solution builder web portal will slash the time it takes partners to put solutions together from hours to minutes, says the firm.

SpliceCom offers soft and hard voice platforms for deployment in the cloud, on-premise and hybrid applications, and the broad range of configuration and deployment options meant that resellers were spending more time analysing and then designing the best solution based on the most competitive price, often amounting to several hours.

"SpliceCom Design Services was developed to simplify these tasks by streamlining and unifying system configuration, pricing and comparison," commented Stuart Bell, Business Development Manager.

"The portal allows channel sales personnel to configure SpliceCom solutions from five users to thousands in under two minutes, providing comparisons between more traditional hardware-based systems and native or virtual soft voice solutions through a simple one touch slider key."

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# Deal tied up by CityFibre

CITYFIBRE has completed the £90m acquisition of national network infrastructure assets of KCOM Group, excluding the Hull and East Yorkshire areas. The deal was first announced on 14th of December last year.

CEO Greg Mesch commented: "By combining the highly attractive KCOM network assets with our own we are well positioned to tap into future growth in the rapidly evolving UK fibre market."

"With a significant presence in 36 cities, 21 of which are completely new markets for us, we are now established as a credible alternative and the largest independent provider of wholesale fibre infrastructure on a national basis."

"Moreover, the £180m funding package we have closed equips CityFibre to push hard on commercialising the acquired assets, which we've already begun to do with our first new service provider relationship on the acquired Bristol network."

"It also funds our continued organic growth trajectory towards our medium term goal of dense network presence in 50 towns and cities, with an estimated addressable footprint of 35,000 public sector sites, 10,000 cell sites, 350,000 businesses, and five million homes."

"This is an audacious acquisition which elevates us to a much more significant place in the UK network infrastructure arena." See page 24



FEBRUARY 1st marked the launch of Eclipse's third annual Fastest 4 reseller incentive promotion and again features Ex-Stig Ben Collins who 'can't wait to get cracking' with the winners on race day.

The challenge to sell Eclipse's fastest four connectivity products (with the addition of Managed WANs this year) runs until 30th April and is open to the whole reseller channel.

Resellers with 40 points or more will join Eclipse at Palmer Sport to race some of the fastest cars in the world including the BMW M4, Ariel Atom and Caterham 7 Superlight.

Former Stig Ben Collins will oversee the contenders and offer tips from his days as James Bond's stunt driver. Collins stated: "Fastest 4 is always a blast and I can't wait to get cracking again. I'll be doing another SuperRide in the Palmer Jaguar JP-LM for those who want the full Le Mans experience."

Henry West, Head of Channel at Eclipse, commented: "Fastest 4 is a great experience for all involved. We have serious ambitions in this market and welcome the opportunity to reward our partners whenever possible."

# Wade makes G-Cloud splash

EXPONENTIAL-E'S presence within the Government sector has been significantly bolstered by its appointment to the G-Cloud 7 framework.

According to Lee Wade, CEO of Exponential-e, the public sector is a key part of the firm's plan for double digit growth this year.

"Since its inception, G-Cloud has aimed to offer a broader range of cloud computing services to the public sector and greater flexibility in procurement contracts," he said.



Lee Wade

"As the framework continues to open up new opportunities for

public sector contracts, we look forward to standing up against the competition to grow our presence in this sector."

David Lozdan, who is the Head of Public Sector at Exponential-e, commented. "The G-Cloud 7 award is another important area of Exponential-e's public sector package."

"Paired with our recent network services award we can make it simpler for customers to select connectivity services that complement the cloud services offered via G-Cloud."

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comms supply

## Maintel to push new UK service

THE skills and capabilities acquired by Maintel via its acquisitions of Proximity and Datapoint have enabled the systems integrator and MSP to launch a new nationwide Partner Services division.

Maintel CEO Eddie Buxton commented: "The acquisitions brought together a strong portfolio of skillsets, meaning we can now offer a one-stop-shop of support to partners."

He pointed out that Maintel's channel business was the strongest performing sales division in 2015, representing circa half of the firm's overall revenue.

"In launching Partner Services we are building on this success through an experienced team focusing on our channel partners," added Buxton.

"Partner Services brings together skills and resources to help the channel win service, support and managed business across UC, contact centre, workforce optimisation and networking technologies.

"We've already seen a great response to the creation of the division, including a 10% partner increase."

Maintel Partner Services offers two main types of service across the UK and Ireland – professional services (including engineering, installation and consultancy) and managed services (including maintenance and support).



Eddie Buxton

## Tuffs set for Unify VP job



Barry Tuffs

THE new man at the centre of Unify's channel growth campaign, Barry Tuffs, the incoming Vice President for UK and Ireland Channels, is tasked with delivering significant channel growth while developing existing relationships with partners and distributors such as Nimans and ScanSource.

He will also focus on the roll out of new cloud-based partner programmes designed to target the small and mid-market customer segment.

Tuffs brings 25-plus years comms experience in direct and indirect sales and management, and joins Unify from Avaya where he held a variety of roles including Director of the UK & Ireland Channel Team.

He helped to introduce the iConnect Program and take

Avaya into the mid-market. Prior roles include stints at C&W, Telewest and Nortel.

He also spent three and a half years running his own business, called Wire Solutions which traded as a BT Local Business.

Tuffs will report to Thomas Veit, Senior Vice President of Channel for EMEAR at Unify.

Veit stated: "Barry will be an instrumental part of our channel acceleration strategy in the UK & Ireland as we aim to expand our presence dramatically in the coming years."

Tuffs said: "This is a tremendous opportunity to help drive the growth of the company."

His appointment is the first key channel move since Unify was acquired by digital services company Atos from Gores and Siemens late last year.

## Comms Supply basks in glow of record sales

GLOWING Q4 2015 sales of £350,000 were eclipsed by positive customer feedback, according to Comms Supply which notched up record sales in the period, along with sparkling endorsements from customers.

"Our fourth quarter results for 2015 were 27% higher than any other period since we launched almost four years ago, and more than double the sales of the same period in 2014," commented Karl Alderton,

who is Norwich-based Comms Supply's founder and MD.

"But it's only when there's a problem that we show our true colours. We send out a service questionnaire whenever anything goes wrong, whether there's a fault, billing issue or any other glitch.

"That enables us to find out what customers really think, and we achieved top marks across all of the service categories surveyed." See page 48



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# Jola portal hastens multi-product deals

A NEW reseller portal introduced by Jola Cloud Solutions has simplified the ordering process, enabling resellers to build multi-product offerings without the need to re-enter data or dip into other parts of the system to complete the order.

Adrian Sunderland, CTO, commented: "When a single order involves many products the journey may not be easy for resellers to create and build multi-product offerings.

"We want to encourage our resellers to order all their customers' requirements from us so once they have entered the delivery details Jola partners can build the entire solution.

"Resellers can save and return to part-built orders, add



Adrian Sunderland

orders to existing sites and view orders in progress."

Jola provides connectivity and Broadsoft packages, and with 100-plus partners a self-service portal has not come a moment too soon, according to Sales Director Lee Broxson.

"Our partners are ordering hundreds of Broadsoft seats, leased lines and mobile SIMs every month, and making this process easy and low-touch saves on administration costs and cut-out translation errors," he stated.

# Pollock's top performance

CHESS' annual financial results indicate how far the company has evolved with acquisitions and product portfolio expansion driving a 33% increase in turnover to £74m and an EBITDA increase of 13% to over £14m. The business has also taken its headcount to 450-plus people.

David Pollock, Chief Executive, said: "2015 saw us continue to reduce our reliance on fixed line call revenues with a real focus on growth in cloud and ICT product sales.

"We have invested in business systems and infrastructure and made some significant appointments to strengthen the senior management team across the Group.

"We are excited by our future plans having secured a £50m bank facility to support our acquisition strategy in 2016."

Key acquisitions include Avenir Mobile (UK) in June 2014, adding more than 78,000 mobile connections and 200 resellers. Other acquisitions of



David Pollock

note include Parachute IT and Compwise, both strengthening Chess' ICT offering.

2015 also saw Chess collect a number of business awards and industry accreditations.

Pollock commented: "We are proud to have built a long-term and sustainable business that continues to grow organically and by acquisition, building on a solid infrastructure based on people, processes and product."

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OMBUDSMAN Services is to provide a complaints handling scheme for members of the Internet Services Providers' Association and the Internet Telephony Services Providers' Association (and their customers), replacing the Communications and Internet Services Adjudication Scheme (CISAS) which becomes obsolete once currently logged complaints are resolved. Chief Ombudsman Lewis Shand Smith (pictured left) commented: "Ombudsman Services' roots began with resolving telecommunication complaints. We will help ITSPA and ISPA to improve their customer service models, as well as offer customers our free and impartial resolution service should they encounter a problem with Internet telephony products or services."

## SHORT CALL

Zayo Group Holdings has closed its 98.8m euro acquisition of Viatel's infrastructure and non-Irish carrier and high bandwidth business from the Digiweb Group based in Dublin, Ireland. The acquisition adds an 8,400 km fibre network across eight countries to Zayo's European footprint, including 12 new metro networks, seven data centres and connectivity to 81 on-net buildings.

# Silver for Voyager

VOYAGER Networks is targeting the mid-market contact centre space having joined forces with Enghouse Interactive as a Silver Partner in its EMEA channel programme.

Voyager Networks will offer the Enghouse Interactive Communications Centre (EICC) and the Quality Management Suite (QMS).

Peter Howells, Director, Voyager Networks, commented: "We have a strong horizontal capability in networks, network security and the overlying col-



Peter Howells

laborative application layer coupled with a vertical footprint in the housing, academics and construction sectors.

"Partnering with Enghouse strengthens our presence and capability in these markets."

OLIVE Communications is to significantly scale up its operations following a £15.25m funding boost.

Business Growth Fund (BGF) has invested £10m growth capital while Barclays has provided £5.25m in new debt facilities.

High Wycombe-based Olive has seen revenues climb from £11m in 2012 to almost £30m at the end of this financial year, and has featured in the Sunday Times Tech Track for the past three consecutive years.

The funding package will be used to expand Olive's customer base and develop its range of services. The business also

plans to grow its 150 strong team with appointments across its three sites in High Wycombe, Hatfield and Towcester.

Martin Flick, CEO, stated: "Our results have been impressive on a self invested basis but we have ambitions to develop our product offering for customers and partners even further.

"BGF's minority, long-term funding model gives us the flexibility to do this."

Mark Nunny, an Investor at BGF who will also take a seat on the board of Olive, added: "Our flexible equity will give Olive the headroom to invest organically for growth and consider acquisitions."

# Global Mesh project goes in overdrive

THE roll out of a new Global Mesh project by the automotive industry could see the delivery of 100 million wireless access points per annum in new cars across the planet.

Nathan Stewart from IT and cloud solutions provider Total Group, who is technical lead for the initiative set for launch in 2021, told Comms Dealer: "Within two years of launch the automotive industry will have more coverage and bandwidth than the existing copper, fibre and mobile networks combined. They will overnight become a super carrier."

It's expected that by 2022 the automotive Global Mesh will provide 10Gb wireless bandwidth across the globe anywhere within a few kilometres of a modern car.

Stewart says the network will be self-building, self-upgrading, self-powering and, as an infrastructure investment model, he claims that existing carriers will not be able to compete.

"Every new car will have an access point," added Stewart. "The mesh will have complete global wireless coverage and visibility of over 10 billion devices and approximately six billion people."

"By 2021 we expect that the access points will be ratified at 802.11ax standard or better, providing multiple Gigabit bandwidth over many kilometres by 2023."

If the project comes to fruition it could have a huge impact on the existing telecommunications industry. Facebook and Google have similar plans for global wireless coverage. Stewart believes it will change network provision paradigms and push ICT resellers into completely new business models.



Nathan Stewart

"A free fast global wireless network could be disruptive for personal, residential and SME line rental and connectivity but we think enterprise connectivity will be slow adopters," commented Stewart.

"Existing carriers will very likely leverage the network and data products will be available to resellers and distributors."

"I suspect that for the reseller community revenue will shift from providing lines and connectivity to providing solutions, security, data, IT services and marketing products."

"If the network is freely provided the data rights and ability to leverage big data and marketing influence increases."

"By 2022 a further three billion people and 10 billion devices are expected to start using the Internet. A great opportunity awaits resellers that adopt new solutions and prepare to leverage the user and IoT explosion."

"The ability to leverage and profit from free wireless is well proven in the retail and hospitality space, and resellers will need to plan for how similar models can work on a global basis."

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## SHORT CALLS

**Nimans** is holding a series of two day engineering courses on Samsung WLAN offering training for site surveys, protocols, system trouble shooting and software. Nimans says the UK WLAN market grew by circa 30% last year and is worth £250m.

**Adept Telecom's** strong performance last year drove the fastest rising telecom share price on the London Stock Exchange at +101.75%, followed by Gamma with +84.47% and KCom at +35.83% (source: Bloomberg 1st January 2016). Manx Telecom was ranked fourth with +26.56%, followed by BT at +20.23% and Maintel with +16.67%.

**Node4's** new London office enables the company to cosy up to customers and channel partners in the south east. The new office will consolidate assets following the acquisition of Premier IT Networks. Paul Bryce, Business Development Director, said: "We are positioned to offer localised customer support."

**Hot on the heels** of its Platinum Partner award from Avaya, Alternative Networks has retained Platinum Partner status with Mitel, recognising its success across six verticals including education, professional services, retail and healthcare.

**Interoute** has opened a new 16,000sq ft office in Nottingham city centre, a move that brings together employees from its existing offices on the outskirts of Nottingham and staff from the Derby office of recently acquired Easynet. The new office is expected to attract more right-fit staff due to the improved transport links and city centre location.



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# Advanced signs up former Fujitsu CTO

FORMER Fujitsu tech chief Jon Wrennall has joined Advanced Computer Software Group as new CTO.

He brings 20 years experience and spent the last five years as CTO of Fujitsu UK and Ireland, overseeing 1,200 architects and implementing change strategies that saw the £1.7bn business grow from a largely public sector client base to almost 50% private sector.

Before joining Fujitsu Wrennall was CIO and Transformation Director at the Valuation Office Agency. Prior to that he served as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' first CTO, leading the integration of the former Inland Revenue and Customs & Excise organisations.



Jon Wrennall

Wrennall stated: "Advanced is going through an exciting period of growth and is investing heavily in software development. This is a massive opportunity to build on the broad set of products and services."

Gordon Wilson, CEO, said: "Jon brings experience, proven

leadership skills and a passion for technology."

Wrennall is a Chartered Engineer, Fellow of the British Computer Society, founding Fujitsu Fellow and member of the Advisory Board for application intelligence company, AppDynamics.

# DrayTek adds 4G/LTE router

DRAYTEK has added the new Vigor 2860Ln LTE (3G/4G) router to its Vigor 2860 family.

"4G/LTE is now a realistic practical option for many network requirements as an alternative to, or augmenting, fixed-line applications," said Julian Hubble, Sales and Marketing Manager at DrayTek.

The router can utilise 3G/4G as a 'pop up' broadband facility where fixed lines are not available and 3G/4G provides the main connection. Applications include construction sites or visiting teams, or permanent usage where fixed lines are slow, not available or less effective.

The router also functions as a secondary failover connection in the event of the fixed (primary) line failing. It can also balance traffic across a main



Julian Hubble

line connection and 3G/4G for optimum speed using DrayTek's load balancing features.

"As well as LTE connectivity for data, the Vigor 2860Ln makes good use of SMS text messaging," said Hubble. "Texts can be sent to the router to check its status or even reboot it with an appropriate command."

The Vigor 2860Ln also supports Wi-Fi and the features of the Vigor 2860 series routers.

# Hoque offers smaller firms agility

DATA CENTRE PLUS has launched a pay-as-you-grow hosting solution designed to match the flexibility requirements of smaller firms.

The company provides colocation for businesses' IT equipment at its Media City premises in Manchester, working with organisations that want to outsource their power, storage and

cooling requirements for their servers and data backup.

Mashukul Hoque, founder of Datacentreplus, said: "As more SMEs begin their journey into the cloud it is only right that the data centre community facilitates this progression and provides an environment that supports growth and is sympathetic to cash flow.

"The barriers of trust and price are beginning to be overcome at a rate of knots. However, agility still remains an issue for smaller companies.

"Pay-as-you-grow essentially provides a client with the ability to grow their services, allowing them to reserve dedicated space and only pay for that when they grow into it."



NIMANS has staged its second annual X Factor-style talent contest for staff who performed a variety of acts including singers, poets, actors, a Greek-style dancer, rap duo, guitarist and a rock band. Investors In People Manager, Sue Goldfine (pictured), and Dealer Sales Account Manager, Carl Foster, were voted the overall winners for their rendition of The Lion and Albert poem. Event organiser Mat Weall said: "Some of the acts are better suited to their day jobs, but the contest proved that Nimans is awash with talent in areas other than comms supply."

## SHORT CALL

FCS has appointed Ombudsman Services as an alternative dispute resolution scheme for its members, replacing the Communications and Internet Services Adjudication Scheme. Ombudsman Services deals with complaints made directly to a company but have reached a deadlock stage, or have been ongoing for eight weeks-plus. *More Ombudsman Services news on p18*

# ShoreTel completes Corvisa deal

SHORETEL has completed its \$8.5m acquisition of Corvisa, a provider of cloud-based communications solutions. The acquisition is expected to accelerate ShoreTel's fiscal 2017 hosted revenue growth to circa 30%.

Corvisa's APIs and SDKs will facilitate third party application integration; while the addition of Corvisa's SIP trunking to the ShoreTel solution portfolio will position the vendor as a SIP trunking provider.

Corvisa's standalone cloud contact centre expands Shore-



Don Joos

Tel's presence in the contact centre market, enabling integration with non-ShoreTel communication solutions.

ShoreTel will also expand its cloud services in Europe having acquired Corvisa's Amsterdam and UK data centres.

"Corvisa's APIs, SIP trunking and contact centre expands our cloud-based offering while providing new sources of hosted revenue," stated Don Joos, President and CEO, ShoreTel.

"We are focused on accelerating technology time to market, growing hosted revenue and expanding our cloud offering globally."

Matt Lautz, CEO of Corvisa, added: "Corvisa's cloud contact centre, coupled with ShoreTel's go-to-market expertise, creates a compelling combination."

# MXC invests in Selection



Peter Rigg

CHANNEL investment company MXC Capital has agreed to cornerstone a placing of new ordinary shares in Castle Street Investments (CSI), an AIM quoted cash shell, in conjunction with CSI's proposed acquisition of Selection Services Investments, a provider of IT solutions and cloud services.

The deal represents a platform acquisition to start a buy and build in the IT solutions and cloud services sector, with a focus on the fragmented smaller end of the market.

Selection is an established business with £35m revenues, 65% of which are recurring.

MXC is investing £12.9m out of a total placing of £30m, amounting to 24.9% of the enlarged share capital of CSI.

CSI will acquire Selection on a debt free basis and will

have £16.5m of available cash resources and terms agreed on a debt facility of £7m to support its strategy.

Peter Rigg, Chairman of MXC, stated: "The transaction demonstrates the MXC model at work – identifying the opportunity, advising on the transaction, securing the funding (in this case twice over subscribed) and then adding the operational management experience to drive the buy and build opportunity."

Selection reported EBITDA of £3.3m in the year ended 30th June 2015 and as result of its capital structure a loss before tax of £1m.

As at 30th June 2015, it had net liabilities of £24.9m which included net debt of £20.4m.

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A STAND-out performance from Imago ScanSource secured the distributor Polycom's EMEA Distributor of the Year award as well as the North America Distributor of the Year accolade. The awards were presented during Polycom's annual partner conference. Ian Vickerage, President, ScanSource Communications Europe, commented: "Our global partnership allows us to combine Polycom's solutions with ScanSource's tailored services and tools, enabling us to help customers grow their businesses."

## Mills eyes up further expansion

SIX Degrees Group's (6DG) growth ambitions have been boosted by a £12m organic investment programme.

The additional capital investment comes six months after funds managed by Charlesbank Capital Partners acquired 6DG with the goal of building the UK's largest mid-market managed services provider.

With plans underway to recruit 50 people 6DG will be building and developing its sales, marketing and customer service teams, among others, to service its growing customer and partner base.

Alastair Mills, CEO of 6DG, said: "We want to own the mid-market. We now employ 400 people, have over 2,000 customers and own a comprehensive technology infrastructure. Now we are making a recruitment investment as we look to bring the best talent in our industry to fuel our future growth."



Alastair Mills

### SHORT CALL

SIPHON Networks has been credited with the Microsoft Partner Gold Communications Competency just months after achieving Silver Communications Competency. Ciaran Bolger, Sales Director at SIPHON, said: "We've invested in the skills, documentation and systems to reinforce our technology enablement offering for Microsoft Enterprise Voice." See page 26

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# ICON targets key markets Avnet names leader for IoT



Mark Shane

ST ALBANS-based distributor ICON has reacted fast to the burgeoning WLAN, IoT and critical messaging markets, building on its long-term Spectralink relationship with a revamped product line and expanding its portfolio following the addition of products from global wireless network infrastructure provider 4ipnet, including wireless LAN controllers, access points, hotspot gateways and switches

“With the Allied Telesis Extricom Wi-Fi solution, these additions will enable us to support channel partners who need to deliver traditional or real-time WLAN infrastructure solutions in sectors such as hospital-ity, healthcare, and the more demanding education and logistics markets,” said Mark Shane, Sales Director, ICON.

“We have also extended our capability to support partners delivering critical messaging and IoT solutions by adding Multitone to our Fusion and BlueSky messaging portfolio.”

To help realise its 2016 growth ambitions ICON has invested in a year-long campaign to develop the wireless solutions market targeting end users in the hospitality, health-care, retail and food manufacturing sectors.

“We are seeking channel partners to work with us to develop these opportunities,” confirmed Shane.

“During Q1 we will also announce a partner support programme for our UC solution Wave IP, designed to strengthen partner margin and generate new sales.”

ERIC Williams is to develop and deploy Avnet’s global IoT strategy having been appointed to the newly created worldwide role of Vice President of Internet of Things (IoT).

“The pace of change in today’s global business environment demands agility and imagination,” commented Rick Hamada, CEO, Avnet.

“Our customers and suppliers are asking us to develop new solutions combining multiple elements of technology from the edge to the enterprise.

“In Eric we have found an executive with global experience and a proven ability to design, develop and implement innovative programmes with positive results.”

Williams has served in a number of executive leadership positions within the technology industry and was most recently a strategic advisor for CABA Technologies and Moon, focused especially on the intelligent LED market.

From 1994 to 2014 he served in a number of advanced positions with Arrow Electronics.

He also has experience in leading large sales organisations and identifying and advising on mergers and acquisitions.



Eric Williams

From 1987 to 1994 Williams held numerous leadership positions in sales and operations at Bell Industries.

## SHORT CALLS

**Business Systems UK**, a call recording and workforce optimisation specialist, has added O2’s Mobile Recording technology to its portfolio, strengthening its play in the financial services call recording market.

**Overline Network Consultants** is to supply a hosted telephone system to service almost 700 employees at Adur & Worthing Councils. The contract builds on Overline’s experience of providing bespoke solutions to large local organisations such as Shoreham Port Authority, The Queen Alexandra Hospital and The Amex stadium.



GAMMA’S annual UK roadshow gets under way on March 2nd at Hopetoun House in Edinburgh, the first in a run of four ‘Gamma does Downton’ stately home themed events. Previous roadshow themes include museums, universities and castles. Richard Bligh, Chief Operating Officer, commented: “We’re always looking at ways we can improve what we do and our annual roadshow plays a vital part in making this happen.

“Feedback from our partners is fundamental to shaping our roadmap, helping us to come up with innovative ideas and staying ahead of the curve. Last year we welcomed over 600 channel partners to our roadshow and this year we’re expecting even more.”

During the roadshow delegates will hear about Gamma’s latest product developments such as the launch of its MPLS-based solution, Converged Private Networks, and Gamma’s new mobile service, as well as a first look at SIP Trunk Call Manager.

Chris Daffin, Network Services Director at Maintel, added: “It’s a great opportunity to get together and catch up with the Gamma team and other channel partners, all under one roof.”

The roadshow also stops at Crewe Hall (March 3rd), Ragley Hall (March 8th) and London’s 8 Northumberland Avenue (March 9th).

*Pictured above l-r: Graham Kedzlie, Head of Sales – SI; Richard Bligh, COO; and Bob Falconer, CEO*

## SHORT CALL

The latest leg in Channel Telecom’s nationwide partner workshop tour saw Tim Nelson, Head of IP Voice, join forces with BT Wholesale and Broadsoft at the Gotham Hotel in Manchester for a session to help partners upskill their sales staff and win more hosted VoIP orders. Nelson said: “Given the increasing demand for hosted solutions, training events like this are essential in keeping on top of a growing market.”

## Global SIP launch

A WHITE labelled global SIP trunking solution, called Global SIP Connect and launched by Tata Communications, enables resellers to extend the reach of their voice services while removing the complexity of worldwide SIP deployments.

Anthony Bartolo, President of Collaboration and Mobility at Tata Communications, stated: “As demand for cloud-based UC continues to soar, SIP trunking is becoming a critical tool for businesses looking for best in class voice services.

“Global SIP deployment can be time consuming and complex due to interoperability and regulatory challenges, but our offering enables service providers to overcome these challenges on a global scale while eliminating the cost of building new solutions from scratch.”

Mike Sapien, who is a Principal Analyst at industry watcher Ovum Research, said: “Global SIP services are now a critical ingredient in creating an IP platform to enable many enterprise applications.”

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# Clariti video powered for cloudbursts

POLYCOM'S newly launched cloud-ready collaboration infrastructure software, called Polycom RealPresence Clariti, offers a simplified per-user licensing model with a lower entry point, and enables the mass deployment of video collaboration across businesses of all sizes, claimed the firm.

Clariti also offers a hybrid cloud capability allowing users to 'burst' into a cloud service for planned and unplanned spikes in capacity demand.

Customers have multiple options for deploying the solution, including on-premises, hybrid or hosted IaaS offerings from partners, or directly in their own cloud networks.

Clariti includes Polycom RealConnect capabilities which allow Skype for Business users and those who use other platforms to seamlessly connect.

Ashan Willy, Senior VP, Product Management & Worldwide Systems Engineering, commented: "As visual collaboration enters the hyper connected phase employees have high expectations of being able to connect from anywhere, and from any device at any time.

"The RealPresence Clariti solution offers cloud economics, cloud deployment options and cloud hybrid capabilities to Polycom's infrastructure suite."

The company has also expanded support for developers to extend their capabilities with the new Polycom Sandbox.

This virtual lab provides access to Polycom's APIs and SDKs so that partners, ISVs, and customers can build applications and integrate visual collaboration into their workflows.

Polycom has also made available a set of support tools, including a community-based



Ashan Willy

resource designed to facilitate the open exchange of information in the pursuit of innovative application development and workflow integration.

"The RealAccess service delivery platform is being expanded across the entire RealPresence Cloud platform, offering organisations diagnostic insights and data to help them better manage their whole collaboration solution," said Willy.

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## Nine gets Investors in People Gold standard

NINE Group has achieved Gold standard for Investors in People, joining the top 7% of UK accredited organisations dedicated to realising the potential of their staff. Nine secured the Silver standard in 2013.

HR Director, Helen Chamberlain, said: "we are a customer-centric business and heartily endorse the maxim that happy staff is the first step towards happy customers.

"The Investors in People Gold standard is an important accolade and a key milestone,

## Eclipse to push colo free offer

ECLIPSE has rolled out a colo promotion that offers resellers who sign up to a three year contract a free rack for one year and free installation.

Eclipse's colo solution provides rack space, power, cooling and connectivity with multiple levels of redundancy built-in.

"The offer is available to all Eclipse partners looking for multiple data centres including our Docklands-based Tier 3+ environments," stated Henry West, Head of Channel Sales

"Colo offers a way to significantly reduce the cost of customer infrastructure with no upfront costs and no ongoing utility and maintenance bills."

West also noted that the promotion aims to give resellers a hosting entry point for their customers and the opportunity to consolidate in-house hosted services into one place, including hosted PBX, email and web hosting etc.

"Our partners have the opportunity to realise 100% margin on colocation sales for the first year with this deal," added West.

The offer is available until 31st March 2016.



Helen Chamberlain

and endorses our commitment to staff excellence."

Chamberlain also noted that Nine Group has its eye on the Platinum standard.

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# Mesch: Architect of a pu

Greg Mesch, the tenacious founder and CEO of CityFibre, is a relative newcomer to the UK channel but he is already the instigator of a pure fibre infrastructure revolution and has chosen the UK's primary cities for his battleground.

**A** credible alternative infrastructure presence that provides choice and stimulates the disengagement of service providers from the UK's monolithic incumbents is an industry imperative, claims Mesch, the architect of CityFibre's project to provide such a stimulus. His strategic mission to create a true alternative has already justified CityFibre's headline investments and acquisitions, and Mesch is now expressing his priorities for high growth in partnership with resellers.

"For too long the UK telecoms landscape has been dominated by a single national infrastructure provider," said Mesch. "To compete with the rest of the world we need to ensure that there is choice and competition in the market. That's what we're doing. We are not just about providing like-for-like products over our independent network, but Gigabit as standard."

So who is Greg Mesch? He seems a man determined to redefine Britain's connected future and is busy mapping a route to reach the summit of his ambition. It could be argued that to become a real challenger to the likes of BT would be too high a mountain to climb, but the evidence of Mesch's progress and strategic advances so far, and his previous career achievements, suggest otherwise.

Mesch started out as a telecoms engineer and entrepreneur and has a strong background in the building of high growth fibre optic telecoms companies. He became Chief Operating Officer for ESAT Telecom in Ireland (which IPO'd on NASDAQ and was subsequently purchased by BT for over 1 billion euro). Mesch was also founder and Chief Operating Officer of Versatel Telecom which built one of the largest fibre-based infrastructures in the Dutch and German markets. Versatel also listed on NASDAQ and the Dutch AEX exchange and was purchased by Tele2 and Apax for over \$1.5 billion.

In 2009 Mesch became Non-Executive Director of EU Networks before founding CityFibre in 2011 with Mark Collins through the acquisition of several established fibre optic businesses. Despite his glittering backstory, Mesch counts his biggest achievement as taking CityFibre from a fledgling IPO to its new position as the largest wholesale infrastructure provider after BT Openreach, in just two years.

CityFibre listed on the AIM market of the LSE in January 2014 raising £16.5 million and gained access to long-term funding opportunities. The company then raised a further £30 million following



Greg Mesch

**With the growth in data rising exponentially, pure fibre is the only truly future-proof infrastructure that can support it**

an over-subscribed private placing, taking the total equity raised to £46.5 million. In December 2015 CityFibre acquired KCOM's national fibre assets (excluding Hull

and East Yorkshire) for £90 million and secured financing of £180 million, increasing its footprint to 36 cities and enabling CityFibre to target a total of 50 cities

by 2020, reaching 20 per cent of the UK market.

"We are a builder of Gigabit Cities, constructing modern pure fibre infrastructure in cities to serve CPs, SIs, local authorities, data centres and mobile operators," explained Mesch. "Our networks enable partners to use them in any way they wish, whether that's providing entry level active products or taking them on a journey to consume dark fibre and build their own on-net networks."

CityFibre's Gigabit City campaign kicked off with York and Peterborough, followed by Coventry, Kirklees, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and now Bristol. "These projects proved our model of city-wide wholesale fibre infrastructure and gave our investors the confidence to support us further in the acquisition of KCOM's national networks, helping us to reach scale and create a meaningful, national alternative infrastructure for the UK," stated Mesch.

Other developments of significance that underscore the strength of CityFibre's business model include the formation of a joint venture company in 2014 with Sky and TalkTalk to deploy a new Fibre-to-the-Home network in the City of York. Soon afterwards CityFibre signed the UK's first dark fibre-to-the-tower deal, a



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# re fibre future

national framework with EE, Three and MBNL. And in October 2015 CityFibre sealed a Master Services Agreement with Vodafone.

The KCOM acquisition gave CityFibre an additional 1,100 km of metro network and 1,100km of long distance network, allowing it to connect to peering points in London and data centres across the UK. This masterstroke of an acquisition and subsequent funding shines as a signal victory for Mesch's rolling campaign convoy across the UK's infrastructure territory.

"We found it hard to offer partners the scale they need to transact at volume," he commented. "But with the acquisition of KCOM's national network assets we overcame that barrier and are much more relevant to our partners. By 2019 we aim to be the network infrastructure of choice in all of our local markets and have hundreds of CP partners transacting across our growing network, delivering state-of-the-art services to end users across the country."

That the reseller community will respond positively to Mesch's mission is already clear, evident in the high interest shown by existing and potential partners. "We are building awareness of CityFibre as an alternative for CPs," noted Mesch. "We're already working with tier 1 providers, local authorities, emergency services, mobile network operators and multiple business CPs, but the more CPs who come on board as partners the faster we can grow for the benefit of all. Building a very different connected future for Britain isn't just about us

building network, it's about our partners making use of it.

"For a long time UK CPs, data centres and MNOs have been calling for a true, national alternative to BT. It's this demand that underpins our business model. Every major announcement we make and every press headline we get triggers a fresh wave of interest from potential new partners. Our job now is to convert this heightened interest, onboard new partners and give all of them a voice over what comes next. We believe that working in true partnership with no hidden agenda is what will keep our partners with us and make the UK communications industry great."

#### Fast growth

CityFibre now employs 105 staff and generates revenue growth of 115 per cent year-over-year. The company's turnover of £2 million at IPO now stands at over £36 million and rising. "We're rapidly expanding and have some of the best brains in the industry," added Mesch. "That said, we are still a small, close-knit group and our culture reflects that dynamic. None of us are here to be just like everyone else. 'Alternative' to us isn't just about our network, it's about everyone having the personal freedom to be fresh, creative, and even disruptive when we need to be. Because of that, absolutely no voice goes unheard. Everyone who works at CityFibre is passionate, energetic, driven and very busy."

Their joint priority is to exert a telling influence over the future of Britain's connected future by expanding CityFibre's pure

fibre network footprint and increasing the addressable market for partners. "We are targeting major metro footprints and will open up our infrastructure to a broad range of CPs to maximise its use," added Mesch. "With the growth in data rising exponentially, pure fibre is the only truly future-proof infrastructure that can support it. We need to plan for tomorrow. We're also investing heavily in state-of-the-art platforms to make sure our partners can do business with us easily and access all of the information they need. Building on these developments and evolving our systems to be truly world class is next on our list. We're agile, independent and here to stay."

#### Just a minute with Greg Mesch...

**Tell us something about yourself we don't know:** I'm a heli-skier

**What do you fear the most?** Poor health

**Name three ideal dinner guests:** Steve Jobs, James Dyson, Neil Armstrong

**Role model:** Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO of General Electric

**One example of something you have overcome:** Being the youngest of five brothers

**Your greatest strength and what could you improve on?** I never give up: That can be a strength and a weakness

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

**How do you relax when not working?** Cycling and skiing

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

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# SIPHON pumps up cloud

Fast growing SIPHON Networks' cloud UC mission could come to dominate, according to Steve Harris, co-founder and Managing Director, who says the company's reseller engagement strategy strikes a harmonious chord with an expanding posse of channel partners.

There is no doubt that Harris's biggest career achievement is co-founding SIPHON in 2009, but how he managed this remarkable feat is still a head-scratching question. "I look back on how we did it with a £50,000 investment in the middle of a global financial crisis," recalled Harris. "Initially, we were lucky to partner with smaller companies such as BNS Telecom that were acquired and grew into larger entities. As a consequence our revenue increased alongside theirs and we could offer the same value but with additional scale. We then used our growth to fund the acquisition of VCOMM. The timing coincided with a strong upturn in cloud adoption and we could offer our cloud UC service providers a true end-to-end solution and technology enablement proposition."

Much time and effort was spent on integrating VCOMM and establishing the distribution side of the business, which is a fundamentally different operation compared to SIPHON's initial *modus operandi*. "The value that the acquisition created for our customers was clear, so we needed to significantly change the way we operated in terms of our internal systems and processes," added Harris. "Our customers are mainly cloud UC providers but we are working with

a growing number of IT resellers who recognise that they need additional support to maximise their success when offering voice and UC services such as Skype for Business Enterprise Voice."

SIPHON has no dependency on legacy revenues or vendors therefore its focus is on two primary and disruptive cloud UC market offerings, BroadSoft and Microsoft Skype for Business (SfB). "We use an indirect channel model and will continue to work through our channel partners, enabling them to bring these disruptive technologies to their end users," stated Harris.

Having established its Microsoft Technology Practice over a year ago, SIPHON has been eyeing the SfB domain for some time now. In a significant development SIPHON recently achieved formal status as a Microsoft Gold Partner and is also leveraging Gold Communication Competency capabilities in its work with partners.

Last year SIPHON extended its BroadSoft partnership to include BroadCloud. This enables partners to consume and offer the BroadWorks solution on an opex basis rather than buying their own platform with the associated capital investment. "We are also looking at other cloud offerings to complement this



Steve Harris

with other suppliers including Oracle (Acme Packet), Polycom and AudioCodes. Ultimately, we sit between our vendor suppliers and channel partners, so these relationships shape the type of products and services that we can provide."

Another important development got under way around 18 months ago when SIPHON set about evolving its internal structure and systems to scale and support its growth ambitions. "We completed our ISO27001 certification and have invested in the automation of our internal systems, whereby we now expect to process, provision and fulfil over 70 per cent of orders automatically," added Harris. "This investment in systems and processes is key as the volume of orders we processed last year increased 125 per cent against 2014 figures."

The revenue at SIPHON has grown by 644 per cent over the last four years, earning the company 23rd place in the Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 awards 2015. This year SIPHON will increase its headcount to 50 full-time staff and is targeting in excess of £20 million turnover by 2017. "Our main priority is to execute on the business plan we set out when we took our strategic investment last year from Finance Wales (Private Equity investor)," said Harris.

**We will continue to work through our channel partners, enabling them to bring disruptive technologies to their end users**

proposition, so the channel should expect the launch of new services in this area during 2016," said Harris.

"We are committed to these BroadSoft and Microsoft SfB solutions and also have strong vendor partnerships

# UC for partners

"We were above our forecasted plan last year and expect to do the same again in 2016, although we think our growth in percentage terms will be more modest. We will achieve our business goals by continuing to ensure that our offering is genuinely relevant to our partner customers as well as our continued investment in innovation."

The statistic that most interests Harris is the percentage of companies yet to adopt a cloud UC solution. "The SME and mid-market segments have seen massive growth in this area during 2015, but fewer than 10 per cent of UK SMEs have a cloud UC service," he noted. "That speaks volumes about the opportunity that exists. It's not surprising that there's considerable investment and alignment happening in this space."

Harris has a knack for putting his finger on an opportunity, and his magic touch played a big hand in the formation of SIPHON which he founded with Technical Director Rob Smith. "We saw the emergence of cloud UC, and also saw that it would be the smaller and more dynamic service providers that would quickly find success in this space," explained Harris. "But the ambitions of these companies were hampered by a lack of technical skills and integration experience, so we recognised that the circumstances were favourable to build a company that would help them to be disruptive with us working as their technology and integration partner."

SIPHON does this by adopting the same approach to all channel partners, regardless

of who they are or the services they are trying to provide. "It's a strategy that works for us and is consistent across our cloud, distribution and Microsoft practices," explained Harris. "Ultimately, the partner will have some skills and ideas on what they'd like to offer, so they come to us with various requests. Our job is to plug the gaps in their skills and knowledge and add further value to their offering. Our value to them will increase if there are more gaps to fill or more sophisticated ways that they want to utilise our portfolio of products and services, whether this is to differentiate themselves from rivals or simply to provide a more comprehensive offering."

## Driving force

Cloud UC and its adoption will continue to be the primary driving force behind SIPHON's growth, and Harris plans to take his approach to new geographical markets, tailoring solutions to each partner depending on their requirements. The most effective partnerships involve investments in joint sales and marketing initiatives that ultimately drive success for both parties.

Harris has the astute ability to ensure that SIPHON remains ahead of the curve. This strategic foresight and clear vision could be strongly attributed to his previous work experience in comms. He joined Nortel as a work placement student while at university and took a full-time role after finishing his degree. "I spent eight years at Nortel across various roles in logistics, project management, marketing, business development and sales, which gave me a good

grounding in the industry and business in general," he said. "I have my Nortel stock and options certificate on the wall in my home office. It's a stark reminder that things can change very quickly. The demise of Nortel is well documented, but it was a great place to start a career in telecoms."

## Just a minute with Steve Harris...

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

As a youngster I played baseball for Great Britain

**What talent do you wish you had?** To be a professional football player

**Industry bugbear:** Developing the next technology before making the last one work properly

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

**How would you like to be remembered?** Always did what I said and made things as enjoyable as possible along the way

**Name three ideal dinner guests:** Martin Johnson, Arsene Wenger and Winston Churchill

**What technologies could you not live without?** Mobile phone, email and GPS navigation

**Top tip for resellers:** Identify what you're good at and why, then continue to invest and differentiate in that specialism. Look at building partnerships to drive innovation and growth in other areas

**Your greatest strength and what could you improve on?** I'm a hard worker who always makes time for staff, customers and suppliers, but need to work on my patience and accept that some things can take longer than I would like



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# CMA clears BT-EE deal

The Competition and Markets Authority's go-ahead for BT's acquisition of EE has stirred up a hornet's nest of industry reaction.

**T**he deal combines the UK's two largest telecoms players with EE's £6.4 billion of annualised revenues and £1.6 billion of EBITDA representing a 36 per cent and 25 per cent addition to BT's £18 billion and £6.3 billion, noted Philip Carse, Analyst at Megabuyte.com. "The CMA has given a completely unconditional green light to BT's acquisition of EE on the basis of limited overlap in retail markets," he stated. "The CMA has apparently not heard of fixed-mobile convergence or the move to triple and quad play. Regarding the wholesale impact, the CMA notes Ofcom's ongoing strategic review, thus effectively leaving any major decisions on Openreach to Ofcom."

According to ITSPA, industry hopes for greater competition in the UK mobile market have been quashed by the CMA's approval of BT's takeover of EE. Despite the CMA concluding that the deal will not significantly impact competition, Eli Katz, the Chair of ITSPA, believes that the acquisition is a deep concern for the industry and he questioned why the CMA's final report did not consider potential wholesale mobile remedies when approving the proposed BT-EE merger. "Particularly, given the panel had expressed differing opinions in its provisional report around the merger's effect on the

wholesale mobile access market," he explained.

ITSPA says the wholesale market is 'highly restrictive' and hampers the ability of new entrants to compete, and that MVNO access to mobile operators' networks is reducing, therefore restricting their ability to compete. "The CMA panel was split in its provisional findings report as to whether the BT-EE transaction would lead to a significant lessening of competition in the market for wholesale mobile access," claimed Katz.

"ITSPA members have differing opinions on the BT-EE merger but it must be taken into context with the wider market consolidation currently taking place, particularly the proposed tie up with O2 and Three. This would be extremely damaging. There is already substantial evidence in other European markets to suggest that prices rise when the number of mobile operators in a national network decreases from four to three operators."

Katz called for a review of the wholesale mobile access market and effective remedies agreed before any merger between O2 and Three can be considered. "We would urge the EU Commission to consider these recommendations in its current inquiry," he stated. "A fully functional



Eli Katz

wholesale mobile access market would encourage innovation and competition, and result in improved outcomes for UK consumers. The UK's mobile market could become as competitive and innovative as it is currently for fixed telephony."

## Another view

ITSPA member Simwood disagrees with the position taken by the industry body and Simwood's Managing Director Simon Woodhead has called for more evidence to be presented that support its claims. "We opposed the BT-EE merger but disagree with ITSPA's proposed remedy regarding MNOs," he said. "We can provide other ITSPA members with an MVNO service through Simwood Mobile, and have no issues with MNOs. In our experience the single biggest counter to competition in mobile is Ofcom, not the MNOs. We consider there are far bigger threats to competition

arising from the strategic direction of BT, and Ofcom is choosing to ignore them."

Chris Pateman, CEO of the FCS, believes that the merger allows BT-EE to supply identical products over different delivery platforms which are regulated in fundamentally different ways. "This is not a recipe for greater competition or enhanced user functionality," he stated. "Many CPs told us they see this merger as a major threat. We took a delegation to Ofcom to make sure the regulator understood our position. We partnered with iMVNOx, the MVNO trade association, so we could feed some international experiences into the consultation. When those disappointing initial results were published, we encouraged members to rally round and write to policy makers suggesting that as a minimum equivalence of wholesale access should

be extended to mobile networks. Vodafone, Sky, Virgin, TalkTalk and Gamma (to name but five) also made spirited representations which ended up being ignored by the CMA.

"Our one consolation is that BT has always been a willing wholesaler in the fixed line market. And BT has consistently held to the line throughout these proceedings that it will be a willing wholesaler for mobile access too. An early move in this direction would do much to calm channel nerves."

FCS has called for Ofcom to take a more agile, tactical approach to regulation that reflects today's fast moving markets. "But whether or not that happens any time soon, tight vigilance by the reseller community is the name of the game now, along with the early gathering and submission of evidence to Ofcom of any unforeseen market distortions," added Pateman. "If the channel wants to get the best result from this merger, the channel has to react and report. If we wait until the market is broken before we ask Ofcom to act, we will have nobody but ourselves to blame."

The BT-EE deal is actually a boon for business, believes Teleware's CEO Steve Haworth, who noted that the European market is going through a period of big change and BT is at the forefront of this with the acquisition of Britain's largest mobile group. "BT and EE are fantastic brands and by joining forces there will be benefits to both consumer and business customers," he said. "We are excited about the potential opportunities this acquisition creates." ■

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# Why M&A's a big deal

Comms sector M&A activity reached standout levels last year, observes Marcus Allchurch, Partner at Acuity Advisors, who explores the driving forces and their implications for 2016.

It's been a standout year for comms sector mega-deals in the UK, the biggest being BT's acquisition of EE which was given the green light last month. BT has to be one of the great success stories of 2015/16 with a share price up by around 20 per cent against this time last year, a firm grip on its nationwide fibre strategy, a growing TV base and an infrastructure to sell into households and businesses across the UK. Furthermore, with Deutsche Telekom soon to own 12 per cent of BT's shares, we would anticipate more opportunities for deeper integration across the combined global footprints and, dare I say, further M&A.

Next up is the much anticipated merger of Three and O2. Three is raising £10.3 billion to acquire O2 from Telefonica with the objective of creating a £15 billion business post-integration with the largest pure-play mobile operation in the UK. Interestingly, it has been rumoured that Three will look to IPO the business after the integration has taken place in order to return capital to its investors.

Both of these deals present opportunities and threats to players in the comms channel. We expect BT and EE to spend some time integrating and working out combined fixed and mobile propositions to be sold through existing channels. This could open up some

interesting opportunities for resellers to access EE's mobile network and some new services. There is probably more uncertainty around the future for O2's channel partners as Three's focus to date has been entirely on consumer mobile. This may present a huge opportunity for some channel players, although the potential for disruption will need to be managed carefully.

Looking forward, we have to expect more consolidation. Could Liberty Global re-look at merging with Vodafone? How will Zayo and Interoute continue their expansion plans? And what will TalkTalk do to future-proof itself in a market where converged businesses of scale are emerging all around it?

Turning to the IPO market – is there a bubble, and if so, should we expect it to pop? There is much speculation about another tech bubble, with some good justification. Square, the mobile payments business founded by Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, shocked the market in November by announcing its intention to IPO with a valuation of \$4.2 billion. This is around 30 per cent below its valuation a year earlier when it last raised private money at a valuation of \$6 billion.

The reasons underlying this are complex, but the single biggest cause has to be venture capitalists overpricing early stage companies in the hope that it will 'all



Marcus Allchurch

be OK' when they exit via a listing on the stock market.

#### Positive market

Acuity's view is that these situations, where unicorns are forced to float at lower valuations than they've had in the past, are actually positive overall for businesses operating in the comms market. Why? Firstly, most unicorns are based on the West Coast where there are many more precedents for high valuations of early stage companies operating in markets which they themselves are creating.

Secondly, there is no shortage of capital out there, and should investors shy away from unicorns they are likely to want to invest in lower risk sectors. Telecoms businesses tend to have attractive underlying

economics which will always be of interest to investors. And thirdly, with the old guard including Microsoft and BT finally managing to re-invent themselves with a convincing strategy for the future, the place for channel partners will become clearer again and create significant opportunities for investment and value creation.

UK and European private equity investors have enjoyed a great relationship with telecoms companies over the last ten years or so, with many generating considerable returns on the investments they've made (such as XLN, Pulsant, Wireless Logic, Onyx, Six Degrees and many more). As such, we are aware of many private equity houses looking for new investments in the sector. Specific sub-sectors we have

seen attracting particular attention include UCaaS, connectivity, security and IoT, all of which interest investors.

A key question for comms suppliers will therefore be, what is the right strategy to attract private equity investment? While I think it's fair to say that there is no right answer, there are themes that investors are keen to see: Recurring and booked revenue is key; capex should be kept as low as possible; and a differentiated capability is also attractive.

Not only should these characteristics reduce the risk during the investment period, but they should also make an exit to trade far easier. We led and completed five comms deals in 2015 and saw a clear preference for trade buyers to focus on filling strategic gaps in their portfolios rather than buying purely to top-up revenue growth and extract opex synergies.

Trends and activities in the M&A market are, on the whole, positive for the comms sector. We see a continuing 'wall of money' providing capital for mid-market companies to grow, improving fixed and wireless infrastructure, and some exciting innovation from new VARs who are able to deliver cutting edge solutions into businesses and deliver a clear improvement in service while reducing cost. These trends should continue to fuel M&A across the sector in 2016. ■



## Spitfire to offer 3CX as hosted

SPITFIRE is to host 3CX Phone System v14 for 3CX partners in the UK, offering 3CX in the Cloud as a self-configured and self-managed solution or as a fully managed service depending on the customers' capabilities and requirements.

"Hosted 3CX removes the barriers that have been blocking the hosted PBX market with superior architecture and flexible delivery options," commented Tom Fellowes, Spitfire's Sales Director.

"3CX in the Cloud is a fully virtualised instance with its own set of dedicated PBX services, as well as completely separate data stores.

"With 3CX in the Cloud, customers will have a dedicated PBX separated from and unaffected by other tenants.

"Customers also have access to all the features of the on-premise version such as web conferencing, instant chat, presence etc. And they can choose their preferred telecom vendor while retaining the ability to move from hosted to on-premise whenever they wish."

Nick Galea, CEO, 3CX, added: "3CX in the Cloud is not a multi-account system, it's a virtualised instance of 3CX Phone System with dedicated PBX services for each customer and complete data separation which sets it apart from old style hosted PBX."



Nick Galea

# Qubic works with Fidelity on DR device



Sean Dixon and Joe Papa

FIDELITY and Qubic have collaborated to offer partners a seamless fixed-to-mobile SIM Disaster Recovery solution plus pre-Ethernet install connectivity aimed at SMEs.

The solution is based on a single device on site with all of the complexity held within Qubic's network.

Sean Dixon, Sales Manager, Fidelity, commented: "This innovation offers true mobile failover for wired office connectivity, creating a private network whether connected wired or wirelessly.

"This solution allows our partners to deliver and bill customers quicker. Working alongside our long-term partner Qubic we are launching an exclusive offering to the channel."

The SIM fits into a broadband router and in the event of a fixed line break the service will seamlessly flip over to a single network or multi-network SIM.

The SIM works via a private APN set up between Telefonica and Qubic's network, and the product is said to be a first for the channel. "The channel can earn revenue and margin quickly as a customer can be live within 24 hours rather than waiting 90-plus days for Ethernet services," added Dixon.

"The fixed IP on the SIM will be the same as the Ethernet service when delivered, thus reducing the IT and configuration cost for the customer once the wired connection is live."

Fidelity is one of four companies on Telefonica's Global Partner Programme and has been pioneering the channel launch of IoT and M2M services with the roll out of vM2M, which reduces three devices – tracking, PDA and mobile – to one.

Joe Papa, owner and Director of Qubic, stated, "Direct connection to our data centres of mobile data, without crossing the public Internet, is a significant addition to Qubic's managed hosted service offering. "Qubic's fixed line services already connect directly to the data centre without crossing the public Internet, extending the LAN to remote workers.

"The mobile interconnect means that mobile workers or locations that don't have broadband can connect securely to the LAN in the same way and within the same IP range. The technology also allows us to provide secure mobile failover for fixed line circuits."

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## Contact centre firm gets \$30m

NEWVOICEMEDIA'S international growth ambitions have been boosted by a \$30m investment from BGF Ventures which joins existing investors Bessemer Venture Partners Eden Ventures, Highland Capital Partners Europe, Salesforce Ventures and Technology Crossover Ventures.

NewVoiceMedia operates in the cloud contact centre market which is forecast to be approximately 20 million seats world-

wide by 2020, with upwards of 30% cloud penetration, according to the company.

Last year the firm grew its international new business by 528%, and the new investment will bring a stronger focus on the north American market.

Rory Stirling of BGF Ventures commented: "We believe NewVoiceMedia will be one of the most successful software companies to emerge from Europe this decade."

## ShoreTel in Q2 revenue cloud push

SHORETEL'S financial results for Q2 fiscal year 2016 show total revenues of \$90.4m (\$90.6m Q2 2015) and strong growth in recurring revenues driven by partners.

Don Joos, President and CEO, commented: "Following the ShoreTel Connect launch we gained momentum with customers as our pipeline of cloud opportunities expanded.

"Our channel partners contributed a historically high portion of cloud bookings."

Recurring revenues, which consist of all hosted and related services revenue plus support revenues, represented 52% of total revenue and reached an annualised value of \$189m, up 15% on Q2 2015.

Hosted revenues of \$30.5m were up 20% year-over-year and 4% sequentially.

During the period ShoreTel completed its acquisition of Corvisa, a provider of cloud-based solutions, expanding its cloud services in Europe. ShoreTel also boosted its cloud presence in Australia with the acquisition of M5 Australia.

"While executing these strategic objectives we generated solid profitability," added Joos.

### SHORT CALLS

**Simwood's 2016 VoIP Fraud Analysis paper** released last month underscore's the company's leading role in combating the issue. Regulators and industry experts snapped up copies while still hot off the press and Simwood received requests from three of the world's top 10 global carriers with combined revenues of 180bn euros. "Take up from customers has been strong," stated Simwood MD Simon Woodhead.

**BT Wholesale's CEO** Nigel Stagg has stepped down following a 36 year career with the company. His successor is yet to be named.

**Unify, now known as the Atos brand for comms software and services,** has unveiled OpenScape Contact Centre v9 which offers a 360 degree customer view, providing a contextual history of all details and contact with a customer, regardless of media channel. Also featured is a new user interface modeled on Unify's Circuit platform.

# Comms sector review

Philip Carse, industry analyst at Megabuyte.com, reports on the recent trading performances of leading companies operating in the comms space.

UK quoted Telecoms & Networks companies have not proved immune to general stock market concerns and volatility, with one and three month declines of 7% and 16% outpacing the FTSE All Share's 3% and 6% falls over the same period. This is also a worse performance than the general Megabuyte universe of tech companies, down 3% and up 5% over the same period. This appears to have put a stop to the bull run of Telecoms & Networks companies in recent months, with a flat performance over the last year versus -7% for the FTSE All Share and +25% for the Megabuyte index.

One key driver of the poor performance in recent months has been TalkTalk, down about 35-36% over the last three and 12 months, following its well publicised security breach and the resulting £30-35m impact on FY15/16 profitability, or an approximate 10% hit.

The major sector news in the last month or so has been the CMA's approval of the BT acquisition of EE. The CMA justifies its unconditional go-ahead on the basis of very limited overlap between BT's fixed and EE's mobile activities at the retail level (has it not heard of quad

play?). Regarding the wholesale impact, the CMA notes Ofcom's ongoing strategic review, thus effectively leaving any major decisions on Openreach to Ofcom. As a reminder, the deal combines the UK's two largest telecoms players, with EE's £6.4bn of annualised revenues and £1.6bn of EBITDA representing a 36% and 25% addition to BT's £18bn and £6.3bn. It would, however, almost double BT's Consumer and Business retail revenues of £7.4bn.

Another area of interest recently has been in fibre networks, with both tier 2 town and city fibre network provider CityFibre and rural broadband Gigaclear advancing their causes. CityFibre acquired KCOM's national network for £90m, funded through an £80m equity raise and new debt. The network, which CityFibre said would cost £200m to build today, significantly enhances its metropolitan footprint and gives it a new long distance network, advancing its business plan by five to seven years. Meanwhile, KCOM benefits from a substantial reduction in net debt.

Gigaclear received 25m euro in debt funding from the European Investment Bank, as part of a planned



Philip Carse

## The CMA justifies its go-ahead on the basis of very limited overlap between BT's fixed and EE's mobile activities at the retail level

£90m funding this year, which will help fund 2016's planned 40,000-premises rollout. This comes on top of 15,000 live premises and 10,000 under construction as at the end of 2015.

In other corporate activity, Motorola Solutions is to acquire Macquarie-backed UK public safety network provider Airwave for £764m net of cash acquired. The price represents barely 3.1x EBITDA to June 2014, reflecting the wind-down of Airwave's TETRA network as the UK Government looks to 4G mobile networks for a lower cost alternative, and represents a thumping

announced the proposed acquisition of COLT Group's managed cloud business for an undisclosed sum, after COLT threw in the towel on its IT services business last June, baulking at the costs needed to get to profitability. This was highlighted with first half 2015 EBITDA losses of 7.7m euros on revenues down 14% at 33.3m euros.

In results news, comms and IT provider Alternative Networks announced 13% EBITDA growth to £22.1m on revenues up 9% to £146.8m for the year to September 2015 (10% and 4% organic), with the usual exemplary cash conversion. The year was a significant one in the development of Alternative Networks in terms of management, product, systems and operations, with the company's positive outlook reflecting the fact that it now generates as much revenue from managed services, hosted desktop and IT professional services as from its once core fixed voice services.

Private companies reporting results recently include contact centre specialist Sabio (revenues up 21% to £41.7m, combined with rising margins and very strong cash conversion); Wavenet (flat EBITDA on revenues up 19% to £12m, due to growth investments); and SSE Telecoms (EBITDA halved on revenues down 5% to £35m, but orders up strongly subsequently due to network and product enhancements).

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# Samuel ramps up partne



David Samuel

24 Seven Communications' Managing Director David Samuel is a dynamic comms entrepreneur ready to stamp his mark on the reseller channel. Here's how...

**S**amuel's entrepreneurship, vision and strategic planning could be the spur for something big. He set up Leeds-based 24 Seven Communications in 2002 following a stint working for his father in the telecoms industry. "I recognised the need to demystify telecoms for business, particularly for a SME customer base, and saw an opportunity to do my own thing," he said.

24 Seven's turnover, currently £6 million, is certain to multiply. The firm employs 20 people and Samuel has plans to double the headcount over the coming two years. "During the past year we have made significant advances in the mobile market and launched a national roaming SIM card, Jump SIM," he said. "Its success has been a huge accolade for 24 Seven, along with the overall growth of the team and expansion of our services."

24 Seven's Jump SIM was developed in response to the growing demand for a solution to the national problem of poor mobile coverage. "This has been a topical issue for several years and I am proud to feel established as a leading voice on the subject," stated Samuel. "Jump has tackled an emotive and

controversial problem that affects a huge number of people across the country."

Samuel leverages a wide portfolio of services designed to make businesses more efficient. These range from M2M SIMs, national roaming, call conferencing and recording, VoIP, SIP trunking, international termination, number ranges and mobile solutions. "Our bread and butter is in the SME market and this is very much where we see our future," stated Samuel. "We're able to offer an attentive service and our no-jargon commitment is crucial to this."

Direct sales remain important but Samuel has witnessed strong demand from resellers in the past year for 24 Seven's suite of products and associated data and billing platforms, giving customers complete control. "Since the recent appointment of a Reseller Channel Manager, Vinny Sohanpaul, we've quickly increased our profile among resellers," noted Samuel. "If you have the right range of products at a good price and can match that to customer needs it becomes a no-brainer for partners. It's also important that all of our partners are the right fit for our business. It's an area that we monitor closely because this helps to build strong and lasting customer relationships."

# Partnership strategy

24 Seven offers bespoke packages to reseller partners, including M2M solutions across three networks and its roaming solution for both M2M and voice. "Demand for a national roaming service in the B2B sector looks set to continue and we are working with resellers to further develop the strong market for Jump SIM," added Samuel. "M2M services are on the rise and we're now perfectly placed to help businesses stay connected thanks to our recent agreement with EE. This means that we join a select group of businesses offering a 4G, 3G and 2G M2M capability via EE, which will be promoted through resellers."

Becoming an MVNO with complete control over its network and billing platforms was an important milestone and gave 24 Seven a much deserved confidence boost.

## Let's improve customer service throughout our industry

"In terms of the mobile market, the recent mergers have impacted on competition," added Samuel. "Although it's good to see agreements forming between diverse service providers there is a fine balance to be struck between competition and consolidation if the market is to thrive. As Managing Director of a telecoms company I am monitoring and commenting on this trend regularly in order to keep our offering competitive and maintain working relationships."

The comms sector has always been highly reactive and confusion over technology and regulation continues to be a barrier, believes Samuel. "Therefore, as we look to increasingly professionalise our offer we're finding new ways to develop products and services that won't be constrained by these factors," he added.

"Due to the highly regulated nature of the telecoms sector the success of our business is constantly affected by outside factors – including Government and policy regulation – and it's a constant struggle for businesses like ours to jump through the often silly hoops they construct. That's why it's important to stay ahead of the curve and transition the business in line with the changing market."

With that in mind 24 Seven underwent a rebrand last year, developed new products, increased telecommunications market share and moved towards a more sustainable business model. "It's vital that regulation doesn't get in the way of progress as customer solutions always have to be at the forefront of our priorities," stated Samuel.

"In hindsight I would have been bolder in taking Ofcom to task over industry regulation. On the one hand it's calling for more competition. On the other its capitulating to the demands of big business. We have a foremost responsibility to our customers and nobody should get in the way of this imperative. Let's improve customer service throughout our industry and provide telecoms for better business. It is, after all, an enabler for

companies of all shapes and sizes. I'd also like to see the Government take a stronger stance with the multi-national players, in particular the MNOs. They are vital for our business, and because of that they have a stranglehold which is itself a barrier to innovation and competition in our industry." ■

### Just a minute with David Samuel...

**Role model:** Steve Jobs: His drive, ambition, imagination and success as an entrepreneur and inventor is inspiring

**What talent do you wish you had?** The ability to fit more hours into the day

**What do you fear the most?** Networking. I find the whole process frustrating

**How would you like to be remembered?** As an entrepreneur willing to take risks to offer the best possible service and advice

**Name three ideal dinner guests:** Chris Evans so I could talk to him about his plans for Top Gear; Ian Flemming, a fascinating character; and Michael Schumacher, a hero to me

**What could you not live without?** My car. I'm a petrol head

**Top tip for resellers:** Find a true partnership. It's all very well when things are going right, but the value of a true partnership is how you work together to overcome problems

**Biggest career achievement:** Setting up my own business and seeing it thrive, along with the success of our Jump SIM innovation

**Greatest strength:** Spotting the next big thing and launching ahead of the industry

# Tomorrow's office today

**W**orking patterns have changed enormously over the last 10 years, but there are even bigger changes coming, writes David Hatley, Head of Indirect Sales, BT Wholesale. Tomorrow's office will be dominated by new comms technology, and in many cases there won't be an office at all. The way we work is already undergoing a fundamental change. Commuting to open plan offices and a meetings-based work model present serious obstacles to productivity for many people; while an increasingly dispersed workforce and project-based working are driving more collaboration and interaction than ever before.

Email, Skype for Business, audio conferences, screen sharing, webinars, live chat, IM and social media are all daily tools, arguably overtaking face-to-face meetings. The ability to collaborate with people instantly online, wherever in the world they're located, will be a major part of future working.

Whether for reasons of productivity or practicality, more people are working from home, on the move or in 'third-place' locations like coffee shops, making secure, reliable cloud-based email a necessity for almost any organisation. To enable this increasingly flexible approach more workers will need to carry the office with them in the cloud. Smartphone, tablet and laptop use will overtake desktop PCs as mobility becomes business critical. These trends are a big opportunity for resellers.



David Hatley

The agile, mobility friendly and collaboration-focused work of the future is underpinned by cloud-based communications technology. Resellers should talk to customers about these new working patterns and explain that future trends will see some legacy communications solutions become redundant.

The products that will facilitate the future include hosted services that enable any organisation to access previously large business-grade solutions, including cloud voice technology. Data connectivity services will be a key proposition as the most significant working tools will rely on faster speeds from bigger pipes. The potential solutions for customers range from VPNs that enable cloud-based platforms and BYOD compatibility, to 330Mbps G.fast ultrafast broadband that BT will be rolling out over the coming years.

Overall, what matters most to end users will be increased speed, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, connectivity and robustness. Resellers must therefore offer a wide portfolio of data connectivity options that can support the working models of the future. Those options include Ethernet, fibre, broadband, G5 and optical. ■

# Rebrand signals big growth

Oxfordshire-based VoIP.co.uk's rebrand to Firstcom this month is the latest in a string of strategy moves from co-founder and Managing Director Adam Crisp who discusses how the traditional reseller model is being superseded by more meaningful strategic partnerships with trusted cloud service providers.

**C**risp is a man with the vision to start a company from scratch and build it into a pan-European business, so you'd be doing yourself a big favour by lending an ear to his story and observations. Firstcom was established under the name VoIP.co.uk in 2004 by Crisp and Chairman Jean-Pierre Vandromme to address the growing demand for next generation IP-based communications systems. The company provides cloud services and was best known for its SIP Encrypt product which prevents phone hacking and is compliant with Payment Card Industry Data Security standards. "We built our network from the ground up and through our channel partners we now supply a comprehensive portfolio of products to any size and type of business customer," said Crisp.

Acquisitions have also been instrumental in the company's development and growth in Europe. In July 2014, Crisp extended his

reach into Europe with the acquisition of Denmark-based UC firm Firstcom, acquiring 85 per cent ownership of the company and a group-wide rebranding opportunity which this month saw VoIP.co.uk become Firstcom. Soon after the acquisition Crisp relaunched Firstcom's flagship mobile enabled UC platform, called Universe, creating new opportunities for partners. He said: "Scandinavia is well ahead of the UK in terms of UC and this acquisition gave our UK partners access to superior UC products."

Just six months after snapping up Firstcom, Crisp reached deeper into European territory with the purchase of Germany-based telecoms company Teleforte, which also has offices in Poland and Spain. Teleforte operates in the traditional telecoms space selling international number services to customers including German airline Lufthansa. The acquisition completed Firstcom's service offering in the traditional telecoms



**Adam Crisp**

## IT companies have great technical know-how but they often lack telecoms expertise

space and ensured its UC product had a route to a wider market. "We now have offices in the UK, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Spain, providing a platform to strengthen our presence throughout Europe," said

Crisp. "These transactions helped us close our first round of external funding to accelerate the growth of our pan-European group."

Introducing SIP to the marketplace was probably

the biggest factor influencing growth in the company's early days, noted Crisp. But the more recent European activity has brought a much wider product portfolio combined with stronger product

# with ambitions

management, resulting in well positioned solutions.

According to Crisp, Firstcom's biggest opportunity is subscription-based cloud communications complete with IP telephones, cellular mobile, mobile apps etc, all targeted at the SME sector, along with secure SIP trunking and cloud enhancements, cloud call recording and cloud menu systems. "We have invested in our own software development and network dev-ops team to make sure we deliver our partners and their customers ongoing upgrades and cloud-based features," added Crisp.

In May last year Firstcom embarked on a partner recruitment campaign following the launch of a new partner programme. The company wasted no time to on-board traditional telecoms, IT and security partners in a move that coincided with the launch of its new UC suite and a drive to boost sales of its SIP Encrypt solution. "Our revamped programme saw us offering support with sales collateral including social media as well as support with technical sales and proposals," explained Crisp. "We are also strong on channel partner training and offer technical, sales and marketing skills development within partner organisations.

"Our partner programme extends our reach through the creation of regional hubs across the UK in addition to continuing to work with our existing partners. We are aiming to bring the UK up to the same standard as other countries, such as Denmark, where ISDN is dead. For that to happen,

IT and information security managers need to ensure telecoms is included as part of their overall strategy and not treated as a stand alone service."

Crisp welcomes telecoms resellers to the partner programme, but he is also attracting IT partners with great technical know-how but no telecoms expertise. "By adding our cloud telephony to their offering they can benefit from new revenue streams in terms of monthly commissions without having to re-train or support a new product," said Crisp.

#### Growth enablement

Channel partners may not have the resources to identify and target growth segments on their own. With this in mind, Firstcom's main focus will be enabling new and existing channel partners to identify where they can grow their business and to help them formulate a sales execution strategy. "Partners are no longer just looking for technical support and residual commissions, they are also seeking value added services like sales and marketing assistance," commented Crisp.

"Our growth is due to next generation services that are fully integrated with wider communications and completely secure. Although we have an aggressive expansion plan across Europe, the UK is still very much a key focus. There is so much potential for us and our channel partners in the UK and we intend to build on our strengths and develop existing and new alliances."

Crisp counts his technical acumen as his greatest strength, and an ability

to understand new things quickly can be traced back to his school days. "I have always been inquisitive by nature and want to understand how things work, so science at school naturally led to an engineering degree," he commented.

"Building a business and watching it grow organically is easy if that growth is built on engineering excellence and hard work. I've always insisted that our products are as good as they can be from an engineering perspective. But turning that business into one that achieves stellar growth meant drawing on the experiences of others, and having a strong financial team is critical."

#### Just a minute with Adam Crisp...

**Role model:** Elon Musk: He's innovative, pioneering and inspirational

**What talent do you wish you had?** To play the piano

**Lessons learnt:** You are only as strong as your team. If you try to do everything yourself you will never grow

**What do you fear the most?** Failure, and I'm not a big fan of wasps

**Name three ideal dinner guests:** The author Peter May, Jessica Ennis and Einstein

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

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

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

**If you weren't in comms, what would you be doing?** Working on renewable energy sources for the motor industry

# Short notice VAT changes now in force

**H**MRC gave the UK telecoms industry just 16 days notice to implement changes to the way VAT is billed and accounted for in legislation issued on the 16th January, writes **Guy Miller, Council Member, ITSPA**. From 1st February, all invoices sent from a telecommunications wholesaler to another wholesaler or to a reseller for call charges should have the VAT element removed. This should be accounted for instead by the receiving party. This is known in the tax world as a Domestic Reverse Charge.

This sudden change in law stems from a number of cases that HMRC has been investigating where so-called Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) has resulted in millions of pounds worth of tax revenue being lost through complex webs of high value, low audit trail transactions which switch VAT obligations several times in a short period, frequently across multiple European Union countries. Companies in the chain then 'go missing', keeping the VAT element of the transaction with no intention to pay it to the authorities.

Resellers should see invoices from their wholesale suppliers VAT-free from the 1st February, but there are technicalities attached to this and ITSPA recommends they contact a tax advisor to understand their responsibilities in the new scheme as the direct



Guy Miller

**This sudden change in law stems from a number of cases that HMRC has been investigating**

payer of VAT for goods they have purchased.

The VAT change is principally aimed at call charges and SMS messages and where possible other services, for example line rentals, should still be subject to the current 20 per cent VAT charge. This is likely to lead to confusion as many suppliers will need to create two invoices where there was once one and some may decide to have different VAT rated lines on the same bill. If it is difficult to split these items (for example, call bundles associated with a line rental) then the HMRC guidance is clear – if in doubt, zero rate the whole service.

HMRC said in its guidance that it will 'apply a light touch in dealing with errors that occur in the first six months of introduction', but it is expecting the changes to happen now so the industry needs to react quickly. ■

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- <b>Call Queues</b>		•
- <b>Call Recording</b>		•
<b>Call features</b>	•	•
- Call Divert	•	•
- Call Forwarding	•	•
- Call Waiting	•	•
- Call Park	•	•
- Call Traffic Limit	•	•
- Three-way Call	•	•
- Line Monitoring	•	•
- Voicemail	•	•
- Voicemail to email & Fax to email	•	•
- Quick Dial	•	•
- Last Number Redial	•	•
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- Personal Client lets you call, SMS, IM & email	•	•
- Personal Address Book & Events Diary	•	•





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# Give your top teams the recognition they deserve

Celebrate with the best teams in the UK ICT channel and this year, celebrate in style as we move to the glamorous Park Lane Hotel.

Don't delay, now is the time to give the brilliant sales and marketing teams in your channel business some quality recognition for the energy and creativity they have shown in helping your business grow.

Now in its fifth year, the Awards will once again give ICT Channel businesses a unique opportunity to acknowledge the skill, determination and success of their sales and marketing staff.

Specifically aimed at teams rather than individuals, the Comms Dealer Sales and Marketing awards will once again be fully supported by Eclipse – who take up their position as lead sponsor for the third year running.

Pete Tomlinson, Director of Sales, Marketing and Product at

Eclipse, part of the KCOM Group, said: "These awards celebrate the enormous contribution our sales and marketing teams make in creating value, both in our own business and for our customers. At a time when we are seeing the most successful channel players reshaping their organisations from being product centric into putting relationships at the very heart of what they do, it's time for our sales and marketing teams to come to the fore. We are now not just evangelists, but also educators for a whole new way of working.

"I am a passionate supporter of this

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

### Perfect platform

Taking place on May 5th 2016, the Awards finalist ceremony returns to the stunning ballroom at the refurbished Park Lane Hotel in London's West End, which provides the perfect platform to



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

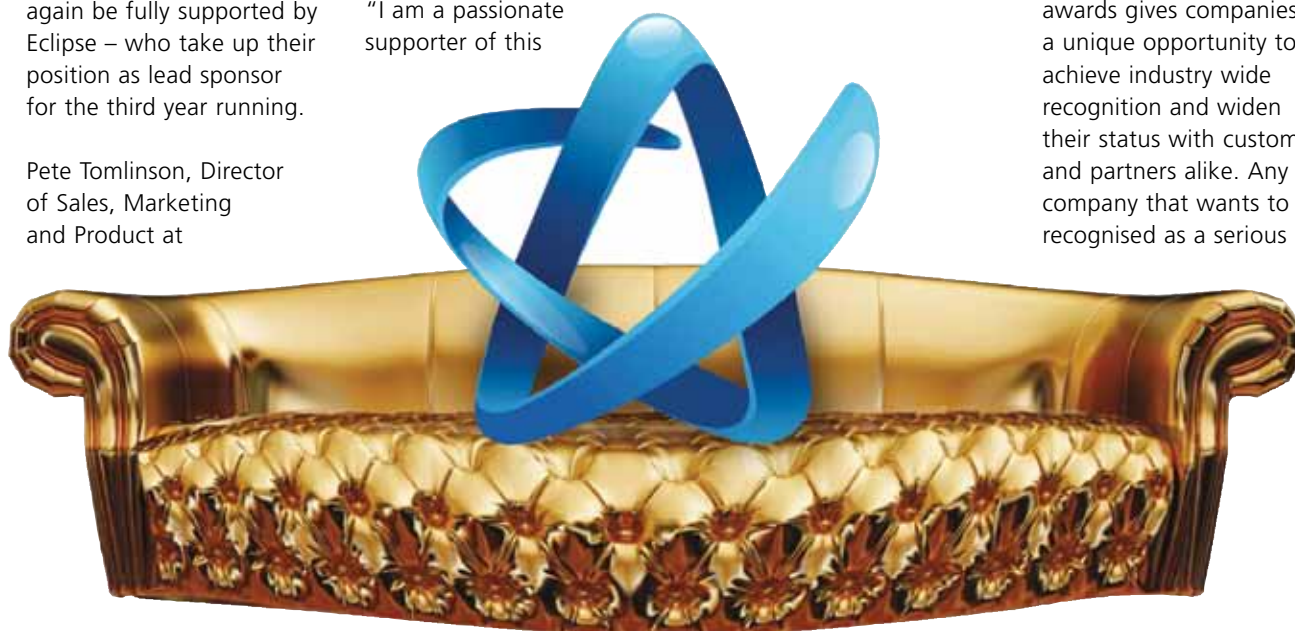
celebrate in style.

So why should you enter your teams? Nigel Sergent, Editorial Director at Comms Dealer, summarised the benefits of participation: "As a magazine we always applaud the success of resellers, vendors and distributors operating in the ICT channel and these awards gives companies a unique opportunity to achieve industry wide recognition and widen their status with customers and partners alike. Any company that wants to be recognised as a serious

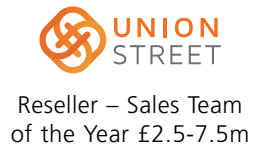
channel player should take the opportunity to put their sales and marketing teams in the limelight and this is it!"

The 2015 awards were staged at the lavish Café De Paris in London, hosted by popular TV presenter Chris Hollins. One of the stand out winners was Berry Telecom who secured a Best Reseller Sales Team Award and the coveted Overall Sales Team of the Year Award.

Managing Director Simon Langford was thrilled with his team's success: "The awards have given Berry confirmation that its sales strategy and service levels are recognised as leading by our own high performing industry. We're now able to more easily quantify and communicate to our customers, and prospective customers, the level of performance and service Berry provides. Here's to the awards in 2016!"



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## SPONSORS & WINNERS OUTLINE THE BENEFITS...



**TOM METCALFE**  
CHANNEL TELECOM

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

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



**CHRIS GOODMAN**  
FOCUS

"Winning the Comms Dealer Sales & Marketing Awards in 2015 was a great accomplishment. The award is a fantastic way to demonstrate to both aspirational

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



**PAUL TAYLOR**  
VOICEFLEX

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

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



**CHARLES AYLWIN**  
8X8

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

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



**ANDY GRANT**  
BOWAN ARROW

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

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



**SIMON LONGFORD**  
BERRY TELECOM

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

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



**VINCENT DISNEUR**  
UNION STREET

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

## THE CATEGORIES

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

### Reseller Categories

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

### Distributor Category

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

### Vendor Category

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

### Service Provider Category

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

### Best Channel Marketing/PR agency

### Overall Sales Team of the Year



# Partners gain control

Since unveiling its channel ambitions almost a year ago during a landmark event at Manchester's Media City, plan.com has fine-tuned its partner portal into a powerful acquisition and business management engine that is revolutionising the way resellers address convergence opportunities.

**K**eith Curran and Dan Craddock set up plan.com just over two years ago with a strategy focused on giving partners the means to control their customer's communications needs simply and effectively online, and give them total flexibility in the quotation, supply and ongoing management of UC solutions. "When we first met it was clear we were both on the same page about the opportunity but, to a degree, we were like chalk and cheese," recalled Curran.

"Dan understands technology like I never could, whereas my background over the past 30 years has been very much around relationship development. We both recognised that combining the world of technology with long-term partner relationships was potentially a perfect match, and within 20 months of that conversation we had more partners and connections on board than had been achieved in five years in my previous mobile business."

With so many long-standing relationships in the mobile

sector it was no surprise that plan.com's early growth was mostly through mobile partners. But as Chris Smith, Head of Business Development was keen to point out, the multi-million pound portal is helping resellers make bigger margins by addressing a much broader comms portfolio.

He said: "Our partner relationships are changing rapidly based on the customer-centric portal we have developed. It simply gives resellers complete control over all client communications including broadband, VoIP, M2M, data etc. In fact, our VoIP offering is growing faster in like-for-like terms than when we first launched our mobile channel, and by far the biggest driver of that growth is the traditional mobile partners themselves."

Central to the portal's appeal is the fact that resellers can construct their own 'dashboards' based on individual status or responsibility, as Curran explained. "Whether you are on your own, have 10 employees or 50, you can



Keith Curran

create personal dashboards and change them accordingly. You can simply and easily personalise them with your own logos, move the tiles round, resize them and tailor exactly how you want your dashboards to look and feel.

#### Total flexibility

"For instance, you could decide to have a repair option on or off, you could set up how you want your mobile broadband deal to look or your fixed line or IoT packages. It's all down to how you want to play it and what people you want to give permissions to. You might not want sales people to see certain customer information so you can tailor theirs accordingly. Once the dashboards are set up, partners and their customers don't really need an IT department. Everything can be done with one click."

Another core feature of the portal is more efficient and

old handsets and send the complete quotation to the customer for approval," he commented. "Once tweaked or embellished based on feedback, the reseller can then add in their branding, a strap line, mission statement, company details etc, and email it to the customer. This is all in real-time with no waiting for network approval."

plan.com's main network partners are O2 and BT and appropriate margins have been set for partners within the portal, but they are not carved in stone, as Curran clarified. "The partner can decide what they want their mark-up to be. They may set a chosen percent mark-up on a UK landline that suits a particular purpose, but choose to set the mobile rate to something completely different.

"Likewise, with international rates you can set a flat rate of whatever percentage you want across everything. Or, you can sell a custom rate. So let's say the customer phones China a lot, they can select China, add the rate, and then can adjust the price either up or down to the requirements of the customer."

Even more attractive to resellers is that they can see how much money they will make on commission as they build the quote. "Partners tell us they want to decide what they are doing," said Curran. "So if one finds they are up against a specific competitive network offering for example, they can change their margins in real-time to determine at what level they wish to work. This flexibility in real-time can really be the difference between winning or losing a deal." ■



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# TWL's fit for business

Cardiff-based TWL Voice and Data has spent the past two years getting into tip top operational condition. Here, Managing Director Andrew Nicholson discusses the fitness programme and how it has become a key component of his growth strategy.

**W**ith strategic foresight Nicholson brought in external help to get TWL's business basics right and he continues to build on the foundations that have been put in place over the past two years. He credits business advisory firm Mustard for helping to get TWL disciplined and fit for growth by installing structure, processes, systems and frameworks that put Nicholson in command of his destiny. "This gave us something we never had before, and it created a solid platform for us to grow," he said.

These processes gave TWL a clear picture of where the company was and how certain elements of the operation were performing. "Having accurate data about the performance of the business was key to us making tough, but beneficial, decisions," added Nicholson. "From sales figures to response times, there was no hiding place. It cleared up any weaknesses and helped us to develop a culture of hard work and honesty. Good

people working for each other is what drives a team, not laziness and a lack of accountability. In hindsight, I would have implemented structure sooner."

Nicholson explained that TWL's proposition has been built around providing customer experience excellence in communications systems and maintenance. The company supplies Mitel, Unify, Toshiba and Oak equipment with hosted VoIP, Wi-Fi, mobile, cabling and security also in the kit bag. Nicholson's current priorities are to recruit the right talent with the right attitude and to complete the acquisitions he is targeting. "As well as organic growth we are planning for acquisitions, acquisitions and more acquisitions," he said. "In the short-term we're interested in speaking to any small to medium telecoms firm in south Wales and the south west of England."

Two important acquisitions already in the bag are Danwood Telecoms which was snapped up in 2012 in a deal that increased the customer base by 200



Andrew Nicholson

and pushed turnover up by £450k; and the purchase of JVH Communications in 2015 which boosted turnover by 22 per cent to £2.2 million. "These acquisitions were huge for us in terms of leaps in growth," added Nicholson.

#### Growth ambition

The company now has 500 clients, 18 staff and revenues of £2.2 million with a forecast to hit £2.4 million in 2016 via organic growth alone. TWL's clients include professional rugby team Cardiff Blues, Cardiff and Vale College, Port of Milford Haven, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Welsh retailer JoJo Maman Bebe.

"We will be at £5 million turnover with 30 staff by 2018," said Nicholson.

"That's not taking acquisitions into account. Growth will also be driven by two divisions in our business – data cabling and security. The security division is fairly

new, but data cabling has been part of our offering for a couple of years. The latter is worth £400k per annum to us and we grew it over three years from £50k in its first year. This has been a great area of growth."

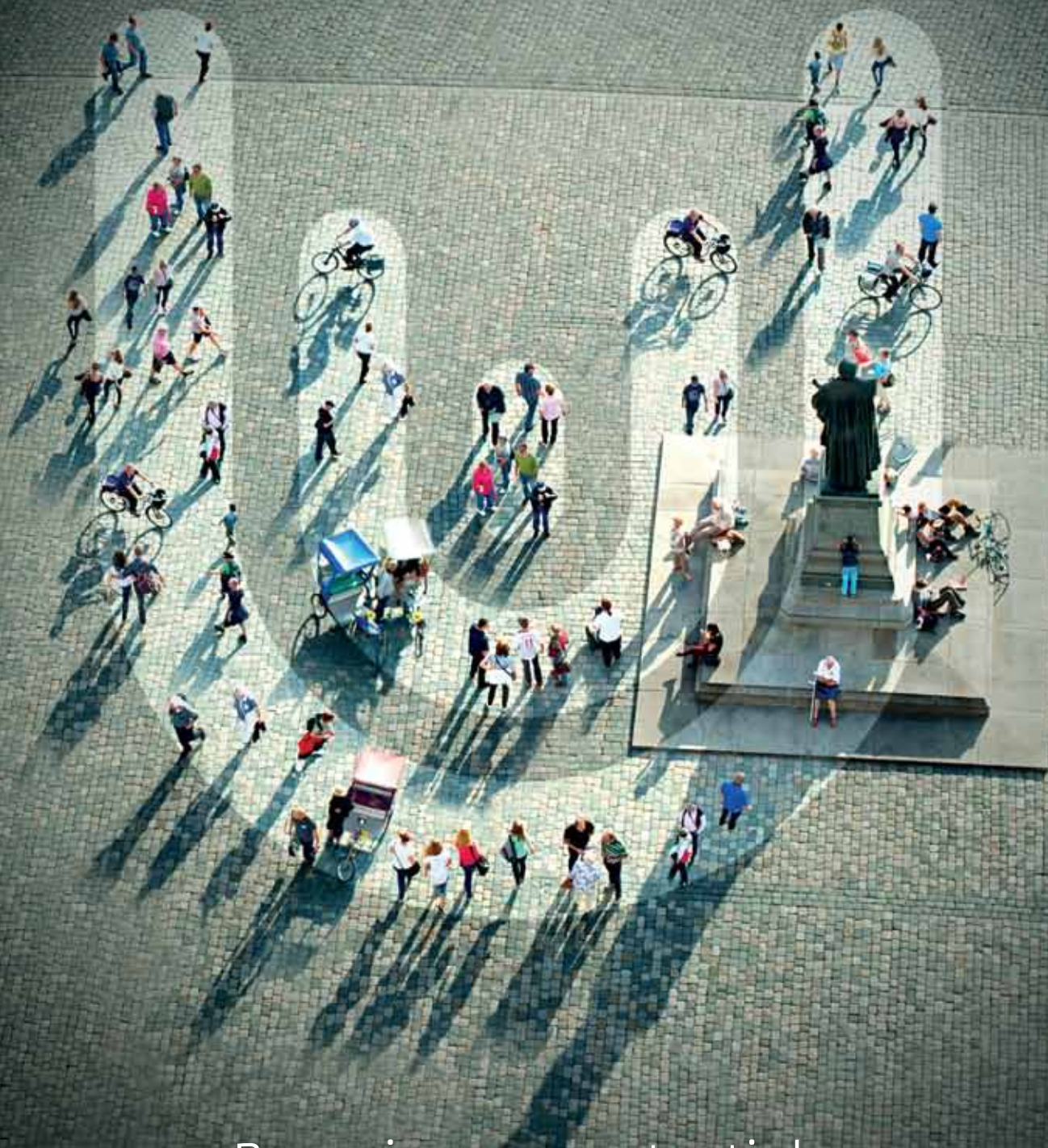
Needless to say Nicholson has a firm grasp on the market's dynamics and he is observing with interest how telecoms is converging with security. "In its basic form you're seeing mobile phones having the ability to control home appliances and utilities, and how home automation is impacting on telecoms is something that has great implications for security in general," he stated. "We are targeting the security division as a real opportunity for growth."

TWL was founded in 2000 after the south Wales company Nicholson worked for as an engineer went bust. He couldn't turn his

back on customers who came knocking on his door for support and was straight back on the case with five clients on the books at launch. "The experience of being laid off and putting together TWL in such a short space of time made a lasting impression on me," he said. "Anything that has been thrown at me since I have been able to manage with a calm head under pressure."

Other key developments since TWL's foundation include the implementation of a ticketing system and CRM function. "This allows us to keep on top of any issues current clients may be experiencing, as well as helping us to manage installations and upgrades far more effectively, minimising any disruption the business may experience," said Nicholson. "Our excellence in managing installations, training and customer support leads to increased productivity for our customers, increased sales, lower costs, improved reliability, happier staff and improves the customer's brand."

But recruiting quality sales staff who are willing to go the extra mile for customers and put teamwork first is a pressing issue of significance for TWL. "We offer no hiding places, it's bred into our culture," commented Nicholson. "We need people who can work for the team, not themselves. We're in the process of bringing on graduates who are eager to learn. They have no bad habits and we can help them develop a customer-minded approach to all manner of telecoms. We don't want negative people, we want people who are positive and solve issues." ■



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# Stakes raised in comms

CDI Comms has quickly become a name on the lips of many in the industry and according to Sales Director Andrew Forster the company's reputation for giving customers what they want will soon be the talk of the town.

**C**DI Comms, the telecoms arm of CDI Group, has offices in Birmingham, London and Newcastle and its team of engineers install and maintain systems UK-wide, including equipment from Panasonic, Mitel (Aastra) and Wi-Fi solutions from Samsung. The company is targeting a 20 per cent uplift in revenues this year following the launch of a new-look website, its first telemarketing operation and an expanded engineering workforce.

Midlands HQ'd CDI Group was founded in 1987 as a data network infrastructure specialist serving many market sectors, not only in the UK but across Europe, Asia and America. Recognising the convergence of voice and data the firm set up its comms division in 2014. "Business is brisk and exceeding all expectations," stated Forster. "We employ over 60 technical staff at our Birmingham and Newcastle offices which gives us the flexibility and control essential to make sure we provide the best possible service to a demanding market."

The milestone launch of CDI's telecoms division was not just about expanding into an adjacent market, it also demonstrates that anything is possible with ambition and focused dedication, both of which are Forster's trademarks and qualities that were role modelled indelibly by his father who embarked on a successful journey of personal growth and development.

"My dad's background in the north east of England was not privileged," stated Forster. "But he put himself through night school, commuted 240 miles to Tewkesbury during the 1980s and became the Operations Director for a successful software house. Sadly, my father passed away before he could enjoy his retirement. Everything he ever did was for his family, and not once did I ever hear him complain."

Picking up the baton for personal growth Forster, who began his working life as a bricklayer, cemented the building blocks of a career in comms when he decided to swap constructions sites



**Andrew Forster**

for the relatively quieter atmosphere of an academic learning establishment. The move to higher education was inspired by his father's ambition to get up and go the full distance. "In the 1990s I studied business and marketing at university," commented Forster. "This led to a job at Evesham Micro selling PCs and servers in the call centre. I moved through the departments and eventually became Channel Manager, setting up and running the channel sales division."

#### Convergence

Channel building and telecoms collided when Forster met an Aastra reseller in south Wales, prompting him to join the vendor's ranks. "I worked for eight years as an account manager at Aastra, and later Mitel," added Forster. "My career path led directly to CDI's door because I serviced CDI's account for seven years

while at Aastra. We became firm friends and I joined CDI in March 2015. It's an exciting energetic company and I am enjoying the challenges and opportunities associated with this role."

Current areas of particular interest are SIP and hosted, along with a notable increase in white label installations. "We work for various dealers and have a number of key partnerships," said Forster. "We cover the UK but our focus has been more on the midlands, so we intend to expand geographically and open offices in other areas where required. Our biggest opportunity is picking up from other suppliers and installers who have let customers down.

"We get a lot of comments from customers who say that we have succeeded where others have failed. We pride ourselves on getting a job right first time every time.

CDI is based on a customer comes first, friendly and professional service."

Every client has a different set of requirements so CDI Comms tailors solutions to meet the various business needs of its customers. "We offer a range of solutions from traditional analogue and digital services to VoIP-based products such as SIP phones to businesses of all sizes," noted Forster. "We also offer scalable pay-as-you-grow solutions including unified communications that integrate email, IM, applications, wired and wireless telephony, voice messaging, along with audio, video and web conferencing."

Forster's strong connection to CDI Comms is reflected in a wider bond of staff unity that gels the business together. "At CDI there is a close family atmosphere with strong interpersonal ties that stand the test of time," he explained. "Many employees have been with the company for 20-plus years and have seen it grow from strength to strength. If you pick up the phone to us you'll find you're always talking to someone who cares and takes their job personally."

Forster's affinity with the values upheld by CDI Group is such that he ranks his biggest career achievement as becoming Sales Director at the company. "I'm working in an environment that I enjoy and with customers who are exciting," he enthused. "I'm playing a major part in a company that is growing fast, with values and ethics that I fully embrace. In hindsight, I would have made the move into telecoms much faster, rather than into IT." ■



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# Get it right first time

Caring about bespoke solution delivery is a subset of caring for customers post-sales and should be a primary goal for all comms providers, according to Karl Alderton, Managing Director, Comms Supply.

**A**lderton's calling to help SMEs fully understand their options when making buying decisions about their business communications came during a stint working at BT. He joined the company at the age of 18 and developed a successful sales career over a six year period in which he witnessed the issues faced by SMEs when dealing with providers, including some 'horror stories' that spurred him to set up on his own and establish Comms Consulting.

"We would act as the SME's telecoms director, helping them to make informed decisions about the most appropriate telecoms solutions for their business," Alderton explained. "However, I struggled to find suppliers who shared my attitude to customer care and grew increasingly frustrated. The only way to ensure the solutions I recommended would come to fruition in a cost-effective, professional and timely manner was to deliver them myself."

Alderton launched Comms Supply in February 2012 to deliver such solutions. By June 2013 the company had achieved £1 million

turnover. "The business has been growing steadily over the past four years but it was three years ago that we started to see the market change dramatically," he said. "One of our first big step changes was to become an ISP in our own right, rather than being a reseller. By taking control of data we knew we'd have a significant advantage as more and more businesses migrated to SIP trunks and hosted solutions."

Comms Supply's natural next step was to develop its own SIP trunk and hosted solutions. "The ability to provide connectivity and the voice product gave us the opportunity to offer bespoke solutions based on the needs of our customers, as opposed to what we could purchase from another provider," stated Alderton.

Despite these successes the most significant milestone in Comms Supply's timeline to date came in January 2015 when the company moved from selling to end users directly and became a channel supplier. "We originally had a soft launch working with a small number of channel partners to ensure our processes were fit for purpose in a



Karl Alderton

channel model," explained Alderton. "In September last year we publicly launched all of our products to the channel, including our hosted solution, YourUCP, and our SIP solution. Since then we have recruited a number of partners who are now enthusiastically recommending our products to their customers."

#### Revenue growth

Over the past two years Comms Supply has witnessed its turnover increase by more than 100 per cent and its workforce double. "We are currently recruiting for three new team members to support our growth and we anticipate needing a further three people by April 2016," commented Alderton. "We believe we will achieve turnover of more than £2 million by the end of this financial year and forecast this to increase by a further 100 per cent over the following two years."

Alderton believes that Comms Supply's channel offering is its biggest opportunity. "Our strategy is to have a reasonably small number of key active partners across the UK, under 500," he added. "Another fundamental element of our approach is that our partners always have access to an engineer. After carrying out some customer research we decided that the customer experience was far more efficient and satisfactory when every query was handled by an experienced engineer, rather than a customer service executive."

Poor communication is a big stumbling block when building effective business relationships, noted Alderton. "That's why our partners receive a regular stream of updates about their order or service issue," he said. "They have the information they need to update their customers without needing

to constantly chase us which improves the customer service they can deliver and reduces administration time for both parties."

Alderton is also aware that Comms Supply needs to increase the capacity of its voice network, and plans to do just that by over 1,000 per cent next month. "Some UK providers have run out of capacity in the past 24 months and we are determined to prevent this happening to us," he added. "As with any major upgrade, we need to fund the project without increasing the cost to our partners."

Alderton's other primary goal this year is to finalise Comms Supply's partner portal which will offer a single hub for partner interactions. "We want this portal to be intuitive and helpful for all of our partners, so we're investing heavily to get this spot on. Our hope is that we can get to 90 per cent of all interaction available from a single interface by the end of 2016."

A trend noted by Alderton is the growing demand for bundled services, whether that's free SIP trunks as part of a data solution or free minutes with a hosted solution. "We have already started providing bundled services," he said. "For example, all Ethernet Internet connections including EoFTTC and EFM are provided with free SIP trunks, which has supported a large increase in EoFTTC connections across our partner base. We are now discussing with our partners what other bundled solutions would allow them to sell more services while ensuring they are still able to retain a good margin." ■

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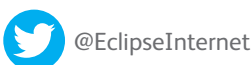
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# Luck charmed by SITS Group growth outlook stands out

IT solutions provider Camworth kicked off an acquisition campaign last December with the purchase of Bristol-based cabling firm Cabletec Communications. The acquisition enables Camworth to deliver a full range of services including Cisco solutions and support. Camworth Director James Luck is no stranger to wiring having started his career installing structured cabling before moving into design and mobile telephony. "I have worked as both customer and supplier which allows me to see both sides of the coin," he said.



James Luck

Luck established Camworth in 2009 with a mission to create a business that genuinely puts the customer first. "That's what all of our staff try to do every day," he stated. "I love it when a client calls me just to let me know we have exceeded their expectations or just to say thank you."

Luck attributes much of Camworth's growth to the support given by Cisco and Comstor. "We have steadily grown from a start-up to turning over £6 million in 2015, and have a great plan in place for 2016. We're looking forward to telling our customers about it," added Luck. "We have aligned the management team to where we want to go, launched a new website and restructured the business.

"We aim to be a trusted technology partner for our customers, and cover everything from the design of the structured cabling to the monitoring of the network.

We always strive to deliver the best technological fit and work with vendors such as Cisco, Riverbed, Palo Alto, F5 along with others."

### Right track

In the SME space, a lot of technology is moving to the cloud, allowing the SME to focus on their own business rather than the technology. "VARs advising customers on the right solution, while saving them time and money are on the right track," added Luck.

He has witnessed a big change from customers looking for the best price to customers seeking best value. "Our aim is to establish trusted relationships with our customers that last for years rather than focus on one-off transactions based on price," he added. "Our strategy is founded on

service excellence and long-term relationships. This has allowed us to broaden what we do with our customers while gaining new ones along the way. Based on our track record, we are seen as a trusted pair of hands by some of our vendors which is also driving growth."

Due to growth in Camworth's customer base Luck's current priority is the recruitment of technical staff. "Great people are always in high demand but the main challenge is ensuring they fit with the team we have here," he commented. "By focusing on hiring the right people with the correct skills and personal values I am confident that in three-five years time we will be a company renowned within the IT industry as having a brilliant team who provide excellent service to a great client base." ■

Cardington-based cloud computing specialist SITS Group collected a brace of awards in Q3 last year. The firm was named the fastest growing medium sized business of 2015 among companies with an annual turnover of between £5 million and £15 million at the Ward Hadaway Fastest 50 Awards, and was listed in The Sunday Times Hiscox Tech Track 100. Not bad for a business that began as a light bulb moment during a heavy night out. "I started SITS Group in 2008 with three co-founders who are experienced IT practitioners," said Phil Cambers, Commercial Director. "We were friends and came up with the idea on a stag do."



Phil Cambers

SITS is now a fully functioning consultancy practice generating circa £6 million turnover and employs 30 staff. Its first important deal win was a major project at the Port of Tyne. It then scooped the VMware SMB Partner of the Year award two years running and also set up Pivotal Networks. "No longer does the marketplace want to work with broadline resellers," noted Cambers. "Clients want to work with two or three specialists who can co-operate with each other, get the job done and know their company inside out."

A main strand in SITS Group's growth strategy has been to hire slow and fire fast. "Luckily we haven't had to resort to the latter too often as our staff are hand-picked," added Cambers. "They make our business and are pivotal to our growth plans. We also

stick to what we do best and resist the temptation to diversify into areas that aren't core to our business.

### Tech savvy

"Clients are a lot more tech savvy so they have a different set of requirements compared to 20 years ago. IT is no longer a 'nice to have', but a 'must have'. Also, while the consumption of IT has got easier, the back-end where the processing takes place has become incredibly pivotal to organisations. Managing the sprawl and growth of data is key, as is security."

Cloud is clearly disruptive. However, when you start looking at public cloud offerings there are often gotchas that can catch clients out, according to Cambers. He said: "We need to constantly educate people on the pros and cons of public and private cloud and help clients decide what's right for them. Our view is that cloud will end up being deployed in a hybrid fashion over the coming years and we have solutions to address both." ■



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# Value that's adding up

Not only are resellers looking to purchase hardware from distributor ProVu, they are also turning to the company for its menu of value added services, explains Managing Director Darren Garland.

**G**arland has witnessed a growing number of resellers wanting to use ProVu's systems and infrastructure to resolve their technical issues. This requirement is emblematic of a wider trend in which forward thinking distributors are starting to deliver value added services as well as kit. "Our reseller portal, ProSys, gives resellers access to a range of tools designed to ease the fulfilment and management of customer premise equipment," he commented. "With the added assistance of a technical support team, resellers also know that if they face more technically complex issues the team are on hand to assist. By enabling our resellers to remotely manage deployed phones and assisting them with more complex issues they are able to cut their costs as any technical issues become outsourced, allowing them to focus on their core business."

To better support resellers with services ProVu runs tests on all of its products before making them available to order. "This allows us to gain in-depth knowledge of our products," added Garland. "We also maintain

close relationships with our vendors which allows us to learn and work with them on technical issues, helping us to continuously develop our product knowledge."

ProVu also offers training to staff and resellers to help equip them with the skills and knowledge to sell its products. "To give all of our resellers access to technical training we have made some of our training courses available online, meaning resellers can undertake training at an appropriate time for them and from the convenience of their own office," explained Garland. "We can also provide training at a resellers' preferred location."

#### Automated processes

In addition to reseller support structures, automated order processing is also part of everyday life at ProVu. Resellers are adopting this process as well as adapting their own systems to feed directly into ProVu's. "Through our portal resellers are able to place their orders outside of regular office hours with the config settings they require," added Garland. "Resellers can also access deployed phones and remotely manage



Darren Garland

## Consultancy-based services should allow us to open up the market

them from their desks, saving time and money by minimising the need for site visits. Our APIs also enable resellers' customers to place their own orders directly onto our system."

Some products aren't as easily accessible as others so ProVu provides consultancy services to widen product accessibility and attraction. "For example, we have been supplying Sangoma kits for four years and from our experience we have seen that while there is a demand for these products, there is a shortage of people and services to support the install," commented Garland. "With high training costs many resellers simply do not have the means to install such products themselves. As a result, we offer wrap-around services for higher scale installs that require technical expertise.

"This not only helps to open up some products to a wider audience, it also enables resellers to add such products to their portfolio with the added peace of mind that we can assist them with the install and ship items ready to plug in and work out-of-the-box. Prior to an install, resellers can arrange a specific time with our technical support team to be on hand, over the phone. Upon agreement, our technical team's services become sub-contracted to the reseller, meaning they are dedicated to remotely support the specified install for the agreed duration."

Garland is currently assessing additional opportunities for ProVu to offer more value added services. "Our strategy to provide consultancy-based services should allow us to open up the market and make high scale installs

more accessible to many of our resellers," he added.

To help resellers keep ahead of the curve ProVu carefully selects its vendors to ensure they have a pure channel model. "This helps resellers to maintain higher margins and ensure a traditional supply chain is maintained," said Garland. "Our resellers will not find our primary vendors' products for sale at lower prices on e-tailer sites. We are also open to suggestions from our channel partners as to what products they would like us to sell."

ProVu offers a range of VoIP products that help to ease resellers' installs by providing them with the complete package. "By not limiting ourselves to just one product line we empower our vendors to continually develop new items," noted Garland. "When launching a new product we ensure that we market items according to brand guidelines and offer resellers training and webinars to increase and develop their own familiarity with the products. Through our technical training, resellers can become fully equipped to sell our vendor's products."

In order to evolve, Garland believes that resellers should be looking to adopt a more flexible approach in their purchasing. "Not only do they want to be looking for cost-effective solutions, they should also focus on reliability and assistance in the maintenance of end devices from their distributors," he commented. "Ultimately, it is through the distributors' value added services that resellers will be able to grow and succeed in today's challenging market." ■

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# Disties on the front line

Trends in services-orientated distribution are gathering pace. Here, we provide a snapshot of how some distributors are aligning their channel propositions and partner engagement models to the bigger picture.

**T**he influence of changing market dynamics is felt strongly by distributors who are at the vanguard of a services-driven revolution. "The industry is moving towards services as well as kit, and we expect this trend to gain momentum this year," noted Richard Carter, Group Sales & Business Development Director, Nimans. "We have embraced areas such as mobile, cloud, connectivity, leasing and on-site services. These are becoming more important in terms of what we do and build on our traditional strengths such as training and technical support."

It's the distributor's role to help resellers stay ahead of the curve and Nimans has invested in doing just that. "One relatively new area for example is collaborative telemarketing," added Carter. "We have an in-house team that is now conducting work on behalf of resellers. We are telemarketing into their bases and performing a consultative sell around UC or the cloud."

Education is also important and Nimans delivers this via regular training, high level account management

and field-based support. Investments have also been made in its Network Operations Centre and the development of various portals. "Additional resources have also beefed-up our IP and data skills in tech support, as well as increasing the number of engineers," added Carter. "Identifying high growth markets is also key. WLAN will be a significant growth area this year and extra manpower has already been put in place to help resellers capitalise in this burgeoning sector."

The role of resellers needs to evolve, observed Carter, who noted that collaboration is a key driver. "The more collaborative partnerships a reseller has the better," he stated. "Teaming up with a services-orientated distributor is an important part of this process. In the last few years Nimans has evolved and moved away from traditional tin and a reputation of being a catalogue-based company. We are a much more dynamic voice and data services and solutions provider."

As a distribution partner ScanSource Communications also provides solutions combined with value added services and support to



**Richard Carter**

resellers. "Our goal is to enable resellers to act as trusted advisors to their end user customers," said Ian Vickerage, President, ScanSource Communications, Europe. "We do that by providing the solutions, tools and support they need to enhance their specialist skills. We continue to add new technologies to our product offering. For example, we have recently added presentation and telepresence solutions from Ashton Bentley and Array, products that are complementary to our Polycom solutions offering."

#### Market making

"Our role is also to help our manufacturer partners, large and small, to grow their business and create a niche in the marketplace. We do this by offering marketing support, events to share their solutions, and demo opportunities for our reseller customers, along with sales and technical support for resellers."

The distributor should offer services that complement

the reseller's skills and help them to provide a total solution to the end customer. "In ScanSource's case, we can also provide the global reach and scale that can help resellers in fulfilling larger, international deal opportunities," added Vickerage. "We are currently in the midst of integrating the ScanSource Communications and Imago ScanSource businesses following the acquisition of Imago by ScanSource in 2014. It's an exciting time, enabling ScanSource to provide more solutions, services and support to resellers throughout Europe and beyond."

How to build and sustain a services model without competing with customers has always been a bugbear for distributors, noted Graham Jones, Country Manager, Exclusive Networks UK. "The model has to complement the business while protecting channel loyalty," he said. "Distribution services broadly come under three areas – professional

services, training and cloud offerings. There's also newer services in finance leasing and marketing."

The channel will experience irreversible change thanks to the adoption of cloud with more vendors moving to a service-licensing model, believes Jones. "There will be less VARs in the marketplace and distributors will need to work in partnership with them to succeed," he added. "In turn, VARs will also need to become even more in tune with their customers' needs as consultants, while developing their own identities and not being seen as just another supplier. Disties need to grasp all of this, be ready to move quickly and stay agile. There will always be a role for a true value added distributor, and vendors and VARs need to understand this."

plan.com's partners often come from a background where they have for many years, or even decades, sold a single product. "Our mission is to turn these partners into businesses that are comfortable selling a full range of services so that they can deliver each customer's complete communications needs," stated Keith Curran, co-founder of plan.com.

"It's a hugely exciting time, and witnessing some partners do their first VoIP deal and make more money than they have made on mobile in 10 years is satisfying. In the past, partners have tended to stick to selling the product they are most comfortable with, but our portal, with its simple and familiar interface, is breaking down the barriers that prevented partners becoming true multiple product providers." ■





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# Are the right people get



DEBORAH ROBERTSON  
UK MARKETING DIRECTOR  
8X8

“ We all need to ensure that investment in marketing delivers what a business needs, revenue. My advice is to tie marketing spend to revenue in a way that is easy for your executive team to relate to. Agree the target sales revenue to be achieved and divide it by your average order value to identify the number of orders required. Then apply your lead to sales order conversion rate to come up with your lead target. Not only does this help you decide how much to invest in cost per lead, but it also helps you to know when you have driven enough leads – very helpful for a conversation with the sales and finance teams!



ANDY GRANT  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
BOWAN ARROW

“ Integrated marketing is the key to marketing success in 2016. The overall objective for investing in marketing activities is to increase awareness, consideration and create action. The budget allocated to marketing should provide an acceptable and achievable return on investment. Therefore, marketing in isolation is a waste of money and effort. A truly integrated campaign can take many forms, but today I would advocate including these five communication channels: Social, digital, mobile, print and telemarketing. Every element plays a part in delivering on a successful marketing strategy. A couple of well planned and executed campaigns will deliver a greater Rol than many small activities over a given period.



Planning a marketing strategy can be a risky business. Get it right and you'll enjoy warm praise from everyone in the company as leads and sales flood in. Get it wrong and you'll be out in the cold until you can win back respect – and that could take some time!

The problem is marketers today have more choices than ever regarding how and where to promote or advertise products and services. In addition to traditional methods, such as print advertising, radio and direct marketing, there's email marketing, web-based advertising and multiple social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, not to mention mobile marketing.

Many channel businesses have learned the hard way, that what works in, say, traditional print marketing, does not work as well (or at all) on the web or on social media and vice versa.

Andy Grant, Managing Director, at Channel Marketing firm Bowan Arrow, firmly believes a joined up, integrated and planned approach to marketing campaigns will deliver better results.



JOHN PETT  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
CHESS PARTNER SERVICES

“ Firstly, set realistic, measurable goals aligned to what the business wants to achieve. Secondly, you need to know your target audience, understand your competition and identify gaps in the market via rigorous research. This can ensure that your efforts return maximum value. KPIs are essential. They will benchmark your performance and set milestones for the team to achieve. Creating checkpoints can help you to understand the progression of your strategy more clearly and adapt to any changes to reduce risk. Most importantly, now that you know what success looks like, analyse your performance to constantly improve what you do.



JULIEN PARVEN  
MARKETING DIRECTOR  
DAISY DISTRIBUTION

“ Understand your customer. Without that, a business can spend an inordinate amount of time, and ultimately money, on activities that will deliver nothing. Understanding your customers' behaviour will provide you with an insight into how they would like to be engaged with, and allow you to tailor your approach accordingly. Digital marketing is becoming more relevant. It gives the customer the ability to establish their own preferences. The organisations that will win are those that adhere to those preferences. Finally, understand your objective. Without it you can never measure whether you have been successful or not. It allows you to reflect and review, as well as adapt and evolve.



HELENA BELCHER  
HEAD OF MARKETING  
ECLIPSE

“ Understand and deliver against your customers' needs. Be ready to deliver what they want, where and when they want it. When building brand recognition think about advertising and event sponsorship, but make sure the placement is right for the audience. Then actively prospect by sharing high value content through email, direct mail and networking events. All are a great way to pique interest and get the conversation started. Two top tips for successful marketing: Keep hold of the leads and nurture them through marketing until they're sales-ready or your conversion rates will plummet. And never be tempted to measure Rol on individual tactics. Focus on the entire customer journey and measure success at the end.



DARREN FARNENDEN  
HEAD OF MARKETING  
ENTANET

“ Ensure your marketing strategy, and especially the activities that result, clearly supports the business' objectives for the year, whatever they may be. It's so easy to fall into the trap of 'lets just do what we did last time', or 'lets just make some noise and hope for the best' without having any clear goals. Instead, carefully consider what key objectives the business has and formulate a strategy that will support their achievement. Where possible, ensure these goals are quantifiable so that you can more accurately assess your performance and calculate your Rol, helping you to formulate further strategies in the future.



If you (like us) are looking to grow...

# Getting your key messages?



ROB TOWNSEND  
GROUP CHIEF MARKETING  
OFFICER, NIMANS

“It’s not how and what you plan, but who you plan it with: Sales, product and marketing go hand in glove, so all three need to work together. The ‘why’ comes from sales, the ‘what’ from product, and the ‘how’ from marketing. Data also forms the backbone, but not just target contact details. Management Information and BI are integral to unlocking next year’s nuggets. A deep dive into your spend analysis will reveal patterns, trends and potential. Not just customer growth potential but how that can be mapped and modelled to prospects or lookalikes. This, backed up by robust market and competitor analyses and a firm eye on future trends, usually puts one in a good position.”



MARK SAUNDERS  
GROUP MARKETING  
DIRECTOR, NINE

“Marketing plans should be about customers not about you. I always insist that the outcomes of our marketing plans are written in the customer’s voice: What positive developments would they say about us in one year’s time that they don’t say now? Traditional or social? Both is the predictable, but correct answer, because your customers want to decide how to engage with you, not fall in line with your decisions. Finally, if it can’t be reliably and ideally, objectively measured, then it shouldn’t be in the plan. RoI is still super relevant, which is why we won’t be attending any traditional trade shows in 2016.”



“You must firstly identify the need, in other words, the problem you are trying to solve for your target market,” he says. “Then you’ll need to articulate a solution to the problem you have identified. If you can, provide evidence of differentiation and show how your solution should be considered above your competitors.”

“A truly integrated campaign can take many forms, but today I would advocate including five communication channels: social, digital, mobile, print and telemarketing. It may sound like a long list but every element plays a part in creating a successful campaign.”



PHILLIP REYNOLDS  
JOINT CEO  
OAK

“Be clear about your message. What is it that you want to tell your audience? What message do you want to get across to them? What action do you want them to take when they’ve seen your message and shown some interest? A.I.D.A is as valid today as it’s ever been, but of course it is the Action point that determines that your money is not wasted. It’s the Action point that determines RoI, so this is where you need to measure and track. Whether you measure click throughs, calls to a specific DDI, visits to a specific web page, number of emails opened or the number of web chats had, you should aim to measure and track responses from initial interest to closed sale wherever possible.”



PAUL TAYLOR  
SALES & MARKETING  
DIRECTOR, VOICEFLEX

“A strategy is about objectives, and making a plan highlights how you’re going to execute your strategy. Trade shows, advertising, training, direct marketing, and of course social media are in the mix. But whatever methods you put in place you must know and understand your customers, what they need (not what you think they need), and how you can get them to buy from you. See what’s working and what’s not and make adjustments. Every conversation is an opportunity to promote your business, understand and support your customers’ needs and increase sales. It’s now about selling yourself, selling the company, selling the benefits of your telephony application, selling the data company and selling the SIP provider.”



There are many easy steps you can take to connect up your marketing. For example, simply including a client’s Twitter handle on printed materials can help influencers connect more easily with your brand and spread the word on their networks.

There are many more of course, so read on and see what other channel professionals recommend to get the most bang from those marketing bucks...



RAY PITCHFORTH  
MARKETING MANAGER  
ICON

“A marketing strategy must be linked to the company’s business goals and not be an isolated activity run by sales or marketing. When developing a campaign you must know what is preventing you from achieving your goals. Is it a lack of awareness, false perceptions of the product, or something else? The key to delivering campaign RoI is regularly monitoring and managing spend against achievement, at least monthly or weekly for short campaigns. However, you need to know what should have been achieved at any point in the campaign. Deviation from target needs to be explained and corrected. Campaign RoI does not have to be measured in money terms. A higher rate of lead generation might also mark a successful campaign.”



PAULA SIMCOE  
MARKETING CONSULTANT

“Ensure there’s alignment between your marketing strategy and the agreed business plan. Will success be defined by growth in revenue, margin, market share or some other key performance indicator? Once you’ve carefully researched and segmented your target market, focus your marketing effort and budget on that chosen niche to establish credibility and leadership. Build your brand reputation to drive awareness among potential customers. Showcase key success stories to demonstrate how your unique offering has addressed customers’ specific needs and encourage others to consider doing business with you. Lists of features, products or services can take the spotlight later. Increase the effectiveness of integrated campaigns by measuring, reviewing and refining both marketing tactics and content, ahead of any grand scale launch.”



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# Now's the time to register for the networking event of the summer!



THE date has been set and registrations are now open for the UK's leading channel networking and thought leadership event for resellers addressing SME business markets.

Margin in Voice & Data will return to the Forest of Arden in the West Midlands on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2016 giving resellers a 'once a year' opportunity to engage with their peers, meet potential new partners and truly understand the transformational technological trends affecting ICT service provision in the UK.

Unlike a traditional exhibition based format, MIVaD is limited to pre-registered, qualified attendees so no time is wasted talking to people you don't want to and vice versa! The event is based around a managed programme of pre-scheduled 1-2-1 meetings and is supported by an educational seminar programme, workshops and an evening dinner including complimentary overnight stay for delegates.



The long established MIVaD model is already proven in enabling vendors and resellers to establish new business partnerships or re-invigorate those with old friends.

This year Margin in Voice & Data's conference programme will take reseller delegates along new income avenues helping them to benefit from joined up managed service provision, Cloud Communications and the Internet of Things.

Topics to be debated and discussed will include:

### Route 1: Utilities/Eco-system management

- Energy Services – Billing, Green Energy, ICT energy efficiency, cloud computing
- Energy Management – Smart meters, Smartphone energy control
- Machine-to-Machine (M2M) – Monitoring and control,



Industrial automation,

- Logistics, Smart Grid, Smart cities, Health, Defence etc.

### Route 2: Merchant Services

- Card payment services
- On-line payment services
- Intelligent Terminals (M2M)
- Fraud prevention

### Route 3: Recurring revenues

- M2M – making money while you sleep
- Web RTc – monetising the power of the Internet with Business apps and VideoCloud communications – the Licence to make money!
- Mobile Data – security, back up, MDM (Mobile Service Management), productivity suites, custom apps.

## WHAT DELEGATES SAY ABOUT MARGIN IN VOICE & DATA

*Thank you very much for yet another superb event.*

*The speakers were excellent and it was great to make old and new connections. We've come away with new energies and ideas, so thank you to you and your team.*

CLAIRE MADDOX – EUROLINK

*Thanks for a very useful and enjoyable event I have followed up with some contacts and will be developing the work with them in due course.*

TERRY LOCKWOOD – PARAVAIL

*We have avoided this sort of event in the past as we thought it would be a waste of time, MiVaD was informative, and entertaining and very efficiently run. We have already chosen a partner to work with that will increase our profits significantly.*

DON MOORE – TELECOM RESOURCE

*Many thanks for an excellent event yesterday. I found the content very thought stimulating and it was good to meet contacts and friends old and new.*

STEVE HAYDN – GREEN TELECOM

*A big thank you to you and your team for another successful Margin in Voice and Data event. Without doubt the best show in town.*

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Margin in Voice & Data is a FREE to attend event for registered, qualified delegates and includes all event hospitality and overnight accommodation at the Forest of Arden Hotel.

Places fill up fast so don't delay, register now at [www.margin-in-voice-data.com](http://www.margin-in-voice-data.com)



# Fujitsu signs McLean

# Watson gets top tech job



**Paul McLean**

PAUL McLean has joined Fujitsu as Enterprise Manager for Indirect Channels. He brings 20-plus years industry experience and while at Hewlett Packard he managed a £1 billion Enterprise Group channel business with over 500 resellers, developing a team of over 30 field and inside sales partner business managers. He was responsible for strategy, coverage model creation and adoption, and driving growth across the Enterprise Group business.

For the past two years McLean has been the owner of Channel Optimiser, an IT consultancy organisation focused on channel transformation, optimisation and maximising the efficiencies, relationships and business growth between channel partners and vendors.

Kevin Matthews, Head of Channel and Direct Services at Fujitsu UK & Ireland, commented: "Paul brings years of industry expertise and insight that will prove invaluable as we embark onto the next phase of our strategy."

McLean added: "I understand the challenge, I've been there before, and I am up to the task."



**Howard Watson**

HOWARD Watson has stepped in as CEO of BT Technology, Service and Operations (BT TSO) and Group Chief Information Officer following Clive Selley's appointment as Openreach CEO. Watson is currently BT Chief Architect

and Managing Director for Global IT Platforms.

He joined BT in 2011 from Cartesian, a telecoms software and consultancy company where he was Managing Director. Prior to that he was Chief Technology and Information Officer at Telewest and Chief of Transformation and Technology at Virgin Media.

Watson commented: "The next few years promise to be transformational in terms of how people communicate and I look forward to making my contribution."

## Also on the move...

## Adae moves into VP role



**Mike Rogerson**

MIKE Rogerson has joined Akixi as Business Development Manager. He brings over 20 years industry experience having held network, distributor and reseller posts with companies such as BT, Telefonica and O2

UK. Rogerson said: "With an increasing number of businesses realising the potential of hosted voice I am keen to start working with our UK partners to help drive more sales and increase recurring revenues." Bart Delgado, Managing Director, added: "Our new innovations and the increasing demand from our customers led us to look for an addition to our team. We are fortunate to have found someone of Mike's calibre to fulfil this role."

JODIE Piper aims to double reseller numbers at DMSL's Cloud Telephones business from 60 to 120 and recruit more referral partners for DMSL's business and consumer broadband portfolio. Piper, who has been appointed Reseller Development Manager following a decade working at the company, commented: "The growth we are seeing in hosted



**Jodie Piper**

voice is phenomenal. We are also seeing solid demand and growth in broadband services. DMSL fully expects a further acceleration in sales this year and we need more reseller partners to reach the full potential that's out there."



**Marcus Adae**

MARCUS Adae has been posted to Avnet's newly created position of VP for Core Suppliers and Technology Groups, EMEA. Adae has worked in the IT industry for 25 years with a strong sales emphasis on value-add and solutions distribution in Germany,

Austria and Switzerland. He is based in Munich and reports to Graeme Watt, President, Avnet Technology Solutions, EMEA. Watt said: "Marcus's appointment enables us to further focus on customers, particularly in high growth segments, and deliver a clear value proposition around our solutions and services for next generation technologies." Adae was previously Managing Director for Germany at Tech Data and most recently Ingram Micro's VP for the Central Region.

PATRICK Joggerst has been appointed Executive Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing for GENBAND. He was previously the firm's CMO and boasts more than 30 years experience in leading sales and marketing for global brands in the telecoms and technology industry. Prior to GENBAND he was head of worldwide sales at BroadSoft.

## Routledge rises to Country boss

D-LINK has promoted Paul Routledge to the role of Country Manager UK&I five years after he joined the company. He first worked in the European Business Development team prior to becoming Sales and Marketing Manager UK&I in 2014.

Routledge's extended responsibilities include post-sales and service delivery and developing new channels to market for D-Link's cloud-enabled smart solutions, while gaining market share for business wireless and switching and driving D-Link's IP surveillance solutions.

Routledge said: "The UK channel is constantly evolving and it is up to us to meet and exceed the changing needs of our channel partners. Looking at the wider business strategy from a D-Link perspective, what we have to do is drive growth of technologies with real potential and focus on cloud-enabled products and solutions."



**Paul Routledge**



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