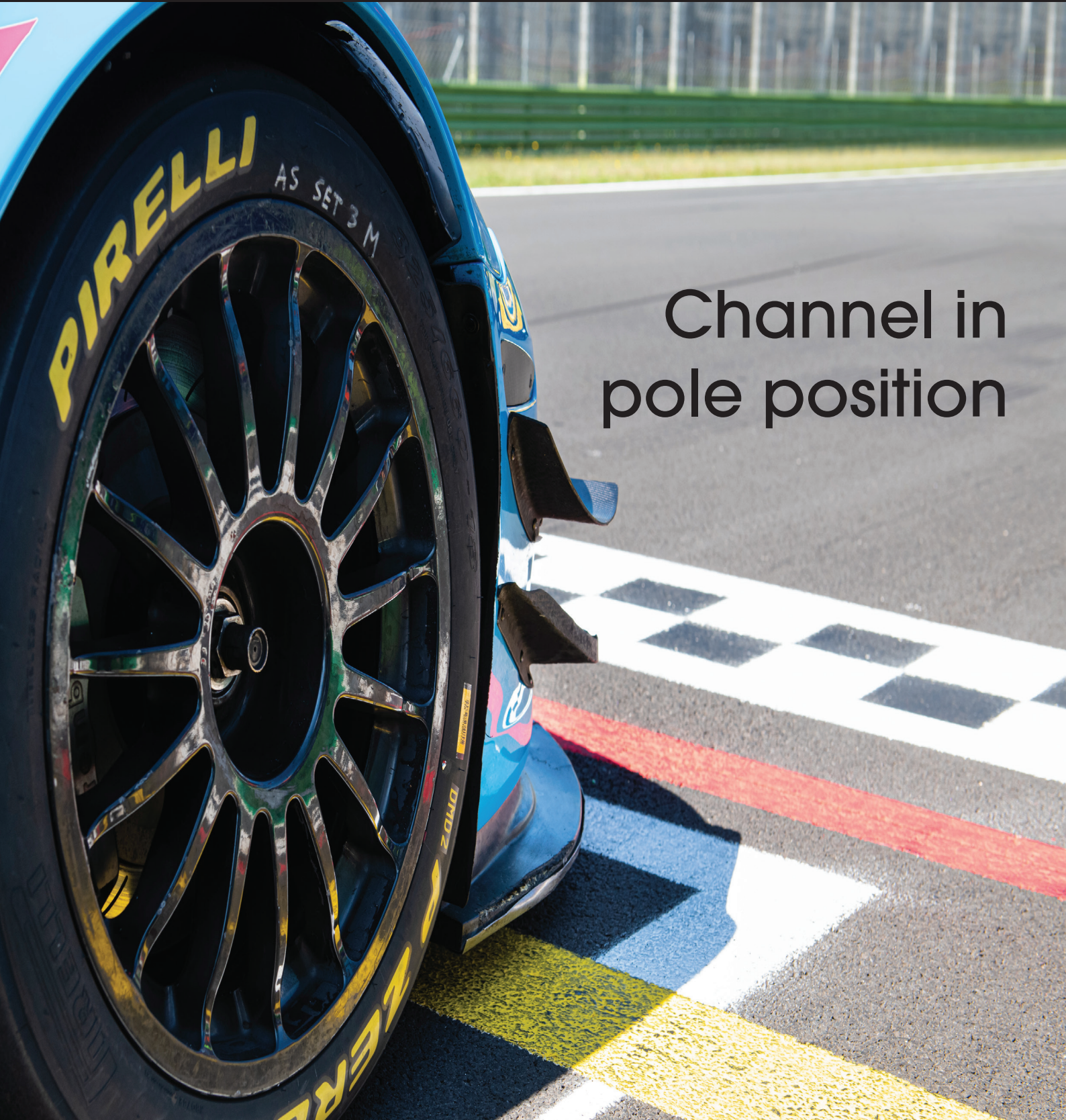




SDC CHANNEL INSIGHTS

SUSTAINING DIGITAL EXCELLENCE

WINTER 2021



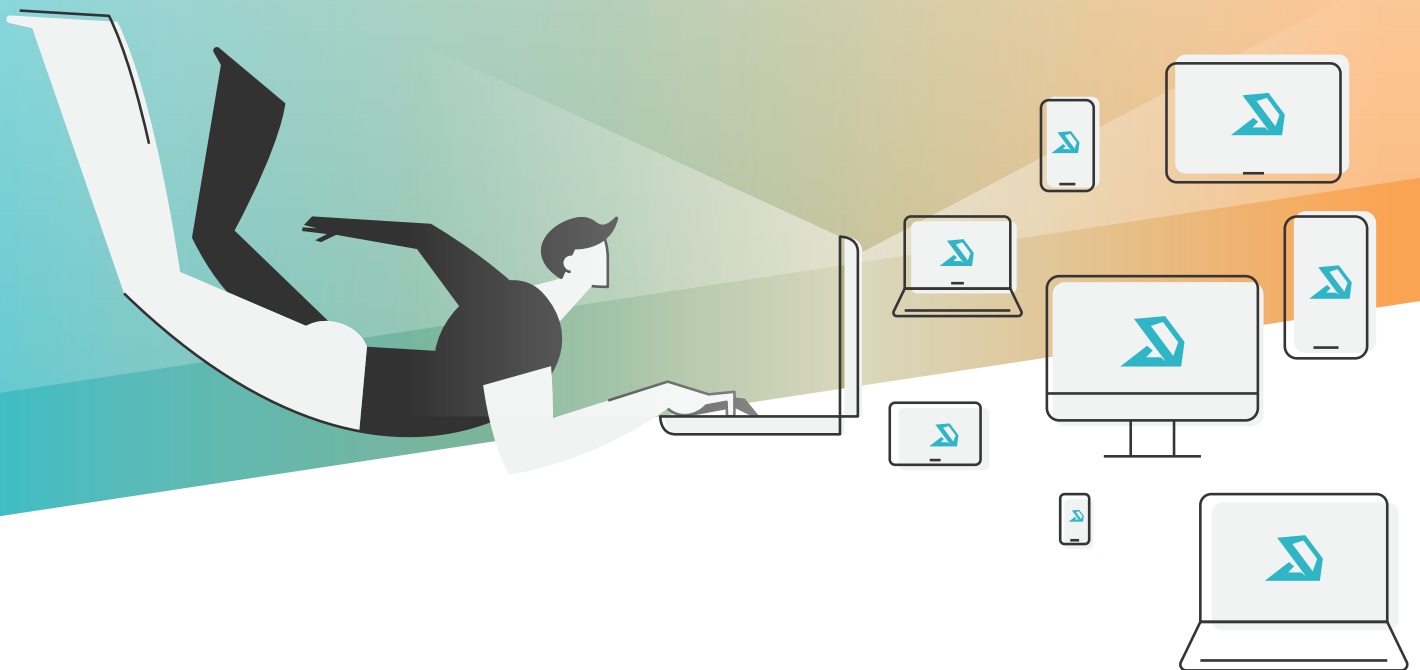
Channel in pole position



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Viewpoint



By Phil Alsop, Editor

Channel in pole position

BEARING IN MIND ongoing events across the globe, to the certainties of death and taxes, we might reasonably add volatility. Climate volatility, political volatility, health volatility – all have had and are continuing to have a major impact on individuals and organisations across the globe. Not the least of which has been the resulting business volatility. Or, more accurately, the resulting increased business volatility. After all, digital transformation was a reality some time before the pandemic hit. Businesses of all shapes and sizes across all industry sectors were seeking to address the challenges and opportunities of the fast developing digital world. Covid-19 added an urgency to this process.

Cue my favourite quote, spoken by Orson Welles, playing the part of Harry Lime in the film *The Third Man*: “In Italy, for 30 years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love, they had 500 years of democracy and peace – and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock.”

Slightly harsh on the Swiss, maybe, but the point is well made. Times of great volatility, uncertainty and change require creative, bold and intelligent people, processes and companies to come up with radical solutions. The IT world is, perhaps, the best example of an industry which seems to have such radical solutions on tap. However, many of its potential customers are nervous or unsure as to how to proceed, given the wealth of possibilities set against the risks of getting it wrong.

For many years, the Channel has promoted the ‘trusted partner’ phrase, to the extent where it has now, sadly, become almost meaningless. Nevertheless, in 2021, trusted partners have never been more important – especially those that deliver beyond the fine sounding words.

Hybrid IT has been arrived at as the optimum approach for virtually all organisations - a mixture of on-premises and off-site IT hardware and software solutions; hosted in a variety of data centre and cloud environments and locations. The challenge end users face is understanding not just what infrastructure and applications they require to deliver the best possible products and services to their customers, but how and where to access these critical resources.



And the Channel is perfectly placed to provide this necessary, impartial advice. It can assemble a comprehensive end-to-end IT infrastructure for the end user, aggregated from all of the on-premise and cloud/third party solutions available and deliver not just an optimised solution, but ongoing support as well.

As our SDC Channel Insights digital publication makes clear, via both the videos and articles, there are so many possibilities for the Channel when it comes to delivering digital solutions. The biggest challenge is, perhaps, as one of the video interviews underlines, deciding on what to offer and, equally importantly, what not to offer. In other words, specialise in what it is that you can do well, if not better than any other organisation, and don't try and be all things to all customers.

I hope you find the SDC Channel Insight content makes for valuable listening and reading, and recommend for your attention our second planned SDC Channel Insights virtual event, which will take place in early 2022, following a highly successful launch event earlier this year.

More details on all of our Channel activities can be found [here](#).

All the best,
Phil Alsop

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DW DIGITALISATION WORLD

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Channel Insights

Phil Alsop, the editor of Digitalization World speaks with 20 leading companies for unique perspectives on the changing channel landscape

SPONSOR PERSPECTIVES

PAX8/RESELLO

Digitalisation World

A powerful cloud combination for the Channel - PAX8 & Resello

Harald Nuij, Managing Director of Resello, talks about the company's recent acquisition by Pax8, a global cloud management platform provider. The combination of Resello's technology portfolio and Pax8's MSP-focused platform, alongside their shared vision of accelerating cloud growth, provides a number of benefits for channel organisations of all sizes wishing to expand and improve their own cloud-based customer solutions.

ACRONIS/RESELLO

Digitalisation World

Talking cyber protection - Acronis and Resello

Ciaran Bolger, Sales Director Strategic Business - Europe - Acronis, talks through the company's Cyber Protect Cloud solution, and how cloud distributors like Resello support MSPs to meet their clients' security requirements.

ADDIGY

Digitalisation World

Making the most of the Apple opportunity

SDC Channel talks to Jason Dettbarn, Founder and CEO of Addigy, about the rapid increase in use of Apple technology in the workplace. Begun somewhat informally during the BYOD trend, and accelerated during the pandemic, the growing enterprise Apple device trend can no longer rely on general purpose RMM tools for management and monitoring, but needs a dedicated Apple Device Management solution.

QUANTUM

Digitalisation World

An ever changing Channel?

DW talks to James Mundle, Global Channel Chief at Quantum, a leading storage vendor, about the ever growing importance of the Channel as the best, trusted source of the hybrid IT solutions demand by today's dynamic, digital enterprises.

PARK PLACE

Digitalisation World

The Channel – delivering technology choice and expertise

Jeff McCullough, Vice President of Global Channel Sales at Park Place Technologies, talks through the many opportunities available to the Channel, as end users are looking for a combination of technology choice and expertise in today's hybrid world. Jeff also outlines the company's Discover, Monitor, Support, Optimise (DMSO) solution, including the recent launch of the Uptime Partner Portal, alongside the partner-focused Uptime Program.

EGNYTE

Digitalisation World

Mission control for critical content

Eric Anthony, Director of MSP Community & Enablement at Egnite, talks through the company's enterprise content platform, which offers cloud content security, compliance and collaboration, as well as data lifecycle management; with MSPs having a major opportunity to leverage the Egnite Platform to help their customers get to grips with the challenges and opportunities of managing unstructured data. Eric predicts that compliance in particular will grow in importance over the next few years.

KASEYA

Digitalisation World

MSP or MSSP?

Marwin Marcussen, EMEA Channel Solution Architect at Kaseya, talks about the many challenges and opportunities facing end users as they seek to address the outfall from the pandemic, alongside the continuation of their existing digital transformation programmes. Happily, the Channel is perfectly placed to provide the expert knowledge and solutions end users require, with security very much the number one focus.

NINJARM

Making the most of IT management

Andre Schindler, General Manager EMEA at NinjaRMM, provides an update on recent technology and business developments at the remote monitoring and management solutions vendor.

CHANNEL PERSPECTIVES

HYVE

Digitalisation World

Making the most of a managed cloud - Hyve Managed Hosting

DW talks cloud with Neville Louzado, Head of Sales at Hyve Managed Hosting, with the focus very much on the differences between unmanaged and managed cloud solutions and the overall benefits of taking a managed approach.

NODE4

Digitalisation World

Opportunity knocks as hybrid IT meets the hybrid workplace

Steve Denby, Head of Sales Enablement at Node4, discusses how the Channel has a major role to play in helping its customers adjust to the 'post-pandemic', hybrid workplace. Edge, AI, IoT, security

and sustainability are some of the opportunities Steve sees for Channel organisations as they have the opportunity to become the end users' trusted, expert technology solutions provider.

NODE4

Digitalisation World

The importance of building services around skills

Andy Slater, Director (Azure Practice / N4Stack) at Node4 Ltd, talks about the twin hybrid opportunities for the Channel – hybrid IT and the hybrid workplace, emphasising the importance of providing the expertise and value which customers are not able to find within their own organisations.

JOLA

Digitalisation World

Making the most of the mobile data opportunity

Andrew Dickinson, Co-founder and CEO at Jola, provides valuable insight into the mobile data market. He talks through the here and now of the IoT and 4G/5G landscapes and looks at some future technologies, explaining the many opportunities which exist for Channel organisations to provide mobile data solutions to their customers, and giving some valuable advice as to what to look for in a mobile data partner/provider.

LEASEWEB

Digitalisation World

Be the best at what you do, and understand what you don't do

Terry Storrar, Managing Director UK at Leaseweb, provides some valuable advice for the Channel as it seeks to address the challenges and opportunities resulting from more and more customers moving to the 'pay as you use' model, and for individual companies to distinguish themselves in such a competitive market.

NEBULON

Digitalisation World

On-premises opportunities still very much alive!

Tim Pitcher, Vice President Sales at Nebulon, talks Channel challenges, including differentiation, changing business models and hyperconverged. Working through its OEM server partners, Nebulon has recently launched the smartPartner Programme, providing Channel companies with an exciting, recurring revenue opportunity.

HELECLOUD

The Cloud continues to dominate

Dob Todorov, CEO and Co-founder of HeleCloud, talks through the company's recent acquisition by SoftwareONE - optimistic that both organisations and their respective customer bases will see some major benefits as the Cloud continues to grow in importance as the post-pandemic business world seeks to address the challenges and opportunities of hybrid digital transformation.

TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVES

XDR ALLIANCE

Digitalisation World

Alliance seeks to standardise Extended Detection + Response

DW talks to Gorka Sadowski, Chief Strategy Officer at Exabeam, about the recent launch of the XDR Alliance, which aims to bring together competitive and complementary vendors to work together on some common cybersecurity objectives, with end users the main beneficiaries.

ILAND

Digitalisation World

Understanding the true cost of the hyperscale cloud

DW talks to Justin Augat, Vice President of Marketing and Marc Beder, VP of Solutions Architecture, both at iland Cloud, about the importance of understanding the true cost of acquiring enterprise-fit cloud services from the hyperscalers. They emphasise that end users need to carry out the necessary due diligence before committing to any cloud offering.

EAGLE EYE

Digitalisation World

Views on video surveillance - Eagle Eye

DW talks with Dean Drako, Founder and CEO of Eagle Eye Networks. The company's recent global video surveillance survey highlights a growing trend for end users to move from on-premises to cloud-based video surveillance solutions, as well as some

interesting trends concerning compliance and audio recording – the company is thriving as a result!

COMMVault

Digitalisation World

Commvault - The rise of Kubernetes requires a new approach to data protection

Recently, Commvault carried out a survey looking at storage in relation to Kubernetes. DW discusses the findings with Geeta Vaghela, Head of Product Management at the company, looking at the data protection implications for containerised workloads for organisations already trying to manage their physical and virtual storage environments.

ATOS

Digitalisation World

Quantum computing – what's all the fuss about?

DW talks to Cyril Allouche, Group VP, R&D Director, Quantum Computing, about the potential for quantum computing in the enterprise environment.

INFINIDAT

Digitalisation World

The ever increasing importance of digital data protection

DW talks with Phil Bullinger a few months in to his new role as Infinidat CEO and excited about the company's future. Phil shares plenty of insights into those storage technologies designed to both combat the threat of malware and enable the opportunities of a hybrid IT world, as well as recent customer success stories.

BLOOR RESEARCH

Digitalisation World

AIOps moves beyond the 'angry teenage years'!

Paul Bevan, Navigator, Research Director: IT Infrastructure at Bloor Research, provides some great insights into the state of the AIOps market, and its place in the overall Ops landscape, covering cloud, observability and Digital Operations Management along the way.



A money maker most MSPs are ignoring

MSPs looking to boost their revenue don't have to look far. While providing traditional IT services is essential to staying afloat, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by Apple (and its devices) are key to an MSP's competitive survival in today's ever-changing work environment and thriving with high-profit revenue in the rapidly growing Apple market.

BY JASON DETTBARN, FOUNDER & CEO OF [ADDIGY](#)



WITHOUT A DOUBT, Apple has made some serious inroads in the workplace. A once Windows-dominant environment, SMBs and enterprises are welcoming more and more Apple devices into their IT infrastructures. The shift began in 2020 when Apple introduced its M1 chip, which improved device performance, power efficiency, and battery life. In addition, the M1 chip allows users to run the same applications on their Mac laptops and desktops as they run on their iPhones and iPads, providing Apple users with a truly connected experience across all their devices.

There are additional benefits that Apple devices bring to organizations as well. According to a Forrester Total Economic Impact™ study, during the three-year device lifecycle, organizations save \$635 per Mac when compared to PCs. According to the same study, built-in security features like automatic data encryption, anti-malware capabilities, and the ease of enrollment into mobile device management (MDM)

make Macs more secure than their PC counterparts. In fact, organizations reduce their risk of a data breach by 50% per deployed Mac.

Given this data, Apple's rapid growth shouldn't be much of a surprise to IT professionals, even though they've neglected the tech giant in the past. When end users are operating from home offices and backyard patios, it's tougher than ever to justify unsupported Mac and iOS devices in your managed networks. Accommodating Apple device users and expanding your Apple device support can help you tap into new business opportunities and even create a competitive advantage over those who refuse to support Macs. My team and I came from a Windows management company. Together, we brought our experience to bear on the design of Addigy, the only cloud-based, multi-tenant Apple device management platform purpose-built for MSPs. Whether you're new to the Apple ecosystem, to Addigy, or both, I'd like to offer a few ways to help you (re)frame your thinking as you begin to manage Apple devices.

Addigy's Apple Device Management Solution Is Built for IT Admins

There are two major components of our Apple device management platform that should make it accessible to Windows admins who are new to the territory:

1. We pre-package many applications for easy deployment

We recognize that it can be difficult to understand how to package scripts for Mac computers when you're new to the Apple ecosystem. To smooth this transition, we maintain a catalogue of public software that's prepackaged for easy deployment. This also makes it possible for admins working on Windows devices to deploy Mac packages through Addigy's portal without having to switch devices or learn a new language from scratch.

2. Our solution relies on a governance policy structure that relies on inheritance



In the same way that Windows devices are often governed by group policy objects (GPOs), devices enrolled in Addigy are organized under parent and child policies.

These background preparations and frameworks may not sound like a big deal, but this similarity helps break down what might otherwise be a major conceptual barrier as admins work to serve end users on both Windows and Apple devices.

From there, we do our best to make it straightforward to learn how to package custom app configurations, and our user forum is a lively place to get advice (or borrow popular pre-packaged scripts).

How Windows has been modeling its products after Apple

There are two major ways that Addigy's workflows make it simple for IT admins to manage Apple devices that should look familiar to those who are used to working with Windows machines.

1. Zero-Touch Deployment

Zero-touch deployment has been a standard feature of Apple's device enrollment workflow for years.

With Apple School Manager and Apple Business Manager, enrolled devices are tied to your organization by their serial number, making it easy for admins to remotely support these devices from the first time they boot up and connect to the internet. Although Windows hasn't done this kind of factory-to-desk work for a long time, they recently introduced Autopilot: it's a very similar program, which does the same thing as Apple's zero-touch but with a Microsoft engine. Even if you're new to Apple device management, you've probably at least heard of the new push to preconfigure devices using Windows Autopilot.

2. Addigy Identity Management

Identity management in the Apple ecosystem should also look familiar to Windows admins these days, as Microsoft has been cribbing Apple's best ideas in user identity management for years; providing a white-label login page that can present the MSP logo and background as the native login window.

Since the release of Azure, Microsoft has been increasingly moving its software to the cloud, starting with the ability to sync remote user information with on-premise records. The good news for Windows admins who are learning to manage Apple devices using Addigy is that there is an Azure integration through Addigy Identity (as well as O365, Google, and Okta IDP integration).

To support blended environments and the IT admins that support them, folks with Addigy can sign into Mac endpoints using their Microsoft Azure credentials. This helps admins and end users streamline their workflows without the hassle of managing multiple identities.

Managing Macs in a Windows environment doesn't have to be a challenge

People choose Mac devices for business because they love to work on a best-in-class operating system. For designers and artists, the applications and tools they rely on may even require an Apple OS. And these Mac users shouldn't be left without the same high level of IT support just because their OS is a local minority.

For many MSPs, it's long-past time to secure the Mac devices that operate alongside the Windows machines in your managed environments. It's time to give both camps the support they need.

Too many MSPs who support organizations with a blend of Windows and Apple devices settle for a platform that isn't designed to support Mac computers from the ground up, or worse, they use their legacy remote monitoring and management (RMM) solution that was designed to manage Windows machines and lacks the functionality needed to manage Macs to the same degree.

Addigy's Apple device management platform was built to ease the adoption curve for IT admins new to Apple management or juggling multiple OSs. Purpose-built for IT service providers, Addigy simplifies Apple device management, allowing MSPs to automate onboarding and deployment while ensuring devices are secure. Addigy lets IT admins manage devices in real-time, launch remote control access, initiate a Live Terminal session, remotely monitor devices and automatically respond to alerts and remediate issues, and so much more.

Addigy was built secure from the start to help MSPs maintain always-on compliance across all Apple devices under management. With Addigy, IT admins can quickly apply and enforce powerful security policies across all managed Apple devices, automate OS and software updates, configure identity provider logins and MFA at the login window, deploy state-of-the-art malware detection software, and remotely lock or wipe devices that are lost or stolen to prevent sensitive client data from ending up in the wrong hands.

In summary, Addigy will enable you to easily manage Apple devices to the same degree as you've always managed Windows devices.

Learn More

MSPs can't afford to ignore Apple's rapid and continuous expansion into their managed networks. It's critical that every device connecting to client networks is managed to the same standards regardless of OS and kept secure from bad actors. Addigy helps simplify Apple device management for MSPs. If you'd like more information or would like to see a demo of Addigy, visit addigy.com/demo



Digital transformation and the SMB

Digital transformation can be a lot of work but the benefits to your clients can be huge.

**BY ERIC ANTHONY, DIRECTOR OF MSP COMMUNITY & ENABLEMENT
AT EGNYTE**

IN GENERAL, digital transformation is any process by which digital technologies are used to improve business processes through the implementation of those technologies. For the SMB this can mean a myriad of different things. One of the popular transformations currently is a move away from on-premise file servers to the cloud. While this is not, by strict definition, an analog-to-digital transformation, it is a further digitalization moving away from physical equipment to virtual. In my opinion, the SMB market currently sits in the early majority stage of adoption with just less than 50% of SMB customers storing all their unstructured data in the cloud. Those that are storing files in the cloud are likely using services that

are user-centric and do not consider the needs of the business. Therefore, I believe there is an opportunity for a business-centric cloud solution to transform how a business stores, uses, and collaborates with unstructured data.

What is unstructured data? Unstructured data is all the individual files such as, documents, spreadsheets, presentations, PDFs, images, and more that a business uses daily. These files need to be stored somewhere and frequently need to be shared, not only inside the business, but with outside collaborators as well. Traditionally, a business would store those files on a file server so that all the users

inside of an organization could have shared access to those files. There was a file structure and permissions that made sense to the organization. Fast forward to today when not all employees are in the same building or have access to the file server.

Many cloud-based file storage solutions have emerged, but most are user-centric creating a problem of data sprawl across those users and the version control that comes with it. What is needed is a solution that mimics the organization-centric structure and convenience of the on-premise file server, but is available from anywhere. Egnyte provides the file structure with NTFS-style permissions and the familiar mapped drive letter (Windows) or network volume (Mac) that users are accustomed to. In any digital transformation, training the end users is frequently a costly and time-consuming part of the project. Migrating a file server to the cloud with Egnyte virtually eliminates that part of the project. In addition, users can access Egnyte files using any web browser, iOS or Android mobile device making it truly cross platform and work-from-anywhere friendly.

Another common problem with on-premise data is collaboration. With traditional file servers, files would need to be shared by sending them as email attachments. Some files are too large to be sent by email and are blocked by the sender and/or receiver's email system. There is also the issue of version control. When a file is sent as an attachment, the organization loses all control of that file.

An innocent example is, John sends an image to Sarah for her review on a Friday afternoon. On Saturday, John realizes he needs to make a small change and updates the image but forgets to send Sarah the new version. Monday, when Sarah checks her email, she approves and forwards the email to the printer for production. Obviously, this will be without John's Saturday update. Imagine instead, that Sarah received a link to the original file so that every time she clicks the link, she is seeing the same version that John is. Using links instead of attachments has other advantages as well.

Links have no size limitations, nor do they create data sprawl. Links can be voided. What if John was sending a sensitive document to Sarah but instead accidentally sent it to Sara (no "h"). John would have all the way up until the time that Sara opened the email and clicked the link to invalidate the link and disable it. Likewise, with Egnyte you can set limitations such as number of times a link can be used, setting an expiration date, or preventing download of the actual file (view-only). In addition to making it easier and more secure to share files, Egnyte also offers capabilities to comment, @ mention, and add meta to files stored in Egnyte to make collaboration even easier and more productive.

The benefits of this transformation to the SMB are

even more important since the surge of work-from-anywhere. Having access to all the files that business uses without having to change the users' workflow is a major benefit. The added bonus of more efficient and reliable collaboration both inside and outside the organization can have significant productivity improvements and therefore, measurable cost and revenue benefits. At the same time as those improvements are realized, all of the access and sharing is done in a much more secure environment and methodology.

So, what are the benefits to the IT service provider? We have already covered one, not having to retrain users. Another is not having to retrain your techs. Since Egnyte utilizes NTFS-style permissions and familiar user groups and roles the administration of those files is easy. Because the files are in the cloud there is no physical server to maintain or repair in the case of a failure. Combined with not needing a 3-5 year refresh on the physical equipment, this can greatly reduce costs and risks of dealing with an on-premise server. In some cases, it can also eliminate the need for a VPN which comes with its own costs and headaches.

The last but probably most important piece of any digital transformation today is making it secure. Traditional security for the SMB was primarily focused on protecting the endpoint. That is where the greatest risk to your infrastructure sits, between the keyboard and chair. What are we actually trying to protect though? Ultimately, we are protecting the data. We are protecting it from being stolen, encrypted, or being used maliciously. What happens when we move that data to the cloud? Suddenly the endpoint is not as important because we can now employ layers of protection between the endpoint and the cloud, things like multi-factor authentication, encryption, and restricting what files are actually downloaded to the endpoint.

Additionally, for those clients that require compliance like HIPAA or GDPR knowing what data is being stored and where is critical. Egnyte can classify all types of PII, PHI, and other sensitive data types so that you can help clients maintain those compliance requirements.

Digital transformation can be a lot of work but the benefits to your clients can be huge. It is your role as their IT services provider to make sure that they remain as productive, and profitable, as possible using the technologies applicable to their business. At the same time, it is also your responsibility to make sure they remain secure and compliant with the requirements of their industries. Egnyte can help you transform and protect the way your client's access and share their unstructured data while making administrative tasks easier and more efficient for you.

Let's be Partners!
[Join the Egnyte Partner Program Today](#)

Five keys to building a profitable, scalable MSP stack

Every managed services provider knows that your solution stack is the beating heart that delivers your MRR. Your stack is what you bring to the table when you're negotiating a contract. It's the technical expression of the results that you intend to provide and the pain points that you're trying to alleviate.

BY TOM WATSON, CHANNEL CHIEF ADVISOR, NINJARMM

IN SHORT, your stack can make or break your MSP.

Even so, it's not unusual to find MSPs with "thrown together" stacks, overly complex intertwining solutions, or too many vendors to keep track of (remember: it should be a stack, not a pile).

So the question is, how does an MSP build their stack out for maximum effectiveness? More specifically, how do you get the most utility out of your stack while keeping it scalable and profitable over time?



How to Build the Perfect* MSP Stack

* ok, of course there's no such thing as "perfect," but the following can help you establish the best fit possible now and put yourself in a great position to adapt as needs evolve in the future.

Key #1: Start with who you want to sell to and who you want to be for them

Managed services is a crowded and complex space. You'll never win by trying to be everything to everyone. Different circumstances and different clients require a different approach. When building your product stack, you should build it around your ideal audience and where you want your business to fit in the market. Specifically, early MSP owners ask themselves two critical questions:

Who are you selling to?

What do you want your company to look like?

These are the kinds of questions that often come up in a marketing discussion, but they're extremely important throughout your business.

When you begin by identifying the type of client you want to work with and to what extent you want your business to serve that client, you can better define what your stack needs to look like.

Key #2: Don't give clients and prospects the chance to dictate or pick apart your stack

Do your clients need to know what's in your stack? There are a couple of different camps on this topic,

but the growing consensus is that it's often easier to sell managed services when you don't bog down your prospects with the details of the stack. For one thing, all the details and technical specifications can be confusing. For another, it gives them the chance to say, "Oh, we don't need that," or, "Look, we found a cheaper solution that does." In either case, it can make your job harder when it comes time to close the deal.

That's why I like to say, don't sell the stack, sell the solution!

For the most part, clients and prospects don't really care what products you're using to get the job done. They're paying for results. Focus on the solution that you're providing them, not the products you're using to deliver those results.

Key #3: Have strong security baked in from the get-go

One major emerging trend that has been building for years, and that we predict will hit full steam in 2021, is the bundling of more-than-basic cybersecurity solutions into managed services contracts. No more asking a client if they want additional cybersecurity – it's now a requirement.

This makes tons of sense across the board. First and foremost, your client often can't be expected to make logical decisions about technology (at no fault of their own). As mentioned, if you show them an itemized list, many SMB clients will try to pick things off of that list to save a few bucks. This has always been the struggle when it comes to selling managed services, and more and more MSPs are realizing that the solution is simply not to give them the option.

You can probably guess the other reason why this is a brilliant approach. Actual security. MSPs and their clients have become increasingly popular targets for cyber attacks. If your client gets breached, they're going to look at you for answers (and maybe even toss a lawsuit your way). When the crap hits the fan, you can't fall back on, "Well, I tried to offer you security but you didn't want it." Even if you're right, it won't save your business or your reputation.

Bundling is the answer, and it's an easy one to stomach. You are an IT professional. You know what's best for your clients. By compelling them to bend to your cyber recommendations by simply packaging them as part of your core offering, you're not strong-arming them – you're being a responsible IT provider who is looking out for everyone's best interests.

Key #4: Keep your stack as lean and uniform as possible

So, how many products should be in your stack? Depends, right? Every MSP is different. The best high-level answer is probably going to be, "as few as possible to get the job done." Although tools and

Above all else, you need to make sure you're striving for consistency across your client base. It puts you at an advantage when you can run your proposals almost like a template system

products can be very shiny and attractive, simplicity is a major factor when it comes to scalability.

Above all else, you need to make sure you're striving for consistency across your client base. It puts you at an advantage when you can run your proposals almost like a template system. A certain type of client will always get a certain solution stack that you've already built out and deployed across other, similar clients.

This makes it easier to sell, easier to maintain profitability, and easier to scale your business.

Again, the best way to maintain focus and discipline is to clearly identify what your ideal client looks like and what you're trying to accomplish as a business.

Key #5: Seek out tools that integrate and play well with others

I recommend getting as many tools as possible from the fewest number of vendors. In addition to cutting down on screens to manage and context-switching, this also makes it easier for you to manage your accounts, handle your vendor relationships, and can often give you the benefit of bulk pricing discounts by giving more of your business to a select few providers.

Think twice about chasing down the "best of breed" solutions across the board. It's actually far more important that your tools integrate well and speak to each other when necessary than it is for them to be wearing a gold medal. This is another reason why sticking to vendors who can provide a variety of solid solutions, tools, and integrations rather than a single solution is often the best way to go.

What's Next?

Your solution stack is the heart of your managed services business. The tips outlined above can help you get the most out of your solutions and make you a more competitive and profitable MSP. To learn more about how NinjaRMM can support the growth of your business, visit us at www.ninjarmm.com and sign up for a free trial.



Developing your channel business for a post-pandemic world: the need for efficiency and automation

Many digital transformation challenges experienced by end users can apply to the channel as well.

BY ANDRE SCHINDLER, GENERAL MANAGER, EMEA, **NINJARMM**



THERE'S NO DOUBT the world has changed. In 2020, social distancing, remote working and stay-at-home measures reshaped the landscape for logistics, supply chain and technology industries. Workforces became widely dispersed, new strategies evolved and the channel stepped up to support end users and help them through a period of major upheaval.

According to McKinsey & Company, businesses accelerated the digital transformation of supply-chain and internal operations by three to four years, while the share of digitally-enabled products jumped ahead by seven years.^[1]

Now, as we progress towards Q4 2021, companies have learned to evolve, survive and succeed. Device purchases and reconfiguration, rapid software deployment and accelerated cloud usage have contributed to a new business narrative. But, in many cases, digital transformation has been implemented in haste, as a matter of survival. There is disconnect, lack

of integration and inefficiency across companies that have deployed disparate solutions. IT departments are still struggling to adapt, facing tightening budgets and a raft of security issues.

In a survey carried out by NinjaRMM with business leaders across the US, UK and Germany, nine in ten IT teams reported an increase in devices under management in the last year.^[2] Yet, the majority of organisations are still relying on manual processes for routine endpoint management.

Many of the problems experienced by end users are also challenges for channel partners. To develop your channel business for a post-pandemic world, you need to improve efficiencies and lean heavily on automation. And by educating your customers on these automation advantages as well, you're creating further opportunities for your business.

Automation for total control



When you implement automation, it helps with a range of repetitive, time-consuming tasks. These tasks can be performed on-demand, on-schedule or in response to performance thresholds and state changes. The right policy-based automation engine will operate across organisations, sites, dynamic groups and individual endpoints. From OS and third-party patch management, to antivirus management, remote control, drive encryption and custom scripts, automation engines take the pressure off overworked IT teams, whether that's channel-based or an end user vertical.

Three key tasks in need of automation

While nine in ten companies are using outsourced IT, there are opportunities to extend the level of support. Only around one in four are using an MSP for patch management and endpoint security. Yet rising IT complexity is creating the need for additional and more efficient use of managed services. There are three quick wins that can have a big impact for businesses.

Task 1: Automating new device setup

Over half of respondents are relying on manual processes for new device setup, with 60% spending more than three hours per device. One in three still rely on internal, manual processes to set up new devices, while surprisingly, as many as one in five expect the end-user to set up their own device.

Task 2: Remote software deployment

Deploying software to end-users was also a major challenge for respondents. Nearly seven in ten reported software deployment taking more than three hours per endpoint per month. With the right remote deployment solution, end users reported average savings of 1.6 hours per month.

Task 3: Automating patch management

Two-thirds of respondents rely on manual patch management for their devices, with 77% spending more than three hours per endpoint per month. That adds up to a lot of wasted hours, very quickly.

Not only can manual patching present a security risk to employees and networks, it's also hugely inefficient. The negative effect on businesses is felt on the balance sheet, the unnecessary exposure to cybercrime, and also in time lost to basic tasks, which could be focused more productively elsewhere.

Only 11% of 1,140 business executives surveyed this year believe their current business models will be economically viable through to 2023. And 64% of those executives say their companies must build new digital foundations.^[3] This presents major opportunities for those savvy channel partners who are able to influence and gain a foothold. Will you be one of them?

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IT co-management powers the next wave of digital transformations through efficiency, expertise

With rising IT complexities and the opportunities digital transformation brings, how much of your IT workflow do you want to own and how much should you hand over to be managed by a partner?

BY ANDRE SCHINDLER, GENERAL MANAGER, EMEA, NINJARM



EVERY ENTERPRISE takes a unique path to the cloud, with a bespoke combination of on-premise and public cloud services and tools.

But in a world of seemingly endless options, how can a business discover their optimum route? And when they embark on the path to digital transformation, how can they reduce the burden of problem identification and successful troubleshooting?

By turning to the channel, businesses connect with external IT and security professionals that can guide them through their journeys. Channel partners such as managed services providers (MSPs) or value-added-resellers (VARs) can deliver the skills and technologies that businesses need either in fully managed or co-managed IT agreements. These relationships help businesses accelerate their operations while staying secure and flexible enough to support a widely-dispersed workforce.

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As the world moves towards a hybrid working model, blending remote working with office-based working, the IT setup in many organisations will become even more complex, further intensifying the need for external support.

Enter the world of co-managed IT

That's why we're seeing a prominent shift towards co-managed IT, where MSPs support in-house IT teams by taking on some of their responsibilities. IT co-management is an opportunity for businesses to create a partnership to supplement, enhance and support their existing IT.

A business may choose to have an MSP provide tools like ticketing and project management software, remote monitoring and management (RMM), antivirus and backup solutions. They may also want support for their IT staff.

This support could lighten the load by helping with day-to-day processes, allowing the in-house team to focus on big picture issues, or it could even contribute to strategic planning. Perhaps there's a knowledge gap that needs plugging, custom project work or systems integration requirements. These are just some of the opportunities that can be realized. An MSP is able to provide around-the-clock service that goes beyond what many organisations are able to support on their own. Plus, there are often cost savings in having fewer in-house IT resources, as tech talent can be expensive to hire and train, and could be prone to churn.

A recent IT tech debt study from NinjaRMM exposed the true scale of legacy IT technology and how it prevents companies from realizing their

potential. Nearly half of respondents noted that their organization is using hardware and software that's more than five years old. Around one in five stated their hardware and software is between 11 and 20 years old.

This can place undue strain on resources, with organizations spending approximately 17 hours each week maintaining legacy technology. Transitioning from on-premise to cloud-based can deliver dramatic efficiency gains in a short amount of time. And by leveraging the expertise of MSPs, internal IT teams can unlock efficiencies without having to train or hire specialists.

For the arrangement to work well from the outset, co-managed agreements between two parties should be regularly discussed and reviewed. There isn't a one-size-fits-all. Every agreement needs to be based on the unique aspects of each company's IT configuration or support needs. It's important to have frequent contact to resolve any issues early on and then keep the managed service agreement updated on a regular basis.

Channel Partners Have The Right Tools For Digital Transformation

Employing a channel partner allows a business to focus on adding value for its customers while mitigating the risk of disruption. And when embarking on a digital transformation journey, the right partnership will provide strong foundations to support the growing shift to hybrid work models, as well as helping to drive engagement with internal and external audiences. RMM should always play a part, too, allowing businesses to manage IT environments remotely, securely and with ease.

Co-managed IT will continue to gain prominence, but the relationships need to be managed carefully, particularly at the beginning. As well as a requirement for the right software, there's often a lack of documentation. This can make it harder for businesses to adapt to the new hybrid world. A centralized location and standardized workflow for documentation ensures a smoother digital transformation journey. And the right channel partner will already have all the processes in place and the tools to make documentation easier.

IT Co-Management Will Thrive In a Hybrid Future
Moving forward, we're going to see more co-managed agreements between channel partners, mid-market and enterprise businesses as the complexities of IT management and costs of lax security rise.

As hybrid working looks set to become a permanent feature of the commercial landscape, high quality remote support continues to remain top-of-mind for many IT executives and co-managed services augments and enhances the abilities of IT departments.

A recent IT tech debt study from NinjaRMM exposed the true scale of legacy IT technology and how it prevents companies from realizing their potential. Nearly half of respondents noted that their organization is using hardware and software that's more than five years old

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DMSO and hybrid models for partners

Due to the ongoing global pandemic, the way businesspeople connect is evolving in unprecedented and unpredictable ways. What was once considered common – travel to customer sites – has been replaced by virtual and hybrid environments, with computer screens connecting us as we solve the toughest challenges.

BY CHAD JONES, SENIOR DIRECTOR, CHANNEL, EMEA, **PARK PLACE**



AS THE WORLD RE-OPENS at various rates, we will be faced with another adjustment – hybrid working models. Splitting time between office and home brings another set of challenges – and a portfolio of innovative solutions that Park Place Technologies partners can offer to their customers.

What a Hybrid Environment Means for Partners

The hybrid model not only applies to how and where we work but also to customer's IT infrastructures, which often present their own set of unique challenges. Many partners are finding their customers now having to manage a dual approach to delivery – on-premises data centers and server rooms in addition to private or public clouds. For a partner's customer,

deciding what data lives where is a challenge that often poses several questions, including:

- Can I manage the public/private cloud-hosted applications centrally alongside my on-premises install?
- How do finances add up and what is the true cost of ownership of moving data applications to the cloud?
- How fast will I need access to the data and is it readily available?
- Is governance an issue when it comes to the security of sensitive or personal data?

With Park Place's exclusive Discover, Monitor, Support, Optimize (DMSO) strategy, partners are able

to remain flexible and nimble in an ever-changing environment. Through a large portfolio of innovative solutions, we bring more to the table than just third-party maintenance services. Employing a level of knowledge, proactive notifications, and intuitive user experiences, the power of choice has become more important to partners, than ever before.

How Park Place Partners Utilize DMSO to Stay Flexible
Driving insights and actions in real time is what it's all about when time matters more than anything. While there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution, our DMSO strategy increases flexibility by allowing our partners to strategically facilitate their customer's success journey, equipping them with knowledge on what is going on in their customer's IT environments and proactively offering ways to mitigate risk. This level of flexibility also allows partners to suggest solutions that free up necessary IT dollars to allow for smart reallocation of not only money, but also resources to work on mission critical projects based on organisational goals.

1. Discover – With ParkView Discovery™, partners can offer their customers automated IT asset recovery, dependency mapping and comprehensive coverage of Cloud services, desktops, servers and edge services. This provides complete visibility into data center and cloud system activities.

2. Monitor – Using the suite of ParkView services, uptime is no longer an issue, data centers stay running and forecasting network trends become easier. Entuity Software™ provides the ability to easily see when something has gone wrong and gain a glimpse into views crucial to determining network health.

3. Support – Our multi-vendor/one contract approach provides support for networking, storage and server hardware without having to manage multiple contracts and contacts. Remediation methods and event notification for hardware, operating systems and network incidents are put into the hands of our partners, offering increased levels of support and proactive maintenance.

4. Optimize – Easily cut through the clutter with targeted, in-depth insights partners need to ensure they are delivering the best possible outcome for their customers while equipping them with actionable alerts and notifications, eliminating noise and panic.

The DMSO structure Park Place offers, provides partners with a multitude of benefits to offer their customers. From comprehensive data centre management options to solving critical staffing issues and reallocating IT resources and spend, partners can help their customers maximise uptime, increase operational speed, promote efficiency, and grow return on investment.

But the DMSO portfolio is just one element of our investment in your future. Park Place is also providing partners with ways to deliver DMSO with exemplary customer service.

The DMSO structure Park Place offers, provides partners with a multitude of benefits to offer their customers. From comprehensive data centre management options to solving critical staffing issues and reallocating IT resources and spend, partners can help their customers maximise uptime, increase operational speed, promote efficiency, and grow return on investment

Investing in Your Future

Park Place Technologies will launch its first-ever global partner portal, appropriately named "Uptime," in September 2021. Designed with partners in mind, the global platform provides the ability to easily and seamlessly conduct daily operations and optimise revenue streams in a single, easy-to-use tool. Using the portal will provide partners with several benefits including:

- A deal registration program that provides economic incentives such as preferred pricing
- A full library of co-brandable assets
- Access to quick tip videos to help navigate main features of the portal
- Dashboard functionality, allowing visual measurement of success against crucial KPIs
- Comprehensive overview of all of Park Place's solutions and services
- A look into Park Place news and upcoming events

In addition to the launch of the Uptime Partner Portal, a new partner-focused program, also named Uptime, will be unveiled. The updated program structure keeps one main goal in mind – to enable partners to be customer heroes. From improving the customer's support experience, to saving customers money on their support costs, the Uptime Partner Program will enable and reward partners for their collaboration and customer advocacy.

The pandemic is altering the way businesspeople connect, and Park Place is working to ensure our partners and their customers are able to meet the most unprecedented – and most unpredictable -- challenges.

Harnessing the power of living data: The modern Quantum and Quantum Alliance 2.0

In response to this seismic shift in how organisations store, protect, manage and orchestrate data, Quantum has evolved its offering and radically changed its business model to help customers harness the power of the data they generate to grow their business.

BY JAMES MUNDLE, **QUANTUM'S GLOBAL CHANNEL CHIEF**



CURRENTLY, the amount of unstructured data being generated globally is growing by an astounding 60% per year. As a result, IDC projects that unstructured data will make up 80% of all data on the planet by 2025.

This so-called “data explosion” can be partially attributed to the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) applications, as well as video surveillance. New AI and ML applications are being developed at a rapid rate, most notably in sectors such as healthcare, transportation and manufacturing. These devices, sensors and cameras typically generate huge quantities of footage and images. For instance, the average autonomous test vehicle captures two terabytes of data per hour. Often, organisations must store this data safely and

securely for years, or even decades, for auditing and compliance purposes.

What’s more, data generated by businesses and organisations is moving around more than ever before. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, an increasing amount of data is now being created at the edge – in fact, Gartner estimates that by 2025 around 75% of enterprise-generated data will be created and processed outside a traditional data centre or cloud. By necessity, data created at the edge must be centralised or moved to the cloud at some point in its lifecycle.

Secondly, thanks to an increase in remote working and globally distributed teams, it’s likely that data will have to be moved multiple times – to various locations, data centres, or to the cloud – so it can be accessed by the different employees and customers who need to use it.

As a result of these changes, data storage and preservation are growing concerns for many IT leaders. According to research by Forbes, 95% cite the need to manage unstructured data as a pressing problem for their organisation. And they are grappling with how they can take advantage of the massive amounts of data being generated and captured to drive insights to grow their businesses. As such, many are now looking for new solutions that better suit their needs in terms of data management across the entire lifecycle that deliver better TCO, convenience and security.

Allow us to reintroduce ourselves

In response to this seismic shift in how organisations store, protect, manage and orchestrate data, Quantum



has evolved its offering and radically changed its business model to help customers harness the power of the data they generate to grow their business. Quantum now provides a comprehensive line-up of subscription-as-a-service data management and analysis solutions, building on our four decades of experience and expertise as a leading storage vendor. These solutions ensure that we are uniquely positioned to support customers throughout the entire data lifecycle and address their wider business needs.

Our new offering includes:

- Intelligent multi-tiered storage solutions
- Data protection across physical, virtual, and cloud environments
- Data identification and classification
- High-speed access to shared data
- On-demand access to archived data
- High-performance NVMe and hybrid-flash storage
- Video surveillance and ruggedised mobile solutions

As we evolve and grow, so too does our customer base. In addition to the core sectors Quantum has traditionally served – such as media and entertainment – we now work with a wide range of organisations which are just beginning to harness the power of data. They come from sectors including education, government, life sciences, security, autonomous driver assistance (ADAS) and mobility.

“We are quickly becoming a company that enables digital transformation in organisations,” says James Mundle, Quantum’s Global Channel Chief. “It’s no longer simply about storing and protecting customers’ data but helping them to enrich their data and unlock the hidden value in it. Organisations that figure out how best to use the massive amount of unstructured data they generate, and store will no doubt gain a competitive edge, improve time to market and produce a better product. Quantum is here to help them achieve this.”

Why Quantum for resellers and MSPs?

Quantum’s channel partners vary in size and sector specialism, but they share the following characteristics:

- They value independent vendors who provide differentiated solutions
- They require flexibility and responsiveness
- They provide consulting services on managing storage environments to support organisations’ wider goals

Partners are often attracted to Quantum due to its channel-focused business model, which ensures that partners are treated as a focal part of the business – never an afterthought. Plus, Quantum now offers new integrated systems, customer-first technology, and strong industry alliances with vendors such as Veeam, Splunk, Cohesity and Rubrik. This ensures we’re well-placed to boost our partners’ success. Mundle adds: “At Quantum, we’re dedicated to supporting

At Quantum, we’re dedicated to supporting our partner resellers and MSPs. We provide technical and financial support every step of the way, from identifying opportunities to closing deals

our partner resellers and MSPs. We provide technical and financial support every step of the way, from identifying opportunities to closing deals. As a 100% channel-focused company, Quantum knows that who we are today is thanks to our top tier network of distributors and resellers. As we expand our portfolio and forge more industry partnerships, adding more resellers to our partner network is critical.”

The Quantum Alliance Partner Program

The Quantum Alliance is a CRN 5-Star award winning program, designed to help partners who share our goal of solving customers’ toughest data management challenges to grow their business and increase their profits. To ensure partners extract maximum value from the program, we’ve recently introduced new rebates and enhanced margins.

At Quantum, MSPs and resellers are at the core of what we do. To further demonstrate our commitment to our partners, we’ve designed a detailed Quantum training curriculum that includes sales and technical certifications. Partners also benefit from a dedicated online portal where they can access resources and information, including the latest product releases, sales enablement tools and webinars.

To ensure partners obtain maximum value from the Quantum Alliance, we also hold an annual invitation-only partner conference – Quantum Elevate. This event unites our community of channel partners, application partners, Quantum sales professionals, engineers, and executives. Together, they share insights and learn about Quantum’s latest solutions, competitive information, customer implementations, and future roadmaps.

To help partners spread the word, Quantum offers numerous co-branded marketing opportunities, as well as market development funding. This can be used for demand generation efforts, appointment setting campaigns, digital content, end-user events, design and agency services, and more. Have we piqued your interest? Get in touch to learn more about how the Quantum Alliance Partner Program can help your business find the right opportunities and close them quickly. Book a fifteen-minute briefing call.



Five cloud management trends:

Simplifying the way IT partners buy, manage and sell cloud

Accelerated digital transformation affects the way modern IT partners support clients and manage their tech stack. Several trends have emerged over the recent years that define how IT partners purchase, manage and sell cloud services, as change keeps driving our industry forward.

BY HARALD NUIJ, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT [RESELLO](#)

The continued transition to 'everything as-a-service'

It should come as no surprise that IT keeps moving from on-premises to the cloud, with vendors increasingly using subscription-based licensing models. At the same time end-users prefer the benefits of subscription-based cloud services over long, drawn-out IT projects with high up-front implementation costs. This model doesn't just apply to software either, increasingly other IT vendors have also started offering hardware subscription models, ranging from laptops to print equipment.

The pressure is now on for the remaining ISVs to transition their software to the cloud. For instance, Microsoft recently announced major efforts towards convincing additional ISVs to run their software on Azure, and named 2022 'the year of the ISV'. This software can then be made available for provisioning and purchase via the Azure Marketplace and AppSource.

The trend of ISVs becoming cloud vendors and end-users adopting the subscription-based licensing models present both opportunities and challenges for IT partners.

Opportunities include:

- Supporting clients and managing their transition from on-premises to the cloud;
- Advising on which cloud services to choose;
- Managing those cloud services to supporting end-users after implementation.

Challenges include:

- Training employees and acquiring the required knowledge and skills;
- Lowering support cost;
- Cutting on time spent purchasing, provisioning and managing cloud services from a wider set of cloud vendors.

Consumerization of IT

Consumerization of IT is what we see as the next step in everything as-a-service (XaaS). With IT moving from on-premises to the cloud using subscription based licensing models, replacing CAPEX with OPEX has become the norm. The evolution has had a profound impact on IT partners, and their business models and sales approaches, as both the customer buying cycles and frequency of customer touch points have changed in-step with the transition towards cloud services.

As IT solutions become more designed and marketed towards the end-user, they have become more involved in making the purchase decision, even to the extent of purchasing and provisioning of cloud services themselves.

Consumerization of IT also has other side-effects. For instance end-users increasingly use their own endpoint devices (Bring Your Own Device or BYOD) to install and use cloud services for communication, collaboration and access to company data. Another side-effect of this is called shadow IT, where the IT department or IT partner does not have a complete overview of the software and cloud services in use within the organization. This is one of the reasons why Microsoft recently launched two versions of their Windows OS that both run in on Azure. Windows 365 and Azure Virtual Desktop both empower end-users to run Windows on any device, while ensuring data protection and security.

As a response to the consumerization of IT, more cloud services distributors are offering modern cloud marketplaces. The marketplaces act as a self-service area for an IT partner's clients and can be made available to end-users. This new development makes the IT partner's cloud management more time efficient, while maintaining a clear overview of the cloud services in use. At the same time it also gives the end-user more flexibility to self-service the purchase and provisioning of the desired cloud services.

Security, security, security

It is no secret that cyberattacks, ranging from ransomware to data theft, have been on the rise for quite a while, and show no signs of stopping anytime soon. The massive wave of employees working from home, over unsecured internet connections, and storing company data on non-company devices, has only exacerbated this trend. Protecting clients' data and endpoints against these threats and ensuring compliance is increasingly the prerogative as of the IT partner. And just like "location, location, location" directly affects home value, security now plays a much more significant role as a defining factor in determining an IT partner's added value.

The cyber-attacks against SolarWinds and Kaseya prove that both vendors and managed service providers (MSPs) can become an attack vector for hackers and be user to breach into an end-user

Consumerization of IT is what we see as the next step in everything as-a-service (XaaS). With IT moving from on-premises to the cloud using subscription based licensing models, replacing CAPEX with OPEX has become the norm. The evolution has had a profound impact on IT partners, and their business models and sales approaches, as both the customer buying cycles and frequency of customer touch points have changed in-step with the transition towards cloud services



environment and gain access to valuable data. It isn't just the enterprise and large corporations that are being targeted either. As larger organizations shore up their defenses, small and medium sized businesses (SMBs) are becoming the new target for cybercriminals. Data shows 43% of all cyber-attacks target medium and small businesses, while 60% of SMBs do not have a cyber-attack prevention plan in place. Research also shows that the top three security cloud solutions IT partners are considering of adding to their product portfolio are ransomware protection, threat hunting and endpoint protection solutions.

SaaS sprawl

Another trend in cloud management is license sprawl or SaaS sprawl - the growth in both the number of licenses purchased for and number of different SaaS solutions used within an organization. The growth is accelerated by the consumerization of IT and the subsequent rise of shadow IT.

SaaS sprawl can cause inefficiencies that create unnecessary costs. Different teams within the same organization might be using different cloud services for the same use case. For example, using Slack and Microsoft Teams increases the number of support tickets, and therefore, the cost. End-users might also

purchase cloud services before they are needed, or forget to cancel them after their usage has ended. Since cloud services run on subscription-based licensing models the associated costs can ramp up quickly.

SaaS sprawl can also be the cause of security issues or compliance issues. End-users can use the incorrect access and security settings for cloud services. Company data might be stored in different public clouds, creating siloed data and management issues. Ultimately, it is up to the IT partner to support their clients in fixing the SaaS sprawl issue. By rightsizing IT with efficient license management, reporting and automation, the IT provider can avoid unused licenses, cut down unneeded purchases, lower support cost and fix security and compliance issues.

Customer retention

The need to focus more on customer retention and lowering monthly recurring revenue (MRR) churn is also important for IT partners in managing their tech stack. The rise of cloud services has made it more convenient for companies to start, adjust or cancel the software subscriptions they use at any given time, and has also made it easier for them to switch IT partners.

To increase customer retention IT partners need to have clear insights into what the client's needs are, especially if and when they are changing. That requires more frequent touch points with clients, and a different approach to sales. To better build out customer relationships IT partners increasingly rely on clear data and insights into cloud services adoption and usage by end-users. Some IT partners are able to add value by training end-users, which helps drive usage and lowers MRR churn. IT partners also combine insights and more frequent customer contact with automated processes and workflows and seamless delivery of cloud services, so that when a client's needs change, the IT partner is able to quickly and efficiently adapt and support their clients.

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IT asset discovery: creating a foundation for success

Although it can be a laborious task, IT asset discovery and management represents a critical foundational function for any managed service provider (MSP). Without good IT asset management processes and tools in place, MSPs risk losing visibility and governance control of a client's IT estate. After all, as the saying goes, you can only manage what you know actually exists. But that's not the only challenge.

**BY GREGG LALLE, SVP, INTERNATIONAL SALES AND STRATEGY AT
CONNECTWISE**



IF MSPs want to assure business-as-usual operations for clients in the most effective way possible, then IT asset discovery and management will be crucial for enabling a truly coordinated approach to optimising costs, service, performance and sustainability of the infrastructure.

Why it pays to get to grips with IT asset discovery
Essentially, IT asset discovery is the act of understanding the full scope of all devices on a client's network. Everything from laptops and mobile

devices to printers, servers and more.

When assets linger on the network without being accounted for, this potentially introduces significant operational and security risks. For example, an unmanaged laptop will create gaps in the patch management or software update strategy. This in turn risks introducing vulnerabilities that will give hackers the foothold they need to infiltrate a client's network. It also means MSPs will fail to address flaws that could enable malware and ransomware to self-install. Since MSPs are only able to successfully manage the assets they actually know exist, good asset management will be key for every client engagement. Once asset discovery is complete, then MSPs should be well positioned to be able to initiate a systematic asset monitoring and management process.

IT asset management – the next critical task

Essentially, IT asset management (ITAM) is an all encompassing programme that involves tracking what assets are on the network, verifying that each asset is up-to-date with any security and software patches, and ensuring that each asset on the network is sufficiently protected and properly configured. For MSPs, ITAM typically represents the full range of services that are required to manage all assets throughout their lifecycle. This will include patching software and operating systems, repairing hardware issues, optimising device performance and speed, taking measures to ensure devices stay secure – such as providing firewalls or VPN technologies – and keeping track of all service performed on individual



devices. It can also involve tracking and managing software licenses to ensure a client stays compliant as well as managing inventory and replacing devices or parts as these age out.

IT discovery and management: addressing the challenges

While IT asset discovery and ITAM represent critical core functions that underpin any successful MSP-client relationship, both activities involve a lot of work. Typically this translates to multiple tedious and repetitive tasks that will eat up technician hours. Unsurprisingly, technicians are rarely enthusiastic about undertaking IT asset discovery and ITAM assignments. Preferring instead to prioritise their efforts at solving the IT problems and risks that will keep clients satisfied and stop catastrophes from developing.

However, IT asset management and ITAM is a symbiotic and never ending endeavour. As organisations evolve and grow, their networks become ever more complex. Keeping up with all the new devices and technologies that clients are continually adding to their estate means that MSPs will need to approach IT asset management and ITAM as a continuous process. So, how do MSPs reduce the burden on their technicians while ensuring that no device goes undiscovered or unmanaged for long?

1. Put network scans on autopilot and automate agents

Today's complex and constantly evolving IT environments means that deploying automated IT asset discovery scanning is an absolute must for MSPs, especially when supporting organisations that have permanently adopted a distributed or remote working model.

Initiating regular network scans via a remote monitoring and management (RMM) solution enables MSPs to quickly find new assets, determine if these should be on the network to begin with, and then track and manage those assets. Plus, automated scanning releases technicians to focus their time and energies on urgent client requests.

Automation can also help with enabling an easy and repeatable process to find, account for and reconcile every device that needs to be monitored. Installing agents on new devices eliminates any need for technicians to constantly undertake configuration tasks while making it easy to stay aware of every device that needs to be monitored and managed. With agents on every asset, MSPs will be able to automate routine maintenance tasks like patching and recoup time and resources when undertaking these essential tasks on behalf of clients.

2. Initiate a centralised database and dashboard

Achieving a single source of truth makes it possible for MSPs to deliver better service and maintain

better security for clients. By connecting multiple IT management functions into a single dashboard view, MSPs can now see the 'big picture' and identify, at a glance, when assets are having ongoing performance issues, or if assets pose a security threat or are being used in out-of-policy ways.

In addition to making service delivery less of an uphill battle, achieving this 'eye of god' style oversight of the entire estate also supports enhanced and more value add client conversations. For example, by feeding all this data into a professional services automation (PSA) tool, MSPs will be armed with valuable information on everything from what hardware will soon expire to demand for new software licenses and renewals.

This paves the way for more informed conversations that help clients understand which devices need to be upgraded or replaced, and why. This should be a win-win for everyone because when clients replace outdated assets with modern high-quality tech, their IT works better. The resultant boost to overall performance of the IT estate also benefits MSPs who will face less of an uphill battle where service delivery costs are concerned.

Keeping clients secure

Unknown, unpatched and unprotected IT assets represent a cybersecurity risk and MSPs are all too aware that many clients don't have advanced endpoint or network protection in place.

MSPs can help their clients by implementing better IT asset management processes and by finding the right tools to protect networks and devices. Routinely assessing assets can play an important role in catching issues - such as outdated patches or unlicensed software - that pose security threats. By continually elevating asset management practices, processes and solutions, MSPs can ensure they never miss an activity that could pose a danger.

Knowing their assets also means MSPs can make recommendations on their technology stack. One of the key drivers in operational maturity is not supporting every device type or technology. The more you can narrow that set, the deeper you can go on spend with the vendor and/or investing more deeply in certifications and education of your colleagues - leading to better satisfaction and retention in the long run.

Ultimately, automating IT asset discovery and management will result in a better service for clients. It also frees up MSP staff time to focus on other strategic or revenue generating tasks. By turning IT asset discovery and management into a powerhouse for future success, MSPs can free up the bandwidth and resources they will need to pursue new fast-growing commercial opportunities like the demand for cybersecurity services.

How to become the perfect partner in a digital world

Since the pandemic began, we've seen major accelerations when it comes to digital transformation. According to research by McKinsey & Company, digital offerings across enterprises experienced seven years of progress in a matter of months. Organisations have quickly realised that if they're to keep pace with competitors, they need to embrace digital transformation in all forms and step into the newly hybrid world.

BY HASINA DHANJI, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR CLOUD IN EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, **COMMSCOPE**



The channel's role in digitalisation

The channel has a crucial role to play in digitalisation. Companies and customers are increasingly turning to their community of partners and resellers for advice and guidance as they consider making large-scale technology investments. Today, businesses need to make investments that can stand the test of time and it's important that channel partners understand these goals and are able to guide business leaders as they make their decisions.

Vendors today aim to deliver the best of the best in terms of their technology solutions. To do so, they need to provide their network of experts across the channel with reliable connectivity, and solutions which can be implemented flexibly, evolving with the customers' needs in mind to allow the channel to remain agile. The partner community has an



incredibly important role to play in the industry, as they enable vendors to reach a wide global audience and act as the lynchpin to ongoing success.

It is crucial that channel partners offer a range of services with vendors who offer flexible solutions, so the partner can stay in play with their customer throughout their digital journey.

For example, say initially they work with the customer to implement a new cloud solution, down the line when their needs become more granular and specific, the channel partner can help migrate the customer to the correct platforms and solutions without having to be disruptive, saving both time and money.

Facilitating the transition to digital

With the rise of hybrid working models, flexibility and scalability are increasingly becoming business critical. This is especially true as more businesses adopt pay-as-you-grow approaches. To ensure continuity, business leaders and IT

teams need access to an agile network that can adapt and develop in line with changing digital strategies, rather than having to continually switch and replace solutions as the business evolves digitally.

Channel partners can help businesses to achieve the desired flexibility through a few key steps. Firstly, it's fundamental that partners set up their practise comprehensively so they can offer a wide range of solutions to their customers – encompassing both public and private hosted solutions as well as the necessary performance for the company in question.

After carefully considering the best technologies on offer, they must also ensure that the solution can offer the required speed to market. Cloud-based platforms are a popular choice, as their automated, intuitive nature allows partners to turnaround and build networks reliably, remotely and speedily for their customers.

Beyond technology solutions, partners need to invest in skills and expertise – as well as the individuals within their community. The move towards a hybrid world has meant that partners need to offer both environments with the ability to move between public

and private to allow the customer longevity and flexibility in how their technology serves their business. These new methods include increasingly offering cloud-based solutions, developing complementary offerings, and adopting Service Level Agreement driven models.

Key steps for partner success

Investing in cloud is critical, as it's predicted that nearly half the WLAN market will be cloud-based in the next few years. Partners need to be selling cloud services and products if they're to stay competitive today. An expert understanding of the cloud space will also help them to break through the noise in the existing market.

For channel partners looking to guide their clients through their digital transformation journey, there are many technical and sales training materials out there that partners can leverage for free. There's also a number of try-before-you-buy and trial options available for partners looking to expand the services they can offer.

Ultimately, success today will be underpinned by the potential for partners to adapt and guide their customers through the challenges of adapting to the increasingly digitally-dependent world.






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The Channel: The perfect partner in a hybrid world

How collaboration and business resilience will be vital in a post COVID world

BY RICHARD EGLON, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, **AGILITAS**



WITH POST-COVID-19 life within reach, businesses are looking to return to pre-pandemic normality while implementing the new ways of working we have adapted to.

This has created a hybrid culture, which has taken hold of many different areas of our lives. One of these areas is sustainability, and how this model (which can reduce travel/office energy consumption etc) can support a more eco-conscious society.

One size doesn't fit all, so it's up to the consumer of any product or service to collaborate with strategic eco partners to build resilience to benefit their industries and the planet. This involves incorporating a mix of on-site and cloud managed services and an office that offers flexible, work from home options for a more sustainable and balanced way of working.

The Channel is perfectly placed to bring together these requirements into a coherent IT strategy. But just

like the end-users they support, channel companies need to decide what the future holds for collaboration and hybrid working and how important a contribution to sustainability and the impact on the environment will be to those wanting support from the industry.

Collaboration solutions

While moving channel companies to remote or hybrid working will change the use of business tools, it can be a positive move. With remote technology solutions able to help increase transparency, drive productivity, facilitate collaboration, and push companies towards a digital future. With so many types of collaboration solutions available, channel businesses are seeking trusted, strategic partnerships to meet more needs.

There has also been a rise in demand for life cycle management and sustainability solutions, with many businesses striving to adopt a more circular economy - an ecosystem that combines bleeding-edge technology solutions with the extended lifespan of legacy systems through a more productive and efficient supply chain.

Hybrid working

With hybrid working and collaboration technologies now staples in our lives, the number of people prioritising a business outcome made up of multiple technology stacks has increased. There is likely to be a shift from video calls towards a hybrid, shared workplace, with remote working only highlighting how expensive office space, overheads and travel costs are.

It is also important to consider how digital tools can communicate company culture through social channels. Businesses need to harness both the virtual and physical workplace to self-accelerate that culture now that face-to-face events have reduced dramatically for most employees.

Analytics tools

Analytics have become incredibly useful in the age of hybrid working. The change in how we work is already giving rise to analytics tools that show some element of productivity and output.

As more people head back to the office, things like overheads will start to increase again. However, as we move forward, analytics tools will help businesses both in the channel and beyond build more productive and efficient workplace strategies that will define their resilience in the years to come.

When it comes to collaboration, partnering with business intelligence (BI) solution providers can only go so far, with analytics needing to be evened out with feedback from staff on working processes and wellbeing.

BI tools cannot replace the need for conversations or measure workforce satisfaction in a hybrid model.

While moving channel companies to remote or hybrid working will change the use of business tools, it can be a positive move. With remote technology solutions able to help increase transparency, drive productivity, facilitate collaboration, and push companies towards a digital future

Because of this, leaders need to be more in tune with their workforce to emerge stronger post pandemic.

What can the Channel expect?

New innovations are set to be very people-focused. Society is now demanding a work-life balance so there will be a need for technology innovations that support both sides. We are already seeing the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), meaning that people are spending less time doing administrative tasks, freeing them up to spend time on future looking projects.

Secondly, we can't hide from how important sustainability has become. Some companies can already put tangible data behind their contribution to sustainability and their impact on the environment, and it is these companies that will be the ones who overtake their competitors.

In the past, collaboration was all about partnerships, but as technology has progressed collaboration is more important than ever within the workforce. With collaboration and resilience now necessary for all businesses, the Channel needs to embrace new ways of working, and technology needs to be integrated to keep up with demand and expectations as we move into the next phase of the workspace.



The Channel, the perfect partner in a hybrid world

As businesses review their operations and prepare for the future, we are seeing the emergence of a hybrid world. Hybrid working, where employees can mix working from the office with working remotely, looks set to become the norm as restrictions implemented due to the health crisis begin to ease.

BY GERT JONK, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF EMEA, ALCATEL-LUCENT ENTERPRIS

HOW TO ENABLE hybrid working simply and safely is the question many businesses are asking. In the hybrid world, customers need, and expect, strategic guidance and recommendations based on their objectives and desired outcomes. The channel can seize the opportunity by providing a more consultative approach.



Digital transformation is, of course, a priority for organisations across all sectors. By gaining an in-depth understanding of what they want to achieve, the channel can support the customer on their journey. The best vendors will always support the channel

in beginning and developing these discussions. Broadening the conversation with the customer to hone in on not just what technology is of interest to them, but why, is the key to unlocking this opportunity. Ask the customer what they want the outcome to be, and what is needed from a particular technology, to help them achieve their goal. The channel can deliver added value and provide a comprehensive picture of not only what technology is best for them, but why, which will enable true engagement.

Starting from the ground up, by investing in their network, businesses are building a solid and future-

proof platform on which to build and accelerate their digital transformation. However, in evolving to a network infrastructure that delivers connectivity for digital apps, IoT and user devices, while supporting workflow optimisation and process efficiency, they require support. Hybrid working is driving demand for unified communication and video conferencing technologies, which were important previously, but not seen as the highest priorities. Customers want guidance in navigating the challenges of hybrid working and implementing the connectivity and collaboration tools that are best suited to them.

Hybrid working has increased demand for services such as Unified Communications-as-a-Service (UCaaS) and Communication Platforms-as-a-Service (CPaaS). UCaaS and CPaaS share a number of benefits including increased productivity, scalability and flexibility, and give businesses the opportunity, and associated cost reduction, by shifting from CapEx to OpEx operating models.

As new technologies emerge, such as different 'as-a-service' models, cloud architecture, IoT, or new requirements with regards to data security and data privacy, the channel must evolve in line with these updates. Partners must take on a more consultative role, working with major tech enterprises, investing in research to remain at the cutting-edge of technology, anticipating and responding to new trends, and then making these new solutions easily available to the customer.

One of the biggest challenges inherent with connectivity is security. Take the IoT for example. The number of IoT devices is undergoing phenomenal

growth. For some organisations, IoT is helping them get back to some semblance of normality. From checking people's temperature to contact tracing, the IoT is playing a major role in economic recovery, but it presents challenges from a security perspective. While there is no doubt that businesses need IoT devices to grow and thrive, they need to connect to the network, and they need to do it securely. This means that even if a customer connects an unsecure IoT device, that the network it is connected to is secure and will withstand any potential security breach.

Perhaps one of the biggest opportunities for the channel therefore, is to become security experts. Indeed, the channel can sell the network infrastructure and the gateways to support IoT devices. Over and above this, they can become a security advisor, ensuring the configuration of the network and all necessary measures are put in place to properly secure it.

As network requirements become more focused on intelligence, automation and security, the channel can help customers map out their strategy and goals and work with the vendor to put the solutions together. In the hybrid world, as the technology continues to advance and digital transformation journeys accelerate, it is essential to think strategically, long-term and focus on the outcomes. It all starts with asking the right questions at the very beginning and building a true understanding of customer needs and their desired outcomes. Doing this will ensure more long-term customer relationships and enable businesses to reap the benefits of their technology investments.





The channel - The perfect partner in a hybrid world

Even before the pandemic threw the world into a state of flux, many businesses were already overhauling their outdated, legacy-based infrastructures in favour of robust, scalable and flexible cloud-based solutions.

BY ROBERT BELGRAVE, CEO OF PAX8 UK



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION has long been on the horizon for many industries, with some faring better than others. However, what we have seen in the past year is that the pandemic and resulting lockdowns have accelerated digital transformation on a scale that we couldn't have predicted pre-COVID. A recent report found that UK businesses have accelerated their digital transformation efforts by 5.3 years due to COVID-19.

The sudden advancement of UK firms' digital transformation efforts means that these organisations were not only able to survive the past 12 months but

have also been able to future-proof their businesses as they look to emerge from the pandemic. As a result, markets such as hybrid cloud computing have thrived due to their ability to provide improved scalability, agility and reduced costs.

A remote workforce driving the need for agile solutions. With the global workforce having worked remotely for the past 18 months, employees completing their tasks from the comfort of their living rooms now feels the norm. However, if we cast our minds back to last year when we first entered lockdown, the thought of working from home not only made some

organisations re-assess the possibility of remote working, but required many to adapt their operations to facilitate it.

As a result, many businesses looked towards cloud infrastructure and adopted a hybrid approach that enabled staff to easily transition from a remote working environment to an on-site one once offices reopened. Providing employees with these cloud-based solutions has enabled them to remain productive, communicate effectively and allowed them to continue collaborating with their teams.

Adopting a hybrid infrastructure provided several advantages during one of the most challenging years many have faced. A hybrid model provided flexible and agile tools for staff. It meant that organisations had a continuity plan in place and could remain operational with minimal disruption or downtime.

Utilising a robust channel network

With such a large number of organisations adopting remote work processes, the need for a reliable and sturdy partner network has become even more apparent. Companies have been able to turn to partners to provide an essential digital infrastructure that directly aligns with the needs of each individual organisation. Businesses are able to utilise these partner relationships to fast-track the adoption of game-changing technologies that enable remote and hybrid working while also providing the support needed to navigate the current climate.

Additionally, remote working produced a number of challenges for channel partners. For instance, technologies would traditionally be deployed with all staff in a single place while utilising the same network. A remote workforce meant that partners needed to overcome the challenges of different networks and employees using their own devices. In order to maintain a remote workforce effectively, partners need to become even more ingrained within an organisation to help them identify where they would see the most value and what challenges will face them both in the short and long term.

From remote to hybrid

Remote working was already on the agenda long before the pandemic, yet some organisations still required their employees to remain in the office full time. What we have learned in the past year is that this way of working is outdated and providing more flexibility improves employee satisfaction. A recent study found that 82% of workers enjoy working from home which means that the idea of “hybrid working” simply can’t be ignored as we emerge into a post-pandemic world.

A previous piece of research found that moving forward, 85% of the UK workforce expect to have a hybrid approach to work in the future. These workers prefer the idea of splitting their time between a single

office and their home, stating that a better work-life balance and enhanced well-being were the key drivers. Thankfully, most organisations have spent the past year implementing and perfecting the necessary tools and infrastructures to support this hybrid approach. However, this does mean that the hybrid cloud won’t just be crucial in delivering productive, scalable and agile work solutions, but will also be a fundamental tool for businesses to facilitate improved employee well-being.

We are already seeing a number of key players prepare for this hybrid approach. Microsoft recently unveiled some key features to its latest operating system (OS), Windows 11. The firm states that its latest OS has been designed to enable businesses to support remote working. As a result, some key features will enable more seamless interaction with cloud platforms and access to hybrid communication and collaboration tools. With the likes of Microsoft taking significant steps in providing solutions to enable hybrid working in the long-term, we can expect many organisations to follow suit.

A recent report on the Global Hybrid Cloud Market, released by Reportlinker, predicts that we can expect to see the market grow at a CAGR of 16.63% until 2026. The report states that hybrid cloud’s ability to support remote working will be a crucial reason for its growth and, with hybrid working looking likely to remain, we shouldn’t be surprised if this number is significantly exceeded. As the global workforce continues towards a hybrid working model, companies are going to feel more pressure in ensuring that staff have access to all of their applications, whether at home or in the office. A hybrid cloud solution will provide this flexibility, and as staff continue to rely on more complex collaboration tools, businesses need to ensure that their cloud infrastructures can support these tools to empower this new way of working.

With such a large number of organisations adopting remote work processes, the need for a reliable and sturdy partner network has become even more apparent. Companies have been able to turn to partners to provide an essential digital infrastructure that directly aligns with the needs of each individual organisation

So you want to be an MSSP?

JON-MARC WILKINSON, SALES DIRECTOR UK & IRELAND, **WATCHGUARD TECHNOLOGIES**, looks at the growing demand for managed security services and what it takes to become an MSSP



AS CYBER THREATS continue to grow in sophistication and complexity, more businesses – particularly SMEs – are turning to their trusted IT solution providers for 24x7, expert support in defending against them. The global Managed Security Services market size is projected to reach USD 42,250 Million by 2026, from USD 21,680 Million in 2020, according to research firm Valuates Reports. But if you are a traditional cyber security reseller that wants to embrace the as-a-Service opportunity or if you are among the Managed Service Providers (MSPs) looking to add the extra S for Security, there are things that could trip you up and things to look out for to make life easier.

With a threat landscape that gets more treacherous by the day, you need a layered approach to security that includes prevention and detection as well as response. When crafting such a managed service, you need to include protection against zero-day threats via dynamic, deep analysis as well as automated

detection and response capabilities. Don't just be reactive. End-user education is one of the most critical components of an effective security program. Security sentiment and engagement among employees play a critical role in a company's risk posture. Without an understanding of how attacks happen and a commitment to behaviours and processes that reduce their likelihood, businesses are left exposed. That means MSSPs need to factor in strong end-user security awareness training into managed security offerings and use automation to reduce costs.

A complete packaged managed security offering must include protection for networks and endpoints along with other services such as Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) and DNS protection. Fortunately, the cloud will enable you to streamline delivery, simplify operations and consolidate vendors within a unified platform, as well as reduce the need for time consuming and costly site visits. The more offerings you can adopt from a single vendor while ensuring that customers get the services they need, the easier it is to keep your total vendor count down. An easy-to-use, cloud-based management system can centralise a ton of previously arduous configuration, deployment, and management tasks, and help maintain a strong network performance and security posture for your customers at scale.

Actionable insight

As IT infrastructures grow in size and complexity, granular visibility into activity across them is crucial to recognise patterns, threats, and security gaps, and to respond before damage occurs. Some SMEs do not even have visibility into what resources are being consumed, where they reside, and how they potentially interact.

Many network visibility platforms deliver large volumes of data, but with little clarity and ranking. What is needed is a clear, simplified approach that provides actionable data to more quickly and effectively prioritise, investigate, resolve and report.



From a network admin standpoint, actionable data is about tracking the top users, destinations, applications, domains, and often includes things like the top blocked botnet sites, intrusion preventions, advanced malware attack attempts and blocked malicious destinations. With these insights, you can easily monitor and gain critical insights about your customers' network security in real time, from anywhere and at any time.

Flexible pricing and billing

Recurring revenues are one of the great attractions of becoming an MSSP but processing payments and managing invoicing is far from simple, and the way you transact with your vendors may be different from your customer billing model.

The best way to avoid this complexity is for your vendors to offer flexible pricing models, which could include fixed term contracts paid upfront or monthly, pay-as-you-go setups, or pre-pay points to enable security on a monthly basis. The aim is to allow you to purchase products in the same way you sell and deliver them. You also need the ability to scale up and down instantly to meet changing requirements. Even before the pandemic, limited time and resources were making managing IT security feel like an insurmountable challenge for many businesses and put the focus on managed security solutions. Now,

Now, with fewer people heading back to offices and data centres and travel restrictions still in place, cloud deployment using automation can eliminate much of the on-site headache involved in setting up and managing customer sites

with fewer people heading back to offices and data centres and travel restrictions still in place, cloud deployment using automation can eliminate much of the on-site headache involved in setting up and managing customer sites. Security appliances can even be pre-configured in the cloud and shipped to customers who simply need to power them on and ensure there's an internet connection.

You can find out more at <https://www.watchguard.com/wgrd-partners/mssp-partner>



DIGITALISATION WORLD

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It is imperative that Digitalisation World Magazine remains a timely resource for this industry, so we are especially interested in highlighting very recent work.



Navigating the channel in a post-pandemic world

The enterprise landscape has evolved dramatically over the past 18 months. Digital transformation has accelerated beyond expectations, while workforces have transitioned towards hybrid working models and employees flexibly work between offices and their homes.

BY ED BAKER, EMEA PARTNER LEAD, **MCAFEE ENTERPRISE**



WITH THIS SHIFT towards cloud-based remote working, enterprises now experience a large number and range of endpoints accessing their networks. Unfortunately, this has opened the doors for cybercriminals to deploy more digital, cloud-based attacks, resulting in the emergence of increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

As a result of these changes, the channel has had to shift priorities, adapting to the changes their

customers are experiencing across the IT and security industry. From the acceleration of cloud adoption and adapting infrastructure architecture to supporting the new remote workforce, channel partners now need to evolve with the times and ensure they are on hand to meet the evolving demands of the new normal.

How have priorities shifted across the channel?

Even now that we've emerged from national lockdowns, the impact of the pandemic isn't going



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The importance of security for enterprises has notably increased during the pandemic. Today, channel partners are guiding businesses as they adapt their security policies, solutions and best practices to align with these new ways of working

away any time soon. To stay relevant in today's evolving industry landscape and ensure they have the best practices in place to support their customers, channel partners must continually adapt and leverage new tactics.

Flexibility within the enterprise has been one of the key trends we have seen emerge during the pandemic, as the uncertainty of the past year has forced businesses to be able to adapt quickly to change. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, many organisations didn't have the infrastructure in place to cope with the sudden demand for virtual connectivity. To support the hybrid workforce, channel partners have turned towards flexible infrastructure and helped IT teams to increase their capacity through cloud and SAAS applications. Cloud has become the go-to solution for customers unable to upgrade their existing on-premise servers, storage and applications.

We've likewise seen channel partners turn to gamification to engage new and existing customers, such as offering virtual competitions for remote employees or advertising entertainment or comedy at the end of a virtual industry conference. Further examples of ways that the channel has adapted to the new normal, include the transition from traditional marketing to social and virtual marketing, embracing 'as-a-service' models like MSP, and supporting customers throughout their individual cloud journey.

The channel is also facing a new situation in which everyone is following an inside sales model. This is not just changing the relationship between customers and partners, but it is also driving significant changes for channel partners. As a result of this shift, we're seeing a greater focus on creativity and an increasing pressure for partners to learn new skills and stand out amongst competition.

Supporting rising security demands

The importance of security for enterprises has notably increased during the pandemic. Today, channel partners are guiding businesses as they adapt their security policies, solutions and best practices to align with these new ways of working.

Part of this support involves offering risk intelligence solutions, which can help businesses to predict and prioritise potential threats, before pre-emptively adapting their defensive countermeasures to ensure optimised security and future business resilience. In line with this, channel partners are also offering more managed services to help lighten the workload for stretched security teams.

This helps example, partners can offer support through automated analysis and strategic incident response to security teams work more efficiently with the resources they have at their disposal, allowing them to respond to threats from device to cloud quickly and cost-effectively.

Taking a Zero-Trust approach to security is also crucial, especially given the rise in remote network access over the past 18 months. It helps enterprises control access to their network and restrict this if necessary. Channel partners can support and guide enterprises as they adopt this new mind-set, which in the long term will help them to protect IP and critical data, no matter where it lives across the network or in the cloud.

Ultimately, by working with trusted channel partners who can share expertise, guidance and support, business leaders and IT teams can ensure they have the best tools in place to navigate their way through this post-pandemic world successfully and optimise business resilience across their organisation.





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Zero Trust: The growing channel opportunity

We have all seen and felt the impact that COVID has had on our working lives. What started out as a blanket, work-from-home (WFH) approach has morphed into a hybrid model. IT departments in companies of all shapes and sizes have faced a variety of challenges to keep this disparate workforce working both productively and securely.

BY LEE EALEY-NEWMAN, VP CHANNEL EMEA, **COLOR TOKENS**



ONE SUCH CHALLENGE is dealing with the increasing number of people who need access to corporate networks. Perhaps it is somebody working from a remote location who needs access to company data or (much more likely these days) somebody who is working from home and needs access to any number of cloud applications.

Pre-COVID, many organisations might have turned to a VPN tool to provide consistent access control for

everyone. However, VPNs struggle with differentiated access whereby one employee can access something, but another employee cannot. And how about dealing with different risk profiles for example? It is clear that another approach is needed.

Goodbye to perimeter security solutions?

The traditional approach to security assumes that everything inside of an enterprise network can be



trusted. This doesn't work anymore. The digital transformation of the modern workplace, along with an increasingly remote-from-the-office workforce has seen a wide adoption of multi-cloud strategies. At the same time, data breaches continue to make the news. Very recently we saw the hack on Colonial Pipeline (USA) with some saying it was one of the most significant attacks on essential national infrastructure in history.

Seemingly, this ransomware attack took advantage of a single compromised user account with the net effect of compromised fuel supplies and rising prices at the pumps. And whilst organisations spend billions trying to prevent cyberattacks like these, hackers continue to make headlines.

This has resulted in many businesses to focus on a strategic zero trust approach. This methodology improves the legacy and perimeter security mindset by implementing a 'default-deny' security posture – that is, trust nobody.

Enter Zero Trust

Traditional security is primarily focused on perimeter-based solutions that look at north-south traffic. With a vast majority of businesses now adopting cloud computing, the perimeter now extends way beyond the physical boundaries of the enterprise. Some estimates point to 75 percent of datacenter traffic being east-west. Importantly, traditional security solutions cannot defend against lateral east-west threats or internal zero-day attacks. And furthermore, users can be careless, compromised, or even criminal, resulting in unauthorised access to critical applications and data. Ultimately, this leaves the trust model broken.

A new Zero Trust approach is needed, one that secures all IT assets independent of location (cloud or on-premise). One that works across all existing vendors and is platform-agnostic. Zero Trust security is all about eliminating implicit trust or to put it another way, it is an interrogation of trust within networks. At its core, Zero Trust follows the notion that the correct way to secure a network is to assume a zero level of trust. Continuing this logic, no solitary person can perform any kind of change to the system that could compromise the security of the system. When organisations embrace a Zero Trust mindset, they are effectively mitigating vulnerabilities that are inherently present whenever people interact with technology. Human error is nullified by automation.

Working patterns have changed. Technology is trying to keep up. With security at the forefront for businesses of all shapes and sizes, adopting a Zero Trust approach is the smartest move in the face of an ever-evolving and growing threat environment. An approach that grants employees the least privilege necessary for them to do their jobs properly. As your organisation continues to evolve alongside cloud-

Traditional security is primarily focused on perimeter-based solutions that look at north-south traffic. With a vast majority of businesses now adopting cloud computing, the perimeter now extends way beyond the physical boundaries of the enterprise

based technologies and your workforce becomes increasingly reliant on mobile devices, it is time to ditch traditional perimeter-focused approaches to security. Instead, focus on resources and tools that enable access for all users, wherever they choose to work from and whichever device or network they need to access.

The channel opportunity, zero Trust is big business.

The global Zero Trust security market is expected to reach USD 59.43 billion by 2028, registering a CAGR of 15.2% from 2021 to 2028, according to a new study conducted by Grand View Research. According to a new report from Okta, Zero Trust has increased in priority for more than three-quarters (78 percent) of European businesses. Today, almost all companies (90 percent) are working on a Zero Trust initiative, up from 41 percent a year ago. Among European companies, nine in ten have either fully implemented the strategy, or have plans to do so in the coming months. Two years ago, it was a priority for less than a fifth (18 percent) of firms. In total, 82 percent of businesses in Europe have increased their budgets for Zero Trust, and no firm has reduced its budget.

For any VAR or MSSP looking for growth, Zero Trust access technology should become an essential part of their security offering. Remote working (at least a hybrid model) looks like it's here to stay, which means businesses will be looking to replace outdated network security – the data center-centric approach will no longer be sufficient. Securing endpoints and replacing VPNs offer VARs and MSSPs a wealth of opportunities as a Zero Trust mindset becomes the norm.

With a Zero Trust approach becoming the next, most critical layer of security, it's time for the channel to take advantage of Zero Trust.

What's the best way to hack it through the racket?

The cybersecurity space is more complex than ever. There are a plethora of services and platforms out there (according to one estimate, there are more than 3 500 cybersecurity vendors in the US alone). That can make it difficult for organisations to choose a vendor and know that all of their security needs will be met.

BY PAUL BALKWELL, VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL SALES AT ZIX



THE SITUATION is hardly made simpler by the fact that cybercrime has risen to record levels over the past couple of years. The weeks following March 2020, for example, saw a 667% increase in phishing attacks. In 2020, each UK business experienced an average of 686 961 attempts (successful or not) to breach their systems. There were also 1 120 breaches and cyber attacks that were reported on in mainstream media, which accounted for 20 120 074 547 leaked records. Additionally, there was one ransomware victim every 10 seconds and US\$17700 was lost every minute due to a phishing attack.

Those breaches can be costly too. By some estimates, global cybercrime will cost US\$1-trillion, or one percent of the world's GDP in 2020.

Not helpless

At times, organisations can be left feeling helpless, especially when it's become increasingly clear that no organisation can guarantee that it won't fall victim to a cyberattack or data breach. But that's no reason not to be thorough when it comes to choosing a security provider.

In fact, it means you should be even more thorough, and choose one that can best serve your needs in every potential scenario. Your security provider should not, for instance, just react to threats, but proactively monitor and assess them and be able to secure all aspects of the business, including email, cloud, and productivity suites.

And when it comes to recovery in the wake of a breach, you want to ensure that you have a security provider which understands the importance of recovery and backup.

Your backup provider should be able to address the unique needs of laws such as GDPR and any others that impact the jurisdiction you operate in. This includes, but is not limited to, its choice of data centre, data encryption, at-rest and in-transit rules, and the ability to purge backups. Additionally, adopting a backup provider shouldn't impact on your organisation's ability to do business.

The solution you choose should therefore offer simplified employee on-boarding and off-boarding with





bulk activation, automated addition and deletion of users, and backup of inactive accounts. Additionally, it should offer an out-of-the-box setup with zero adoption effort, no matter what SaaS platform you use.

A group effort

It's also important to remember that even the most sophisticated security solution can't do everything on its own. Security is a team effort. A good provider will understand this and help you with things like employee education (one of the most important aspects of organisational security) and putting together a breach response team.

The team should be drawn from departments across the organisation, including customer care, executive leaders, IT, and HR. This team should also include external partners (if you don't have them internally) such as legal counsel, communications, forensics, and your technology providers. Everyone in this team should be aware of what responsibilities they have when it comes to responding to a data breach.

Once the team is together, simulating different event scenarios will assist the team to work together to execute the planned response.

Finding peace in the noise

Ultimately, it's clear that the volume has been turned up on every aspect of security. There are different vendors across different categories who all want to talk to the IT team. The language has changed, the amount of money has changed, the number of

vendors has changed. The nature of the threats has changed. All of it is amped up compared to where it was.

But by taking a big picture view and remembering the most important security fundamentals, you can overcome all that noise and find a security provider willing to work with you and meet all your needs.

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5G and the evolutionary, not revolutionary opportunity

CSPs in the UK are still investing in new infrastructure to support the rollout of 4G, yet 5G is already a common buzzword on everyone's lips. The world of tech never stands still, and despite 5G's emergence in the last few years, we mustn't forget that it has taken us close to 13 years to implement 4G, thanks to numerous challenges cropping up along the way.

BY ALP KOSTEM, CHANNEL SALES DIRECTOR, EXPONENTIAL-E



SO, AS WE ENTER THE 5G ERA, we must heed the lessons we've learned from 4G's rollout and take steps to ensure consumers and businesses alike enjoy the full benefits of 5G coverage as soon as possible. First, let's look at what makes 5G such a compelling proposition. Analysis published this year by PWC in its 'Powering your tomorrow' report predicts productivity and efficiency gains from the roll-out of 5G technology will add £43bn to UK GDP by 2030.

Although that's still nearly 10 years away, many countries are already striding ahead in their rollout

of 5G. Services have already been launched in 48 countries to date, according to the GSMA's Global mobile trends research report, meaning there are opportunities 5G can offer the channel today, despite its full rollout still being some way off.

5G will set a high bar for businesses: the channel is well positioned to help reach it

Contrary to what many of us have read, the benefits of 5G are likely to be evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. Use cases are unlikely to change much



compared to what can be done with 4G now, but what will change is the speed and capacity on offer. Take the remote working scenario, for example. 5G will offer 10x more bandwidth, which means reduced network contention – i.e. less competition for bandwidth between the millions now expected to be working from home in some capacity in the future – leading to greater mobility and more seamless flexible working. In fact, in the coming year and beyond, we may see a trend towards more broadband providers rolling out 5G backup for consumers, as it may be better equipped to provide adequate connectivity for home working than copper-based broadband in some instances. This could be a key driver of the acceptance and adoption of 5G – a backdoor route, if you like, to the introduction of 5G into our everyday vocabulary and lives.

But it isn't just individuals that will be able to leverage 5G. Partners are also set to benefit strongly from the opportunities the technology and its associated services present for businesses. For example, many expect it to accelerate the sale of products leveraging various IoT and AI solutions, provided channel partners are proactive in incorporating 5G into their solution portfolios. Prior to the pandemic, industries such as retail and tourism were considered most likely to benefit from such services, and once they are back on their feet, we can expect their interest in 5G to escalate quickly.

The technology will set a high bar that all organisations will strive to reach when it comes to connectivity and technology implementations. The channel must take this opportunity to engage with customers about how investments in 5G can complement and inform long-term transformation initiatives to help them achieve this goal.

Understand the value of your expertise

The channel has a lot of experience in handling ground-breaking new product launches and will be similarly pivotal to making the rollout of 5G an unqualified success.

Its expertise will be particularly invaluable at a time when businesses are looking at the future of the office and work as a whole, and how their communications and networking strategies will support them. It'll be crucial given the number of potential enterprise use cases too, with the technology set to be the first generation in the history of mobile to have a bigger impact on the enterprise than on consumers, according to a report by GSMA Intelligence.

This expertise is valuable because it's so unique: as partners, your insight, advice and best practice from working with clients in adjacent and different industries means you are best placed to share informed counsel of where new practices, processes or architectures can be applied to drive value. Your depth of experience will be difficult for many businesses to find



or access on their own, meaning they could potentially miss out on some huge benefits offered by 5G and other technologies if they choose not to engage with you.

All this opportunity will no doubt bring complexity with it though, which also helps explain partners' other potential role; to act as educators and facilitators of the adoption of 5G in corporate environments, particularly for businesses that may have struggled to determine its full potential without third party expertise. How to provide the best advice for every business. One thing we must also remember with 5G is that each deployment will differ depending on the size of the organisation, its IT estate and its network infrastructure. Partners must be aware of this and take steps to make sure they can provide the adequate and bespoke expertise and support needed to make 5G services a success in the long term.

Larger enterprises for example will likely have the ability to build their own private 5G networks, and as a result will dominate its deployment in the early stages. Smaller businesses that are less tied to other technologies, on the other hand, may benefit from being more nimble and able to quickly explore the opportunities of 5G as they arise.

While it may be some time before the full benefits of 5G and resulting ROI truly come to fruition, the technology's rollout is well under way and there is no question that it will be invaluable to all businesses. Those at the forefront of technology adoption will want to begin preparations for its implementation today, and channel partners that are ready to support them in doing so will be best placed to turn the technology into a long-term business opportunity.

Going to the edge and moving to the cloud

The skills within the IT Channel and Managed Service Providers (MSPs) are going to be essential in order to help organisations navigate all the complexities that edge computing will bring.

BY FRANCIS O'HAIRE, GROUP TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR, [DATASOLUTIONS](#)



OTHER THAN THE NAME, Edge Computing isn't a very new concept. It is very analogous to the move from centralised mainframe computing of the 1980's to the PC and server based distributed computing of the 1990's.

At a time when the public cloud providers predicted (and hoped) that all computing would eventually move on to their centralised platforms, it was quickly realised that this can't happen in every scenario. In many cases, data needs to be stored and processed

close to where it is created. Moving large volumes of data across internet links before it can be utilised may not be the most efficient or cost-effective solution. For this reason, the concept of Edge Computing was developed. And Edge computing certainly looks like being the next big trend following on from cloud computing. Gartner predicts that by 2025, perhaps up to 75% of enterprise-generated data will be created and processed outside of the cloud (or data centre). Internet connected smart devices and sensors (Internet-of-Things or IoT) have accelerated the





need for Edge Computing as the data collected or produced by these devices may be very time sensitive and need to be acted upon immediately while still needing to be centrally processed for deeper analysis and trend reporting. An example might be a local network of smart building controls which report back to an edge server in the building so it can coordinate actions and environmental controls immediately.

The edge server would then consolidate and perhaps condense this data and send it to cloud services for long term storage and analysis. The Agriculture sector throws up a number of interesting use cases for edge computing. Many forecast challenging times ahead due to factors such as global warming, population control and scarcity of resources. And with sustainability also high on the agenda, it is a perfect time for technology to step up to the mark and drive automation in agriculture.

Some of the world's hunger problems stem from poor crop yields or even total crop failure. And whilst some of the factors responsible for such calamities are out of human control, we can use technology (specifically automation and data-driven insight) which can help to alleviate some of these challenges. For example, so-called agribots (agricultural robots) are a great example of computing at the edge.

They are usually driven by 5G connectivity and utilise localised data processing in order to communicate with a variety of sensors around the farm. The beauty is that they can learn and feedback in real time giving the farmer up to date and very useful information on the state of affairs on their farm as well as being able to maximise scarce resources such as water (and

even people). The growing trend of organisations adopting multiple public cloud providers, keeping certain applications in their own data centres and now with the additional need for Edge Computing, can lead to a very complex and dynamic architecture that needs to be managed and secured effectively. When it comes to security at the edge, organisations find themselves in a situation where they have their data at the edge, and not in the workload. This requires securing data both in transit and at rest, a challenge that companies need to address or face the consequences of potential breaches.

Also, the huge increases in the amount of data and processing that will occur at the edge will act as a massive carrot for hackers - you can be sure that they will be increasingly targeting the edge and associated devices. With endpoint and network security currently taking preference, will this leave edge security as an afterthought? Let's hope not.

The skills within the IT Channel and Managed Service Providers (MSPs) are going to be essential in order to help organisations navigate all the complexities that edge computing will bring. Furthermore, the channel and MSPs can help companies to fully realise the business benefits that these technologies can bring to organisations over the coming years.

Indeed, the move towards edge computing provides a massive opportunity for the channel and those therein. In a post-pandemic world with businesses seeking to gain competitive advantage, there will undoubtedly be massive demand for speedier data processing. Edge computing has the power to meet this demand (and more).



Four fundamental shifts in IT investment creating new opportunities for resellers



The disruption caused by the pandemic has increased the demand for digital services and highlighted a need for business continuity solutions. Whilst we

are seeing companies of all sizes and industries switching to cloud solutions, current economic uncertainty means IT budgets reflect risk reduction and investment in the correct IT infrastructure is more important than ever.

**BY DAVID DEVINE, PARTNER PROGRAM
MANAGER, NORTHERN EUROPE,
OVHCLOUD**

Switching to a cloud solution offers a strong business case for moving from a CapEx to an OpEx model. There are various hybrid and multi-cloud services available on the market each with their own merits and Hosted Private Cloud is an ideal solution for many enterprises.

1. Switch from a CapEx to OpEx model

As companies put greater focus on preserving cashflow, many are considering whether there is scope to downsize their office space and facilities to a lower capacity. Either way, IT investments will still need to be made and a key question, therefore, is whether to switch investment to the cloud or stick with on-premises. It's well documented that moving IT infrastructure investments to the cloud is a smart move but cost and complexity have held back organisations wishing to update legacy applications that were originally designed for on-premises. Moving legacy applications is difficult and costly due to the work required for cloud suitability but private cloud offers a faster and less complex alternative route at lower cost.

The business case is made more compelling for many companies who's on-premises datacentre resources (not just racks and servers but power,

connectivity, cooling and resilient design) aren't really fit for purpose when it comes to business-critical applications. Underinvestment and asset sweating has put many companies' IT at risk of outages and capacity issues can easily compromise performance. The challenge goes deeper than simply a modernisation and capacity issue. Many companies are at a critical IT investment crossroads: do they invest in upgrading legacy on-premises infrastructure for applications that have been kept there out of necessity rather than choice or do they invest in moving workloads to the cloud instead?

The current economic uncertainty combined with home working becoming a more permanent working reality have made the latter option more appealing and is accelerating organisations' digital transformation strategy. As the barriers such as migration costs and complexity diminish thanks to private cloud and open source, switching to the cloud is a genuine and compelling alternative that will help improve performance, efficiency and reduce business costs.

Furthermore, witnessing countless "born in the cloud" organisations grow at a rapid rate and dominate many industries has switched the balance of risk versus reward. Companies have a much greater desire to emulate this agile, digitalised business model that can adapt and scale up or down at enviable speed to meet changing market demands. This combined with the lowered cost, complexity and risk of migrating to cloud has tipped the balance in favour of moving legacy applications to private cloud and enjoying the business benefits of moving to an OpEx model.

2. Focus on reducing and controlling business costs

Traditionally the focus of an IT leader has been to bring technological competitive advantages to the business but cutting unnecessary costs is now just as important. According to The Flexera 2020 State of the Cloud Report, optimising the existing use of cloud to save costs was the top cloud initiative for 73 percent of participants. There are certain steps that can be taken such as cutting software licencing costs, reducing storage complexity, virtualising databases and integrating applications and workflows with operational and inventory management systems. End customers are becoming more reliant upon Managed Service Providers to streamline spending.

Whilst this is creating many new revenue opportunities for IT resellers, customers are without question putting the channel under increasing pressure to reduce costs. To mitigate this downward pressure on margins, partners are successfully creating differentiated services through their expertise in employing best practice across areas such as cloud migration audits and roadmaps, technical design, reducing the costs of exiting cloud services, process automation and support contracts.

An additional dimension is customers' desire to control future costs by having greater transparency and predictability. For example, many customers have had their IT budgets stripped by the relatively high costs for ingress and egress charges. As more data intensive workloads move to the cloud, this issue becomes even more paramount. In fact, it becomes a deterrent to move more applications to the cloud. MSPs who offer cloud services that do not charge ingress and egress, such as OVHcloud are therefore important to consider.

3. Increased agility and speed of time to market

One of the many benefits of cloud is that it provides businesses with agility and shortens the time to take applications to market. While a physical server could take days or weeks to procure and provision, a cloud server takes minutes.

The effects of the pandemic have inevitably led businesses to focus on having a stronger online presence. Being able to address fluctuating demands from peak periods and seasonality is a key component in adapting to this new landscape. Companies have become more efficient through up-to-the-minute billing for their cloud services. Whilst the use of data and applications has increased significantly, so has the need for more computer power. Given the size and connectivity limitations of most on-premises datacentre resources, they wouldn't

The current economic uncertainty combined with home working becoming a more permanent working reality have made the latter option more appealing and is accelerating organisations' digital transformation strategy. As the barriers such as migration costs and complexity diminish thanks to private cloud and open source, switching to the cloud is a genuine and compelling alternative that will help improve performance, efficiency and reduce business costs

be able to cope with this type of demand. Many end customers are combining public cloud for customer-facing applications such as customer portals and ecommerce sites and have seen the agility benefits this delivers such as the ability to burst and contract application resources effectively based upon seasonal demand.

On the other hand, many business-critical systems such as ERPs have been kept in private cloud, hosted on-premises which comes with its own drawbacks such as fixed infrastructure, storage and compute capacity. Typically, it takes longer to increase capacity due to hardware lead-times and many on-prem businesses have finite capacity with limited growth options. Moving these applications to a third party hosted private cloud that provides the capacity and cost flexibility benefits of public cloud is being seen as a credible option. Plus, it outsources infrastructure management to free up often limited IT resources to focus on other strategic initiatives.

We have reached an inflection point where companies can clearly see an achievable roadmap to continue their digital transformation strategy. They can move legacy applications hosted on-prem to private cloud as the legacy barriers such as the technical and cost resources have been removed.

4. Adherence to data security and compliance

Data security and compliance are themes that have been widely recognised in Europe for a while now and are starting to gain more traction. Following the creation of GDPR in 2016, the CLOUD Act was passed in 2018 which enables US law enforcement to access any data owned by U.S. domestic companies

that is stored overseas. More recently in July 2020, the Privacy Shield ruling was overturned in the European Court of Justice. Privacy Shield is an EU-US agreement which provides companies on both sides of the Atlantic with a mechanism to comply with data protection requirements in support of transatlantic commerce. Once you factor in Brexit-related data compliance issues, we have a very complicated landscape. UK businesses moving data-sensitive applications to cloud are looking for guarantees their data remains in the UK or within a UK datacentre. In a Freeform Dynamics survey OVHcloud commissioned, 50% of end-users wanted to source cloud services from non-US based hyperscalers to enable them to address their concerns around security, compliance and GDPR. Respondents raised concerns over where cloud providers are headquartered and wanted guarantees their data will always reside locally. Customers want to be able to choose whether their applications fall within the CLOUD Act or GDPR and this issue is fast becoming a new critical buying criteria.

What can we expect in the future?

Businesses will undoubtedly continue to experience uncertainty and prioritise essential short-term IT projects with minimum exposure to risk and capital costs, at least in the short-term. But most IT leaders will view this uncertainty as an opportunity to adapt and strengthen their business models.

One thing that we can say for certain is that resellers who adapt their business models quickly to address these changing customer dynamics – by accelerating their multi-cloud managed services offering for example – will find new ways to differentiate, add customer value and boost sales.



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Digital transformation: the long-term revenue opportunity

ROB HANCOCK, HEAD OF PLATFORM, GIACOM reflects on the last year and provides the channel with an outlook on where the opportunity to generate revenue lies through the rest of 2021.



AT THE START of the pandemic many people would have been mistaken for thinking that work-from-home and stay at home orders were going to be short-lived. After the Prime Minister introduced these initial instructions to the nation, many IT teams rushed like mad to maintain business continuity and productivity for their organisations. Since then, society's behaviour has changed; and so has the way in which people work, seeing the rise of remote working.

During that time cloud application usage skyrocketed too. Digital transformation initiatives sped up almost overnight. And, while the initial scramble focused on business continuity and technology upgrades; across the board, the cloud evolution has not ceased and neither will digital transformation. Especially since the UK is encouraging investments in connectivity and digitising Britain.

Changing the shape of organisations

Initially, during the pandemic, homeworking was considered temporary. But, through 2020 many organisations came to accept the longevity of the situation and changed their working policies. Today, we see more firms opt for continued remote working and / or hybrid working policies, offering a blend of office-based and remote working options to employees. But, where does the opportunity to sell 'remote working' truly lie for the channel in this scenario? Research shows that in 2020 there were 6.0 million SMEs in the UK; which was over 99% of all businesses. Clearly, there is vast revenue potential available here.

Another driver of organisational change across enterprise and SMB markets is cloud adoption. Research points out that 88 per cent of organisations expect the adoption of cloud services to increase in the next 12 months. This underpins the importance of cloud within wider future technology strategies; which will, no doubt, improve organisational operations too.

Business-grade and secure

Through the pandemic we've seen many people work from their kitchen tables, for instance. Often employees have used their personal broadband and, in some cases, own mobile devices and laptops. While this workforce's diligence is worth applauding, the use of their own personal technology is often not business grade or secure. At first, these temporary solutions may have been sufficient; but they are not sustainable long-term. This is where the ongoing opportunity lies for the channel. As organisations make committed strides towards remote or hybrid-working, they will require the right blend of technology and equipment to enable employees to be productive. This means, kitting out employees



with fast, efficient, robust and secure internet and voice connectivity that is suitable for their jobs. Moreover, they need to offer staff access to feature-rich communication applications, like Microsoft Teams, for unified communications and collaboration (UC&C), so that productivity can be maintained.

At a practical and physical level, organisations need to supply employees with reliable equipment to do their jobs. We've talked about business grade laptops and phones. But what about support with setting up ergonomic home working stations for staff, as they provide people with voice, data and cloud applications to enable them to work.

Collaboration and brainstorming applications

Before the pandemic, Microsoft Teams wasn't used effectively by many firms. However, since last March, Microsoft Teams usage for video calls increased by 1000%. And, it is also reasonable to say that many firms have become adept at driving productivity with UC&C technology; and that they derive substantial return on investment from these applications.

The need for UC&C is not going to go away anytime soon. Meaning the revenue opportunity will remain available for a long time yet – especially in the SMB market. What will change over time is the need for richer features that enable people to do aspects of their job better, since they no longer meet as often in person. This might, for example, mean employees seek out features from technologies that enable them to brainstorm more effectively, such as digital whiteboarding – or, more accurate meeting transcription services. Therefore, CSPs and MSPs will need to work more closely to match client needs against partner technologies.

The data security opportunity

And, while remote and hybrid-working will likely remain standard for many organisations in the future, it does raise security concerns for IT teams. As various pandemic lockdowns ease over time, many people will likely be eager to change their work scenery and work in different locations.

Some might want to take a week away and work remotely. Some might want to work in a local coffee shop. Regardless of their choice, organisations will have to assess if their IT security strategies are robust enough to accommodate these sorts of situations.

In these kinds of scenarios, are MSPs then equipped to help organisations with these new data security needs? Do they offer multi-factor (MFA) and single sign-on (SSO) security? What about the on-boarding of new employees at the SMB level when new staff join? Has cyber security awareness training been offered to employees – is training ongoing in order to protect data?

Line of business moves to the cloud

Aside from offering voice, data, UC&C and security technologies, many organisations are shifting entire business applications into the cloud. This was a large focus for many organisations in 2020 and will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future.

This presents further opportunity for MSPs as they consult with clients. They may already be speaking with customers about these aforementioned technologies – but, since they have their clients' ears, there is opportunity to become more deeply embedded within client organisations by supporting wider initiatives to move business applications into the cloud. It then also means MSPs will be able to offer a great deal of value-add off the back of existing contracts and generate incremental revenue.

Conclusion

During the pandemic the channel demonstrated how adaptable it is to step up and meet customer needs fast. Strong relationships between CSPs and MSPs were at the heart of this success. But, it can't stop there. Digital transformation is a long-term destination and the use of the cloud to support organisations is here to stay: be it for collaboration; data security; or to enable business applications to shift to the cloud. The opportunity is almost endless.

To capitalise further, though, means MSPs need to align with CSPs that can provide the strong foundations they need to support their customers with their cloud journeys. Can their preferred CSP offer collaborative consultancy and work with them to solve any technology challenges? Do they support with training and marketing? Can they bring value to the MSP's proposition by offering a breadth of technologies that enables them to expand their portfolio of products that they offer to customers? What is their long-term technology roadmap? The right CSP partner will have all these bases covered. What is more, the future is promising in 2021 for the channel – especially when you consider the revenue generation opportunity across that 6-million strong UK SMB market. It just begs the question about whether the channel has the right partnerships in place to succeed.

Before the pandemic, Microsoft Teams wasn't used effectively by many firms. However, since last March, Microsoft Teams usage for video calls increased by 1000%

The Future Workplace – Making it Seamless and Secure

After many months of changing lockdown rules where companies have had to implement remote and hybrid working policies accordingly, businesses are looking to the future beyond COVID-19 as workforces return to their offices. But what will the future workplace look like? **ROB HANCOCK, HEAD OF PLATFORM AT GIACOM** explains how the channel can support organisations when making this transition in a seamless and secure way.



ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH, businesses have found that their employees prefer a mixture of remote and office-based working, with over three-quarters of staff wanting a hybrid approach long term. Proving that they can work just as successfully and productively from home, it is now the employer's job to adapt their business model to support both remote and office-based working.

An Evolving Landscape

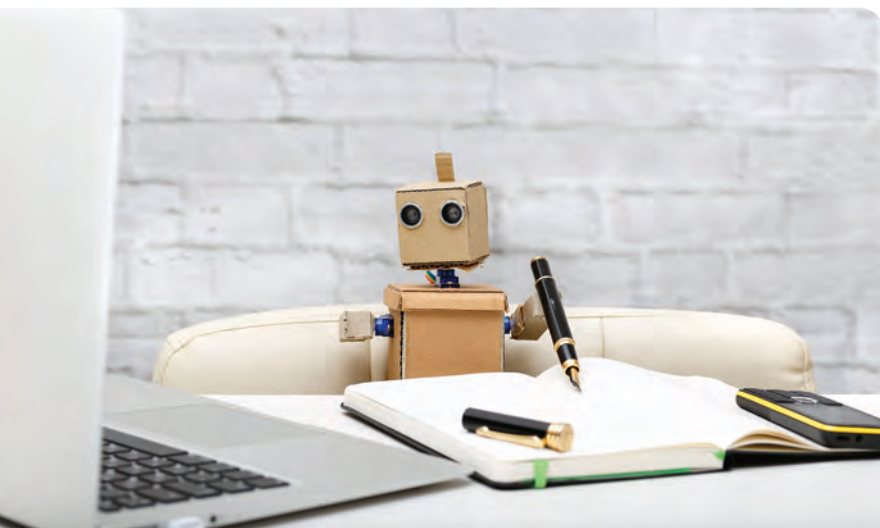
THE PACE of change businesses in all industries had to undergo over 2020 highlighted the importance of being agile during challenging times. COVID-19 has accelerated the need for digital transformation, as without the right technology in place, organisations

will either sink or swim. The role of the channel has been to continuously support its customers through the journey of adapting to remote working and digitally transforming in order to stay ahead. By educating customers on the importance of security, as well as the available technologies and strategies that can support their transition, they will have the right support system in place to maintain business as usual – or even unlock additional productivity – during unprecedented times.

Organisations are trying to be agile to survive, but there is always room for improvement. Quickly and easily responding to change needs to become a core competence natively for all businesses to be able to adapt, as it's clear that this is not a problem that's going to go away overnight. By working with a reliable partner, companies will have the right tools in place in order for them to succeed through the pandemic and into the future.

Leveraging Existing Technologies to Collaborate

Technology plays a key role in the smooth transition to a 'new normal,' keeping virtual teams engaged while enabling seamless and secure communication within a dispersed workforce. Digital solutions must be able to support both employees who choose to work from home, as well as those who have returned to the office. The channel's role in enabling seamless collaboration and communication is vital in order to combat any further disruption and keep businesses functioning. MSP's must rethink how they can best support their customers, while embracing new and



innovative ways of working to fulfil their demands and expectations. Vendors who offer a range of products to fit diverse needs and the tools to deliver outstanding customer service won't only help businesses right now, but will help unlock long term productivity, security and collaboration.

The pandemic has significantly accelerated the adoption and usage of cloud solutions to support remote working. Many businesses already had these tools in place, but just weren't using them effectively across their workforce. For example, many companies have Microsoft 365 deployed, which includes Microsoft Teams. These organisations have had access to such video conferencing tools, but had not needed to use it effectively until COVID-19. Since March 2020 Microsoft Teams has experienced a mass surge of users, jumping by 70% to 75 million daily active users.

Additionally, COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst for the interest in virtual desktop solution such as Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop (WVD), which provides each member of the workforce with the same IT environment, regardless of the device including Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) they're using and whether they are remote or office-based. The desktop effectively becomes cloud-hosted, providing a more secure electronic perimeter which replicates that of the physical office, making it easier to manage one central location.

The Importance of Security

When implementing a hybrid approach, security becomes a complex issue, as the risk landscape has changed. In the office, it's easier to manage and control security within a physical perimeter and managed environment. As soon as you have a scattered workforce, this perimeter disappears, and now organisations have to put in place additional digital protocols to mitigate any cyber risks. Having a good quality MSP partner that understands the importance of security, and thinks about it in a proactive way is key for end customers. Using technologies such as a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to provide secure access from home into remote business systems enables users to securely access systems that the business wants them to gain entry to, but more importantly, making sure that outsiders can't.

However, fundamentally, the biggest weakness in an organisation's security infrastructure is the human user. Cybercriminals are always upgrading their tactics, often more quickly than businesses can train their staff. In order to keep up to date, businesses must take a more proactive approach and utilise cybersecurity resources, such as security training and threat detection tools.

Conclusion

Without education and support from the channel, businesses will struggle to keep pace with the amount

The channel's role in enabling seamless collaboration and communication is vital in order to combat any further disruption and keep businesses functioning. MSP's must rethink how they can best support their customers, while embracing new and innovative ways of working to fulfil their demands and expectations

of change and understand what tools they need to survive and thrive. Reliable partners are needed now more than ever to support companies with workforces working from home and also in the office.

Offices will become places that people visit less frequently, perhaps only to collaborate and to host necessary meetings. Successfully implementing a hybrid approach is still a work in progress for many, and collectively, the channel will begin to find better ways of working and implementing this strategy. Of course, existing and new technologies will continue to play a key role in this transition as we undergo the next digital transformation.





How the channel can respond to the new era of remote working

Remote working looks set to stay. In a survey by the BBC of the 50 biggest employers in the UK, almost all stated their intention to not bring staff back to the office full-time. 43 plan for a hybrid strategy, where employees spend part of their week in the office and the other at home. For the channel, these strategies are now driving customers to consider more flexible and scalable connectivity setups that enable strong network performance across more widespread networks.

BY ROB DARBY, DIRECTOR OF CHANNEL SALES AT PULSANT



AS CYBER THREATS also grow, the priority is now taking steps to improve network resilience while ensuring that security set-ups support disparate working patterns. It's an unenviable challenge for IT departments that need to modernise their infrastructure to support these new strategies, and represents a drastic shift from the traditional physical

office strategy. It's one however that also provides numerous opportunities for resellers.

Seizing the opportunities

The market for the channel has completely transformed since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Providing connections into business parks

and office complexes used to be the bread and butter of business wins, but opportunities have expanded with customers adopting permanent home working strategies.

Securing opportunities will first and foremost depend on resellers offering colocation services to customers, where infrastructure and data is moved out of premises and in-house management to secure and resilient data centres. This ensures that customers' business-critical applications remain secure, compliant and resilient. Public cloud is another option here for organisations, but there will be greater opportunities for resellers with colocation due to it being a more cost-effective and appealing solution.

The next focus for the channel should be leveraging the network capabilities facilitated by a specialist partner to offer faster and more reliable connectivity solutions to customers. The mass adoption of home working has effectively flipped network dependence on its head. Demand that used to be spread across local area networks (LANs) is now leaning much more heavily on wide area networks (WANs). Leveraging software-defined networking (SD-WAN) solutions that use a combination of transport services such as MPLS, LTE and broadband will help deliver the rapid, affordable and secure connectivity that customers demand.

Expanding to the edge

Achieving low latency will also be key for organisations to better serve the requirements of their home workers. Instantly accessible data is core to improving productivity and efficiency of workforces. The issue however with leveraging one centralised data centre is that it is increasingly likely to be geographically distant from users. As data travels back to the centralised location, it will be prone to congestion as network traffic increases.

A shift in focus for organisations will be having points of presence in regionally-located data centres around the UK that are physically closer to users, otherwise known as edge computing. By spreading the load

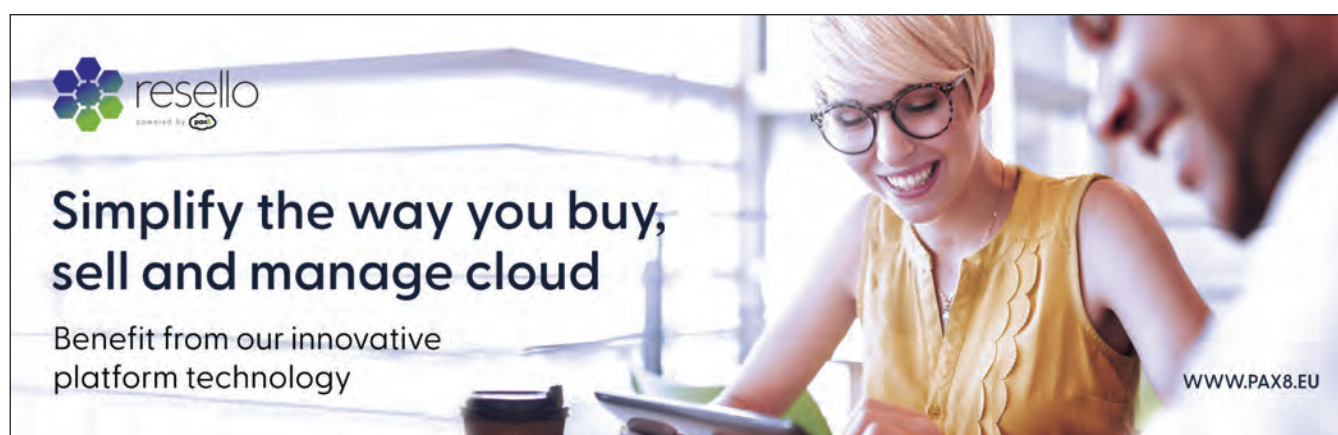
The next focus for the channel should be leveraging the network capabilities facilitated by a specialist partner to offer faster and more reliable connectivity solutions to customers. The mass adoption of home working has effectively flipped network dependence on its head

across three or four regional data centres, data can be processed closer to each end user. This will facilitate fast, low latency connections regardless of where users are located. As hybrid working strategies evolve post-pandemic, edge networking will become a necessity for businesses, and it's the perfect opportunity for the channel to pioneer this solution with the support of the right technology partner.

Leading the way

Remote working won't be dissipating anytime soon, and the prospect of full offices five days a week looks an unlikely proposition for most organisations. Remote working has also become a more viable reality due to the digital shift that has gradually accelerated over the last decade. Digital transformation will also take a new step for organisations as 5G adoption increases and drives growth in more complex and mission critical IoT devices.

As demand for colocation, hybrid and multi-cloud strategies continues to increase, resellers will need to evolve their offerings to truly deliver end-to-end solutions. While data continues to rapidly grow due to the influx of connected devices, their primary aim must be preparation to accommodate the edge networking requirements of the market.



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Why the era of hybrid working presents a golden opportunity for the channel

During the past eighteen months, businesses around the world have grappled with significant disruption and uncertainty. Yet while the pandemic has introduced myriad challenges across the board, for those organisations able to support a home-based workforce, operations have continued relatively seamlessly.

BY ROB BILLINGTON, HEAD OF CHANNEL EMEA AND APAC AT [NETWRIX](#)



SO SUCCESSFUL has the new 'norm' been, that many organisations and workforces are keen to embrace a hybrid working model going forward, even as branch offices reopen and restrictions are lifted.

How has the channel fared in all this? Vendors are always on the lookout for partners that can make a significant difference to their business, a process which keeps the channel partner landscape active and constantly moving. Pre-COVID, the channel as a whole generally embraced a traditional way of

working, however, with hybrid working here to stay, it's a trend that the channel cannot afford to ignore. In fact, the new 'work-from-anywhere' approach presents a golden opportunity when it comes to bolstering existing relationships and attracting new partners.

The sudden rush to home working en masse in March 2020 was undoubtedly a huge adjustment for many organisations. Yet collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams have enabled the channel to re-organise and come together with minimal disruption

for the most part. Indeed, for many, hybrid or remote networking has given vendors and partners alike improved connectivity and communication. By moving away from the central office, this new work model allows both parties more frequent and tailored access to one another.

Long-term, the concept of returning to a five-day working week in an office seems an unlikely prospect for many. The past eighteen months has caused a dramatic shift not only in employee expectations, but also for customers' when it comes to the requirement for on-site meetings. For years, many people have been asking themselves whether we need so many on-site meetings, and the experiences of the year and a half demonstrates the importance of spending meaningful time as a team. The knock-on effect has been to focus minds on business needs and requirements, and while on-site meetings are unlikely to be consigned to the history books, they are set to become less frequent going forward. By prioritising the most valuable in-person meetings, channel organisations can ensure they are deriving the most value from these meetings when they do occur.

Linked to this is the sharp reduction in the volume of business travel undertaken during the pandemic. Knowing that personnel are likely to be online, rather than on a flight to another international office, means that people are often more accessible and better coordination is possible.

Again, once international travel resumes at full capacity, I expect we'll see a continuation of some meetings taking place virtually, leaving the more strategically important visits to get the in-person treatment. The pandemic appears to have focused

minds on what is really necessary. Having people on the ground in various countries has enabled our own team to run meetings within the confines of local COVID restrictions, reducing the disruption to our business. The move to remote working has also made it possible for organisations to utilise local talent and resources without needing to rent office space, a trend that will support many organisations' global ambitions.

The hybrid way of working can also increase the speed of business negotiations and transactions, offering 'around the clock' access to both partners and vendors, allowing them to connect at more accessible times of the workday from more convenient locations.

While there are a number of positives to be derived from increased remote working, there is no denying that recruitment and training can be more challenging to run virtually. During the pandemic, we have had to reimagine training and enablement processes, particularly when it comes to running incentive programmes, and I predict that a much of this revert back to in-person, particularly when it comes to developing individual relationships with partners and new hires.

However, overall the unique shared experience of the past eighteen months has forced us to enable deeper engagements from a distance, which has revealed a number of positive outcomes for the channel. Key to success in the new hybrid world is seeking to better understand our partners and how their business requirements have shifted. Ultimately, the better we understand one another, the better we are placed to work with our partners and meet their needs, and those of their end users too.



How channel organisations can leverage the edge

ROB DARBY, DIRECTOR OF CHANNEL SALES AT PULSANT, discusses the edge computing opportunity for channel businesses and why time is of the essence



We've witnessed a major transformation in how services are consumed. The digital revolution is well underway with end users today demanding rapid performance from web and cloud applications and business critical services.

Simultaneously, 5G is fuelling the growth of mission critical IoT solutions and expanding the number of devices, applications and volume of data. To remain competitive, businesses need access to high-speed connectivity to ensure the low-latency flow of data, regardless of where it's physically needed.

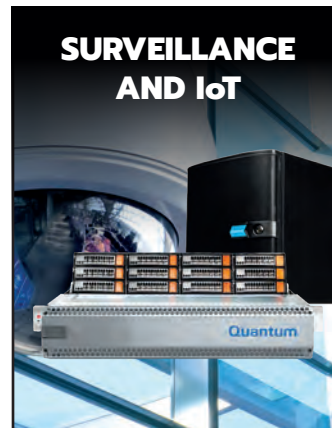
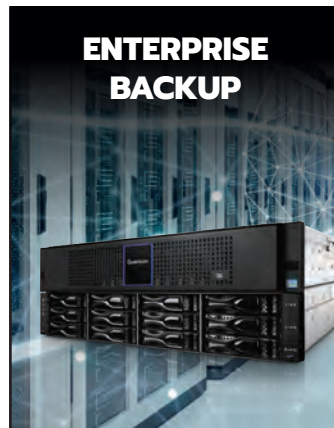
Edge computing is the solution many businesses and service providers are turning to, where decentralised strategies allow data, applications and content to be processed at the network edge. And with the edge computing market predicted to grow at a CAGR rate of 29.4%, resellers need to act fast to capitalise on the opportunity.

Identify the edge opportunity

Edge computing may still be in relative infancy, but the likelihood of future mass adoption is increasing. Covid-19 has already increased uptake of mobile



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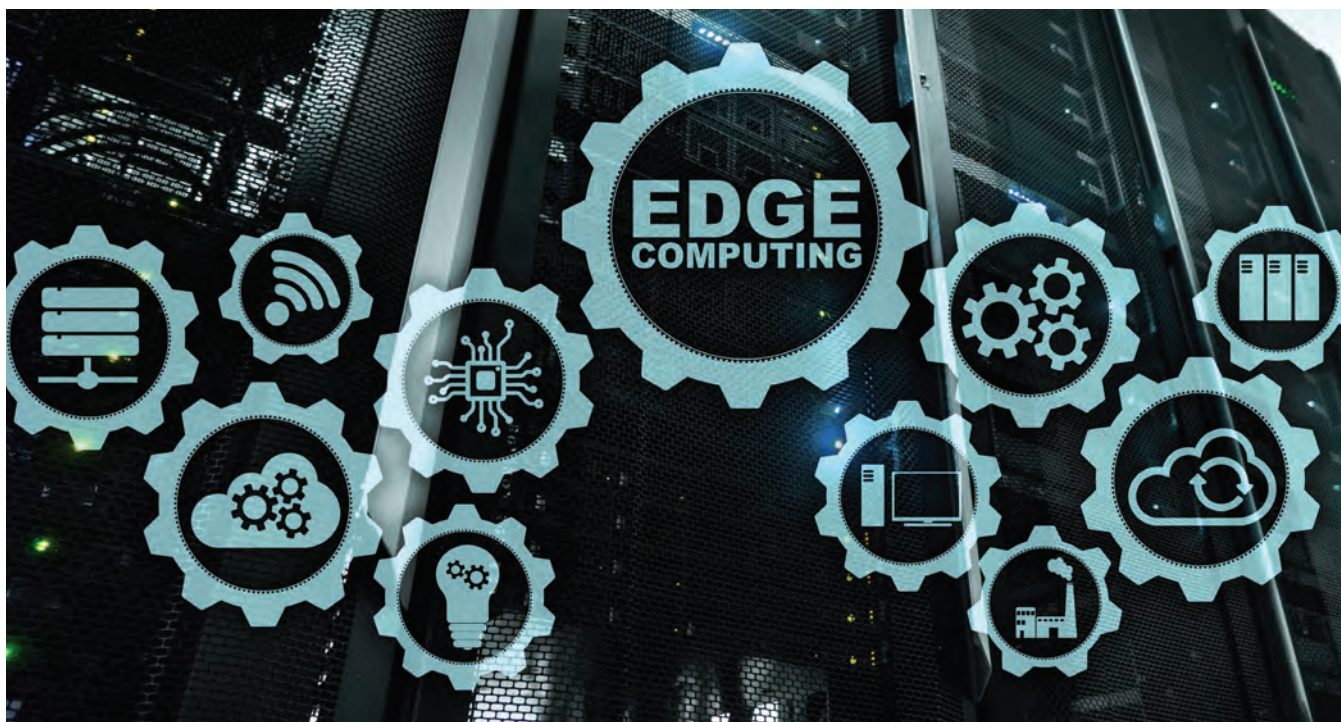
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and hybrid working models, and in the long-term enterprises will need a way of ensuring users can tap into low latency connections, regardless of location. Resellers need to look at where there may be opportunities to diversify to meet evolving customer demands, including the top industry sectors likely to tap into the edge opportunity, such as those with high dispersal of data.

At the same time, before channel organisations can truly capitalise on the edge, they need to understand the technology. Some may view edge as end devices on a network, while others perceive it as endpoint devices. It is much more accurately described however as the linking of end user devices via the edge of public cloud.

Resellers need to ensure their employee base is upskilled on what edge computing is and if internal expertise does not exist to do so, identify a partner that can provide the support and training required.

Develop an edge network

As cloud adoption has increased, many resellers have developed public cloud portfolios. But fully public cloud is expensive and as data volumes continue to expand organisations will seek to move towards hybrid and multi-cloud strategies instead. As a result, resellers will need to diversify to offer end-to-end cloud solutions, whether by building a portfolio organically or connecting to a national network of data centres and cloud platforms to access new markets and revenue streams quickly. At the same time, having data travel back to a single centralised location no longer makes sense as network traffic increases across regions, leading to congestion. Organisations will want to spread the load among several regional

edge data centres to allow the processing of data closer to each end user, simultaneously reducing network strain and improving latency. Resellers will need to develop the edge network to facilitate this approach.

The ultimate goal is bringing data as close as possible to customers, and this means picking an infrastructure partner that can provide wide geographical coverage via sites situated across the UK. Preferably one with a series of regional connectivity hubs to deliver a low-latency, agile, high-capacity network to customers.

Exercise expertise

Today many customers know their business challenge but are unsure of how to overcome it. This will be apparent more than ever with edge computing, providing resellers with an unprecedented opportunity to act as the trusted advisor.

Edge also opens the door to complex new opportunities such as artificial intelligence and machine learning and businesses will be looking for guidance and support on how best to implement edge within their organisation. The channel has a key role to play in guiding them on their transformation and delivering bespoke offerings to meet individual requirements.

As post-pandemic normality returns, organisations will be looking for ways to facilitate faster and more efficient data processing as demand grows and the edge opportunity is one that channel organisations can't let pass by. With the potential for increased revenues and margins, the onus is on resellers to develop their own multi-cloud and edge solutions as soon as possible or lose out to those that do.

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Network automation is an opportunity for the channel in the post-pandemic world

IT resellers operating in today's post-pandemic world face a raft of challenges. They need to consider how best to add value in terms of delivering additional services and their own bespoke IP, beyond simply reselling kit, thus increasing their profitability whilst building longer-term trusted relationships with their customers.

BY ALAN STEWART-BROWN, VP EMEA, **OPENGEAR**

THEY ALSO NEED to think about how they can best maximise their organisation's value and relevance in today's hybrid working environment. Perhaps most of important of all, they need to be innovative. Prioritising innovation is the key to the channel unlocking post-crisis growth opportunities.

One way they can do this is by embracing network automation, the process of automating the configuration, management, testing, deployment, and operation of both physical and virtual network devices within an IT network.

Challenges and opportunities

Network automation can potentially help the channel both in streamlining its own operations and helping them drive efficiencies for customers. It helps resellers do everything from overcoming the negative impacts of the IT skills gap and global IT staffing shortages through to scaling infrastructures and accelerating the speed of deployment of systems for customers.

Network automation delivers consistency of network management, a key benefit for many VAR's and MSP's. They are able to predictably make changes to

production networks and achieve the desired result. Network automation also allows for the creation of a standardised base template for the organisation and the network engineers and consumers (helpdesk, IT engineers, network operations centre) of the network to dynamically fill in values as needed.

VAR's can also standardise network infrastructures more precisely through network automation. The secret is 'infrastructure as code', which means managing your IT infrastructure using configuration files and applying the same source control techniques used in software development. In other words, it means maintaining the state and configuration of your infrastructure with the same processes and rigour that developers use to manage source code. We see a natural evolution from traditional network engineer roles moving ever more into the DevOps world. NetOps automation is the bridge.

Much like application code, configuration files for compute, storage, networking, and other resources can be versioned, peer reviewed, approved, merged, staged, and tested before deploying into production. Network as code is applying the same infrastructure-as-code principles to the network domain from the data centre to the edge, to multi-cloud environments. Network automation also supports faster analysis and problem resolution for resellers. Even though most network management systems collect the network data, organisations may be challenged in identifying and troubleshooting problems without knowing the network topology. Keeping the network topology drawings updated is a tedious, often neglected, task in the era of having to do more with less.

Complex network analysis involves multiple sources of data, such as from configuration files, events, and operational data. The combination of network automation and network analytics can provide deeper insights into performance, utilization, security, and resource allocation and help you automate analysis tasks and resolve issues more quickly than manual techniques.

High-quality network automation can also bring resellers improved productivity. With repetitive tasks removed, they can focus more on strategic activities like identifying new opportunities or driving new business improvements.

Beyond pure functionality network automation can bring other significant opportunities to the channel. Today, we are seeing many of the larger value added resellers building out their managed service provider (MSP) business units to provide a wider range of value-added services to their corporate clients. It started with cloud-based services and cyber-security services but has now expanded to embrace network management applications with many VARs offering outsourced infrastructure provisioning through the

use of automation and remote OOB management tools that can also help deliver a high level of network resilience and failover services.

Coupled with this, the ongoing move of network infrastructure to the edge and cloud brings further opportunities to the channel, particularly in terms of offering their customers value added services. These are opportunities that ambitious channel players can't afford to miss if they want to avoid the prospect of being left behind.

Looking to the future

According to research carried out by McKinsey & Co in 2020, polling executives from more than 200 organisations, 90% believe that the COVID-19 crisis will fundamentally change the way they do business over the next five years and two out three believe that this will be the most challenging moment in their executive career. Only 21% feel they have the expertise and internal IT resources to pursue new growth opportunities successfully.

VAR's can also standardise network infrastructures more precisely through network automation. The secret is 'infrastructure as code', which means managing your IT infrastructure using configuration files and applying the same source control techniques used in software development. In other words, it means maintaining the state and configuration of your infrastructure with the same processes and rigour that developers use to manage source code

This is where the opportunity lies for the channel. Just as Software Defined Networking (SDN) is growing very fast, so is the need for automation and it is those channel partners that take a 'trusted advisor' approach and that are able to offer value added services that will be the really big winners. Those channel resellers that provide their own proven 'service wrapper' that meets the requirements and relevant SLAs to help clients speed up new deployments and accelerates their digital transformation goals will be sought after both today and well into the future.

M-BiTS: the evolution of the traditional MSP model

As a Managed Service Provider (MSP), the past 15 months have been defined by disruption and uncertainty. Businesses were suddenly faced with ensuring their tech stack could operate securely and efficiently at a remote level almost overnight.

BY TAREK MELITI, CEO AT TDM GROUP



THOSE CUSTOMERS who didn't previously rely on MSPs, suddenly realised their value due to the sudden need to support the global shift to remote working – this was most noticeable amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These businesses were the least likely to have planned for such a seismic change in operations and needed to rapidly alter the way they worked and the technology they used to ensure business continuity. Consequently, the managed services model has become more hands-on in terms of business strategy amid the Covid-19 pandemic, creating new opportunities for TDM Group.

As we shift our attention to driving business recovery post-Covid, it is important to take a step back and ask ourselves: does the traditional MSP model offer everything businesses need to bounce back better? As an MSP, we are suppliers of vital day-to-day IT services have the potential to save businesses time and money by adding value to the daily operation of their IT department; while increasing skills, knowledge and vigilance. However, in isolation, an MSP might lack the foresight required to harness technology's potential to act as a business enabler. Instead, it remains a cost centre: an essential department that doesn't directly add to profit but still costs the business money to operate.

Why partner with an MSP?

From the outset, an MSP is an outsourced third-party company that manages and assumes the responsibility of a defined set of day-to-day management services to its customers. In terms of IT, this includes networks, applications, infrastructure and security, via ongoing and regular support and active administration on customers' premises, external data centres (hosting), or in the public cloud.

Why is this model useful? As a business grows, its technology and IT needs also grow, which can create an added workload on existing IT teams. Bringing in an MSP can help free up teams and provide the necessary technical expertise to support a business's changing IT needs. When a business chooses to work with an MSP, they typically receive a Service Level Agreement (SLA), which guarantees a base level of quality of service to the customer.

For many businesses, MSPs can provide the means to shift from a CAPEX (capital expense) model, towards an OPEX (operating expense) model, offering an immediate impact to the bottom line. Ultimately, on paper at least, MSPs have the potential to save your business time and money, while also increasing your skills, knowledge and technical capabilities. A return on investment such as this is highly valued by many businesses – especially the most cash-strapped, as employees pick-up and retain vital skills at no extra cost through the partnership.

Discussing the drawbacks

As mentioned, this model has been widely deployed throughout the pandemic, providing businesses and their IT departments with the tools they need to rapidly and securely pivot from a brick and mortar operation, to a remote one. However, even before the pandemic, this model – and the businesses that employ it – have often been constrained by the Achilles heel of MSPs: who typically focus on the technical aspects of IT.



In other words, despite adding value to the daily operation of an IT department, MSPs concentrate on addressing typical IT-related pain points, such as unsupported users and devices, or neglected networks and data concerns. However, this approach may impact the potential of an IT department to act as a business enabler, causing it to remain a cost centre. Therefore, attitudes towards IT departments are often negative; they're viewed as the gatekeepers of technology, with the power to derail projects or add unwanted delay to positive business change.

Yes, technology and supporting the daily operation of an IT department has the power to deliver greater efficiency and create new competitive advantages, particularly for SMEs that may not have the right in-house capabilities. Yes, the MSP community has played a critical role as suppliers of IT services throughout Covid-19. However, even before the pandemic, business leaders were looking for partners that looked beyond the IT department to harness its true potential and add tangible value, rather than simply keeping things ticking along as they were.

There was a desire amongst businesses to work with MSPs that provided a more comprehensive and transformative level of support, particularly when it came to smaller enterprises. In the context of Covid-19 and the present need to drive recovery and growth, there now is an obvious opportunity for MSPs to revisit and rethink this demand to evolve and diversify their services.

M-BiTS: recognising the importance of tech for your business

At TDM Group, we recognised that there's much more to managing IT and digital transformation than just technology and being responsible for a defined set of day-to-day management services. Not only did we acknowledge this, we also began to look at how we can add to our tried-and-tested, traditional model and offer an IT strategy that considers an organisation as a whole – not just the technology.

Imagine your business could engage with an IT partner that offers the complete package: IT services that address common day-to-day technical pain points, while also considering the impact technology has on the entire business and its growth strategy – the perfect mix of technical know-how and business acumen. We call this our Managed Business IT Service (M-BiTS). Our M-BiTS offering recognises there is more to IT and digital transformation than just technology. In fact, there are various building blocks within a business – data, process, technology – that not only need considering; they need to be balanced and a good relationship maintained between them to manage IT operations effectively and deliver innovative change.

So, whether a business is engaging with existing IT systems or exploring new ones, M-BiTS considers the



interactions of people at every stage of the process – from the suppliers to the users and management. This holistic approach recognises that each building block is underpinned by a human element.

With people at its core, opting for an M-BiTS-style service means businesses are privy to a comprehensive strategy that delivers relevant IT services within the context of the business, helping align IT requirements with the business strategy. In practice, this means that potential weaknesses and vulnerabilities within an organisation can be easily identified, not just in terms of technology, but people, process and data as well.

Ensuring SME survival

It goes without saying that the traditional MSP model serves a useful purpose, with a proven track record which has allowed businesses to save time and money. Scratch the surface a little and you begin to realise that there are some limitations around delivering a successful business strategy. With this in mind, MSPs will be viewed as cost centres to many businesses if the necessary business support is not on offer. The ongoing challenge of supporting SMEs with rebuilding and rebounding from the pandemic has fostered a desire amongst business owners to embrace a holistic approach to managing IT.

The M-BiTS service goes further than simply addressing typical IT-related pain points; it considers the impact technology has on the entire business and its growth strategy, helping to drive a business forward. Therefore, SMEs will be better supported and in a stronger position to recover in a post-Covid landscape.

As an M-BiTS provider we go above and beyond the limitations of the traditional MSP model when it comes to addressing IT issues. When looking at these issues, we always have the impact technology has on the business in the forefront of our minds. Driving our partners business forward through the latest technologies and solutions is core to the M-BiTS philosophy and service. Therefore, businesses that embrace M-BiTS will be better supported and in a stronger position to recover in the post-Covid world.



The value of partner programmes in building lasting customer relationships



Whether it's a distributor, a partner or an end-customer, developing close relationships with your network is crucial to doing good business. To

achieve better collaboration and closer alignment, manufacturers can look to enact a channel programme to provide partners with the support and tools needed to deliver the best possible experience to their customers.

**BY LEE UNDERWOOD, CHANNEL MANAGER
UK&I AT SNOM TECHNOLOGY GMBH**

TO AID RESELLERS in this role, a partner programme should incorporate three core pillars; good portals of communication, on-the-ground sales teams who can share local knowledge and, finally, real benefits. By encompassing these three areas, manufacturers can feel confident that they win, their partners win, and – most importantly – that the customer wins.

1) Incorporate feedback

Resellers are the ones who are out in the thick of it, having those conversations with customers day-in, day-out. As such, it's vital that any channel programme provides them with the opportunity to share those conversations and any insights about what they're hearing out in the market. This will give everyone a real grasp of current demand and where businesses are looking to innovate.

Not only will this ensure that, when new products are released, there is a genuine demand based on customer need but authentic conversations where resellers can turn around and say, "we listened, we fed back, here's what you asked for."

It's important to make it easy for partners to share any feedback. For example, would they benefit from an annual event where they can all come together, network and share their challenges and focus areas for the year ahead? Perhaps they would prefer to complete a 2-minute survey every few months, or share ongoing feedback via a dedicated channel. Thinking about how partners might want to share feedback, and the channels they can use to do so, will help you to build a stronger partnership together in the long-term.

2) Local infrastructure and sales support

When customers are spread across the globe and working in multiple countries, having access to regional support can make a huge difference to partners who are on the ground, and need to grasp cultural nuances and other knowledge that is relevant to where the customer is based.

On a practical level, being able to call on a wider network of sales staff who are able to speak the local language could have a huge impact on a partner's ability to work with customers successfully. And from a marketing perspective, they will be able to share which topics are trending in the news and how a customer might be able to latch onto those. Operating in this decentralised way means you can have dedicated sales offices in each region, and tech

support teams who can be there for on-site and/or virtually as they are needed.

3) Delivering benefits that matter

Consumers are accustomed to being rewarded for their loyalty to brands – whether that's visiting the supermarket and gaining points to spend on the next weekly shop, or receiving a special discount for shopping online.

The same applies in a B2B setting. To develop good relationships and a 'one team' mentality, it's crucial that any programme offers resellers a clear path to greater benefits. This could include financial incentives such as after-sales bonuses, discounts that can be passed onto the customer, or free products that will benefit their business communications, such as IP phones. Or there may be more practical advantages available, such as marketing support. Technical training could also be offered as a way to help partners share a higher level of know-how when consulting, selling and deploying various solutions and products.

Customers need to feel that doing business with you is a fantastic experience, where both of you can mutually benefit from the relationship. Focusing on these three areas will ensure that the bonds you form are lasting, rather than purely transactional.



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OCT 26

How businesses in the channel can leverage technology to re-engage their workforce post-pandemic

While employers around the world worked hard to digitalise their services and equip their teams for remote working during the pandemic, most were acting under the impression that what they were doing would protect them against lost revenue by keeping business moving. However, productivity is about more than just means; it's about minds. It may come as a shock to some of these businesses to learn that, despite some of their best efforts to keep workers virtually tethered to their roles, their biggest cost could come in the form of employee disengagement.

BY GREIG JOHNSTON, CEO AT **ENGAGE4**



ACCORDING TO Gallup's State Of The Global Workplace report, employee disengagement during the first year of the pandemic cost businesses a staggering £3.6 trillion, primarily due to feelings of isolation and disconnection as a result of working from home.

For those in the technology sector, such as IT services companies, resellers, and distributors, the concept of a distributed workforce won't be entirely new, but that hasn't necessarily made the 'disengagement crisis' caused by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns any easier to weather. While the majority of these businesses will have been set up for remote working technically, how many were set up for the challenge of remote working culturally?

The cost of disengagement

It's easy to pigeonhole disengagement as a productivity or performance issue, but the true cost of disengagement can manifest itself in a number of different ways. When employees switch to remote working en masse, it leaves businesses with a critical

cultural blindspot that can not only lead to poor performance and productivity, but much wider issues to do with feedback loops, employee appraisals, training, HR processes and business identity. If talks around the water cooler are moved onto Slack or Yammer, and staff appraisals become fifteen-minute Zoom calls on a Friday afternoon, a business might suddenly find itself in a position where it's stagnating because its employees no longer have a voice.

This rich culture of feedback, engagement and inclusivity must be preserved at all costs, but it cannot be replicated using a messy combination of WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, Slack channels and Skype calls. There needs to be a unified and consistent approach to creating or maintaining workplace culture in a distributed environment, and that requires a unified and consistent platform.

Unification through technology

The average home-working employee is expected to use more than eight different apps to communicate and collaborate with their colleagues on a weekly



basis. This problem isn't new either. Even prior to the pandemic, an employee advocacy survey found that 74% of employees felt like they were "missing out" on company information and news, 53% of those surveyed said they'd feel more connected if all business communications were handled through a single platform instead of several disparate ones.

If it wasn't clear when this survey was carried out in 2015, it's certainly clear now following the events of the pandemic; companies need to rethink communications for a mobile, distributed workforce. Instead of throwing more apps at the problem, why not focus on a singular platform that provides multi-media sharing, group chats, employee polling, training and HR functions, all under one roof?

Engagement is more than simply keeping a line of communication open, it's about involving employees in company culture, offering them a seat at the table for important announcements and discussions, and finding a way to virtualise those watercooler moments

where experience is shared and breakthroughs happen. This is the kind of engagement we're talking about when we refer to a 'disengagement crisis'. If things like direct messages from the CEO can be pushed out to employees' phones via an app, or they can be invited to vote on an important business issue via an online poll, they're far more likely to feel invested in their role.

The same platform could also be used to onboard new candidates and give access to important documents and training materials, streamlining the entire process. Nearly 70% of employees are more likely to stay with a company for three years or more if they had a good onboarding experience; that's worth remembering now more than ever as we emerge from the pandemic in a candidate's market.

A single platform that unifies all of the above functions can become the ideal digital companion for senior management teams looking to get ahead of the curve and prepare for the challenges posed by the new post-pandemic landscape.



The Cloud is not a location

It turns out that you can have the cloud experience anywhere you need it to be – in a data centre, in the public cloud, or at the edge.

BY ADAM GLICK - SR. DIRECTOR, **DELL APEX PORTFOLIO**



MANY CUSTOMERS I've spoken to think of the cloud as a location – specifically, the public cloud – a place to go to unlock speed, agility, and increased innovation for their development and IT organization. They look to the public cloud to give them the power to instantly spin up resources when needed – and shut them down when they're not.

Since this became popular with the rise of public clouds, these customers think the public cloud is the only place they can take advantage of managed services and automation to reduce the burden of operating their own infrastructure. As I've had these conversations, it's clear that they are associating the benefits of agility, speed, and rapid innovation with the

location where they were first achieving those benefits. They looked to the public cloud to give them the flexibility to rapidly pivot their applications – or even their entire businesses – as the market, or business, needs changed.

Many organizations assume that by relocating applications to the public cloud, they'll automatically gain these benefits, but that experience rarely works out. I often joke that, "Proof of digital transformation is not a bill from a public cloud." It's not the location of your applications that's the catalyst for change, it's how you operate. When you think of the cloud as an experience, not a location, you start to see the true value of cloud.

Why you need the cloud experience at the hardware and software layers

Companies like VMware have worked for over a decade to bring the cloud experience to companies at the software layer. This has been great for customers but has also left many with questions about how to plan for the hardware layer. Capacity planning, large upfront capital expenses, and months-long hardware delivery times all limited on-premises cloud models to the resources on hand that were still planned in yearly cycles.

This is why solutions such as Dell Technologies APEX allow you to have that cloud experience of agility, speed, and increased innovation across your entire IT environment at both the hardware and software layers. This is the cloud experience without the caveats (employee retraining, platform lock-in, loss of security control, decreased performance, increased costs, etc.) When you stop thinking about the cloud as a location – a place you go to derive the benefits of digital transformation – and start thinking of the cloud as an experience to gain speed, agility, and increased innovation, you realize that the cloud can be anywhere you need it to be—in a data center, in the public cloud, or at the edge.

Why is this so important? According to recent ESG research, a full 88% of businesses have cloud strategies that include on-premises infrastructure. These companies are often looking to balance investments both on premises and in the public cloud, but with this comes the complexity of managing capital expenditures, capacity planning, and the need for periodic refreshes. In short, it's complicated, error prone, and time consuming – and a key benefit of APEX is bringing that same speed, agility, and increased innovation of the public cloud experience anywhere. For some businesses, it can be as simple as helping them build their own private cloud so they can keep their data stored locally for security or compliance reasons. For others, they might need to take advantage of the edge with low latency computing in locations with unreliable, slow, or expensive internet connections. No matter the scenario, we provide a cloud experience to you where they need it.

Embracing the as-a-service model as the foundation for cloud

The best part of all of this is that you can get started today. Instead of overbuying physical storage to ensure you never run out of it, you can invest in storage-as-a-service now with minimal upfront capital cost while you transform your approach to your on-premises footprint. Just this small embrace of the as-a-service model shifts the way you approach accounting and the amount of capacity planning you need to do. That's a great first step in your cloud journey and far more productive than just moving a VM into someone else's data center and thinking that the way you operate, or the benefits you'll gain, will

change. It's also much less disruptive than going all (locked) in with a public cloud provider.

At the end of the day, there is no one solution that will work for every customer. IT, by its very nature, is bespoke. The flexibility of core infrastructure has been the engine of progress for over 20 years—the cloud shift has only kept that going.

Almost every customer I've spoken with is looking for a practical way to increase the agility of their business while minimizing the risk and disruption of making that change. The customers doing it best are the ones that are pragmatic about where to run each of their applications. They understand that cloud is an experience, a way of operating that is best achieved in a consistent way, everywhere that they need to operate—from the data center, to the public cloud, and out to the edge. We don't think you should be limited in where you run your applications and we've created APEX to help you run what you want, where you want, the way that you want. We want to give you your cloud experience—and the speed, agility, and increased innovation that comes with it—no matter where you need it.

For some businesses, it can be as simple as helping them build their own private cloud so they can keep their data stored locally for security or compliance reasons. For others, they might need to take advantage of the edge with low latency computing in locations with unreliable, slow, or expensive internet connections. No matter the scenario, we provide a cloud experience to you where they need it



How you infrastructure and work culture can help scale effectively

A great infrastructure offers more than just a better workplace. For organisations, it is tied directly to their profitability and growth. When scaling your business, you need a culturally aligned workforce with better engagement and higher productivity.

BY IT GLUE

Research shows that positive work culture can drive employee engagement by up to 30%. It's no wonder that culturally aligned workplaces are easier to scale. Let's explore the significance of infrastructure and culture on your MSP growth whilst also discussing the different steps you can take to enhance the work culture in your organisation.

The Need for Healthy Infrastructure and Work Culture Work culture is tied directly to your organisation's success. With a positive work culture, you can motivate your employees to do better. When

employees are engaged, they deliver higher productivity and come up with innovative ideas that can take your MSP forward. However, a negative work culture results in disengaged employees who only do the bare minimum without putting in any extra effort.

Your infrastructure also plays a major role in driving organisational performance. The systems, programs, policies and processes you create in your organisation have to be executed efficiently every day. Unless they all complement each other, it will result in utter chaos. Most importantly, your infrastructure provides the parameters

by which your managers lead and your employees work. That's why you need to create an infrastructure that transforms your business goals into action.

Steps to Enhance Your Infrastructure and Work Culture

Powerful work culture isn't something that happens by chance. It should be thoughtfully planned and executed by the concerned stakeholders. When you purposefully develop and implement your infrastructure and organisational culture the right way, you can boost employee retention, reduce turnover, boost efficiency, increase growth and more. The following steps can help you create a powerful work culture:

● Invest in the Right Technology

The technicians in your MSP need the right tools to perform their tasks and achieve the desired results. When they are left with legacy tools to perform complex tasks, it leads to inefficiency and low productivity. It also causes employee frustration and contributes to poor work culture. Always update your tools and make sure they can be easily integrated with one another. · Promote Team Collaboration: A study by McKinsey estimated that work collaboration can increase productivity by up to 25%. You need to come up with innovative ways to boost collaboration even when your team is scattered across the globe. For instance, a simple documentation tool can facilitate easy information sharing and boost collaboration across your team.

· Create a Vision: Your employees need to take pride in their work. Otherwise, they will start questioning the purpose of their work, and this leads to dissatisfaction. You need to create a vision that clarifies your business objectives. Let your employees know what they are working for, how they have helped other companies and why their work matters. By constantly reminding them about your business goals, you can create an organisation where employees are aware of their significance.

● Reward Hardworking Employees

There is nothing more frustrating than hard work going unappreciated. When you fail to reward hard work, your employees' productivity suffers, and this affects your business in the long run. You need to create a culture where hard work is always rewarded. You could offer bonuses, extra holiday days, pay rises, etc., to let your employees know they matter. Also, try to get creative when rewarding your employees.

Benefits of a Positive Work Culture

A positive work culture can benefit you in more ways than you can imagine. It helps you create a holistic organisation that is reward-centred and communicative. Some of the key benefits of positive work culture are as follows.

● Higher Retention

Finding the right talent is very hard in the MSP industry. You don't want to lose your existing talent due to poor work culture. A positive work culture that provides the right work-life balance and focuses on employee well-being can help you retain your best talent.

● Boost Productivity

When employees feel their work matters, their overall productivity increases automatically. Employees who are valued at work are often ready to go the extra mile when it comes to job performance.

● Business Growth and Profitability

Companies that value their people are always rewarded at the end. When you take care of your employees, they take care of your customers, and this enables you to achieve business growth and profitability. Creating a positive work culture may take some effort, but it always results in a great financial outcome.

Building the Right Infrastructure

IT Glue is a documentation platform that tackles one of the most pressing issues for IT service providers: team efficiency. The documentation platform helps companies to document their business assets and processes, allowing for consistent process improvements, dramatic waste reduction, and improvement of their bottom lines. Once stored in IT Glue, they become a company asset, rather than a department or individual one, and staff can self-serve. This creates an organisation poised for growth, and free of the risks/costs associated with missing information.

Information is imported from PSA, RMM and other tools into IT Glue, where it is organised for ease of access. Document both hardware and software using automated processes to reduce the time it takes to onboard new clients. LucidChart and Word integrations help you document processes and documents as well. With relationship mapping and a robust search, your team will reduce the amount of time they waste looking for information by 50% or more. By automating much of your documentation, IT Glue helps streamline your operations and eliminate time waste. When you document your SOPs, contacts, locations and other information, your entire team can tap into the power of IT Glue. As a leading cloud-based documentation platform, IT Glue can help you automate the documentation process and promote team collaboration. IT Glue's SOC 2-compliant documentation platform features an immutable audit trail, multifactor authentication and next-generation password management engine, all of which are fully integrated and linked with all your documentation.

Documentation is a source of competitive advantage. When your processes are well-documented, they move from being individual knowledge to team knowledge. You execute consistently, and do not waste time looking for information, because it's always at your fingertips. Companies with a high level of documentation maturity enjoy higher revenue growth, increased cost savings and superior valuations. IT Glue can help you get there.

To know more about how IT Glue can help create a positive work culture, request a demo.



Five effective ways to reduce cybersecurity risk in 2021

With the rapid rise in cyberattacks in the past year, cybersecurity has quickly become the top priority for businesses around the world. With companies forced to switch to remote work to survive the pandemic, the stakes have never been higher.

BY KASEYA

IN 2020 alone, the National Vulnerability Database (NVD) published 18,362 vulnerabilities in total.¹ Many organizations, including U.S. government agencies, have recently fallen prey to various kinds of cyberattacks. The 2020 Cost of a Breach Report by the Ponemon Institute states that it takes, on average, about 280 days for companies to identify and contain a breach. This is a major concern since the longer a breach goes undetected, the more damage it can cause. IT leaders must constantly be vigilant to keep their infrastructure and data secure. Managing

security, of course, isn't just a one-time job. It is a continuous process that requires time, proactive effort and keeping up with ever-changing technology. Complete visibility requires the ability to discover all endpoints and network devices.

A remote monitoring and endpoint management solution takes care of the discovery process. With the discovery data, your endpoint management tool should then build a network topology map showing the connectivity of all devices. Having full visibility of

your IT networks is critical to detecting and resolving IT incidents that can disrupt services to the business. It is also crucial to IT security as well. For example, you must know what endpoints (Windows, Linux and macOS devices) are out there so you can regularly patch the software on those devices.

1. Gain Complete Visibility of Assets

Your remote monitoring and endpoint management solution gives you visibility and control of every endpoint and network device discovered on your network(s). An endpoint management tool, such as Kaseya VSA, automates the discovery process and provides a network topology map of your IT environment. This includes both agent-based and agentless devices. The VSA topology map also shows the up/down status of each device on the network and indicates if a node has any open alarms. This helps quickly identify potential problem sources so you can resolve issues faster.

2. Patch OSes, Browsers and Third-Party Applications

In 2020, about six percent of data breaches worldwide involved the exploitation of software vulnerabilities. Kaseya's 2020 State of IT Operations Report showed that only 58 percent of organizations patch critical operating system (OS) vulnerabilities within 30 days while only about a third apply critical patches for third-party apps within 30 days of release. Failing to patch all your software, including third-party applications, can put your business at major risk. Automate the process of patching with an endpoint management solution to ensure patches are deployed in a timely manner. You should strive to apply critical patches within 15 to 30 days of availability. Your endpoint management solution must be able to: With so many employees working remotely, patching off-network devices is extremely important to maintain endpoint security.

- Scan regularly for updates and missing patches
- Have visibility into the patch status of all endpoints
- Automate the patch process under the control of policies and profiles that manage patching complexity and ensure reliable outcomes
- Automatically notify about failed updates
- Patch remote, off-network devices (e.g. work-from-home users' computers)

3. Implement Multifactor Authentication (MFA)

How many times have you heard of people using passwords like "password123?" Probably more times than you can count. Password manager NordPass revealed that in 2020, "123456" was the most used password – used by more than 2.5 million people – and exposed more than 23 million times in data breaches.⁴ The second most popular password was "123456789." NordPass observed that the third most popular password, "picture1," took just three hours to crack. This information provides insight into how easily passwords can be cracked. That's why it should come

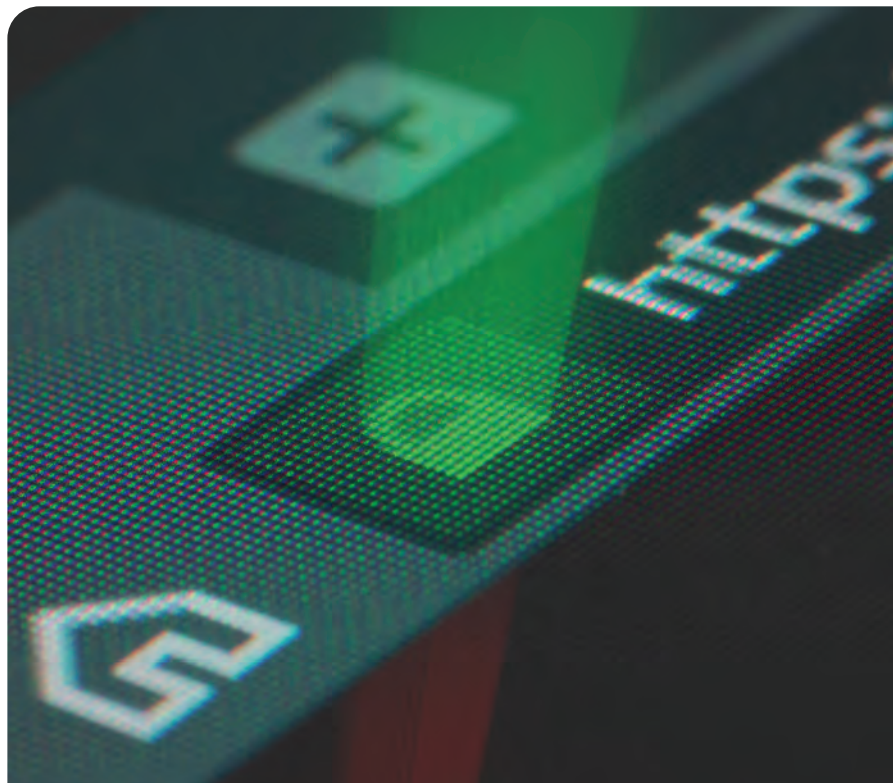
as no surprise that the credentials of many people are available for sale on the Dark Web. In fact, about 80 percent of hacking breaches involve brute force or stolen credentials.

This shows that passwords can no longer protect IT systems on their own. To boost security, businesses need a stronger mechanism that can hinder cybercriminals from easily penetrating systems. Two-factor authentication (2FA), a subset of MFA, ensures that all users logging into systems authenticate themselves with a second authentication mechanism other than a password, such as a code sent to their verified mobile phones, a text message on their phones or a USB key, which when inserted into their devices, allows them to log in securely. IT administrators should use 2FA to log into their endpoint management tools, adding this extra layer of login security for their core IT management solution.

- It isolates the process of providing application access from network access.
- It makes outbound-only connections, which makes networks and applications invisible to unauthorized users.
- Application access is granted on a one-to-one basis. Authorized users can only access specific applications rather than gaining full access to the network.
- ZTNA takes a user-to-application approach rather than a network-centric approach to security.

4. Implement Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA)

Zero Trust Network Access is an alternative approach



to securing access to internal applications compared to network-centric solutions like VPNs and firewalls. ZTNA is based on four key principles:

- It isolates the process of providing application access from network access.
- It makes outbound-only connections, which makes networks and applications invisible to unauthorized users.
- Application access is granted on a one-to-one basis. Authorized users can only access specific applications rather than gaining full access to the network.

ZTNA takes a user-to-application approach rather than a network-centric approach to security

A key consideration when choosing a ZTNA vendor is whether their solution integrates with Unified Endpoint Management solutions such as Kaseya VSA.

5. Manage Privilege Policies

A privileged user has administrative access to all your critical systems, which brings with it the risk of insider threats. As per the 2020 Cost of a Breach Report by the Ponemon Institute, seven percent of malicious breaches are caused by insiders.

Insider threats are mostly caused by employee negligence or due to disgruntled employees who choose to leak company data to cause the company

harm. While outsiders need to “break in” to get access to their victim’s data, insiders with privilege access can be more dangerous to a company since they can abuse this access with ease. Use tools to detect insider threats by monitoring:

- Manage Privilege Policies
- Logins at unusual times
- Unauthorized applications installed on devices
- New devices on restricted networks
- Attempts to gain access to sensitive information

Manage access privileges carefully across all your IT systems and applications. Kaseya VSA allows you to control access to your endpoint management tool by setting up roles and scopes for each user.

How Kaseya VSA Helps

Kaseya VSA, our unified remote monitoring and management™ solution, gives you the visibility and control you need to reduce risk while maintaining system and service availability. It enables you to keep your IT infrastructure secure with automated patch management and vulnerability management.

VSA is integrated with leading antivirus and antimalware solutions (AV/AM) as well as backup and disaster recovery (BDR) solutions so you can manage all your core IT security functions from a single console.



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