

Q&A

with Tim Weller, CEO of Datto



Tim Weller

On October 21-23, Datto, a provider of IT solutions delivered through managed service providers, hosted 850 MSPs from 25 countries at DattoCon19 in Paris. The event gave *Technology Reseller* the opportunity to find out more about the company's future plans, including its global expansion and technology roadmap (covered in next month's issue). To set the scene, James Goulding first asked Datto CEO Tim Weller about the integration of Autotask, which Datto acquired two years ago, and what impact that had had on the company's culture.

Technology Reseller (TR): Almost exactly two years ago, in December 2017, Datto acquired Autotask, a company of roughly similar size. How has the integration gone and what impact has it had on your company culture?

Tim Weller (TW): The integration has gone really well. In a way, we had to bring both companies up to the other company's standards. For example, Autotask, a PSA tool that people run their businesses on, had more of a 9-to-5 business hours support philosophy in Europe and more of a 'sell the tool and then move on' approach. Datto has always had a 'partners for life' philosophy – we are on a journey together; the channel is going to grow; the partner is going to grow; and we will make revenue as time goes on. So, we introduced 24/7

support. Two years on, probably the biggest feedback I get from partners is that they love the support, love that they can call someone any time. In addition to pure tech support, we staffed the sales side more and the account management side. This has had a global benefit too because we now have a very full support team who can answer calls at different hours for other geographies.

Then, Autotask was a little further along in Europe than Datto was and that has helped us bring continuity, which is really Datto's flagship line of products, to market. That's been an education process for people that might have been using the same backup product for the last decade, giving them the chance to revisit continuity and see what is offered by modern solutions. They are always a bit surprised to learn you can get almost real-time continuity – 'Isn't that for the financial markets in Canary Wharf? Isn't that for the airlines?' Bringing enterprise-grade technology to small and medium-sized businesses has always been Datto's hallmark.

Overall, I think the integration has gone very well. Companies have continued to grow rapidly through that change and profits have expanded enough to have made it worthwhile. Not that it was a financially motivated merger; it was really about getting a full product suite out to partners. I love standing on stage at the Keynote and being able to talk about everything we offer. I love launching the tech for partners to go out and sell to small and medium-sized businesses.

TR: Can you give me some idea of the growth you have experienced.

TW: My challenge now is the scale of that growth. First of all, in human terms, Datto was about 800 people and the combined business is now 1,700. We were about 1,300 to 1,400 at the merger, but every month we hire 30 to 40 new people. On top of that, we now have 16,000 partners.

That changes the company, and we have to think about how we maintain that one-to-one partner touch that Datto is known for – that deep immersion. At the end of the keynote I published my email address to all the partners. Obviously, there is the assumption, with 16,000 partners, that not all are going to email me today, but that is an example of how we are trying to maintain that one-on-one culture. And other

executives are doing the same. The door is open and we will keep that culture alive for as long as possible.

That's what I focus on; a partner first culture and getting everybody to view things through that lens. I love to talk to the new employees on their first day of work and say: 'Hey, this company is about MSPs. Wherever you came from before, we don't call them end users; we don't sell direct. Yes, we sell enterprise software to small and medium businesses, but we do it only through channel partners'.

TR: One thing that has impressed me about DattoCon is the culture of openness, the presence of competitors exhibiting at your event. Did the merger with Autotask change any relationships you have with customers?

TW: It did not. Everybody will always say they are open; the PR will always be 'we are open'. Microsoft in the '90s was 'open', even as the Government was investigating it for anti-trust. We have always tried to act in a very open manner, but the merger brought some unconscious bias to light. If you were an Autotask person and you had Autotask PSA and Autotask RMM, you would not have been highly motivated to make the Autotask RMM work with ConnectWise, because that is your competitor. But when you are Datto, in a combined company, as many of our partners probably use ConnectWise as use Autotask. We have a great RMM and we want it to integrate well with both and we want our networking products to integrate well with both. So, we have had to ask ourselves whether we are as open as we can be. This conference is the most obvious manifestation of that: we made the decision to keep it very, very open – open to anyone from ConnectWise down. If Cisco, who we compete with on the networking side, want to come to this conference hall and have a big booth, we would welcome them.

