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v33 · 2020

Comment

Autumn has traditionally been a great time to socialise with colleague and competitors at the dozens of exhibitions that pack out the calendar from mid-September onwards. No chance of that this year, of course. But there are compensations – like Technology Live Virtual. Running over three months from November 2020 to January 2021, this is not a substitute for Technology Live, now moved to March 11, 2021, but an interesting exhibition and showcase in its own right that gives exhibitors and visitors opportunities to forge relationships in a new way. You can find out more about its many attractions by turning to page 35.

Video will no doubt make up a major part of the material provided by exhibitors on their virtual stands. Exhibitors eager to project a professional image may be interested in Video Sherpa, a video production software platform that enables organisations to file, edit, share and manage their video content in-house. Co-founder Anna Downes completes this month's *I couldn't do my job without...* survey on page 48, in which I was pleased to read the following sentence: 'I believe in supporting good journalism by paying for it'. How refreshing.

The greater use of video in offices, schools, cafes etc. is one reason why organisations might want to upgrade their wireless networks. Others, as we report on page 42, include the proliferation of wireless devices caused by BYOD and changes in laptop design, including the use of aluminium cases, which apparently has consequences for signal strength. The introduction of Wi-Fi 6 is another – and a great excuse to start a conversation with your customers about their network upgrades.

Networking is fundamental to business efficiency, and something that too many people – myself included – know too little about. One of the benefits of being a journalist is the freedom to ask some very stupid questions, all in the interests of research of course. I took full advantage of this privilege when I spoke to Andrew Wilson about CityFibre's plans to roll out a full fibre infrastructure to 100 towns and cities across the UK. You can read the interview on pages 28 to 30.

James Goulding
Editor, Jamesg@binfo.co.uk

Just one touch

Promethean is simplifying the kitting out of meeting spaces with an enterprise-grade collaboration tool optimised for quick and easy set up and operation. The plug and play solution brings together a 65, 75 or 85-inch Promethean ActivPanel Titanium Pro interactive display, a Yamaha CS-700 all-in-one video sound bar, DisplayNote Launcher software and a smartphone app. Users can launch meetings based on popular video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx and Google Meet with just one touch. **www.prometheanworld.com**

What's New

Added intelligence

Panasonic has added AI capabilities to its six-strong i-PRO X-Series of network security cameras and announced the first two applications to make use of them – AI Video Motion Detection (AI-VMD), which can detect any human, vehicle, two-wheel motorcycle or bicycle and activate alarms based on pre-determined triggers, and Privacy Masking, which can recognise human figures and pixelate them for privacy protection. As well as developing solutions itself, Panasonic has launched a Software Development Kit so that third parties can develop their own applications. **https://business. panasonic.co.uk/security-solutions**

Carbon-neutral MPS

HP is inviting businesses to offset the carbon impact of printing through a carbon-neutral Managed Print Service (MPS). As well as optimising a printer fleet to improve resource efficiency by 13% and cut paper waste by 25%, HP will estimate total carbon emissions from the HP MPS solution and offset 100% of the associated greenhouse gas emissions by investing in sustainability projects. **www.hp.com**

Remote fix

Over the last four months, Konica Minolta has saved itself from having to make more than 1,000 customer visits across Europe after accelerating the development of a remote visual support tool in response to Covid-19. AIRe Link lets technical specialists identify problems with faulty machines via the camera function of a customer's smartphone or tablet and use pointer and drawing tools to highlight problems and explain how to fix them. Konica Minolta is offering the beta version of AIRe Link free of charge for use with Konica Minolta devices and third-party products. **https://www.aire.link/**

Make the Swytch

Logitech Swytch is a one-cable laptop link that lets you join and host meetings on any video conferencing platform, webinar or streaming software via your laptop. The enhancement to Logitech room solutions gives native support for any video meeting service and the ability to control a room system's camera, audio devices and meeting room display from a laptop. Swytch also provides power and charging for laptops with USB-C. Pricing starts at £899. **www.logitech.com/Swytch**

No change

Pre-announced by NEC Display Solutions at ISE in February, and now available across Europe, the super-quiet PA804UL and PA1004UL laser projectors feature filter-free LCD technology for 20,000 hours of service-free operation, with no need to change filters or replace bulbs. **https://www.nec-display-solutions. com/p/uk/en/products/choice. xhtml?cat=Projectors**

Compact and mobile

Brother UK is meeting growing demand for mobile printers in the logistics, retail and warehousing sectors with the addition of four models to its RuggedJet (RJ) range. The robust but lightweight RJ-2035B, RJ-2055WB, RJ-3035B and RJ-3055WB offer drop protection of up to 2.5 metres and IP54-certified protection against water spray and dust penetration when used with a protective case. Other features include a print speed of four inches per second and multiple connectivity options, including NFC, AirPrint, Bluetooth, WiFi and MFI. **https://www.brother.co.uk/business-solutions/mobile-print-and-label**

SpeedEE mobile packages

EE has refreshed its mobile packages for SMEs. The 5G Ready handset and SIM Only business plans offer access to the fastest speeds on the EE mobile network, with Unlimited Data, a Lifetime Guarantee and Free Next Day Replacement at no extra cost, plus the option to upgrade to a new device during a contract. The new plans offer exclusive access to Apple Music, BT Sport Ultimate, Amazon Prime Video and BritBox. Handset plans start at £16 for Business Essential, £31 for Business Extra and £42 for Business Unlimited. SIM Only, Tablet and Mobile Broadband plans are also available. **https://ee.co.uk/business/small/price-plans/**

Versatile scanner

Canon's new desktop scanner, the imageFORMULA DR-S130, has flexibility built-in, including USB and WiFi connectivity, activation by PC/Mac or smartphone and direct push scanning to output destinations independently of a PC. Perfect for small businesses, work teams and home offices, the DR-S130 scans at up to 60 pages per minute and can handle a workload of up to 3,500 scans a day.

Powered by micro-LED

Due to be launched next year, Vuzix's new generation of wireless, designer-look smart glasses will include a reasonably priced consumer product and an enterprise version with built-in cellular connectivity. Improvements include a larger field of view, advanced waveguide optics and binocular displays, including 3D. Noise-cancelling microphones and Vuzix's patent-pending immersive stereo acoustic speakers support quality phone calls and voice/UI integration between the user and their phone.
www.vuzix.com/technology/next-gen

Desktop centrepiece

Other World Computing (OWC), a zero emissions provider of memory, drives and docking for PCs and Macs, is targeting home workers and creative professionals with its new plug-and-play 'digital desktop centrepiece'. The OWC Mercury Elite Pro Dual with 3-port Hub combines up to 32TB of storage capacity with a built-in USB hub for connecting and charging any USB-equipped Mac, PC, mobile device or accessory.

Added to the fold

Samsung has unveiled the third generation of its Galaxy Z foldable device. The Samsung Galaxy Z Fold2 5G features a 6.2in edge-to-edge cover screen that lets you check email, look up directions or view content at a glance and, when unfolded, a 7.6in cinematic main screen, with minimised bezels, notch-less front camera and a 120Hz adaptable refresh rate for smooth scrolling and gameplay.
www.samsung.com/uk/smartphones/galaxy-z-fold2/

Bridge to the future

Toshiba Tec is meeting demand for more productive A4 colour MFPs with the launch of the e-STUDIO330AC (33 pages per minute) and the e-STUDIO400AC (40ppm). Part of Toshiba's e-BRIDGE Next range, the new models feature a self-encrypting Secure HDD and a 10.1-inch tablet-style touchscreen with a customisable user interface and one-touch activation of complex multi-step processes. The MFPs can be fully integrated with third party solutions and cloud services via an embedded web browser and a growing range of Toshiba e-BRIDGE Plus productivity apps. **www.toshibatec.co.uk/superhero**

New colours

EPOS has updated its EPOS I SENNHEISER GSP 600 range of wired closed acoustic gaming headsets with new colour palettes. Providing high audio fidelity and exceptional realism for gaming sessions, the GSP 601 and GSP 602 feature the same ergonomic design as earlier models but with dramatic new colours – white features, black accents and interchangeable copper-coloured side plates on the GSP 601 and glossy navy blue elements and brandy-coloured ear pads on the GSP 602.
eposaudio. com/ gaming

Smarter listening

Sony has enhanced its 1000X family of over-ear wireless noise cancelling headphones with smart listening technology that senses what you are doing (e.g. walking, driving a car, at the gym, on a train, in a café) and automatically adjusts ambient sound for the best listening experience. Other useful features of the £350 WH-1000XM4 are: Speak-to-Chat, which lets you have short conversations (e.g. order a coffee) with your headphones on – the music stops automatically when you speak and re-starts once you've stopped talking; and 'Quick Attention', which lets you reduce volume instantly by placing your hand over the right earcup. The headphones also support 360 Reality Audio for a more immersive experience. **www.sony.co.uk/electronics/ headband-headphones/wh-1000xm4**

COVID PROTECTION

By the book

ExaClair has added a Track & Trace Log Book to its Guildhall notebook and filing range to help businesses capture staff and visitor information needed for the NHS Test & Trace system, including name, contact number, date, arrival and departure times, group size and on-premises contacts.
www.exacompta.com/trace

Employee mapping

OfficeMaps has added new features to its interactive workspace management tool to help employers maintain social distancing in offices. These include the ability to block desks on an office map so that the others can be allocated in a Covid-secure fashion; a contact tracing feature that shows who is in the office at any time, where they have been and who they have had contact with; occupancy statistics; a sanitiser station locator; and a colleague locator that gives the current working location of employees.
www.officemaps.com

Clean hotels

Rydoo has added a Clean & Safe tag to the hotel booking function of its business travel and expenses app, Rydoo Travel, enabling users to view safety information provided by listed hotels, including their cleaning practices, physical distancing measures and food & drink protocols.
www.rydoo.com

Who's available?

Xerox's new Team Availability App helps businesses manage a flexible workforce by monitoring the availability and location of employees. Xerox says that unlike other attendance management tools, which need to plug into IT infrastructure and can take weeks to implement, its GDPR-compliant SaaS offering is ready in just hours. The Team Availability App is available on the App Store and Google Play Store.
xerox.com

Tech trends: ICT in the UK today

Covid-19 powers cloud networking investment

IT leaders in EMEA have responded to the coronavirus crisis by investing more in cloud-based and AI-powered networking technologies, claims a new report from Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company.

Preparing for the post-pandemic workplace claims that in order to support a hybrid workplace, in which people move seamlessly between working on campus, at home and on the road, IT leaders are shifting away from CapEx investments in network infrastructure towards solutions consumed 'as a service'.

It predicts that the average proportion of IT services consumed via subscription will grow by 41% over the next two years, from 29% of the total today to 41% in 2022. Over the same period, the proportion of organisations that consume more than half of their IT solutions 'as a service' is expected to increase by approximately 74%.

Morten Illum, EMEA Vice President for Aruba, said: "The emergence of the hybrid workplace is pushing IT leaders to deliver a delicate balance between flexibility, security and affordability at the edge. The workplace as we knew it has significantly changed and to support new norms, such as social distancing and contactless experiences, office locations need to have the right technology in place to offer enterprise-level connectivity, security and support. All this must be done in an increasingly challenging financial environment which is spurring the trend for IT decision-makers to opt for the reduced risk and cost advantages offered by a subscription model."

IT decision-makers in EMEA say they plan to explore new subscription models for hardware/software (50%), networking (50%), managed services (51%) and financial leasing (29%).

Despite short-term postponements and cancellations of networking projects since the onset of Covid-19, reported by 74% and 30% of global respondents respectively, most IT decision-makers plan to increase or maintain their networking investments:

■ 38% plan to increase investment in cloud-based networking solutions that allow remote network management at large scale, with 45% maintaining the existing level and 15% scaling back;

■ 34% plan to increase investment in analytics and assurance to troubleshoot and fine-tune the network more efficiently, with 48% maintaining the existing level and 15% reducing it; and

■ 35% are planning to increase investment in AI-based networking technologies that automate repetitive tasks.

Illum added: "The pandemic has caused many organisations to rethink their IT infrastructure investment to build business models that are agile, adaptable and fit for purpose. While there may have been an initial negative impact on ongoing projects, it is encouraging to see that there are firm medium-term plans in place to invest in advancing network technologies enabled by more flexible models of consumption that limit up-front capital demands."
https://www.arubanetworks.com/solutions/technology-solutions/

Business in the dark when it comes to data

Well over half (60%) of UK businesses fear that data volumes are growing faster than their ability to keep up, claims Data-to-Everything Platform provider Splunk in its new report, *The Data Age Is Here. Are You Ready?*. Two-thirds (67%) of global respondents expect the quantity of data to increase by almost 500% over the next five years, driven by emerging technologies like Edge Computing, 5G, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial intelligence and machine learning, Augmented and virtual reality and blockchain. While data is seen as extremely or very valuable to business success (81%), innovation (75%) and cybersecurity (78%), two thirds report that at least 50% of their data is dark (i.e. untapped, unknown, unused) – 10% more than last year.

UK behind the pace in investment in automation

Almost half (46%) of UK businesses have increased their investment in automation since lockdown, according to new research from emerging technology consultants Emergence Partners, compared to 75% in the US, 68% in France and 67% in Germany.

Lack of in-house tech knowledge and skills (39%) and the absence of a strategic approach to technology buying (30%) remain the key sticking points for businesses globally, followed by the difficulty of navigating a 'complex and commoditised automation ecosystem'

(29%); lack of senior level buy-in (24%); outdated vendor licensing models (21%); and a lack of consultancy/support from vendors (20%).

David Poole, CEO of Emergence Partners, said: "Technology adoption is a truly non-negotiable feature of the modern workplace and a top priority for business. However, what's clear is that businesses feel somewhat lost when looking to invest, whether that's due to a lack of appropriate knowledge within their team or a sense of confusion when trying to navigate the vendor landscape." www.emergencehq.com

Cybersecurity top reason to switch MSP

Nine out of 10 SMBs (91%) would consider moving to a new IT service provider if it offered the 'right' cybersecurity solution. For the 700 decision-makers surveyed for the second annual *ConnectWise SMB State of Cybersecurity* report 'right' includes having confidence in an MSP's ability to respond to security incidents (68%) and having confidence in an MSP's ability to minimise damage or loss (58%). Just over half (52%) of respondents say they lack the in-house skills needed to deal with security issues, with 49% regarding cybersecurity expertise as an added benefit of working with an MSP. Yet, only 13% of SMBs say they regularly have cybersecurity-related conversations with their MSP.
www.connectwise.com

Cloud computing saves businesses

Half (51%) of UK business leaders say their shift to a cloud computing business model saved their company from collapse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research by Centrify, a provider of identity-centric privileged access management solutions, also reveals that 60% are planning to substantially increase their use of cloud-based IT following the pandemic.

Businesses to shrink office space to boost IT investment

More than half of UK businesses are planning to boost spending on digital skills training (56%) and IT infrastructure (53%) in 2021, in response to the coronavirus outbreak, claims managed IT service provider Transputec. Its survey of 200 decision-makers in medium and large organisations also reveals that 44% of businesses are planning to downsize office

New Partner Programmes

space and accelerate remote working in order to cut costs; 60% are planning to increase their use of digital collaboration tools to improve staff well-being and create more cohesive teams. Just under half (49%) expect to grow next year.

More training please

Training/education is the area in which distributors can best help resellers succeed in 'as-a-service' categories, cited by 55% in a survey of resellers for Context's 2020 *ChannelWatch* report. Marketing was in second place, cited by 40%. This year's report reveals an increase in the number of resellers selling cloud services in five categories – back-up, disaster recovery and storage (up to 70%, from 44% in 2019); infrastructure; security; web hosting and e-commerce; and business applications.
www.contextworld.com

Office lovers in flight to the suburbs

IWG, the operator of flexible workspace brands like Regus and Spaces, is bracing itself for a fundamental shift in the location of offices, after buoyant demand for flexible workspaces in the suburbs fuelled a 22% jump in sales during the summer, offsetting a 40% sales decline in London city centre locations.

In the three months from June to August, IWG's centres in Uxbridge and Luton both saw a 74% increase in demand for flexible office space, followed by Croydon (36%) and Harrow (25%).

The pattern in the North was similar, if not quite as extreme, with demand for spaces on the outskirts of cities like Manchester growing twice as fast as that for city centre locations (37% compared to 18%).

Although a reduction in commuting times is now a top priority for office workers, cited by 70% of Londoners, IWG claims that people still want to spend time at the office, pointing out that 57% of 2,000 workers surveyed want to return to the office when allowed, albeit not all the time – 46% say they would consider quitting their job if they were asked to return to the office five days a week.

Vestel Visual Solutions

Vestel Visual Solutions, a global manufacturer of professional display solutions, is supporting ambitious UK growth targets with a new VIP digital partner programme available via browser or app. A key component is the new partner portal giving channel partners easy access to stock availability/pricing information; direct access to a dedicated account manager; after-sales support; product & training videos; content & case studies; marketing assets; and sales incentives.
www.vestelvisualsolutions.com

Tintri intelligent infrastructure

Tintri, provider of intelligent infrastructure for enterprises, is following May's launch of its partner portal with a new channel partner programme offering deal registration, guaranteed margins, incentives and discounts; access to marketing-qualified leads; customised marketing resources – collateral, integrated campaigns and event support; training; and Tintri support for customer install base/support contracts. Since May, Tintri has seen a 550% increase in new partner registrations, with 80% of partners successfully closing new customer wins. Tintri Intelligent Infrastructure enables partners to reduce customers' storage management overhead by up to 95% and capital expenses by up to 50%.
https://tintri.com/partners/

J2 Global online fax

J2 Global, provider of the eFax online fax solution, has launched a tiered EMEA channel programme to enhance the support it provides telecoms, UCaas and managed services partners and system integrators. This includes access to services and resources to help partners generate new revenue opportunities while delivering online fax solutions to support customers' digital transformation initiatives. John Mannion, VP Alliances & Strategic Partnerships, eFax at J2 Global, said: "Now more than ever, customers are under pressure to improve their operations through cloud services that remove paper-heavy processes, improve collaboration and guarantee data security. Our eFax EMEA channel program helps valuable partners deliver online fax solutions that allow customers to empower their remote workforce, better manage their operations and meet these requirements."
https://efax.co.uk/channel

Smartway 2 workplace scheduling

Smartway2, a provider of workplace scheduling solutions that can also be used to automate social distancing, contact tracing, sanitation procedures and self-certification, has announced an expanded program for channel partners, referral partners, systems integrators and technology partners. The Smartway2 Workplace Transformation Partner Program is optimised for companies, consultants or advisors who already offer IT, AV and/or smart office design and want to transform the way clients interact with spaces, desks and 'items' in their workplace. Programme benefits include a Partner toolkit, training and support, a dedicated partner manager and revenue share.
https://smartway2.com/partners/

APC power supplies

Schneider Electric is giving European APC Channel Partners the opportunity to increase profit margins through new updates to the APC Channel Partner Program's Opportunity Registration Program (ORP). These provide new discounts, simpler processes and a diversified product/service offering. For example, changes to the Edge ORP will give partners new discounts for selling pre-integrated Alliance solutions including Cisco 'HyperFlex for the Edge' bundles.

StorageCraft storage management

StorageCraft has extended its channel partner program to include free 24/7 global support as a standard offering for all StorageCraft MSP subscription licenses, including ShadowProtect and the recently introduced ShadowXafe 4.0 and OneXafe Solo business continuity solutions. It says it has done this to help alleviate the pressure MSPs are under as they help businesses adapt their IT infrastructures to support distributed workforces due to COVID-19. According to Zendesk, average global support requests were up 19% in mid-July, compared to the same time last year.
storagecraft.com

Exertis supports Pro AV channel with £10 million of credit

Ian Aitken

Technology distributor Exertis is supporting Pro AV resellers during the coronavirus pandemic with the release of an additional £10 million of credit and the introduction of enhanced bundles for home working, huddle spaces, meeting rooms and boardrooms.

Ian Aitken, Director of Exertis Pro AV, said: "It's been a difficult time for the AV industry. Some installations of new equipment have been postponed or cancelled due to the economic uncertainty caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition, social distancing measures have prevented some projects from being fulfilled. We are certain that the industry will bounce back stronger than ever and to help our loyal customers over this difficult period, we are pleased to provide extra credit."

To help resellers make the most of opportunities in collaboration, Exertis already offers product bundles based on equipment from its ecosystem of AV and UC vendors, with options for Microsoft Teams Rooms, Zoom Rooms and Google Hangout Meet Suites.

These include: Exertis TO GO (home working); Exertis HUDDLE (small room/huddle space); Exertis MEET (medium room); and Exertis BOARD (large room).

It is now introducing more options to give customer greater choice. For example, Exertis TO GO home working bundles now offer everything from a basic start-up or desk-based proposition to kits for employees with flexible home/office requirements and an executive solution that incorporates top of the range equipment.

Exclusive Networks expands global reach

Exclusive Networks has expanded into Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and strengthened its existing Hong Kong operation with the acquisitions of two VADs – Veracomp in Poland and JJNET in Hong Kong.

Veracomp has offices in Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary and Bulgaria and an annual turnover of approximately €300m, 75% of which derives from cyber and cloud.

It has a customer base of more than 3,000 resellers and has many of the same vendor relationships as Exclusive Networks, including Fortinet, F5 Networks and Infoblox.

The Group also includes a Poland-based training company, Compendium, which offers over 1,000 vendor-authorised training courses.

The transaction, subject to regulatory approval and other conditions, is expected to close in the fourth quarter of 2020.

Exclusive Networks has also announced the acquisition of Hong Kong-based JJNET, which it plans to combine with its existing local office (opened in 2019) to create a cyber security infrastructure specialist focused on regional expansion into North East Asia.

The combined Exclusive Networks Hong Kong, with a headcount of 30, will report to Exclusive's APAC division based in Singapore.

The acquisition is Exclusive's first in the APAC region since the purchase of Transition Systems in 2016 and complements its operations in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand.
www.exclusive-networks.com

Giacom named fastest growing company in Yorkshire

Mike Wardell

Cloud services provider (CSP) Giacom has been identified as the fastest growing company in Yorkshire by regional B2B media site Insider.

The Hessle-based CSP leads the 2020 Insider Growth 100 List, with adjusted average annual growth of 207.4% over the last five years.

To be included on the list, companies must have experienced positive growth in the most recent year and had turnover of more than £1m at the first year of the 5-year assessment period.

Giacom has over 20 years' experience as an IT service provider, working with leading vendors across the globe to deliver the best cloud services to MSPs.

CEO Mike Wardell said: "We're so proud to be named the Fastest Growing Company in Yorkshire with Insider. Anything we can do to help our customers deliver world class solutions to improve their business, we'll try to do. We make sure we've got the right product that helps them fix a problem for their customers, as well as providing the right content, training and insight to help them educate their customers to ensure the solution fits the business. We don't ask for minimum commitments; there is no minimum contract length, so our customers can cancel at any point. We have a simple sign up process, and it's easy to get rapid assistance from experts on our help desk."

E92plus sets up new division

Independent VAD e92plus has created a new division, e92worksafe, to market the OneScreen GoSafe access control system in the UK.

Helping businesses and schools open up their premises in a Covid-secure fashion, OneScreen GoSafe combines body temperature scanning with facial recognition, advanced AI running on the latest Qualcomm Technologies, and free, unlimited help and training from live agents.

In less than one second, any visitor or member of staff can be scanned to ensure their temperature is safe, with optional facial recognition, mask checks and integration with door control systems and employee and visitor check-in systems. The centralised management platform can link to multiple scanners and consolidate data and attendance information.

Repeat success for DWS

Digital Wholesale Solutions (DWS) has won the O2 Distribution Partner of the Year Award for the second year running.

DWS helps the channel profit from convergence by delivering connectivity, voice, IP communications, cloud and hardware services over a highly automated digital platform with portals, wizards and APIs.

Leveraging high-level relationships and buying power with tier one telcos and IT vendors, DWS provides partners with a constantly evolving portfolio of digital infrastructure solutions.

CEO Terry O'Brien said: "This award is a true testament to the multiple areas of our business that engage with O2. I'm really proud of the dedication shown by our staff who work hard to support our partners every day, always putting them at the heart of our business, even during a global pandemic."

eir Business in partnership with Exclusive Networks

eir Business, the principal provider of fixed-line and mobile telecommunications services in Ireland, is offering new managed security services delivered in partnership with cybersecurity and cloud solutions distributor Exclusive Networks Ireland.

The services include a 24/7 Security Operations Centre (SOC) and SOC portal for monitoring/alerts, fast incidence response times, continual optimisation based on real-time intelligent data and high levels of resilience and redundancy.

Gerry Sheldrick, Director at Exclusive Networks Ireland, said: "Many organisations are choosing to outsource their security to a trusted partner, such as eir, that has the resources, expertise and agility needed to keep ahead of threats. eir's Managed Security Services will maintain the integrity and resilience of an organisation's operations, assets and data."
**business.eir.ie/corporate-contact-us/
www.exclusive-networks.com/ie/**

Hardware as a Service programme launched by Midwich

Midwich is introducing a new Hardware as a Service programme so that new and existing channel partners can offer the latest UC technology to customers without the requirement for a substantial upfront investment.

The programme will initially be available in the UK and Ireland, North America, Australia and New Zealand, with other regions to follow.

Its launch coincides with a worldwide distribution partnership with Poly, whose Zoom-certified video solutions will be available from Midwich on an appliance as a service basis.

Midwich Group Managing Director Stephen Fenby said: "The launch of the new Hardware as a Service programme, along with this exciting new global partnership with Poly, leaves us well positioned to offer the leading UC technology to our channel partners and their customers, without substantial upfront costs."

Working together
This month's round-up of new distribution agreements

Arrow Electronics has strengthened its DevOps offer with a pan-European distribution agreement for developer-first security from **Snyk**. Integrating into existing developer workflows and tools, Snyk builds security into the development process by identifying and reporting on vulnerabilities and providing automated fixes. Similar to the DevOps movement, developer-first security supports shared ownership of application security across Dev, Sec and Ops teams, helping to improve collaboration, speed of software delivery and enterprise security.
fiveyearsout.com

Specialist AV distributor **Midwich** has signed a global distribution agreement with **DTEN**, a manufacturer of collaboration solutions, including purpose-built 'Zoom Rooms' and 'Zoom for Home' appliances. The agreement builds on an existing relationship between Midwich company Starin Marketing and DTEN in the US. Midwich Group Commercial Director Stuart Mizon said: "We are pleased to have signed a global distribution agreement with DTEN. Midwich has seen a substantial increase in demand from our channel partners for DTEN products in North America, so to be able to extend this partnership around the globe is very exciting."
oliver.polhill@midwich.com
www.midwichgroupplc.com

Cloud services distributor **intY**, a ScanSource company, has added **Bitdefender** security solutions to its portfolio, including integrated endpoint protection, risk management and cybersecurity threat intelligence. Available via intY's CASCADE self-service portal and cloud marketplace, Bitdefender Cloud Security for MSPs provides a broad range of security offerings via a single management console, on a monthly subscription with no minimum contract terms. Marcus Ollenbuttel, intY Senior Vice President, Digital Distribution, said: "With more end users than ever before making the transition to cloud solutions, it is important they are also fully secure and protected. With Bitdefender, we are providing our partners with one of the most robust security solutions to meet the demand and adding even more value to our existing cloud security portfolio."
www.inty.com

Westcon plans to increase adoption of **Avaya Cloud Office** in the Irish market, after being named European Master Agent for the Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) platform. Westcon has already recruited a UK-wide partner base, supporting them with free sales and technical training, marketing and assistance and legacy user migration campaigns. It is now aiming to recruit and enable partners in Ireland. Westcon claims that the Master Agent opportunity for UCaaS is compelling for VARs and consultants of all types, not just those with voice backgrounds, as it requires only opportunity qualification and gives partners monthly commissions for the lifetime of the customer contract. Antony Byford, Managing Director, Westcon UK & Ireland, said: "We believe that Avaya Cloud Office presents a great opportunity to serve the advancing needs of the Irish market as it moves towards cloud-based UC and our on-boarding programme will make it easy and profitable for partners."
WestconComstor.com

ScanSource has become a European master agent for the **Zoom** suite of UCaaS solutions for video meetings, voice, webinars and chat on desktops, phones, mobile devices and conference room systems. The addition of Zoom Phone, Zoom Meetings, Zoom Rooms and Zoom Webinars, plus support, training and enablement programs, will help ScanSource Cloud Services partners reach more customers and develop their recurring revenue practice.
https://www.scansource.eu/en/technology/cloud.

**Telarus**, the international distributor of business cloud infrastructure and contact centre services, has started offering **Avaya Cloud Office** by RingCentral to its UK partner network. Avaya's new cloud-based unified communications as a service (UCaaS) delivers enterprise-grade calling, messaging, video conferencing, file sharing and collaboration to users wherever they are located. Gartner

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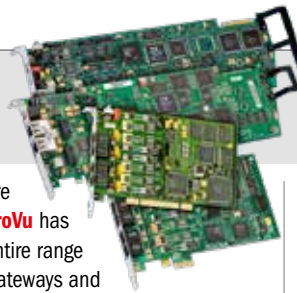
predicts that 90% of all new UC purchases will be cloud-based UCaaS by 2021, up from 50% in 2018. Shane Speakman, Vice President of Business Development – UCaaS, Telarus, said: "Having witnessed the strong uptake of Avaya Cloud Office in our Canadian market, we are excited to replicate this with our extensive partner network in the UK. With our portfolio of over 160 leading service providers and the best support organisation in the industry, we are well-positioned to accelerate end-customers' journey to the cloud amidst the current shift to new ways of work, as well as help our partners diversify and grow their businesses." **www.telarus.com**

Specialist European IoT distributor **Alliot Technologies** is bringing the **MultiTech** LoRaWAN gateway range to the UK and Ireland. Product Development Director Paul Hayes said: "MultiTech are renowned for their work within the LoRaWAN industry. As specialists in LoRaWAN technologies and edge-computing, the MultiTech LoRaWAN gateway range ticks all the boxes. We hope that this addition to our portfolio will help to bring even more IoT projects to life." **https://alliot.co.uk/ www.multitech.com/**

Paul Hayes,
Alliot Technologies

Hot on the heels of its Next Generation Solutions (NGS) go-to-market initiative, **Westcon** has signed a pan-European distribution agreement with **Menlo Security**, provider of the world's only Cloud Secure Web Gateway with an Isolation Core. This separates users and networks from the public internet through secure, low-latency connections to the web and SaaS applications and enables them to block 100% of all malware (e.g. exploits, ransomware and zero-day attacks) from websites, documents and emails. Daniel Hurel, Vice President of Westcon EMEA, Cyber Security & Next Gen Solutions (NGS), said: "Onboarding Menlo Security's solutions adds another string to our bow when it comes to offering our customers the best security platforms available on the market. With our ever evolving vendor portfolio, we're pleased to be able to help our partners across Europe strengthen their security offerings. With its unique isolation core that secures access to data and applications, Menlo Security's platform is a real industry first. Being built in the cloud, specifically for the cloud, it strengthens our Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) offering, an area that we continue to develop in-line with remote worker requirements and cloud transformation." **MenloSecurity.com WestconComstor.com**

Daniel Hurel,
Westcon EMEA

VoIP hardware distributor **ProVu** has added the entire range of Dialogic gateways and media boards to its portfolio under a new distribution agreement with **Sangoma**, which acquired Dialogic in 2018. Simon Horton, European Sales Director for Sangoma and Dialogic, said: "For over eight years, ProVu has been incredibly successful in growing sales and supporting Sangoma's growing customer base. I'm very proud of the relationship we have forged over the years and believe ProVu is extremely well equipped both technically and commercially to grow Dialogic sales throughout the UK." ProVu Managing Director Darren Garland added: "Dialogic's product offering has been sought after for many years in the UK, we are thrilled to have become an official UK distributor for these products and act as an accessible route to market for many existing and new partners throughout the UK." **www.provu.co.uk/dialogic.html**

Westcon is meeting growing demand for simplified network management with RUCKUS hardware, software and services from **CommScope**. RUCKUS products enable IT organisations to deploy, manage and grow complex networks that serve both IT and operational technology requirements. With fewer network elements to manage, RUCKUS networks simplify life for IT while delivering a reliably exceptional connectivity experience. The European distribution agreement will start in key markets, including the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Germany.

Business-class mobile communications solutions provider **Tango Networks** has appointed **UC-Reseller**, the voice and messaging solutions distributor and SIP Trunking provider, to distribute its Mobile-X service in the UK. Under the agreement, UC-Reseller will offer UK resellers a wholesale mobile service based on Tango Networks' Mobile-X solutions, under the brand name UC-Mobile. As part of this, it will integrate Mobile-X with commonly deployed PBXs and UC platforms, enabling resellers to offer their end users 'truly unified communications', including an extension on their mobile, without the use of an app or data; access to the strongest network signal at all times; and features such as presence, call recording, call transfer and presenting any CLI you choose. UC-Reseller says the service is perfect for communications to support distributed workforces and companies operating work-from-home, remote worker, teleworker, telecommuting and business continuity programs. Adam

Mathews, Senior UC-Solutions Specialist at UC-Reseller, said: "Providing fully integrated mobile within any UC platform presents numerous exciting opportunities for resellers, and allows our resellers to offer a 'truly unified communications' solution. Together, our solutions enable resellers to provide new offerings vitally needed in today's marketplace, such as mobile-enabled teleworking communications to support pandemic response and business continuity programs."

CMS Distribution has strengthened its gaming offering after being selected as one of two distributors in the UK & Ireland to supply the latest range of **NZXT** computer cases, components and accessories for the PC gaming market. David Scott, NZXT Regional Manager UK & Nordics, said: "NZXT have been looking for the right distributor to partner within the UK and Ireland for some time now. We are very happy to be working with CMS Distribution as we feel the positive feedback from our existing channel and the wide range of new territory they bring us are the stepping stones NZXT needs to grow. We have great ambitions for NZXT in the region and feel the right infrastructure is in place to become the leading No.1 brand in the UK and Ireland for Case, Coolers and many more products to come." **www.nzxt.com/**

Surveillance and security products distributor **DVS** is entering the home networking and IoT market after partnering with **TP-Link**, a global provider of consumer and business networking products. As well as delivering TP-Link's complete range of business-class Managed, Smart and Unmanaged switches and PoE switches to trade security customers, DVS is addressing the home networking and consumer IoT market with TP-Link smart home products, from plugs and bulbs to Deco Wi-Fi Routers and Wireless Range Extenders. The full suite of TP-Link products will enable customers to control their smart home simply and reliably from one provider and a single app. Gavin Dunleavy, Commercial Director at DVS, said: "We're super excited to be working with a multi-national and well established brand like TP-Link. Its range is comprehensive and covers everything from consumer-led smart home products to industrial and commercial networking equipment. Everything that TP-Link offers will be a great addition to the DVS portfolio and we look forward to building a strong relationship, specifically in the trade only security markets." **https://www.dvs.co.uk/**

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Operating System
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(ASUS recommends Windows 10 Pro for business)

Display
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Memory
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Weight
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Part code GX550

Elevate your game with 10th Gen Intel® Core™ i9 processor
Found at: https://www.asus.com/Laptops/ROG-Zephyrus-Duo-15/

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848 Group triples size of sales team

Stafford-based IT services provider 848 Group is taking on Covid-19 by taking on more staff.

Since March, it has recruited 12 new people for its Managed Services, Business Solutions and Sales departments, tripling the size of its sales team and enhancing its ability to meet the technology needs of its customer base.

In total, 848 Group has recruited three new starters in sales, four on the support desk, two project consultants, one enterprise architect, one lead Microsoft dynamics developer and one senior functional consultant.

Appointments of note include those of Account Director Andy Parr, who rejoins the company after an absence of seven months for family reasons; Business Central Consultant Gurnek Uppal, who has extensive experience of application design, integration and implementation and can provide a full CRM and ERP experience for 848 Group customers; and Solutions Architect Harikumar Nagappan, who has six Microsoft certifications under his belt and valuable experience in delivering end-to-end business critical solutions for transformation and migration programs.

848.co

Free hotel rooms

Andy Thompson

Nxcoms, the Manchester-based provider of VoIP, leased lines, broadband and mobile services, is inviting customers to share its third birthday celebrations with the offer of free hotel accommodation at some of Europe's top destinations.

The vouchers for a variety of three and four-star hotels last for up to 24 months and can be used at any time of the year, with the option to upgrade to all-inclusive for a reduced fee.

Nxcoms Managing Director Andy Thompson said: "This year we wanted to do something special for our clients, so we have arranged for free hotel accommodation at several popular European destinations that can be used at any time in the next two years."

The offer is open to all existing NXcoms clients and any new ones signed up this year.

Find out more at **nxcoms.co.uk**.

Global recognition for Midlands MSP

Infuse Technology has become one of only a handful of companies outside the US and Canada to be included on the *2020 Channel Futures SMB Hot 101* list of the world's best MSPs.

The Midlands-based MSP was ranked 68th based on its growth, long-term prospects and operational efficiency.

Managing Director Paul Howard said: "We are thrilled to be ranked amongst the world's best. It's an amazing achievement and is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team and the support of our brilliant clients. In the last 5 years, we have consistently achieved a significant hike in growth, which we believe is down to our friendly, honest and helpful approach to IT support, as well as the range and quality of services that we provide."

Infuse Technology, an accredited Microsoft Gold Competency Partner, provides a range of services, including cloud solutions, IT strategy and compliance.

www.infusetech.co.uk

Rebranded boxxe partners with Agilitas

Phil Doye

York-based tech company boxxe (pronounced 'boxxie'), previously known as SBL, has selected Agilitas to provide multi-vendor maintenance and professional services to customers in the public and private sectors.

Available as part of boxxe's Platform and Workplace technology offerings, the services include the provision of replacement parts and engineering resource for workplace devices, e.g. desktops and laptops, and for critical server, storage and networking infrastructure to an agreed SLA.

Agilitas was selected because its vendor-agnostic approach enables boxxe to consolidate multiple service contracts and SLAs on a single support contract for cost savings and reduced administration.

Launched on September 1, boxxe is the new name and identity for technology company SBL, which was acquired one year ago by Phil Doye, former majority owner of Kelway, which he sold to CDW.

As well as rebranding the technology provider, best known as an IT reseller to the public sector, Doye is extending its reach into the corporate market and ramping up investment in technology, industry services and customer-facing digital platforms.

Forecast to achieve revenues of over £200 million this financial year, boxxe offers digital transformation solutions in five technology hubs supported by strategic consultancy. These are the platform hub, workplace hub, security, hub, data hub and digital hub.

boxxe.com

Opus Trust strengthens Quadient relationship

Opus Trust Communications, an omni-channel customer communications specialist, has become the first UK company to join the Digital Now programme offered by Quadient (the new name for Neopost).

The partnership will give the Leicester-based company access to Quadient consultants, who can deliver tailored advice and training, enhancing its ability to deliver end-to-end, two-way digital communication solutions to improve the customer experience and drive down operational costs.

Opus Trust Communications CEO Tony Strong said: "Becoming the first UK company to join Quadient's Digital Now program will give us access to world-class digital communication expertise that will further strengthen our impressive in-house digital skillset."

Firstcom set for further acquisitions

Firstcom Europe has finalised a €29m loan facility with Kartesia that will enable it to make further acquisitions and to refinance existing debt provided by Beechbrook Capital, which will retain a shareholding in the group.

The cloud telecommunications provider has made eight acquisitions in the last six years, helping to increase its annual turnover to more than £35m. It currently operates in the UK, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Poland, and will be seeking additional acquisitions within this footprint.

www.firstcomeurope.com

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PTG launches closed loop IT refurbishment service

Leeds-based IT solutions firm pure technology group (PTG) has teamed up with S2S and launched a closed-loop refurbishment and recovery service for businesses' old laptops, phones and tablets.

The zeroC scheme gives customers the opportunity to cut costs and shrink their carbon footprint by forgoing the purchase of new devices in favour of refurbished ones that PTG forensically cleans and updates with new SSDs, long-life batteries and software, including Microsoft 365, Microsoft MIP, InTune and and Teams.

PTG claims that refurbishing and buying a laptop through the scheme saves the equivalent of 250kg of CO_2 and is 50% cheaper than buying a brand-new product. In addition, for every zeroC device purchased, PTG and S2S will plant a tree in the Amazon Rainforest.

PTG Group COO Cliff Fox said: "At its heart, zeroC is all about the salvaging and reuse of IT equipment. Keeping tech running in an enterprise for longer. zeroC offers a cost-effective and 'greener' alternative to simply buying new." **Zeroc.uk**

Record growth for REPL

Retail technology IT consultancy and technology firm REPL Group is planning to invest £2 million and create dozens of new jobs in 2020/21, following record results in 2019/20, including a 30% increase in revenue and a 55% rise in pre-tax profits.

REPL Group Executive Chairman Mike Callender said: "Despite the tough circumstances, this year's performance has been our best ever. By keeping our focus, we had our three best months during the pandemic and have been able to not only maintain job security for all our employees, but also to continue our recruitment drive and create new job opportunities as we further expand our team."

Over the last year, the workforce management, supply chain, customer experience and enterprise systems specialist has created more than 50 new jobs and aims to hire an additional 100 full-time employees before the end of this financial year, as part of a £2 million investment to maintain strong organic global growth.

Babble makes third acquisition this year

Matt Parker

Babble, the cloud comms, contact centre and cyber solutions firm backed by mid-market private equity investor LDC, has acquired its third company this year – Corporate Management Telecom Ltd (CMT).

Established in 1998 and based in Braintree, Essex, CMT provides business telephony and cloud-based services including voice, system hardware, IT and mobile to 500 customers. Since partnering with LDC in 2017, Babble has acquired Arden Group, Direct Response Plus, Diva Telecom, Lake Technologies and, now, CMT as part of an ambitious buy and build strategy.

CEO Matt Parker said: "This is a thrilling and defining time for Babble. As we continue to expand through acquiring high quality businesses, we are getting closer step by step towards our £100m revenue target. We focus on innovative and resilient businesses that are making interesting moves, and CMT fits perfectly within that category." **https://xtech-it.co.uk/**

Vickers take on cyber-security role

Ian Vickers, founder of cyber secure hybrid cloud platform METCloud, has been appointed to the board of the West Midlands Cyber Resilience Centre (WMCRC).

The fourth of 10 centres planned for the UK, WMCRC works with the police to give local businesses a dedicated point of contact for information and advice on cybercrime protection.

Vickers said: "The most effective way to combat the surge in cybercrime is through close collaboration with the government, NCSC, the police, businesses and academia. I believe the WMCRC is very well positioned to be the epicentre of this collaboration."

Ian Vickers has previously been Chairperson of the Birmingham Related Crime Steering Group; a board member of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership and the West Midlands Crime Partnership; and an active member of the CompTIA UK Executive Council.

NPS success for Stone Group

Stone Group has been re-appointed to the Welsh Government's National Procurement Service (NPS) IT Products and Services framework, winning a place on three lots – IT hardware to large customer organisations; IT hardware to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs); and IT solutions.

A partner of Lenovo, Philips, Logitech, Microsoft, HP, Cisco and other global technology brands, Stone Group has more than 25 years' experience in providing ICT solutions to business customers and the public sector.

It recently updated the laptop estate of Public Health England (PHE) and provided the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with a unified comms and collaboration solution for 280 meeting rooms across the UK.

Established in November 2013, NPS is open to public sector organisations throughout Wales, including local authorities, the Welsh Government, NHS, police and fire services and higher and further education establishments.

Timico renews 360 Business Law subscription

IT Managed Service Provider Timico has signed up to the 360 Business Law subscription service for a third consecutive year, as an alternative to employing an in-house lawyer and specialist third party legal support.

Alex Hendry, Head of Commercial at Timico, describes the service, which gives access to a network of 250 legal experts in 60 countries for a fixed monthly fee, as 'ideal' for the day-to-day running of the company's business.

He said: "Generally, when you want to use an external lawyer, you need the CFO to approve the cost of every piece of work. With the subscription service, we can rely on one external resource to support our legal needs without worrying about the costs racking up. It is great to be able to call upon the support of a highly qualified team you can trust at the drop of a hat."

On-demand access to multiple lawyers with specialist knowledge and experience is particularly useful given Timico's fluctuating workloads, acquisitions strategy and the size and complexity of some managed services contracts, including a recent multi-million-pound contract for secure SD-WAN across over 1,200 franchisee sites. **https://www.timico.com/ https://www.360businesslaw.com/**

Zoho breaks down barriers to productivity

Zoho Corporation claims to have removed the barriers between process apps like CRM and invoicing and productivity apps like mail and communications, with the launch of Zoho Workplace.

The single platform brings together nine collaboration, productivity and communications tools built on a common data model and unified through common search and AI across one dashboard, giving users context and continuity across apps, devices and modes of work.

The solution, centred around a fully featured business mail and cloud office suite, is already used by 2 million organisations and 15 million workers in 150 countries. More than 25% of new Zoho Workplace customers switch over from G Suite and Microsoft.

Sridhar Iyengar, MD of Zoho Europe, claims that Zoho Workplace is better than other solutions at streamlining complex processes like data migration, content creation, contextual collaboration and communication and search.

He said: "Businesses are not looking to solve a collaboration problem but a custom invoicing, sales enablement or support problem. Collaboration platforms need to facilitate better business outcomes, not just improve productivity. Workplace, through pre-built integrations with powerful business apps and context and continuity across applications, devices and departments, has the vision and functionality to meet the broad business needs of today."

New capabilities include custom workflows, deeper business context within communication tools, the ability to customise security and privacy within apps for enhanced audit and control and greater automation through AI that works across products.

Pricing starts at £2.40/user/month for the Standard version and £4.80/user/month for the Professional version. **https://www.zoho.com/workplace/**

Sridhar Iyengar

Vodafone calls on Trend Micro

Vodafone is partnering with Trend Micro to help protect business customers' laptops and desktop PCs from online security threats such as ransomware, out-of-date applications and phishing attacks.

Complementing Vodafone's existing specialist cyber security solutions, including Lookout Mobile Security and Vodafone Cloud backup, Trend Micro's Worry-Free suite – Worry-Free Services, Worry-Free Services Advanced and Worry-Free XDR – includes anti-ransomware protection, URL filtering, data protection, smart protection network and a cloud dashboard for centralised management, with the option to tailor services so you only pay for what you need. The service covers Windows, Mac, Android, and iOS devices, as well as Microsoft 365, G-Suite, Box, Dropbox and Salesforce cloud services. **www.vodafone.co.uk**
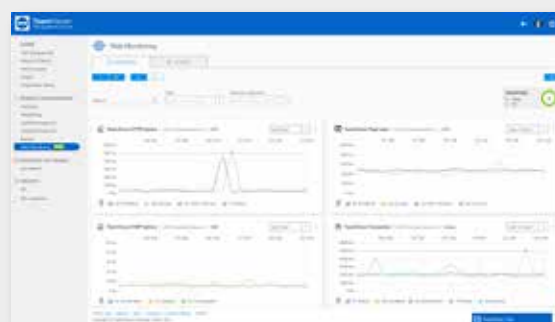

TeamViewer adds web monitoring

TeamViewer has added a web monitoring module to its remote monitoring and management solution, enabling website admins and operators of online shops to check website accessibility and remotely manage the server.

The TeamViewer Web Monitoring module checks whether websites and online shops are functioning smoothly through a combination of website accessibility tests, load time audits and a script-based module for carrying out automated test purchases or customer logins.

TeamViewer Director of Product Management Frank Ziarno said: "Companies of all sizes are dependent on a functioning website. Many have also integrated a customer login or web shop. It was therefore obvious to integrate website monitoring in addition to our functions such as workstation & server monitoring, patch management and virus protection." **www.teamviewer.com**

Twilio cloud communications

Cloud communications platform Twilio has expanded its Twilio Build partner network with the appointment of Deloitte Digital, part of Deloitte Consulting, as a premier global systems integrator (GSI) and Gold Tier Build Partner. The partnership will enable Deloitte to build customer engagement solutions for Global 2000 customers using Twilio's cloud communications platform, including Twilio Flex for contact centres. **https://build.twilio.com**

Three in a row for Brother

The Princess Royal Training Awards have commended Brother for the quality of its employee learning and development programme for the third year in a row.

Its Employee Engagement Toolkit, introduced in 2016, gives Brother's 171 employees device-agnostic access to more than 300 courses covering digital skills development, leadership development, sales training and soft skills training (e.g. wellbeing, stress management and adaptation to change).

Brother UK MD Phil Jones MBE said: "Learning and development is not only an ethical responsibility for leaders at every level; it's also a commercial necessity. People are at the heart of our sustained business success and it's fantastic that this has been recognised once again."

The Brother UK team based in Audenshaw, Manchester before social distancing was implemented.

...continued

Extreme Networks now a fully cloud-managed enterprise

On August 3, Extreme Networks achieved its goal of becoming a fully cloud-managed enterprise when, over a 24-hour period, it deployed the ExtremeCloud IQ end-to-end cloud management platform across 28 locations in 17 countries.

The project included onboarding hundreds of ExtremeWireless Wi-Fi 6 access points and fabric-enabled switches, giving IT immediate visibility of thousands of clients and endpoints.

Having a cloud-managed network in place will enable Extreme's IT team to optimise the day-to-day connectivity experience for employees, while analytics from the platform's unlimited data repository will give them the opportunity to improve processes across development, sales and operations teams.

Daniel Adam, Chief Information Officer at Extreme Networks, said: "We've planned to implement ExtremeCloud IQ to manage our globally distributed network since we released it last year. We proudly use the solutions we sell and with this deployment our employees, customers and partners will experience first-hand the value of unlimited data and the benefits of a centrally managed cloud networking platform and end-to-end cloud-managed network."

■ Extreme Networks has been identified as the fastest-growing cloud-managed networking vendor in Omdia's *2020 Cloud Managed Networking Report*, increasing its market share from 6% to 10%. It has the second highest revenue share in the market and the second highest number of devices managed.

Kodak Alaris updates INfuse

Kodak Alaris has enhanced its award-winning INfuse Smart Connected Scanning Solution with the addition of Windows Server 2019 support, three new flatbed accessories (passport, A4 and A3) and a card reader for access control and user authentication.

Launched last year, INfuse combines software and scanners from Kodak Alaris with a channel partner's application enabling end-users to onboard documents directly into a business process at the point they enter an organisation.

Applications already developed by ISVs and solution providers for use with INfuse include a pre-configured Scan@ Home Solution for remote workers from Xenith Intelligent Workplace Services and a 'scan to fax' solution offered by Integrated Document Technologies (IDT) in collaboration with Retarus and Kodak Alaris. **AlarisWorld.com**

And then there were 15

Vodafone has extended its Gigafast Broadband rollout to Birmingham, Bristol and Liverpool, following a commercial deal with Openreach. Added to its existing agreement with CityFibre, this takes to 15 the number of UK towns and cities in which Vodafone offers Gigabit speed broadband. The service will initially be available to 360,000 premises across the three cities, rising to more than 500,000 by mid-2021. Vodafone's full-fibre broadband uses all optical-fibre cables at every stage of the connection, giving average download speeds of 900Mbps, 14 times faster than the UK's average fixed broadband.

Kaseya IT Complete more complete than ever

Kaseya, a provider of IT infrastructure and security management solutions for MSPs and SMBs has announced new workflow integrations and product enhancements to the Kaseya IT Complete platform.

The integrated IT management platform brings together a number of solutions from Kaseya, Unitrends, RapidFire Tools, Spanning Cloud Apps, IT Glue and ID Agent, giving MSPs and SMBs everything they need to centrally manage, secure and backup IT.

This includes endpoint and network management; simple backup, business continuity and disaster recovery solutions; advanced threat detection and dark web monitoring; automated compliance assistance; and integrated IT documentation.

New updates include the integration of Kaseya VSA, Kaseya BMS and IT Glue workflows with the Kaseya Fusion app, which seamlessly incorporates ticketing, endpoint management, IT automation and IT documentation into a single, mobile application.

To find out more about this and other workflow integrations and product enhancements, please visit **www.kaseya.com**

■ Kaseya recently enhanced its IT Complete security offering with the acquisition of automated email security and phishing defence platform Graphus. This uses patented AI technology to defend Microsoft Office 365 and G Suite inboxes from email threats such as phishing, business email compromise, account takeover, identify spoofing, malware and ransomware. Kaseya CEO Fred Voccola said: "The acquisition of Graphus catapults IT Complete to the next level and secures Kaseya's position as the only comprehensive, tightly integrated, cost-effective platform in the industry to deliver all IT and security management needs for MSPs and SMBs in a single platform."

Gigaclear to recruit 120 engineers

Gigaclear has announced plans to hire 120 full-time engineers by the end of March 2021 as it ramps up its full-fibre network build capacity.

The rural broadband provider aims to increase its headcount by 20% between July 2020 and March 2021 to improve technical skills, boost build speed, increase responsiveness to customer demand and speed up maintenance.

Gigaclear Delivery Director Nathan Rundle said: "Investing in our in-house field engineering team will help us become more responsive and also drive standards by setting a benchmark for our contractors to match in terms of quality and customer experience."

Gigaclear builds and operates a full fibre, ultrafast broadband network in rural areas using a combination of commercial investment and subsidy under the Building Digital UK (BDUK) scheme. Established in 2010, its network now reaches more than 200 communities across central and southern England. **https://www.gigaclear.com/careers**

More links in the chain

Technology Reseller finds out about the growing opportunities offered by D-Link's expanding and diverse product range

If there's one thing we have learnt during the coronavirus pandemic, it is the importance of connectivity and the requirement for ever more robust and secure links between multiple sites – home, office and cloud.

With 35 years' experience in routers and switches, a fast expanding product range with 400 to 500 SKUs, a diverse customer base and an expanding partner community, networking specialist D-Link is well placed to capitalise on this demand.

"We have such a broad, high quality range and everybody wants more connectivity, so it is a good business to be in," claims Paul Routledge, UK and Ireland Country Manager for D-Link.

"We go from a £19.99 smart plug to a top-of-rack datacentre switch costing thousands of pounds, and have multiple products in between – IP surveillance cameras for professional and home use, indoors and outdoors; thermal cameras; WiFi for home use or business use. There are 400, maybe 500, SKUs in our price list."

As its product mix has continued to evolve, D-Link has become an increasingly interesting proposition for B2B resellers.

"I became country manager in 2014 and at that time we were very active in the B2C marketplace," explains Routledge. "We haven't abandoned B2C, but over the last six years we have looked at developing the B2B side of the business more, even entering new areas like industrial networking for security solutions, construction, warehousing. At the end of last year, we got involved in the CrossRail project, supplying industrial network devices for tunnelling machines, which is a world away from a £19.99 smart plug. There are so many areas of business that we touch."

The benefits of having a diverse product range were demonstrated during lockdown when D-Link experienced a surge in demand for its B2C products, such as 4G Wi-Fi dongles and PoE injectors, as office workers strengthened their home networks. Now that businesses are re-opening their offices and reinforcing their IT infrastructure, Routledge is anticipating a swing back to the company's B2B portfolio.

"In April we had a massive swing to B2C products, mainly 4G products but also PoE injectors that people were using to power the desk phones they took home, which we didn't expect. They were plugging them into routers and needed power. Since May, we have seen a swing back to B2B-type products, to our business-class WiFi solutions and switching solutions. As our partners and, more importantly, their customers have returned, we have moved back to 65% business solutions and 35% consumer solutions, which is the ideal mix for us."

Managed services appeal

D-Link sells its B2B solutions through a community of VIP Plus partners that benefit from training, incentives and rebates. Traditionally, it has concentrated on IT resellers, but with the launch of its Nuclias network management platform 18 months ago, Routledge says D-Link has become an attractive proposition for managed service providers (MSPs) as well.

"We are signing lots of partners from the MSP channel. We are also seeing some of our traditional VIP Plus partners move to more of a service model than the pure supply of goods. Nuclias offers itself really well to that type of business."

He adds that D-Link has gradually been expanding the range of devices that can be managed remotely via the Nuclias platform, from Wi-Fi networks 18 months ago, to cloud-managed switches and soon cameras. Ultimately, the aim is to be able to manage any device across all deployment options.

"There is a pure cloud solution, where we host the solution in the cloud; there is a software solution, so an MSP can host it themselves rather than using our hosted facility; there is also a Nuclias Connect Hub that allows the management piece to sit on the customer site. One of the by-lines we use in marketing is 'Your WiFi managed your way': on-site, managed by your provider or managed by us in the cloud."

New technologies

Nuclias is one of the key pillars on which D-Link plans to build future growth. Another, as Technical Pre-Sales Engineer Craig Kirby explains, is new technology, notably WiFi 6 and 5G.

Paul Routledge

"We are hitting 5G from two angles. One is portability, where we combine WiFi6 and 5G in one device to provide mobile connectivity as you move around and travel. The other is fail-over 5G connectivity, where we build 5G into a standard router with a firewall to protect your home network or business network so that should the ADSL/VDSL/fibre internet connection go down you can jump over to a 5G connection."

If you only know D-Link for its routers or its switches or its cameras or its wireless access points or its industrial networking, you are only looking at one link in the chain. The company has much else to discover and take advantage of, whether your market is consumer or B2B.

To find out more about becoming a D-Link partner, please visit **https://eu.dlink. com/uk/en/partner-login.**

...continued

TelcoSwitch recognised for rapid growth

Russell Lux

TelcoSwitch has been recognised as one of the UK's fastest growing private technology, media and telecoms (TMT) companies, coming in at number 25 on the latest *Sunday Times Sage Tech Track 100*, after doubling its year-on-year revenues for three consecutive years.

The list compiled by Fast Track and published in *The Sunday Times* each September ranks Britain's top 100 private TMT companies according to their sales growth over the last three years.

Russell Lux, founder and CEO of TelcoSwitch, said: "This is a very special moment for everyone at TelcoSwitch. We know how strong our platform is, both commercially and in terms of how we support our customers and partners. But to be recognised in such a prestigious list is a key milestone on our journey. In a market where there are a number of very big players, the fact that we're here, thriving in such uncertain times shows we have something that customers and partners really value."

TelcoSwitch delivers a scalable suite of communications and collaboration services through its CallSwitch hosted telephony platform, also available to channel partners as a fully customisable and white labelled platform, backed up by sales and technical certifications delivered through the TelcoSwitch Academy programme.

New look

Panasonic is introducing a new i-PRO logo to its security cameras in the European market, starting with the newly launched X-Series of network security cameras featuring built in AI capabilities and open SDK for third party application development. The centrepiece of the branding, the Nexus, is made up of a series of nodes representing the raw data that i-PRO solutions capture and which provide the insights on which customers base their actions.
https://business.panasonic.co.uk

Business continuity

Sungard Availability Services (Sungard AS) is helping UK businesses implement mixed on-site and remote working without compromising security, resilience or compliance by providing flexible access to self-contained suites in a seven-strong network of professional facilities outside major city hubs. Built with business continuity in mind, all sites have hardened infrastructure (with UPS and generators and recovery to an alternative location), PCs, telephones, specialist equipment (e.g. dealing room turrets) and, if required, meeting rooms and canteens.

ConnectWise targets cybersecurity

ConnectWise is helping technology solutions providers (TSPs) and MSPs improve their cybersecurity expertise with new courses and a two-day virtual conference.

Starting at the end of September, the ConnectWise Certify Advanced series of virtual courses will take place every month for a year, with three separate tracks for SECOPS, vCISOs and sales and the chance to interact with cybersecurity instructors and certification teams, industry leaders and like-minded service providers. The playbook and associated courses include a roadmap towards MSP+ certification.

On October 14-15, ConnectWise is holding the inaugural IT Nation Secure two-day virtual conference on cybersecurity, which is open to everyone but tailored for TSP employees responsible for delivering secure services to their clients. **ConnectWise.com**

Multi-cloud architecture for contact centres

Cloud customer experience and contact centre solutions provider Genesys is making it easier for organisations to build a multi-vendor ecosystem by unveiling the industry's first native multi-cloud architecture.

Developed for Genesys Engage, the architecture supports a variety of cloud platforms (e.g. Genesys Cloud, AWS, Google Cloud and Microsoft Azure), deployment models (private or public cloud, on-premises or hybrid) and management approaches (independently, by Genesys or by a partner such as Accenture, Aria Solutions, Avtex, BT, Cognizant, ConvergeOne, Infosys, NTT LTD or Orange Business Services).

Barry O'Sullivan, Executive Vice President and General Manager for Genesys Multicloud Solution, said: "For decades, businesses had to choose between a suite of applications from a single vendor or siloed best-of-breed systems, resulting in an administrative nightmare, high costs and inconsistent customer experiences. With our multi-cloud architecture, we're partnering with our customers to overcome this challenge. We're giving enterprises the ultimate freedom to customise and future-proof their contact centre technology and infrastructure so they can deliver unique experiences for every customer."

Organisations can move software applications between different clouds; utilise multiple providers to address varying geographic needs and data sovereignty requirements; and extend their core contact centre solution by integrating applications from other providers, such as voice and chatbots, workforce engagement management, voice and speech recognition.

Acquisitons

Xero/Waddle

Xero has announced the acquisition of Waddle, a cloud-based lending platform that helps small businesses access capital through invoice financing. Founded in Australia in 2014 and a Xero ecosystem partner since 2016, Waddle allows banks and fintechs to lend to small businesses by leveraging their accounting data and automating many of the manual processes involved in invoice financing.

Lifesize/Kaptivo

Video meetings company Lifesize has expanded its collaboration portfolio with the acquisition of Kaptivo, which connects traditional, physical whiteboards to modern collaboration tools so that participants can brainstorm, teach, plan and draw as if everyone was in the same room. Kaptivo pairs advanced image processing software that eliminates shadows and reflections on the whiteboard with a secure, cloud-based collaboration platform. Coinciding with the acquisition, Lifesize has launched a new Kaptivo-powered digital whiteboard application that provides enhanced capabilities for remote collaboration and instruction within Lifesize video meetings.
https://www.lifesize.com/en/advanced-collaboration

Hyland/Alfresco

Hot on the heels of its acquisition of Another Monday, provider of a feature-rich, end-to-end RPA software solution, content services provider Hyland has announced a definitive agreement to buy Alfresco. Headquartered in Boston, Alfresco has a cloud-native Digital Business Platform that delivers content services that connect, manage and protect organisations' most critical information. **Hyland.com**

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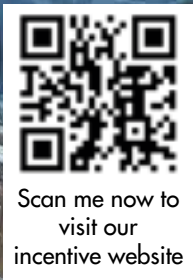
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Top billing

Intelligent Technologies comes to aid of CSPs and distributors with robust and powerful billing solution for cloud services

Simon Adams

When it comes to billing, there's no better proving ground than telecoms, with its vast array of rates, bundles, penalties for over-usage and other variables.

Now, a leader in the field, PRD Technologies (trading as Intelligent Technologies), is offering its services to an IT channel facing ever more complex billing requirements, as customers transition to consumption-based models for software, devices and cloud services, such as Microsoft Azure and other platform as a service (PaaS) offerings.

"We've been involved in telecoms for many years, but telecoms is plateauing and what we are really excited about now is the cloud consumption space. We see massive growth and potential in that area and have diversified to such an extent that our business plans are probably now more biased towards cloud providers than telcos," explains Intelligent Technologies Managing Director Simon Adams.

The Basingstoke-based company already works with a number of IT distributors, notably Westcoast, and is looking to develop relationships with other channel organisations that might benefit from its national, award-winning Intelligent Billing suite and bespoke development capabilities.

It also provides packaged billing solutions for resellers, CSPs and MSPs that have either not yet automated their billing processes or have done so but require greater flexibility than is typically provided by the billing components of popular IT management and MSP software suites.

Intelligent Technologies is well placed to satisfy the needs of both types of customer – those requiring bespoke development and those looking for packaged solutions – thanks to the capabilities it has built up over almost 30 years in billing.

Bespoke development
PRD was established in 1992 and originally concentrated on developing billing platforms to meet the complex needs of large providers like Energis Communications, for which it used to bill more than 80 million calls a day. In 2006, following an MBO, the new management changed direction to focus on 'out of the box' reseller billing packages, while retaining the ability to deliver bespoke solutions. For example, Intelligent Technologies does the billing for all of KPN, the Dutch telecoms provider's landline calls.

It was this capability that first attracted the interest of Westcoast.

"Westcoast found us about two and a half years ago," explains Adams. "They had a really complicated billing requirement that no other billing vendor they had spoken to could satisfy. We did a proof of concept and at the end of it their jaws dropped, and they said 'Wow, get on with it'.

"That was for Westcoast Cloud. They asked us to create all the APIs into their marketplace so they could bill their 600 or 700 partners. About once a month each partner gets a file with all their Westcoast data on it, including Microsoft CSP, Azure and Attached Services data. We process that data and automate everything."

Adams adds that distributors are attracted to Intelligent Billing because of its flexibility, whether they use it for cloud services, device-as-a-service or BOBO (billing on behalf of), where a distributor bills end customers and sends out invoices on behalf of resellers as a value-add service.

"They come to us purely because of the flexibility of our underlying technology. As long as they define their requirements, we can go away and add it to the core platform we've already got."

Packaged solutions
Customisation is a common requirement in billing, but there is also demand from resellers/MSPs for productised solutions that automate virtually the entire billing process, from collecting customer cloud consumption data to populating accounting/invoicing systems.

To meet this demand, Intelligent Technologies offers two versions of its Intelligent Billing suite.

"One starts at £125 a month and even that is feature-rich," explains Adams. "It comes with integrations into accounting systems and Direct Debit systems, a lovely user interface and reporting, and generates all the invoicing for customers, with their logos, so that they can manage everything themselves.

"Then, we have a more advanced Pro version that supports multiple distributors and data streams, so if someone uses distie A for one or more CSP products and Westcoast for something else, we can process the whole lot and convert it into one invoice. The Pro version is also multi-lingual, multi-currency and more automated, with more APIs."

Adams says these solutions are ideal for IT resellers that still waste three or four days every month billing manually.

"There are a lot of small resellers out there that don't have big budgets and have probably got into the habit of doing their billing over the weekend, using Excel spreadsheets. That's fine if you don't have loads of customers, but if you are ambitious and want to grow, it's not sustainable.

"Our objective is to go to resellers and say 'If you are spending three or four days a month on billing, we can eliminate 90% to 95% of that with an automated system'. The other benefits are that it is more accurate, and all that information can be integrated into accounting and direct debit systems, so there is no need for any duplication of entry."

Adams adds that while some people use the Intelligent Billing solution as a black box to collect and process consumable data and generate output for feeding into an accounting system, others use it for everything, including the sending out of invoices, and at the end of the month just export data into the accounting system for P&L balance sheet purposes.

However it is used, Adams has no doubt that Intelligent Billing is set to become an invaluable tool for distributors and CSPs as they struggle with the complexity of billing for PaaS, SaaS and DaaS. "We expect the distie and CSP space to really take off and are hoping to see multiple 100% growth between now and this time next year."

To find out more about how Intelligent Billing can help your business, please visit **www.intelligentbilling.com**

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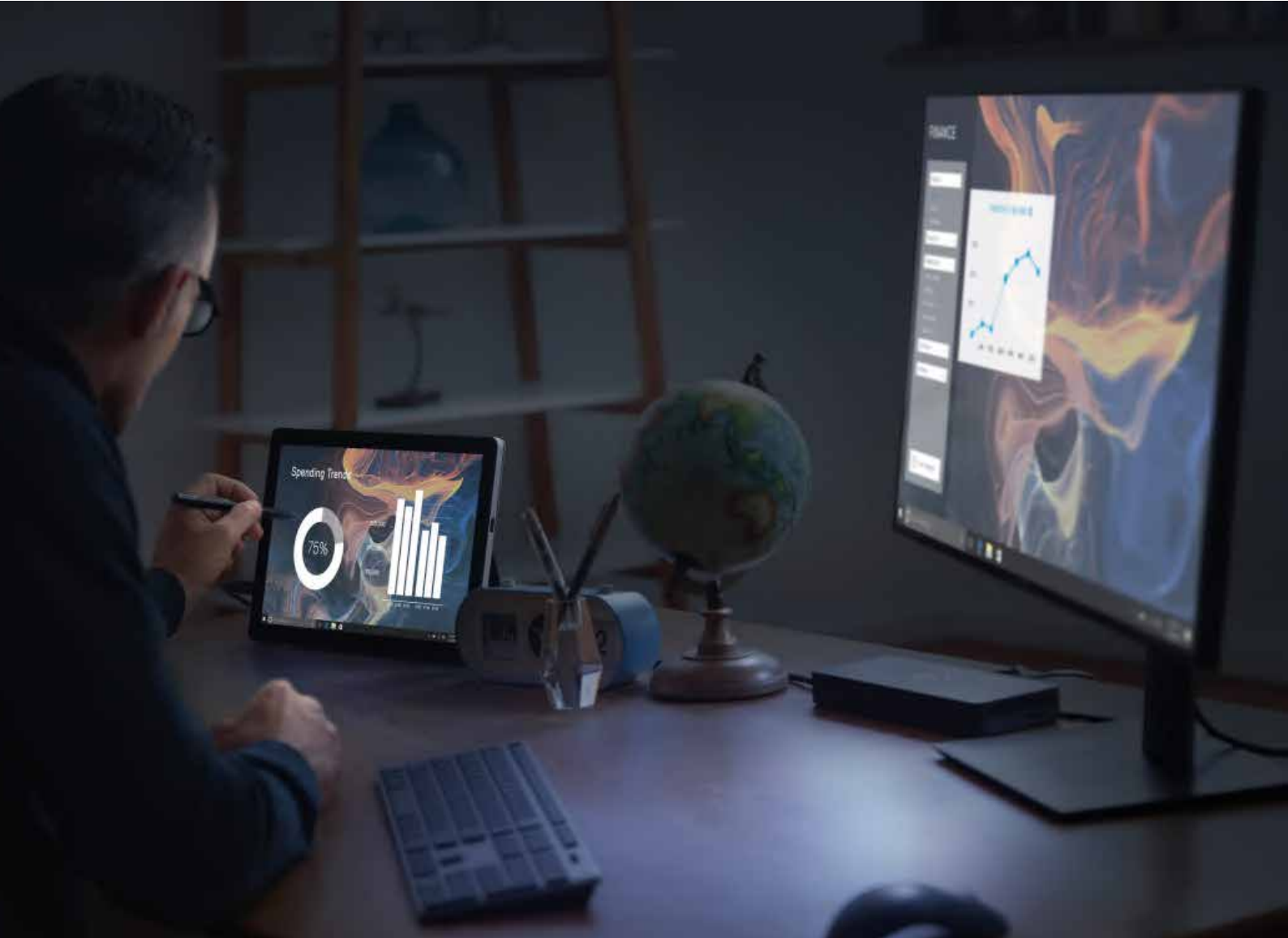
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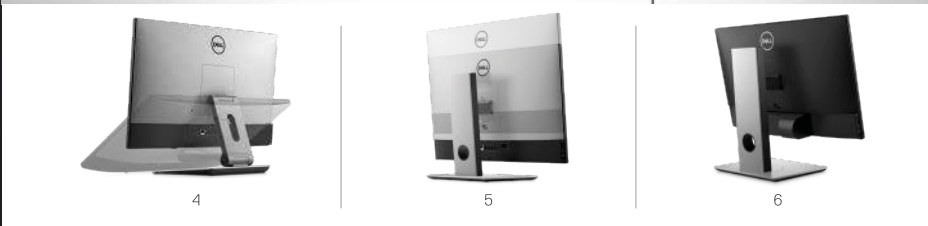
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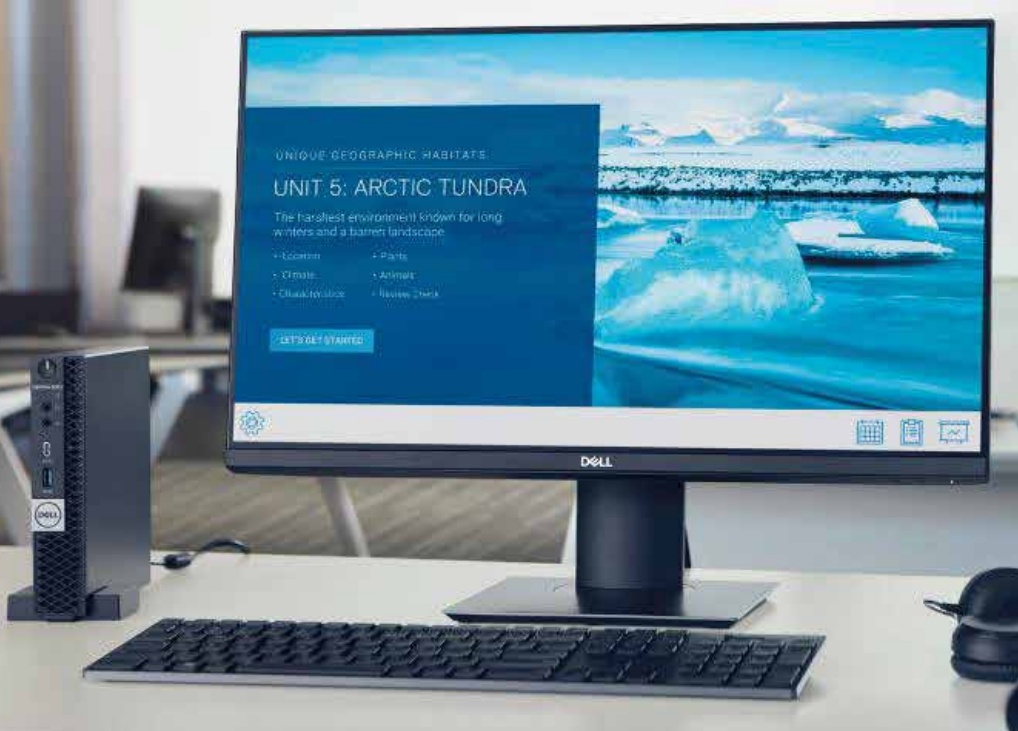
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6 Dell Pro Stereo Headset | UC350

Optimised to provide in-person call quality and certified for Microsoft Skype for Business, this headset comes with leatherette cushions that block out ambient noise and provide all day comfort.

Dell Pro Stereo Soundbar | AE515M (Not in Picture)

7 Dell Micro All-in-One Stand | MFS18

Small footprint mounting solution designed to adapt to your unique environment. Features cable management and full range monitor support with height adjustability, tilt, swivel and pivot functions.

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This All-in-One compact stand houses the OptiPlex Small Form Factor desktop and monitor in a small footprint. It features integrated cabling for monitor power and ethernet, cable management, and flexible viewing with height, tilt, swivel and pivot adjustability.

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OptiPlex Micro Dual VESA Mount with Adapter Bracket (Not in Picture)

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^ Shown with OptiPlex 7080 Micro

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Spend, spend, spend

Technology Reseller meets Andy Wilson, Head of Wholesale at CityFibre, to find out more about the company, its operations, its culture, its ambitions and why it is currently in the running for 11 separate industry awards for its network, marketing activities and channel support. As the title of our Business Basics series suggests – and our first question proves – no question is too basic to ask as we seek to discover more about the UK's third digital infrastructure platform

Technology Reseller (TR):
We hear a lot about full fibre roll-out. What exactly does that entail?

Andy Wilson, CityFibre (AW): Our roll-out programme is literally digging up the streets and laying in fresh fibre. We are very much a civils business in that sense. If you go into any city where we are putting in infrastructure, you will see CityFibre vans and contractors effectively building the network, digging new trenches and putting new ducting and new fibre in the ground. Rather than BT exchanges, we also have our own fibre exchanges spread around each of these cities to serve consumers and businesses, plus separate ones that our big carriers or local partners interconnect into.

TR: What are the challenges you face on that side of your business and are there things other parties like the Government could be doing to make things easier for you?

AW: There are two sets of challenges. In a construction project, you are always going to have physical challenges. Because you are digging up cities and towns and roads, you've got construction challenges and civils challenges and wayleave challenges, especially when you go to main highways and main throughways.

Then there are PR challenges. During lockdown, when it made sense for us to continue to lay fibre because people weren't on the roads or moving around towns, there were issues with local residents who thought we shouldn't be working. We reacted really quickly and did

Andrew Wilson

a really good PR campaign communicating the fact that we had full Government backing and were essentially key workers because DCMS and the Government see a better connected Britain as vital to our recovery. All of our staff had key workers vests and we erected noticeboards in each of our towns and cities to engage with local communities. When we started to PR properly, complaints dropped dramatically, and it ended up being really positive.

TR: You mention there not being vehicles and people on the street. Did your productivity go up during that period?

AW: There was a small lull in Scotland, where Nicola Sturgeon decided we weren't able to build, but in most cities in England productivity went up. Our productivity is rising month on month anyway, as part of our game plan. Our whole raison d'etre is to build quickly; we want to be quick at what we do so we can give the public and businesses what they need.

TR: Do you think we will hit the 2025 target for full fibre?

AW: 2025 is very do-able, yes. At the moment, we are fully financed to 66 cities with a £2.5 billion investment. But there is a lot more work we can do, and we are currently working on a number of other initiatives so you will probably see that number increase.

TR: I think you have already announced that you plan to increase your investment to £4 billion and roll out a full fibre infrastructure to 100 towns and cities, in the process helping to create an additional 10,000 jobs within your pool of network construction partners.

AW: That's right. We don't own the spades in the ground and are reliant on contractor relationships for the full fibre network roll-out. We couldn't scale fast enough without using third parties and civils companies that can go in and put more spades in the ground simultaneously. Between ourselves and BT Openreach, we are creating more demand in the jobs market and will continue to create more opportunities for people.

TR: How do you decide which towns and cities to include in your roll-out?

AW: It's all part of a business plan, as you'd imagine. We are funded by two of the largest infrastructure firms in the world (Antin Infrastructure Partners and Goldman Sachs) and that private investment hinges on a business plan with pre-defined cities based on the density of homes/ businesses and other factors.

For example, we decided not to go into London because it is already well covered, choosing instead to go into the likes of Leeds, Bristol, Nottingham and Derby – larger towns and cities that don't jump off the page as a first choice like Manchester or London but which have an absolute need for this infrastructure.

It is worth adding that when we go into a new city or into a city in which we had

an established business-focused network that we are now expanding, we take a whole city approach, which means building a network once for everyone in that city – residents and businesses. CityFibre doesn't just cherry pick certain parts of the city, which others have done in the past, but floods the whole city with full fibre. *(Ed – CityFibre has an existing Metro network in around 30 towns and cities in the UK today, offering full fibre ethernet services for partners to sell to businesses. At the same time, it is rolling out a 1Gbps Fibre to the Home network to an additional 36 towns and cities, as well as existing areas.)*

TR: That must be more expensive than cherry-picking.

AW: You're right, if you only look at one city in insolation. But if you blend the whole business case together, it makes sense to do it all.

From our CEO Greg Mesch down, CityFibre has a culture of genuinely wanting to make a difference, and to live by that belief system you need to commit in full. Greg has always maintained that he wants to make sure we are not just infilling but are delivering full fibre to everything from the macrocell site all the way to the carrier partners.

TR: Once you have built your infrastructure, how do you make money from it?

AW: It's a very well timed game; we are monetising the network even before it is built. We do big PSN (Public Services Network) public sector framework agreements, where we work with local authorities and councils to make it happen commercially for both parties. We know there is demand from a public sector perspective, so we work closely with most of the PSN contracts in the UK and are successful at it.

We are a channel-only business and off the back of that we work with key strategic partners nationally – big ISPs like TalkTalk and Vodafone – to deliver both consumer and business connections.

We also have a local programme. When we know which cities we are going to be in we go to the local partner community and say 'How do you want to grow your business with your customer base using full fibre'. It's a really nice message because it enables those small to medium-sized IT and telecoms resellers to get on the front foot. We are not live in Derby yet, but when we are, we will know who to onboard.

The fibre infrastructure in the UK is grossly under-developed and partners and consumers know that, so, if anything, it is a case of partners saying to us when will you be coming to our city, not the other way around. We are the white knights in that sense.

TR: What are resellers looking for and how does CityFibre differ from the competition. Is it just geographic availability or are there service elements as well?

AW: There are three things: geographic availability – are we available in areas where customers need connectivity?; the commercials – does our cost base give partners a differentiator?; and massive investment in systems and IT architecture to ensure that as we continue to scale our partners get an automated experience, so that it is easy for them to quote, order and track sales. That is a big mantra – it doesn't come overnight, but making sure we are easy to do business with is front and centre of our strategy.

TR: Where does Entanet, a CityFibre company fit into your go-to-market strategy?

AW: I have three routes to market: carrier and national – the big scale national players; a regional team that works with partners to roll out business locally; and then a Business Partners team – the result of our Entanet acquisition – offering on and off-net services. So, we do still sell BT Openreach and BT Wholesale and Virgin and Sky and TalkTalk services, because while our network is in build mode it makes sense to help partners win business in areas we are going into so that later, subject to the right commercials and the right agreements, they have a second opportunity.

...continued

TR: How do you measure your success?

AW: The business KPIs and metrics are very much hinged on numbers of businesses passed and numbers of consumers passed. It is all about ready for service (RFS) data, because that is the segue into commercialising your network. If you have very small numbers of RFS businesses and consumers, you won't sell a lot, so all of our efforts and our finances are hinged on building network, getting businesses and consumers ready for service and the IT stack. It's all about spend, spend, spend at the moment.

TR: How much do you collaborate with your competitors? There must be times when the industry presents a united front. Where does cooperation end and competition begin?

AW: Greg does sit alongside guys from Openreach, Virgin, TalkTalk and other larger providers at the DCMS when we are lobbying Government. One challenge for the entire industry is wayleave. Wayleave is an obstacle to us getting as much fibre in the ground as possible because you have third parties in the middle making decisions on whether you can or can't dig up that street or go into that building and how much it is going to cost.

For me, the right thing for the Government to do is make access more of an easement, a legal requirement, like we do for water, gas and electricity, because full fibre is so vital to the UK's economic recovery. My peers and competitors are all on the same page and we do work collaboratively on those big ticket issues.

Where the competition begins is in things like overbuild. None of us wants to be putting all this investment in the same place. If we all chase Derby or Bristol, then you are going to have a lot of disappointed towns and cities across the UK. We have been very open about where we are going, and it doesn't do anybody any good if Openreach decides to follow us or get there quicker. That said, you will always get an element of competition because people want to monetise things quickly and most of the areas we go into are lucrative for obvious reasons.

TR: Does DCMS control who has rights to a particular area?

AW: No, they don't currently dictate that, but there are conversations and recommendations and I am sure they advise and coordinate to support bills and programmes like the DCMS rural programme, looking at how to enhance coverage in the countryside and village locations.

With Covid, we have all become more regionalised. My small village is becoming more like a bustling town, and the town I live near is becoming a lot quieter because everyone is staying locally and shopping at the local farm shop or butcher. Village communities and small town communities are bustling and that is putting more demand on infrastructure in those rural areas.

So, it makes sense for us have a rural programme. We have just announced a trial in the villages of Hollins Green and Rixton off the back of Gigabit Broadband vouchers under the Government's Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme. We are doing that through the physical infrastructure access (PIA) route, using Openreach's existing cable ducts to deliver it. In the cities, in the main, our infrastructure build is based upon digging our own channels, but in some areas it makes sense to use existing cable ducts so that we don't have to dig up the road.

Our build programme evolves all the time to be as efficient as possible. If using third party infrastructure is the right thing to do in a particular location, we will do it. The game plan is not about the civils, but about ready for service. So, it's a question of looking at the most efficient way of doing it.

TR: Is 5G a threat or an opportunity?

AW: We are fully supportive of the 5G roll-out in terms of the mobile infrastructure – we recently announced a big deal with 3 and are working on a couple of other contracts. We don't see it as a replacement service for fibre to the premises. It will just form part of how we use connectivity. If we were going to switch over fully to 5G, demand would be too big for the infrastructure.

The important thing for someone like CityFibre is that the 5G roll-out needs a higher density deployment of small cells in a town or city. The fact that CityFibre has a full city approach allows us to enable so many more of those small sites in households, lamp posts, traffic lights, buildings. That's a key reason for the relationship with 3.

The other thing is backhaul. To be able to run a 5G network at such high capacity and higher speeds, you need the backhaul infrastructure to be in place. That is exactly what full fibre gives them.

TR: Is there anything that could make your working life easier?

AW: What would make my life easier from a head of sales perspective is more networks to sell. We have got a really clear plan and are building at an absolutely crazy pace, but, from my own personal perspective, my life would be easier if I had a completely built network in my hands. I want to sell more because the demand is there.

The timing is so good for the channel, with the copper switch-off by BT and new fibre infrastructure going into the ground. There is so much opportunity, whether that's 5G connectivity or FTTP direct into homes and businesses, that as a sales leader I just can't wait. Every time we release a new city, it means more opportunity for ourselves and more opportunity for our channel.

During Covid, we actually launched a new city, Plymouth, so we could send messages to our partners saying 'Great news guys; here's more opportunity and more people for you to talk to in this area with new connectivity and new infrastructure'. I felt really good about that. It's the gift that keeps giving in that sense.

Helping partners become bigger, better and more profitable

Vincent Disneur

In August, leading provider of billing software, Union Street Technologies, received investment from serial tech entrepreneur, Matthew Riley. As part of the investment, Union Street is merging with fellow billing provider, Aurora, creating an independent cloud-based billing and provisioning software business. Riley and Union Street's Vincent Disneur discuss what this means for the channel.

Matthew Riley

**Technology Reseller (TR):
What motivated this deal?**

Matthew Riley (MR): I see a significant opportunity in the channel for cloud-based billing and provisioning software. We estimate the number of channel players will continue to grow and when you include ICT partners into the mix the market sits at approximately 14,500 partners. The combination of Union Street's strong and historic profile and brand equity with Aurora's development muscle will add enormous value to the telco and IT resell markets. I've known and done business with Tony and Vincent for a long time and seen them take Union Street from strength to strength and that's going to continue.

TR: What's going to change at Union Street?

Vincent Disneur (VD): The most notable difference is the increased scale and capacity of our joint operations. Merging Union Street with Aurora creates a combined workforce of 200 personnel serving 800 channel partners that, collectively, use our solutions to bill circa to £2bn per annum.

Matthew is taking on the role of Chairman and has appointed me as Managing Director alongside Kevin O'Brien as Chief Finance Officer. Tony Cook, our previous owner, will remain as an advisor to the board.

Union Street is retaining its brand identity and will continue to supply its aBILLity billing software with technical support and associated services just as before. Aurora, bolstered with significant

new investment, will act as the company's development division, driving forward R&D for existing products whilst developing new innovations for the channel.

TR: How will this move benefit resellers in the IT Space?

VD: Technologies are increasingly converging and there's a growing desire among end users to work with one supplier for all IT and communications services. This presents a fantastic opportunity for MSPs and ICT resellers to expand their proposition to include communications services and many have already done so.

At the same time there are numerous technological changes impacting the market that present enormous growth opportunities. There's Blockchain, 5G, the move to all IP telephony, the list goes on and on. By combining our expertise, resources, and the best features of our software products, we can better assist ICT resellers and MSPs in capitalising on these and existing opportunities.

MR: We have the opportunity to digitally enhance the way the ICT channel not only bills its end user customers, but also how it provisions those services. Getting your bills out right first time, on time every time is the mantra and to do that you have to provision correctly and get the sales paperwork correct at entry. We believe we can revolutionise the way the channel gets its sales to bill process delivered. This means happy end user customers, which means you can get paid quicker and grow faster and that's what this business is about, helping you to grow your business.

Designed to Monetise ICT Services

Earlier this year, Union Street relaunched its market leading aBILLity billing platform with an all new web-based user interface.

Commenting on its release, Disneur said, "Built from the ground up, our developers seized the opportunity to completely reimagine the platform's look and feel. Consultations with users at every stage of development ensured that aBILLity's web client not only looks incredible, it also delivers a smooth and intuitive user journey. The result is a billing system that looks amazing, is highly efficient, provides the unrivalled capabilities aBILLity users have come to expect, and with all the added benefits inherent in a web application. Best of all, it consolidates billing for all services into a single invoice, optimising the end user experience.

"As a fully hosted SaaS solution, aBILLity offers multiple benefits including market leading performance, data security, and availability. There's no need to buy and maintain servers or to manage security, capacity, data backups or disaster recovery measures. Union Street takes care of everything, allowing you to focus on building your business without distraction."

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- **Scalable from start-up to enterprise**

TR: How has the ongoing pandemic affected your plans?

VD: There's been many lessons learned from the pandemic. We mobilised our teams to work from home within a few days which meant we could maintain service levels throughout without need to furlough any personnel. Other vendors have not weathered the crisis so well. Lockdown has provided time and space for many channel businesses to take a fresh look at their billing operations, whilst also exposing actual or potential vulnerabilities. The importance of choosing a vendor that can guarantee resilience and stability in uncertain times has become increasingly apparent.

TR: What's next for Union Street?

VD: This deal is about supporting ICT resellers and MSPs as they seize growth opportunities with innovative, reliable software that will be continuously updated and delivered with fantastic customer service. The objective is simple – to help partners become bigger, better, and more profitable.

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aBILLity Goes Mobile

In June, Union Street launched a new mobile app for its aBILLity billing platform. Available for IOS and Android, the aBILLity app can be downloaded from the App Store and Play Store respectively. The app has been designed to complement the core aBILLity platform by providing an overview of billing activities

Disneur explains the thinking behind its introduction, "During consultations with our user community, one thing that repeatedly came up was a desire for on demand access to high level billing information. Similar to how banking customers can use an app to quickly check the balance of their accounts and manage payees, we've developed our app to provide easy access to contact information, customer data, and management reporting that can give a snapshot of how billing operations are performing."

David J Siegel,
HighNet,
Managing Director

"We have had a long-term partnership with Union Street and for me the latest mobile app is one of the best things this business has rolled out in the last few years."

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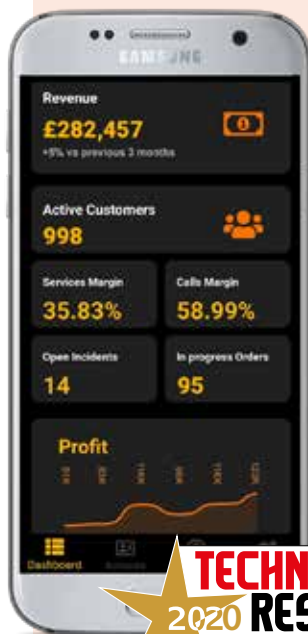
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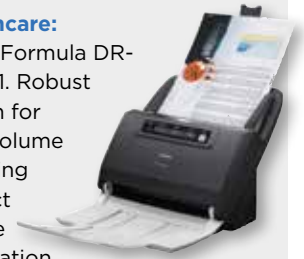
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Technology Live Virtual

Kingswood Tech Events has just announced the launch of Technology Live Virtual. Powered by *Technology Reseller* and our sister publication *PrintIT Reseller*, this one-of-a-kind virtual event for the IT, telecoms and print channel will run from early November until January 2021

Technology Live Virtual, featuring a large exhibition and an engaging series of seminars, has been created to complement Technology Live, a brand new event for the reseller community, which will take place at the Business Design Centre, London on March 11 2021.

Kingswood Tech Events Director Ethan White said: "We had to make the difficult, but right, decision to reschedule our inaugural Technology Live event and move the date from October this year to March 2021. However, we know from talking to many of our customers, partners, channel vendors and manufacturers that now more than ever as an industry we need to meet, connect, learn and keep up-to-date with the latest developments.

"We're providing that platform. Technology Live Virtual is a first-of-its kind virtual event for UK-based technology vendors. While the physical event is designed to bring together IT vendors, technology resellers and managed service providers in an informal direct environment, Technology Live Virtual will provide an online link to potential new customers."

With large gatherings and physical meet-ups curtailed for now, this unique event will give everyone in the ICT community – resellers/MSPs, distributors and vendors – the opportunity to virtually meet, exchange ideas and build mutually beneficial relationships. This is especially valuable at a time when technology convergence is opening up new opportunities for diversification, whether through organic portfolio expansion, acquisitions or partnerships with other channel companies.

Event Director Neil Trim added: "With technology playing such a crucial part in all our lives at the moment, whatever people's age, situation or profession, we're thrilled to launch Technology Live Virtual, our new interactive event platform for key technology integrators, suppliers and service providers. This unique event will provide an unparalleled opportunity for the industry to interact and collaborate, especially at a time when normal working patterns have been disrupted."

Reasons to get involved

■ **Boost brand visibility.** Populate your exhibition stand with video, web details, account manager contacts, an email form for direct contact, document downloads, product information and more.

■ **Showcase new products and services.** Exhibit new and best selling products and services on your own branded stand in the Technology Live Virtual Hall of your choice.

■ **Generate new leads.** As an exhibitor, you'll receive a full three months of data capture and new sales leads. Each visitor that clicks on your stand will have data captured as if they had been scanned in the traditional way.

■ **Speak directly to your target market.** Take advantage of the opportunity to join a round-table or one-on-one live seminar, which will be recorded and posted to all social media and websites to drive visitors.

■ **Place yourself in front of visitors looking for opportunities.** Connect with prospective customers and expand your database of sales leads.

■ **Expand your offering.** Learn about innovative new products, potential new revenue streams and build partnerships that will help you to diversify into new technology areas.

"Technology is renowned for its fast pace, and it's important that IT resellers, managed service providers and technology vendors from all areas stay ahead of the information curve. We're excited to work with many of the technology, print and IT channel's biggest brands to provide virtual visitors with a unique opportunity to view an unparalleled breadth of products and innovations across a three-month time period. We look forward to meeting you all virtually at Technology Live Virtual," White concluded.

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Going global

Technology Reseller talks to Tim Griffin about the importance of having global reach and specialist knowledge

Tim Griffin

Exertis is ushering in what Tim Griffin, Managing Director of parent company DCC Technology, describes as a new era in worldwide specialist distribution and single-source supply chain management by expanding its Exertis Pro AV brand across Europe, North America, Latin America, Australia and Asia.

This will see the company's AV businesses across the world converge under a specialist global brand name, a process that Exertis plans to apply to other specialisms in its portfolio over the coming years.

As the largest business unit within the distributor's global business, Exertis Pro AV was the obvious starting point for this new approach, which serves as a reminder of the company's ability to provide its network of manufacturer partners with a single platform to access a worldwide market of technology buyers.

The process effectively started in 2018, with the acquisition of Stampede and the merger of Stampede Europe and Medium under the Exertis Pro AV brand, which launched the same year, followed by the inclusion of Stampede Asia and Australia in 2019.

The Exertis Pro AV brand is now being extended to Stampede in the United States, Canada and Latin America and Exertis Go Connect, which operates in the Benelux region. Next year, COMM-TEC, which has locations in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal, and Keren in the Netherlands will come under the Exertis Pro AV umbrella.

Technology Reseller (TR) caught up with DCC Technology Managing Director Tim Griffin (TG) to find out more about the rationale for the new strategy.

The challenges that have evolved as a consequence of US-China relations pervade our industry, and we are having to work through those, like everyone else

TR: What are the benefits of this new global approach for Exertis, vendors and resellers?

TG: Obviously, part of it is about communication. Being able to articulate that we are one is a crucial part of the re-brand story and that applies to vendors and resellers – a number of which are global in our relationships with them – and also to their customers. Even the smallest reseller might have relatively small customers that could be tenants in several different geographies and need to leverage a network such as ours to truly delight their customers. The rationale of the brand is being able to communicate that capability across the supply chain.

Then, more important than that, is the substance behind the platform, which is really being able to provide a global platform that gives vendors access to a global community of AV resellers.

TR: You have announced that you plan to extend this approach to other technology areas. Please can you give me some idea of the time scale involved and the specialisms concerned.

TG: The Exertis Pro AV brand has been in existence for some time in the UK, and it's obviously an idea whose time has come through critical mass, I suppose, in terms of the acquisition journey we have been on around Pro AV and being able to stream all those businesses together.

If you look at our other specialisms: we have Exertis Enterprise, which is predominantly hubbed out of the UK but has a footprint across the Nordics, Germany, France and into Spain. That's a business we continue to expand and where we will look to make further acquisitions, as we will with all our specialisms. Then, in the consumer space there are a number areas that we believe are specialisms that our customers care about – and when I say customers I mean both manufacturers/

vendors and resellers/retailers.

We believe that the answer to the future world of distribution is specialism. It's about IP and subject matter expertise in those key areas of technology and route to market.

TR: Are some of the acquisitions you have made in areas other than Pro AV still operating under their old names and will you give them a common name at some point?

TG: If you think of Exertis as the umbrella brand, when we acquire a company we try to find a way of articulating the fact that they are part of the family as early as we possibly can without destroying the value of the brand equity they have built up over many years, which of course is what we are buying. So you tend to find a company becoming X Exertis or Exertis X almost immediately and then over time migrating either to Exertis, if they are the only entity in that geography, or an Exertis specialism as we look to evolve the branding of that specialism. There are a number of companies in the family that as yet haven't had Exertis specialism branding, but in time they will.

TR: Is this just a branding exercise or are there platforms and infrastructure supporting it?

TG: It's more than just branding. It's about the creation of a platform that enables us both to communicate and to execute the benefits of scale that we can bring to vendors and customers. Obviously, part of having a platform is that it allows us to plug in acquisitions faster than we would if we were just a loose collection of businesses. So, it's a crucial part of our journey in terms of operational excellence and delivering value to customers across the supply chain.

TR: What are some of the obstacles you have encountered in this process?

TG: I think data would be one. At the heart of our DNA is acquisition and being able to be good owners of businesses and enabling them to grow faster than they

exertis | PRO AV

would on their own. Every business comes with its own ERP, its own data systems and so on, and we are constantly acquiring, so being able to create a data lake as part of that platform, which people can plug into and which enables us to share practices across the group, has been a major project during my tenure here.

TR: Has the current climate, with Covid obviously but also political problems with China, affected the global roll out in any way?

TG: Addressing the Covid question first. I think most people recognise that there is no horizon point where it will all be better and so one has to adjust and manage the circumstances in which you find yourself. Obviously, it has had an impact; we have had businesses that have really thrived because changes in the social fabric or the way people use technology have played into their areas of specialism, but there have also been businesses that have had to morph their capabilities to adjust to the new landscape. The reality is there are always peaks and troughs in any business. One of the benefits of being diverse, as we are, is that it allows you to have top performers and those performing less well in the portfolio and still delight our shareholders.

Re: China. The challenges that have

evolved as a consequence of US-China relations pervade our industry, and we are having to work through those, like everyone else, both in terms of being a good partner to vendors and putting together solutions that recognise some of the limitations that have been created.

TR: Presumably with the recession and all the difficulties businesses are facing, there might be opportunities for you to acquire other businesses.

TG: You would like to think so. And, as you say, we are an acquirer. One of the challenges for any economically challenged business that is looking to be bought is that they might be in that position because they didn't have good business fundamentals and so might not necessarily be a good business to acquire. It is a mixed bag, but, clearly, we look at this as an opportunity and we will step into it appropriately.

TR: Does your notion of a new era of global distribution run counter to current trends, such as the rise in nationalism and protectionism?

TG: I think you are right that those are long-term trends, but even some smaller businesses and enterprises are probably going to have three or four geographies outside their home territory, and to deliver

a solution they need a partner who has that reach. So that is an aspect of 'global' that we see continuing; while there may be a preference to buy locally, there is still a requirement to reach globally.

The point we are making with the announcement is around specialisms, articulating how our scale enables us to be specialists that can invest in IP and subject matter experts who can enable our reseller communities to do more and leverage that specialism to a greater extent. That's really the point about global specialists, which is where we think the future lies.

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The thrill of the new

Weston extends appeal of Westcon Next Generation Solutions with new go-to-market strategy

Antony Byford

WestconComstor is confident of attracting new resellers and boosting sales for existing ones, following the launch of an EMEA go-to-market strategy for the Westcon Next Generation Solutions (NGS) business unit.

Established last September, Westcon NGS provides channel partners with expertise and resources relating to 'born in the cloud' vendors like Certes Networks, Netskope, Ping Identity, Titus, Menlo Security, Vectra, Skybox Security, Firemon, Sumo Logic and Cyberreason.

Antony Byford, Managing Director of Westcon UK & Ireland, told *Technology Reseller* that Westcon had set up Westcon NGS to help cybersecurity partners find out about and exploit opportunities in new, fast growing technologies that he believes will generate the lion's share of future growth.

"Since 2017, the security market has grown by just under $50 billion globally. That growth has come from the usual legacy vendors across all technology areas, from endpoint to core, to perimeter, to cloud. Over the next three years, the market is forecast to grow by another $64 billion to just under $250 billion, but that growth is not going to mirror the last three years; it is going to come from net new vendors, with net new technologies because people's needs in 2023 won't be the same as they were six years previously," he said.

There will still be big demand for traditional firewall or anti-virus products, but the technologies enjoying greatest growth will be things like Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR), projected to more than double in value from $1 billion to $2.2 billion over the next couple of years; Managed SOCs, forecast to grow to $40 billion at a CAGR of more than

30% – three times that of the overall security market; and SASE.

These technologies, according to Byford, are all about recurring revenue streams – "cloud native subscription technologies, where it is not just about deploying a solution and going back three years later to sell a renewal or an upgrade, but constant recurring revenue".

"Because there are so many new technologies and new brands and new needs in the marketplace, it is a minefield for the channel to understand: where do they start: what do they do; what's their investment plan; how do they find opportunities; who do they talk to. We have built the NGS team to help partners understand the needs of the marketplace and where the revenue opportunities are and to enable, educate and even provide leads."

He adds that a big opportunity right now is in combating the surge in phishing attacks that according to some estimates will be the trigger for 90% of all breaches.

"Businesses are training staff in how to identify a phishing attack and how to respond to one i.e. not clicking on that, not doing this, not doing that. But businesses need to take more responsibility than that. They need to look at technology first and then supplement that with training to make individuals fully aware of the risks. Some of the technologies we have in NGS support that."

Go-to-market strategy

In July, Westcon expanded the capabilities of NGS with a new EMEA Go-To-Market initiative designed to help Westcon partners address a broad array of security challenges using NGS technologies on their own or in conjunction with Westcon's

existing vendor portfolio, including Infoblox, Palo Alto, F5, Trend Micro, Check Point, Pulse Secure, Symantec, NetScout.

To illustrate the potential for up-selling and cross-selling other Westcon solutions, Westcon has created a 16-square grid with the four NGS solution pillars on the horizontal axis (Zero Trust Access, IoT/OT Security, Next Generation SOC and Secure Cloud/DevOps) and Westcon's four key technology areas on the vertical axis (network, infrastructure, identity, applications & data).

"Across that grid of 16 boxes, we cover 33 different areas, because within each box there might be one, two or possibly three areas of technology," Byford explained. "Someone like Palo Alto Networks will cover 6 or 7 different boxes, but it won't cover all of them. Bringing in these other technologies supplements what they are doing and helps sell that solution because we can cover the gaps.

"The whole premise of what we are trying to do is to offer solutions, not just technology. The security landscape is about ecosystems; it is not just about covering an endpoint or covering the core or covering cloud; there are other parts of security people need to consider that they may not have thought about before."

Channel partners themselves don't have the resources or time to research new vendors that might fill this gap, which is where Westcon's seven-strong NGS team comes in. It has done the legwork and the due diligence to identify around 10 best-of-breed vendors that have good potential for growth or alliances with existing vendors.

"We'll work with a vendor, we'll assess how good they are, what the analysts are saying, where the growth will come from. We'll do temp checks with trusted partners and then we'll go live with them."

Byford says that the NGS EMEA go-to-market strategy has been well received by existing cybersecurity partners and he is confident that it will also generate interest amongst Westcon's UC and networking partners, who are increasingly having security conversations with customers, as well as channel organisations that are new to Westcon's books.

"I absolutely expect us to bring new faces to the business that we haven't spoken to before as the market starts to see this go-to-market come alive," he said.
WestconComstor.com

Time to raise your standards

Partners Cambium Networks and Nuvias argue that resellers should be embracing the opportunities presented by Wi-Fi 6

Nuvias and wireless connectivity specialist Cambium Networks are encouraging resellers to speak to customers about upgrading their wireless networks to take advantage of the benefits offered by the new Wi-Fi 6 standard.

Cambium Networks, originally spun-out of Motorola Solutions in 2011, has a broad wireless portfolio, from in-building solutions to point-to-point and point to multipoint technologies that can be used to replace long distance fibre connections.

In August 2019, a couple of months after its IPO on Nasdaq, Cambium Networks strengthened its wireless offering for enterprises with the purchase on Xirrus Wi-Fi products and cloud services from Riverbed Technology.

Alex Chartres, Group Business Manager for Riverbed at Nuvias, points out that this range is now available from Nuvias in its entirety.

"We have an AP at the low end for home office users all the way up to a solution that would light up a football stadium or very large conference with huge numbers of people in high density pockets. Cambium is a great vendor from that point of view, because you can take one offering to market and meet all of your customers' needs," he said.

Marc Jackson, Regional Technical Manager at Cambium Networks for the UK, Ireland and Nordics, adds that Cambium Networks products are application-aware, simple to operate via a cloud-based system and have the industry's lowest total cost of ownership.

In the case of the company's two new Wi-Fi 6 wireless access points, average cost savings over a five-year period could be as high as 29.8% or 42% depending on the model.

The new standard

Wi-Fi 6, or 802.11ax, builds on the performance improvements of Wi-Fi 5, notably higher data rates, by giving better efficiency and, through that, higher density and a further boost to data rates. In addition, a new feature that allows multiple APs to reuse the same frequencies future-proofs a network by ensuring performance continues to improve as older laptops, smartphones and other devices are replaced by 802.11ax compliant equipment.

While performance improvements will vary from application to application, Jackson says that Wi-Fi 6 provides a great opportunity for resellers to start conversations with customers about upgrading their networks – especially now when, with so many people working from home, network downtime is likely to be less of an issue.

This matters because wireless network upgrades are never as simple as taking down one access point (AP) and putting up another, but will usually involve the deployment of additional APs to accommodate the extra traffic brought about by trends like BYOD, which has increased the number of devices requiring wireless connectivity in offices, educational establishments and other workplaces.

"Also, about five years ago, you probably had a laptop with an RJ45 socket. Most laptops now don't have an RJ45, so they rely more and more on Wi-Fi. Devices are also getting smaller and thinner and have aluminium cases so you need a slightly stronger signal to connect," explained Jackson.

Chartres adds that the need to make offices Covid-secure has had an impact too. "A lot of enterprise networks were not designed to be Wi-Fi only. If you go into an office, you see a lot of docking stations around the place, all connected to the wired network. With restrictions around social distancing, we are seeing offices having to redesign their seating plans and, where they are not able to reposition someone's docking station or desk where

More and more new devices like the Portege X30L-G support Wi-Fi 6

structured cabling is available, it puts extra pressure on the wireless network that wasn't part of the original design when that network was installed."

While practical considerations like these are likely to increase demand for wireless networks that are competitive with cabled network environments in terms of speed and performance, he suggests that interest is also likely to be stoked by the emergence of new hardware devices.

"The Wi-Fi vendors have got their Wi-Fi 6 solutions out nice and early and we are now starting to see device manufacturers catch up. While current iPhones don't have Wi-Fi 6, we expect the next crop of Apple devices will. And as devices catch up there will be more demand for people to have access to wireless networks that can operate at the best possible speeds."

Jackson added: "If an SMB is looking at a hardware refresh for laptops, what is the wireless card in those laptops going to be? If they do get a laptop that has Wi-Fi 6 but are only connecting to a Wi-Fi 5 network, they are not getting its full benefit. At that point the reseller can say 'Why don't you put in a new wireless network that will give you higher data rates'."

And once they have done that and people can get onto Wi-Fi faster, there is a case for them also to upgrade their LAN by putting in multi-gigabit switch ports.

As Jackson says: "It's all about future-proofing."

View from the Channel

J700 Group

Jonathan and Deon Cundliffe

J700 Group is a Lancashire-based managed IT solutions provider, helping businesses across the North-West and beyond to achieve a competitive edge through advanced technology.

Offering managed IT services, IT support, cloud solutions, telecoms, web design and SEO, J700 Group is run by husband-and-wife team Jonathan and Deon Cundliffe.

Jonathan, who has 25 years' experience in the industry, founded J700 Group in 2015 after spotting a gap in the market for a customer-centric managed IT service provider.

Along with wife Deon, who joined the team as Commercial Director in 2018, Jonathan has secured a number of major contracts in the entertainment, grocery and electrical sectors, seeing turnover rise to a six-figure sum.

Technology Reseller asked him for his view from the channel.

Technology Reseller (TR): How's business; better or worse than 12 months ago? And how confident are you about the future?
Jonathan Cundliffe (JC): Business is great – and growing. It's definitely better than it was 12 months ago and we're very confident about the future, thanks to things we're putting in place now and have been working on for the past few months.

TR: In what areas are you experiencing strongest demand?
JC: All of them! With so many people working from home in recent months, we've seen cloud services, VoIP telephony and Microsoft 365 going silly. But we've always experienced high demand in those areas.

We've also noticed a lot of enquiries for website development, as many people have set up new businesses during lockdown.

TR: Where is business proving most difficult?
JC: Finding enough hours in the day! I was out helping a client at 8pm last night; a normal day ends at midnight; and most weekends involve work, too. But it's great to be busy – I prefer it this way!

TR: How have you changed/are you changing business operations to exploit new opportunities?
JC: We've re-evaluated and streamlined our internal processes, which is already having a positive impact. We've also hired a PR company to work with us on promoting some of the great work we've been doing.

Since we started out five years ago, we've never lost a customer, so we know our service is unrivalled. We're now focusing on different ways of marketing ourselves.

TR: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing channel businesses today?
JC: Recruiting the right people. As a business, we're very driven and constantly pushing forward, and we want people with the same mindset who will stay focused, fit in with our company ethos and succeed.

TR: Could vendors and distributors do more to help partners overcome these challenges? And if so, what?
JC: Some people have used lockdown as an excuse not to deliver on time. But that's not an excuse I can use to my customers and it can compromise our ability to deliver the service levels we pride ourselves on.

When we all step up and support each other, everything runs more smoothly.

TR: Are customers becoming more demanding, and if so, in what ways?
JC: I wouldn't call it demanding as such, but customers are definitely more switched on to technology and how it can help them. As a result, they see the advantages of what we can do for their business and want more from us. It's positive for us when they understand what we can achieve and have an appetite to take it further.

TR: If you could change one aspect of your job, what would it be and why?
JC: I'd retire!

Jokes aside, I actually love my job and wouldn't be doing it if I didn't.

I've been working in technology for 25 years and I thrive on the pressure. My To Do lists never seem to end, but I wouldn't have it any other way – other than wishing for more hours in the day!

https://j700group.co.uk

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Are you a platform thinker?

Over the years, platformisation has become the go-to tool for market disruptors. It connects key players – customers, business partners, suppliers and regulators – across ecosystems, enabling organisations and businesses to exchange information/products and integrate resources/services, giving them greater analytical and data insights, resulting in faster growth. Here, Gibson Nascimento from API specialist Sensedia explains how platformisation works and outlines how to build an ecosystem that gives users greater agility and resilience

Gibson
Nascimento

Platformisation, or building a marketplace where transactions happen, with software providing the communication and data-sharing tools and Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) connecting them, has been given a huge boost by broadband and the Internet of Things (IoT). People, devices and companies are connected constantly, while analytical technology provides those all-important user insights.

Platformisation allows stakeholders, such as partners and customers, to share data and processes, expand their digital capabilities, merge services/business models, co-create products, develop new marketing opportunities and increase customer participation and profits. It facilitates event monitoring and trend identification, orchestrates resources and triggers co-ordinated actions among ecosystem participants.

American marketing author, consultant and professor, Philip Kotler, says 'Competition is no longer between independent companies; it's between business ecosystems that compete with one another to obtain the best customer service and lower costs'.

Platformisation, however, is only beneficial to business leaders who are platform thinkers. And this requires a change in the thought process from:
■ Resource provision to resource orchestration;
■ Internal optimisation to external interaction; and
■ Client-centric values to valuing the ecosystem as a whole.

The theory works in practice when a flexible and programmatic IT system, running an event-driven platform with service-based (microservice) architecture is in place. It must also be capable of supporting legacy system integration (alongside new technologies), dynamic offers, omnichannel experiences and orchestrated actions.

Platform strategies

Platform thinkers who are confident their IT can transform their digital business must decide what they want the platform to do. Gartner identifies four platform strategies that are not mutually exclusive and which all have different degrees of openness e.g. internal, restricted or open API use. These are:
■ Collaboration – to enable new ways for ecosystem partners to integrate and collaborate;
■ Orchestration – to enable ecosystem partners to share resources and processes;
■ Matching – to pair up those who offer particular services with those who demand them; and
■ Creation – to enable partners to create their own apps, products/services, capabilities and business models.

Industrial firm Caterpillar has various platform strategies far removed from the linear format associated with its sector: Cat Connect is an IoT platform for dealers to help client teams be more productive while keeping operators safe; Uptake is a collaboration platform that uses algorithms to analyse mass data on IoT platforms, detect issues and prevent unplanned downtime; and the CAT Rental Store connects people who own and want to rent equipment left idle.

Platform basics

Platform success hinges upon three fundamentals: connection, gravity and flow.

Connection is about the ease with which others can connect to the platform to share data and services. Apple, for example, provides developers with its underlying operating system and code libraries; YouTube has a hosting infrastructure for creators; and Wikipedia has tools that enable writers to collaborate on articles.

Gravity is about how well the platform attracts participants, providers and consumers; platform builders should pay attention to the design of incentives, reputation systems and pricing models.

Flow is about how well the platform stimulates the flow of value and co-creation among ecosystem participants.

The glue

APIs are intrinsic platform elements and often described as the glue that holds everything together. An API Management system reduces complexity, governs the platform, gives integration agility and opportunities to repurpose components and develop new business models within the ecosystem.

These agile and scalable connectors communicate between internal services, client applications, analytical applications, cloud technologies, IoT devices and the external partner ecosystem. They also apply control and security mechanisms.

APIs make it possible to distribute data/services through new channels (different interfaces and IoT devices), offering omnichannel experiences. They quickly transform data/services into new products and expand existing offers/market products with different forms of monetisation.

They develop new event-driven IT architecture, using microservices and mesh apps to encourage greater agility, component reuse, decoupling, flexibility and responsiveness. In addition to facilitating new business models, APIs enable new technologies to become service providers (e.g. integrating AI with legacy systems) and create innovation initiatives, such as hackathons and joint partner/start-up projects.

In this increasingly competitive world, businesses that are not ready to move to a platform strategy must at least imitate platform thinkers: create more agile IT environments; connect to partners in ecosystems; and focus on the value it gives them.

Gibson Nascimento, based in Dublin, has over 14 years' software development, agile methodology and architecture experience and is Head of Solutions, EMEA at API management platform provider Sensedia. He is an expert in Application Programming Interfaces, supporting multiple industries including retail, pharma, health insurance and banking. With offices in Brazil, Peru and the UK, Sensedia is recognised as 'visionary' in Gartner's Magic Quadrant and as a 'strong performer' by Forrester Wave.
www.sensedia.com

Redstor's new automated portal enables MSPs to
secure margin-rich, repeatable revenue with just a few clicks

Click and collect

Following a recent decision to become a channel-only business, Redstor, a SaaS provider of cloud data management solutions, has introduced an automated self-service portal that makes it quicker and easier for MSPs to deploy backup and recovery, disaster recovery and archiving solutions and to manage their customers' on-prem and cloud data, including Microsoft 365 and G-Suite.

The Redstor Marketplace, representing a seven-figure investment – the biggest non-product investment made by the company outside its acquisition of Attix5, is based on AppDirect's multi-channel digital commerce engine and is designed to provide a smarter way of buying all Redstor products and managing customer relationships.

Redstor Chief Product Officer James Griffin said: "If someone has a data management problem to solve and they are speaking to their partner of choice about it, why should it take weeks and months before that partner can solve that problem for the customer?

"It seems it is very difficult to create an entire digital experience where it still feels personal, where a partner on the phone to a customer is able to fulfil the customer's need and have them using that product by the end of that phone call; and where the partner is able to log into that product and have oversight of the customers they provision and access a library of training content and marketing content that allows them to be really self-sufficient and scale. That's what we think of as a smarter way."

Griffin found what he was looking for in the AppDirect platform and within a matter of months had created a beta version of the marketplace.

"We assembled a team in Redstor, signed the contract on December 31 and deployed the platform to a beta group of 10

James Griffin

partners in the first week of April. We then customised and changed the experience to the point where we are now ready to unleash it on existing partners," he said.

Faster business

For Griffin, the main benefits of the Redstor Marketplace are its speed, execution and ability to scale, all of which can help a partner stand out from the competition.

"If a customer phones and says I need to back up G Suite because I didn't realise it wasn't protected by Google, it takes no more than two or three minutes for that customer to be protected. That is a huge benefit for the partner, and it gives them control as well. It gives visibility over all customers and their team, so they can see who's doing what with which customers."

It is also, suggests Griffin, very easy for resellers to sign up and use.

"A reseller comes to the website, fills in a form and triggers an email for simple sign-up. To create an account, they enter some basic details. We use two factor authentication, so they have to put in a telephone number to receive a text message for verification. They can then log in as a partner of Redstor's.

"There are two sections: one is the reseller's account; and the other is where

the reseller can add and manage customers. When they add a customer a purchase button appears – all Redstor products are available to purchase, with the option of a free trial or a paid product. When you place the order, the customer receives an email to log into product and, if you choose to, you can talk them through set up."

Bruce McKnight, IT consultant at Baseline Data Services, one of the first MSPs to make use of the portal, backs up Griffin's claims about its ease of use.

He said: "For any business onboarding customers in their thousands, there has to be automation. What Redstor is doing is a game-changer. The Redstor Marketplace has been transformational in helping us to fully digitise our business operations. This will revolutionise the way we onboard customers, allowing us to scale more quickly than ever. This is an ideal solution for the new normal we all now find ourselves in, truly fit-for-purpose for today's MSP."

In addition to its Marketplace, Redstor has launched a new partner programme offering discounted buy prices and full sales, marketing and technical support as it seeks to broaden its customer base.

"There are some new product innovations that are really designed to take us into new parts of the market and we want to encourage new partners to help us, so there is a partner acquisition piece and we also have a partner enablement team to work with existing partners," explained Griffin.

"We have a two-pronged approach: attract more partners and work those who want to grow with Redstor."
www.redstor.com

To find out about some of the product innovations mentioned by James Griffin, read our interview with him in the next issue of Technology Reseller.

All-in-one automated portal

Use the Redstor Marketplace to:
- support a wide range of environments and applications, including Microsoft 365 and G Suite
- scale rapidly and infinitely as demand changes, without the need for hardware
- manage a customer's entire data estate from anywhere
- take complete control of onboarding, provisioning and billing in a platform built for multi-tenancy, without having to rely on vendor support
- automate backup and recovery, archiving and DR with a single, web-based control centre
- drive margin-rich, repeatable revenue streams

I couldn't do my job without...

Anna Downes is the Co-founder and CEO of Video Sherpa, a video production software platform that empowers people and businesses to create their own video content in-house. At the core of Video Sherpa is belief in the power of video as an incredible communication tool. The Video Sherpa platform gives organisations a user-friendly way to film, edit, share and manage all their own, unique video content, transforming their communications, training and social media engagement campaigns. Here, she lists the five things she couldn't do her job without


Anna Downes

1 Beats Headphones

Whether I am editing video content, giving an online demo, checking in with our remote team or just listening to some music, my headphones are always within arm's reach. I'm a bit old school and haven't yet embraced the new trend for airpods or ear buds, still preferring the soft cushioning of large headphones. I just love my Beats, which were a gift a few years ago and are still going strong.

2 Zoom
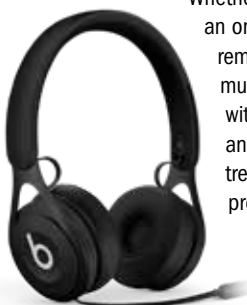
Zoom has been a critically important tool for our company since long before the Covid-19 lockdown forced us all to work remotely. We use it constantly to give product demos to customers all over the world, host webinars, deliver online training for clients etc. I tried other options, and we do use Microsoft Teams for our internal daily conversations, but I find Zoom extremely reliable, with superior picture quality, which is particularly important for us when demonstrating a video tool.

3 Apple Pay

Like many people I rarely use cash these days and find myself ordering online more than ever before, so the ease and simplicity of Apple Pay on my iPhone is

a godsend. Probably too convenient for those late night online splurges if I am honest!

4 Online Newspapers

I believe in supporting good journalism by paying for it and I subscribe to a couple of online newspapers, which is so much more practical, convenient and cheaper than buying print editions. 2020 has thrown everything at us and it is easy to get overwhelmed by all the noise. Following trusted, experienced journalists and getting alternative views from different sources is helpful in getting a more complete picture of what is going on in society, in business, in politics, everywhere.

5 Video Sherpa

We know how tricky and time-consuming it can be to create good quality video content in-house, without having to bring in a professional videographer every time. So we set out to solve this problem and built our own platform – Video Sherpa. It goes without saying that we use Video Sherpa to create all our own video content and everyone on the team uses it daily, creating product tutorials, training videos, customer testimonials and social media content. It really has simplified our entire process significantly, and we've seen a huge increase in our customer engagement and sales as a result
www.videosherpa.com

A bright future

Record growth for IT specialist plotting a £10 million sales surge

Following a record-breaking year in which revenues are expected to rise by 25% to £5 million, fast growing IT support and supply specialist Blue Orange is now planning to double its turnover through a combination of organic growth and acquisitions.

The Lancashire-based business specialises in remote and on-site IT services, as well as the supply of hardware to businesses, schools and colleges throughout Lancashire and beyond.

It currently services around 100 clients from its Adlington HQ – a former bank, complete with walk-in safe. Many customers have been with the business since it was founded 13 years ago, attracted by Blue Orange's ethos of integrity, honesty and agility.

Managing Director David Silous-Holt has been careful to retain these qualities during a period of rapid growth.

"Four years ago, turnover was around £1m. We reached £4.2m last year and it could have gone higher, but we want to focus on more than just revenue. Customer satisfaction followed by longevity and profit are much more important," he said.

To that end, Blue Orange has ploughed all profits back into the business over the last three years. This has enabled it to invest in new systems, such as a client management system that monitors 3,000 devices 24/7; five new vehicles for the company fleet; a major rebrand 18 months ago; and additional staff, including three new engineers just before lockdown.

Silous-Holt points out that these investments have served the company well during lockdown and the worst recession

David Silous-Holt

in recent memory.

"There's no doubt that Covid had an impact on our Q1, but we actually grew our profit in the height of the pandemic, which is an amazing achievement, thanks mainly to recurring revenue. I'm sure things are getting back to normal. We had a storming July and August and it's not unrealistic for us to hit £10m turnover in the coming years based on sustained and profitable growth."

In order to achieve this he is planning further expansion of the company's 30-strong workforce (including sub-contractors) and also looking at acquisitions that will enable Blue Orange to evolve its offering in line with key trends and customer requirements, such as cloud-based IT as a service.

Silous-Holt added: "We've worked hard to create the right culture for our staff and customers and we're about 95% of the way down that journey in terms of our vision."

Focus on education

As thousands of North West school children make a welcome return to the classroom and technology continues to inspire new ways of learning, David Silous-Holt warns that slow broadband and limited expertise, combined with unreliable and even unnecessary platforms, have left some establishments bottom of the technology class.

"When I first became involved in this sector four years ago, I was a little surprised at what I found," he said. "In some cases, IT was so bad in primary schools, and it wasn't always due to a lack of expenditure. On too many occasions, schools were being sold the wrong kit, whether it was not fit for purpose or a powerful enterprise level system that wasn't required and was a waste of money."

He made it his crusade to make a difference, however big or small, and to ensure that clients in the education sector, such as Hugh Baird College and GLF Trust, benefit from developments in cloud-based technologies, from phone systems to Artificial Intelligence.

Blue Orange is now one of a select group of suppliers that make-up the HP for Education trade-in programme, which offers special pricing, trade-In rewards and educational solutions to deliver even more value from HP technology investments.

Now in its eighth year, HP for Education has already given back several million pounds to educational establishments, and is continuing this year with an expanded and improved programme, including an even greater focus on applying HP technology to make a measurable impact in learning environments.

People

Trolle takes the reins at Exclusive Networks

Jesper Trolle has been made CEO of Exclusive Networks, replacing company founder Olivier Breittmayer, who will become a non-executive Board member as part of the company's planned succession strategy. Trolle joins the specialist distributor for cybersecurity and cloud solutions from ECS Arrow Electronics, where he was President of the Americas. Trolle will work alongside company founder Breittmayer for the next three months to ensure a smooth transition. Trolle has spent over 28 years in the IT industry, the last 15 with Arrow, following its acquisition of DNS Denmark, which had previously acquired Next Denmark A/S, set up by Trolle in 2001.
www.exclusive-networks.com

FluidOne recruits CRO as it targets 300% revenue growth

Former G3 Comms CEO **James Arnold-Roberts** has joined FluidOne in the newly created role of Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) as the award-winning network aggregator targets a 300% increase in revenue over the next five-years through a combination of organic growth and targeted acquisitions. As well as leading the FluidOne sales and marketing teams, Arnold-Roberts will be responsible for developing a cohesive strategy for growth, product diversification and cross-sale opportunities. He will work alongside executive directors Russell Horton (CEO), Chris Rogers (Co-Founder and COO) and Hemant Patel (CFO). FluidOne, which already meets the connectivity needs of hundreds of business customers and 200 managed service partners, is building on its position as a network aggregator by adding IT Services, UC and Advanced Security to its existing portfolio. This will enable it to offer customers an end-to-end service for secure single sign on, data integration, connectivity, cloud and end point security.   www.fluidone.com

IntraLAN promotion for Tim King

Tim King, previously Cloud Sales Manager at IntraLAN, has been promoted to Sales Director to lead the IT managed service provider's growing business development team and support its customers as they embrace digital transformation, adopt cloud services and align their technology investments with remote working. Established in 1995, IntraLAN provides

Jesper Trolle, Exclusive Networks

Andrew Wilson, J700

James Arnold-Roberts, FluidOne

Mark Wilkinson, The Data Lab

Eurolink Connect's new recruits

Tim King, IntraLAN

a range of IT services, including business continuity, cybersecurity, mobile services and a dedicated broadband network.
www.intralan.co.uk

New Business Development Manager for J700

East Lancashire IT specialist J700 Group has appointed **Andrew Wilson** as Business Development Manager with responsibility for bringing new clients on board and promoting the firm's services across the north-west. He said: "My role with J700 Group is to build a new pipeline of business. They've had a steady stream of regular new business organically or via recommendations and referrals and are now looking to proactively push for further growth. I'll be concentrating on developing a sales team and spreading the word about the fantastic range of IT, cloud computing and web services J700 Group can offer to businesses."
https://j700group.co.uk

Mark Wilkinson joins The Data Lab

The Data Lab, Scotland's innovation centre for data and AI, has appointed a new Head of Business Development as it continues in its mission to help the country maximise value from data. Tasked with identifying future strategic funding opportunities and spearheading collaborations with partners in industry, the public sector and academia, **Mark Wilkinson** will lead a team of executives located across hubs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. He joins The Data Lab from Teradata, where he led a multi-disciplinary team tasked with delivering business outcomes for customers through use of data intelligence. Prior to joining Teradata, Mark worked with Experian in multiple leadership roles.

Eurolink Connect increases headcount to support growth

Gloucestershire-based connectivity and communication provider Eurolink Connect has recruited three new staff members and restructured internally to cope with growing demand for its services, including hosted IT solutions & support, mobiles & mobile broadband, broadband connectivity, telephone lines & calls, telephone systems, inbound services, network services and SIP Trunking. The new recruits are **Gail Darrett**, who joins the New Business Sales team; IT/network technician **Jack White**; and Senior comms network technician **Antony Davis**. In addition, Eurolink has reassigned a number of roles internally. **Jamie Lewis**

has been made Commercial Manager, responsible for the sales and support teams, while **Noel Hoskins** has taken up the new role of Technical Design & Delivery Manager. He will be supported by senior IT technician **Ryland Milne** and the newly appointed Davis.

Mark Ash recruited by Konica Minolta

Konica Minolta Business Solutions (UK) has recruited **Mark Ash** to head up its Professional Print and Industrial Print Division in the UK. Ash has extensive experience of the print and IT managed services sectors in the UK, having previously been responsible for the UK print business of Samsung (before its acquisition by HP) and, most recently, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer at Altodigital (now part of Xerox). Konica Minolta Business Solutions (UK) Ltd is headquartered in Basildon, Essex and employs more than 750 people in 10 offices across the UK.
www.konicaminolta.co.uk

Solutionize Global appoints new Sales Director

Yorkshire and London-based technology solutions and services provider Solutionize Global has recruited **John Hayes-Warren** as Sales Director, as the company continues

John Hayes-Warren

to take on more staff and expand its geographic footprint with the imminent opening of a third office. CEO and founder David Bentley aims to increase turnover from £42 million to £150 million over the next three years. Previously a sales leader at IT MSP Claranet and Vodafone, Hayes-Warren has 25 years' experience in telecommunications, unified communications, software solutions and hybrid cloud infrastructure.

New EMEA VP at Netwrix

Cybersecurity company Netwrix has appointed **Simon Pearce** to transform its sales and channel strategy in the EMEA and APAC regions. As Vice President of EMEA and APAC, Pearce will be responsible for creating closer relationships with customers and building a consistent programme of sales and channel enablement and partner marketing. Pearce has over 20 years' experience in software and cybersecurity companies, including spells at Quest Software, Smarsh, Quorum and Nearmap.
www.netwrix.com

Shull appointed Poly CEO

Poly has appointed ex-TiVo Corporation and The Weather Channel CEO **Dave Shull** as President, Chief Executive Officer and member of the company's Board of Directors. He succeeds Robert Hagerty, who has served as Interim Chief Executive Officer since February 2020. Hagerty will continue in his role as Chairman of the Board and resume his position on the Nominating and Governance and Strategy committees and Chair of the Mergers and Acquisitions Committee. Marv Tseu will continue in his role as Vice Chairman of the Board. **www.Poly.com**

Dagher returns to Dell

Rola Dagher

After three years as president of Cisco Systems Canada, **Rola Dagher** is returning to Dell Technologies as its new global channel chief, succeeding Joyce Mullen, who is leaving Dell after a 21-year career at the company. Reporting to Bill Scannell, Dell Technologies President, Global Sales and Customer Operations, Dagher will lead Dell Technologies' global partner strategy, vision, enablement, program design and experience. Prior to joining Cisco, she held sales and leadership roles in Dell's Enterprise segment and Infrastructure Solutions Group.

Marilou van Doorn promoted to COO of Leaseweb Global

Marilou van Doorn

Leaseweb, the global Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) provider, has promoted **Marilou van Doorn** to Chief Operations Officer (COO) of Leaseweb Global, with the remit to grow its hybrid cloud portfolio. van Doorn, who holds an MBA from INSEAD, said: "Leaseweb has seen significant growth over the past few years, twice the market average, with a 22% increase in data centre locations worldwide, meaning it is perfectly positioned to provide customers with the right combination of hosting solutions and network capacity to be successful." The company has 18,000 customers, 20 data centres and more than 80,000 servers under management. Services include public cloud, private cloud, dedicated servers, colocation, content delivery network and cyber security services supported by customer service and technical support. **www.leaseweb.com**

Solidatus

John Tobin   Elizabeth Squire   David Pinto   Mark Garbett

New hires to maintain momentum at Solidatus

Metadata management platform company Solidatus has refreshed its senior team with four new hires as it looks to build on its most successful year to date. Recruits include Data Architect **John Tobin**, who joins from Goldman Sachs; **Elizabeth Squire**, who will focus on public sector relationships as Director of Business Development for government, having previously held roles at the MoD and Royal Navy; **David Pinto**, who joins from cloud platform and software development firm Pivotal as a Director of Business Development for financial services; and **Mark Garbett**, also a Director of Business Development for financial services, who was previously at Varonis and Mimecast. **www.solidatus.com**

Drooms strengthens UK sales team

Drooms, a provider of virtual data rooms that give companies controlled access to confidential corporate data across company boundaries, is strengthening its UK sales team with the appointments of **Richard Munro** as Senior Business Development Manager and **Kamal Mehra** as Business Development Manager. Reporting to Drooms UK MD Rosanna Woods, Munro will focus on the UK real estate sector, while Mehra concentrates on corporate finance. Woods said: "We are delighted to welcome our newest team members, Richard and Kamal. We are confident that they will be instrumental in strengthening our presence in the UK market, as we continue to grow our capabilities in response to our clients' growing needs for digitalisation." **http://www.drooms.com/en**

First Chief Sustainability Office for Extreme Networks

Following the establishment of a Corporate Social Responsibility Council to promote sustainable development, corporate philanthropy and the empowerment of people inside and outside the company, Extreme Networks has appointed **Katy Motiey** as its first Chief Sustainability Officer. She will take up the position alongside her current role of Chief

Administrative Officer. At the same time, **Kimberley Basnight**, Chief of Staff/Office of the CEO, has been given the additional role of Head of Diversity and Inclusion. Both Motiey and Basnight have been active in promoting environmental and social justice at the company via initiatives like the Women's Council and the Black at Extreme (BEX) employee resource group.

OutSystems expands leadership team

Patrick Jean, OutSystems

OutSystems, a leader in low-code application development, has expanded its senior leadership team with the appointments of **Patrick Jean** as Chief Technology Officer and **June Duchesne** as General Counsel. Recruited to lead the global engineering team and invest in innovation, Jean has more than 20 years of engineering leadership experience at Apttus, Microsoft and, most recently, Citrix, where as VP of Unified Cloud Engineering he tripled the size of the cloud engineering team. Duchesne, who joins the senior leadership team as General Counsel, was previously Chief Legal Officer for Inovalon, a cloud-based platform provider in the healthcare industry. Before that, she held senior leadership positions at Dell Technologies and EMC Corporation. **www.outsystems.com**

June Duchesne, OutSystems

WMCRC appoints first advisory group members

The West Midlands Cyber Resilience Centre (WMCRC), set up to advise companies in the West Midlands about cyber-crime and to improve collaboration between government, the police, commercial organisations, education and the National Cyber Security Centre, has announced its first three Advisory Group Members. They are **Lisa Ventura**, CEO and Founder of the UK Cyber Security Association; **Paul Street** from the Colmore Business Improvement District; and **Stuart Hadley**, Global Commercial Director of Birmingham-based cyber security services provider CyberQ Group. WMCRC Director **Alison Hurst** said: "We are delighted to welcome our first three Advisory Group Members to the WMCRC. It's really important that we form a group of industry professions from all backgrounds to help support the growth of the centre. Lisa, Paul and Stuart all have different experience and their wealth of knowledge will be invaluable to me and my team."

Lisa Ventura, WMCRC

Paul Street, WMCRC

Stuart Hadley, WMCRC

Alison Hurst, WMCRC

Microsoft

Small business. Big future.

Protecting sensitive data and staying up to date with the latest technology are just a couple of workplace challenges.

Support for Microsoft Office 2010 is ending October 13, 2020, which could put your business at risk. Office 2019, along with Windows 10 on a modern device, has the features and updates to help keep your business safe.

Office 2019

Office 2019 makes powerful improvements to legacy apps businesses need, and offers new intelligent tools to help streamline, organize, and collaborate.

- **Focused Inbox** helps identify your most important emails.
- **Accessibility checker** helps you reach every potential audience.
- **Improved inking** lets you draw, write, and create with ease.
- **Slideshow publishing features** for sharing in presentation format.
- **Improved photo editing** makes it easy to crop, rotate, and enhance.

Check out Microsoft 365 and Windows 10 on modern device for even more collaboration and organization solutions for the SMB community.

Contact your Exertis Account Manager today to find out more.

Preparing for End of Support

Upgrade to Office 2019 and Windows 10 on a modern device to keep your business safe, and to take advantage of all the new improvements made over the last decade.

Windows 7 EOS
January 14, 2020

Office 2010 EOS
October 13, 2020

End of Support means:
- Discontinuation of security updates
- Increased vulnerability to cybersecurity threats like data breaches and viruses

Sources:
1: Source: *The top admin tasks holding back small businesses*, ICAS, May 2016
2: Source: *2016 State of Cybersecurity in SMB*, June 2016

Achieve more

Small business trend:
Driving business growth by saving time

The average small business owner spends over 33 hours a month dealing with internal admin. [1]

55%
of SMBs say red tape is holding back their business growth [1]

Office 2019 and Windows 10 on a modern device provides intelligent tools that will allow you to create great looking presentations easily by utilizing features like Designer, Zoom, and Morph in PowerPoint.

Stay organized

Small business trend:
Expanding across time zones where needed

SMBs outsource key areas of their business they're not as well-versed in. Employees who believe their workplace effectively uses mobile tech are more productive at work.

61%
of small business owners state time saved could be focused on sales [1]

Office 2019 and Windows 10 on a modern device features Focused Inbox for Outlook, which helps you stay efficient by prioritizing your most important emails.
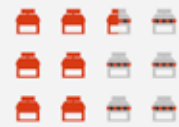
Safeguard your business

Small business trend:
Addressing growing cybersecurity complexity

Due to Microsoft's Intelligent Security Graph, 400 billion emails get analyzed by Outlook and Microsoft 365 email services every month. 1.2 billion devices get scanned every month by Windows Defender.

55%
of the SMBs in the US have suffered a cybersecurity attack [2]

By integrating Office 2019, Enterprise Mobility and Security, and Windows 10 on a modern device, businesses can strike a balance between maximizing efficiency and protection.

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