AMPL:FY

EXPLOIT THE UNCERTAINTY

UNCOVERING THE OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE IN THE CHANGING CHANNEL

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MS TEAMS DIRECT ROUTING:
Opportunity or Threat?

5 REASONS YOUR CUSTOMERS SAY NO TO
Unified Communications

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO
improve customer service

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FOREWORD

As the digital disruption continues, new business models and differentiation are being driven from the emerging UCaaS market and need to enable customers mobile requirements. In today's workplace, mobile working goes beyond just voice, with employees needing to seamlessly access all essential applications on any device. Perhaps most importantly is a robust data offering to support this new way of working. After all connectivity is the engine that drives mobility. Being able to offer robust mobility solutions to your customers will put you head and shoulders above the competition.

There is no doubt the next five years will be a defining time for the channel. Our focus for 2020 continues to reflect our core strategic objectives - building out our UCaaS proposition differentiated by fixed and mobile capabilities and enabling you - our partners - with an evolving set of digital platforms to help you grow your business.

This issue of Amplify will explore the key opportunities to take advantage of for your channel business to thrive, including how to effectively position a UCaaS proposition to your customers, top tips to create winning marketing content and whether or not

MS Teams Direct Routing presents an opportunity or threat to the channel.

I hope you enjoy reading the latest issue of Amplify.

Daryl Pile

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

WHAT'S THE WAY FORWARD?

In recent times much has changed and continues to change in communications with the most obvious catalyst being the emergence of the cloud as the force behind application deployment.

The result is that communications is no longer an IT silo, but rather a software capability easily consumable from the cloud and ready for integration within business applications and processes.

It means that communications and collaboration platforms are gaining in strategic importance, becoming centralised hubs for getting work done.

And getting work done is a priority in today's fast-paced environment where companies need their employees to perform smarter and work more productively.

Achieving that objective requires many things enabled including collaborative technologies integrated with business processes, which in turn will encourage collaborative behaviour throughout the business – all of which is seen as critical enablers for digital transformation journeys.

In today's multiple collaboration tools environment employees play a significant role in deciding what technology they want to use. They can now choose from a wide range of tools and technologies, including; voicemail, instant messaging, audio, video and web conferencing, group diaries and address books and more.

For example, increasingly, internet-based collaboration tools are being used to replace face-to-face meetings, allowing staff to work with a team in another office, in another company, or Unified Communications and Collaboration tools provide employees greater flexibility in how they work together and the better people work together, the more agile and profitable the business becomes.

The rate of change in technology this century has been significant so it is reasonable to expect more and more from each new wave of collaborative technologies as they evolve.

As a deployment method for delivering Unified Communications and Collaboration applications to business via the cloud (UCaaS), 2018 marked an inflection point. According to Nemertes, the research-advisory firm that specialises in analysing and quantifying the business value of emerging technologies, 67% of organisations now have at least part of their UCC applications in the cloud, while nearly one-third are all cloud.

SO WHAT IS NEEDED?

Looking ahead, there is a challenge within workforces in getting them to understand that collaborations tools are more than instant messaging tools. Suppliers that recognise these issues will therefore focus not just on the adoption of collaboration tools, but also on how to integrate workflows and external applications into team collaboration apps so they become a true hub for internal and external collaboration.

For enterprises considering the adoption of UCaaS there is a lot to consider, not least of which is the number of suppliers and applications available.

What is needed is practical advice from providers such as Gamma.

ACT NOW.

MS TEAMS

MS Teams Direct Routing: Opportunity or threat?

Paul Wakefield, is leading the product launch of MS Teams - Direct Routing. He has been the SIP Product Manager since joining Gamma in 2014, and has over twenty years of experience with the voice and wider telecoms industry.

Microsoft have tried to break into the telecoms space before – why is Teams and Direct Routing any different?

Microsoft have taken a strategic decision through "Direct Routing" and their API programme to support partners to drive their UC proposition and Teams enablement.

They recognise the role of the telco, delivery partnerships and customer choice around voice services and are in effect enabling the Channel to deliver voice on Teams, whilst securing the extended use of Teams as a complete UC platform. Microsoft will continue to be a dominant partner in any relationship but for the first time in at least a decade, this currently feels a little more like a real opportunity.

Fundamentally it's about the scale of the numbers:
- Microsoft have 77% of the global desktop market
- 200 Million O365 licences globally
- 7 Million UK O365 licences in UK
- Teams has 20 million daily active users with growth forecasts of achieving 50M users by the end of 2020
- 92% of users don't currently enable voice through "Calling Plans" which provides a significant market opportunity!

Microsoft will take a share of the global UC market – the question is how much?

What's Gamma's role?

Gamma's position will be to support the Channel as the #1 VoIP provider in the UK, building on our heritage and reputation for quality and service delivery. We will provide a commercially viable and feature rich Direct Routing solution, making it simple to provision and support via the Gamma Portal. The offer will appeal to existing Telecoms partners, IT businesses and Microsoft specialists looking for telecoms support.

Gamma will augment Phone System enablement with standard telecoms components such as free* minutes but also through our SIP Trunk Call Manager product - natively providing additional PBX and analytics capabilities in the Gamma cloud.

Where do you see the biggest opportunities within the portfolio for partners over the next 12 months?

There is a role for the Channel in both enabling Microsoft services, supporting deployment through professional services; technical expertise, customer service and product differentiation. The value for the user will be to provide an end-to-end working solution that meets their business needs. Microsoft Phone System isn't a fully-fledged PBX replacement today, although the development programme is heavily resourced and catching up quickly. This allows for opportunities for feature and service enhancements, either filling current feature gaps or augmenting the capability with integrated services such as cloud contact centre, business analytics; PCI services or other "niche" capabilities.

Are the old fears of Microsoft bypassing the Channel down the line gone?

As a Channel Partner, the key questions will always be, "Where do I add value" and "How do I make any money". It's in Microsoft's interests to support the Channel as a critical route to market, particularly with the blurring of the lines between traditional IT and Telecoms and enabling active users as opposed to simply selling licences.

Microsoft have been forecasted (Gartner) to take a third of the UK UC market by 2023, and if they want to achieve those kinds of numbers, Channel support will be crucial.

Gamma can support the Channel to enable voice within Teams by utilising the architecture model Microsoft have developed and is in their interest to support. We will provide a quality product, that is simple to consume (via the Gamma Portal) has robust operational and sales support and margin opportunity, to incorporate into your UC portfolio. For the first time in at least a decade, this currently feels a like a real Channel opportunity.

JAGUAR TELECOM

Jaguar Telecom are an award-winning provider of communication solutions to SME businesses in the South East. They are an experienced team of specialists who choose to use progressive technology, from reputable suppliers. Their core solutions are reliable, infinitely configurable, fully scalable and just what you need to future-proof your business-critical communications.

Their customers include the UK's largest Cash Converters franchise, a huge London Business Park and a waste management call centre, which is kitted out with Horizon Call Centre and Akixi call reporting. Jaguar Telecom enjoy pitching to a variety of different industries and the Horizon Subscription Framework (HSF) provides the flexibility they need, to offer bespoke solutions that meet each client's exact needs.

THE CHALLENGE

Finding new customers is their biggest challenge. Jaguar Telecom wanted to offer more for new prospects when qualifying requirements, but in a highly competitive market, differentiation is difficult and key to standing out. Following an exciting rebrand in 2019, Jaguar Telecom aim to grow their business by 10% in 2020. However, in order to achieve this objective, they need to offer more flexibility around Horizon commercials.

THE SOLUTION

Jaguar Telecom like the Gamma Portal and love the 'Horizon Manage Subscriptions' section. This gives them the ability to be able to instantly access information about their Horizon subscription base, using a variety of useful filters. They have a full and complete view, which means they can easily audit their customers.

The flexibility of the HSF has also been invaluable to Jaguar Telecom. The fact that it is possible to unassign and reuse subscriptions, while also mixing and matching contract terms per customer, means they are not negatively impacted should there be any sudden changes in customer requirements, or even if a customer goes out of business.

Jaguar Telecom also feel increased security now that there are no contract ties between Gamma and the end customer. The commercial arrangement with Gamma is now separate which puts Jaguar in complete control of how they work with their end customers.

The Horizon Fund means Jaguar Telecom can offer each customer a bespoke solution. They can choose which hardware they buy, for which customer and they make the most of this control by crafting specific deals to knock down potential sales barriers.

Jaguar Telecom found the roll out very slick, professional and well communicated. The training meant it was easy to pick up the 'simple to use' platform.

THE RESULTS

JAGUAR
TELECOM

The flexibility of HSF means Jaguar Telecom have increased opportunities to make more margin, especially by selling hardware that is purchased using the Horizon fund. Jaguar Telecom also feel that the ability to cross sell many Gamma products to one customer is the ideal strategy to meet their business goals. Keeping overheads down is key to success and Jaguar Telecom do this by utilising the support from Gamma's team, considering them as an extension to their own "back office".

Jaguar Telecom have had some success upselling Collaborate into their existing Horizon base, by using the Horizon fund to purchase headsets for these customers. It's great that the flexibility of the HSF mirrors the flexibility of Horizon bolt-ons, which is very appealing to end users. This has enabled Jaguar Telecom to target a wider range of customers.

Recently Jaguar Telecom won the business of a budget conscious customer by offering second-hand Horizon handsets at a discounted rate. However, the business still qualified for the Gamma Horizon fund, which Jaguar Telecom will put towards a larger deal currently in the pipeline.

"Our relationship with Gamma continues to go from strength to strength especially as products and services become more flexible, putting the Channel Partner first and in control."

Simon Tompkins, Managing Director, Jaguar Telecom

TELEFONIX

With more than 30 years in the telecoms business, Technical Alliance Partner, Telefonix, provide relevant, bespoke technology and communications solutions that enable their customers to focus on their core business. Their world-class solutions range from hosted voice solutions to high-speed business broadband connectivity, cloud collaboration tools, mobile phone SIMs, cloud computing, and cyber security.

Based in Farnham, Surrey, and with a team of dedicated employees, Telefonix pride themselves on gaining the trust of their customers to become their chosen technology partner, with ongoing service excellence being at the heart of everything they do.

THE CHALLENGE

With a saturated market, a challenge for any reseller is differentiation, which is often a struggle to accomplish. Telefonix wanted to set themselves apart from the competition by highlighting their dedication to providing excellent customer service and technical know-how. As defined by Telefonix's mission statement they eliminate the pain from ever changing and complex technology. Therefore, finding new ways to demonstrate added value and seeking ways to go above and beyond their customers' expectations was an important objective.

THE SOLUTION

In order to achieve the values that Telefonix hold firm, namely, outstanding customer service and continuous improvement, becoming a Technical Alliance Partner was the logical solution. The new status demonstrates to their end-customers that Telefonix have a highly skilled and accredited team with the technical skills and customer service elements to support their business. Becoming a Technical Alliance Partner has opened a wider range of training opportunities across the product set.

Additionally, Telefonix benefit from marketing support ranging from an accredited logo and marketing collateral through to annual marketing funding and access to Gamma's marketing team. Having access to Gamma's marketing team for marketing campaign strategy and execution will be beneficial in creating tailored content that will be bespoke to Telefonix's customers, setting them apart from their competition.

THE RESULT

Telefonix have ensured their staff are now fully accredited across all relevant products, enabling them to quickly solve any customer queries. Having the ability to design bespoke technology solutions that best meet each customer's specific requirements will result in a happy customer base that trust Telefonix completely. In such a crowded market differentiation is key, Telefonix now have an extra string to their bow that will bring many invaluable benefits.

telefonix
voice&data

TOP TIPS
FOR CREATING WINNING MARKETING CONTENT

Developing your company's marketing content takes a special skill that builds trust and positions your brand as an authority while avoiding a sales pitch. Easier said than done! So, we've pulled together our top tips for creating marketing content that performs:

Write what the customer wants to read
You work in the same industry as your target audience, so start by thinking, 'would I want to read that?'.
If you're struggling to come up with ideas of what your customers would want to read, talk to them – learn their pain points, goals and the words they use to describe what's important. This could give some valuable nuggets that you can then transform into killer marketing content. Starting copy with a problem your customer recognises will get their attention and help them relate.

Establish thought leadership
Your regular content is focused on the needs, questions, or problems and connects with prospects or current customers by helping them with a very specific issue they're researching or confronting in the moment.

Thought leadership content is different.

It speaks to an entire way of doing things. It will not usually deal with one practical, immediate problem. Instead, it is part of a broader industry conversation.

Thought leadership shouldn't be your entire content strategy, but it is an essential piece of the puzzle. Deep, insightful content of this kind helps distinguish your brand against your competitors, gain trust and position you as an authority in your industry.

Get more out of your existing content
Why reinvent the wheel? The best content takes time, effort, and skill to produce. Before you invest in creating new content look at the content you've already got – in particular the pieces that have produced the best results – and think about how you can repurpose it. See our infographic to discover how you can make the most out of your existing marketing content: 'The 3Rs of marketing content'.

Don't forget to make use of the resources available to you
Every Gamma Channel Partner has free access to Accelerate, our online partner marketing portal; a simple and secure platform that's designed to make it easy for you to customise white label marketing material, generate new leads and engage with prospects and customers.

As well as a range of premium campaign features, such as automated lead nurture workflows and web banners, Gamma Accelerate is home to over 400 pieces of collateral – from eGuides, infographics and campaign images, through to product brochures, logos and sales enablement guides.

Need help getting started with Accelerate?
Get in touch **accelerate@gamma.co.uk**

5G VISION

Duncan Finlay Head of Enterprise Product and Marketing at Three, sets out the 5G vision and asks if you're ready to join the journey.

In five years' time, the communication services we deliver to enterprises will look radically different thanks to the arrival of 5G. It will bring new business cases to the fore and change so much of what we know and do today. The numbers illustrating its potential are everywhere - Barclays suggests 5G could boost UK business revenues by up to £15.7bn by 2025 and we are certainly backing its potential at Three.

But I appreciate it's hard for boardrooms to understand and imagine how different the world will be, when 5G is such a new technology. It's put into perspective when you realise that the same report by Barclays indicates that 72% of businesses don't know what 5G is.

That's an important insight for the channel, one that screams there's an opportunity to become the trusted advisor and to help close the knowledge gap. Business leaders will look to the channel to help decipher the technology, break down the opportunities and establish the business case.

But you too need to be equipped for success. At Three we're committed to helping you succeed so we're exclusively investing in a channel strategy when it comes to delivering 5G to enterprises. We'll be focusing effort on building the best channel partnerships possible to deliver the extensive range of benefits 5G brings. It's considered a disruptive step, but that's our DNA.

We have a strong heritage to build on. Our Three Means Business campaign is driving success by providing more than just mobile services to entrepreneurs going places. We're already working with exciting verticals like broadcasters on their vast mobile data needs, and our private network capability has made great strides in industries and locations that rely on robust expansive communication links, like Heathrow Airport and one of the UK's biggest ports.

When it comes to 5G, you can expect to see a whole host of virtual reality and augmented reality applications drop into the market in the coming year. Innovative start-ups through to major brands will take a piece of the action. VR and AR will transform retail by giving people an enriched shopping and leisure experience, and help get complex product sales over the line.

Then of course there is the speed you can expect, which will go head-to-head with fixed line broadband. It's a very real alternative because it is so flexible and fast – hardware is connected in minutes, no call outs needed. Building sites across the country will be connected before the first foundation trench is dug; pop up shops will be online without any delay. They too will be able to experience the 500Mbps speeds our customers are already experiencing in London.

But we'll also have new experiences laid out before us thanks to 5G's low latency and fast speed. Everything from powering the communications in semi-autonomous vehicles to fully automated manufacturing production lines is on the to-do list. We'll see machines that

> **Barclays suggests 5G could boost UK business revenues by up to £15.7bn by 2025 and we are certainly backing its potential at Three**

automate the mundane, repetitive jobs relaying critical information in real-time over 5G. In fact, machines will be connected on unprecedented scale, to the extent that there's the potential for some 1 million devices per square kilometre to be supported by 5G. It means that the benefit to farming, health care, transport and smart cities, and a whole host of other IoT applications will come to fruition thanks to 5G.

We'll see in car entertainment for passengers, and safety for drivers ratchet up as with things like turn-assist technology. These advances and practical applications will soon help contribute to solving the bigger debates on safety in self-driving cars.

You may be saying, really? And I bet your customers will be too. But yes, it really is going to start happening. What's more Three is uniquely positioned to deliver these types of applications because only we have access to 100Mhz of contiguous spectrum that offers a 'Real' 5G experience.

We've made a £2bn investment in the end-to end network, including the

> **It means that the benefit to farming, health care, transport and smart cities, and a whole host of other IoT applications will come to fruition thanks to 5G.**

world's first cloud core network. This all adds up to us having unparalleled speed, low latency, capacity and flexibility. We've also maintained investment in 4G technologies too, upgrading sites, improving data speeds, freeing up 4G spectrum and capacity, and deploying new network technologies like carrier aggregation to maximise user experience and performance.

It means we are a cut above our competitors. And if we are, then you can be sure that you will be too when you work in partnership with Gamma. Its team is perfectly placed to help your customers harness the convergence of fixed and mobile.

In fact, it's Gamma experience and knowledge that gives us every confidence that channel partnerships are crucial to realising the potential of our 5G investments and the network leadership we have. Your expertise and skill will unlock the potential of 5G and make these use cases a reality. It's why we want to partner with the best so we can disrupt the market and grow together.

Through the partnership with Gamma we're offering access to the latest technologies, converged products and a partnership approach that combines our mutual expertise brilliantly in a way that you still own the customer relationship. We believe that together we can make the market predictions a reality. We're ready for the future. The only question that remains is whether you are too?
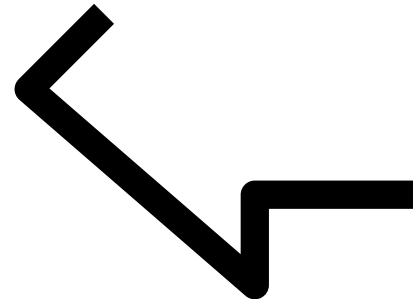
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CALL CENTRES: ALWAYS ON, ALWAYS AVAILABLE

The only constant in any industry is change.

In the technology and communications landscapes, vendors, suppliers, and businesses are constantly searching for new ways to deliver enhanced experiences to customers.

After all, today's customer expectations are higher than ever. No matter which vertical you work in, you can rest assured that your clients are looking for timely, personalised, and consistent service.

Whether speaking with an agent directly or taking advantage of automated self-service, these individuals expect every channel to be connected.

At the same time, we're also dealing with a changing workplace, in an age where people are working from locations other than a traditional office or call centre hub.

How do businesses deliver the kind of experiences customers need from a contact centre, while remaining open to this workplace revolution?

Embracing the changing workplace
We're living in a world where work is no longer a place, but a process. Cloud-based connectivity, applications and mobile technology enable us be productive from anywhere – and it's not only everyday office workers that are seeking digital work opportunities, but contact centre agents too.

Virtual contact centres are allowing geographically-dispersed agents to benefit from greater flexibility and engagement outside of the office.

The biggest driver of this new work environment? **Productivity.** Remote employees are increasingly proving that they can deliver better results than their office-based counterparts. Choosing your own environment for work helps you to maintain your motivation and inspiration at work.

The Virtual Contact Centre
There's now a growing demand for a virtual environment that can deliver the kind of always-on connections that modern employees and customers need.

The virtual contact centre offers benefits such as:
- **Greater hire flexibility**: You're not restricted to working with people who are closest to your business premises. Instead, you can hire talent from around the world. Contact centres can even recruit people from different time zones to provide 24/7 support for clients.
- **Reduced overheads**: You don't need to find the real-estate or pay for the running costs of a vast contact centre facility anymore. Your teams will have access to all the tools that they need in their own home. Your business can become software-focused, instead of relying on hardware.
- **Improved employee satisfaction**: Employees that have the option to work flexibly are more comfortable and happier in their environments. They are also less likely to abandon your workforce, and more likely to go above and beyond for customers.

However, there are challenges to consider.

Managing the always-on contact centre
Running a virtual contact centre, rather than a physical environment, means that you don't have as much control over agent activities. It's impossible to physically watch what people are doing, so you need to find another way to make sure that everything is running smoothly.

Tools for contact centre management can help supervisors and managers to regain control. They can check who's available in the contact centre at a moment's notice, and monitor and control agent activity in real time.

The power of the right tools leads to everything from improved customer conversations, to enhanced business metrics, and stronger client journeys.

What does the future hold?
Trends like flexible working and customer experience aren't going anywhere.

Businesses must embrace the always-on digital landscape, or risk falling behind.

Fortunately, choosing to explore the benefits of a cloud-based service for omnichannel communication could provide companies with new opportunities for efficiency and performance.

In the future, companies could provide their agents with everything they need to deliver sensational customer experience, with nothing but a cloud-based app. At the same time, this app can give agents and team leaders a 360-degree view of the interactions between customers and employees. This means that even with remote teams, companies can still monitor real-time data, understand business progress, and track end-to-end performance.

It's time to discover the value of the always-on contact centre.

BREAKING DOWN
BARRIERS TO IMPROVE
CUSTOMER SERVICE

Today, many organisations are on a journey towards Digital Transformation; changing the way in which they approach and interact with their clients as they endeavour to improve their customer service and avoid being digitally disrupted by competitors.

This digital revolution is changing the way enterprises manage customer engagement. New systems promise ever-more precise and accurate customer insights and journey analytics, but to be truly effective, this data must be available and actionable across the entire organisation - sales, marketing, operations, the contact centre, and more. Enterprises that retain the legacy divide between customer care and the rest of the enterprise risk sub-par customer experience (CX) and lost revenue opportunities.

There are however barriers to improving customer experience and in some cases organisation might be tripping over their own feet.

Often the blame is laid on the situation, another department or - perish the thought - customers when something doesn't go right in a customer experience. But, according to recent research by J.D. Power and Associates, J.D. Power, the global marketing information services company, the problem is more likely in the process, not the people.

Three of the biggest internal barriers to great customer experiences and ways to overcome them are seen as being;

1

FIRSTLY, PLACING A TOTAL FOCUS ON FIXING THE IMMEDIATE CUSTOMER PROBLEM

but not addressing the root cause – the customer need, but by asking yourselves questions about your own value proposition the cause can often be found.

- Why should customers do business with you instead of your competitors?
- What sets you apart from the others?
- What is your reason for doing business?
- What pain points to do you address for customers better than competitors?

2

WHEN ORGANISATIONS DEFINE THEIR VALUE, THEY CAN TEST EVERY PROBLEM AGAINST IT TO FIND ROOT AND FIX IT

This process can however cause a second significant barrier to improving customer experience. Enterprises often put efforts to improve the root cause of poor customer experience on the back burner because on paper it looks like a huge investment that doesn't carry much urgency. After all, the immediate problem has been fixed.

But researchers found that many companies don't invest in customer experience improvements because they aren't sure how to develop a solid business case with a quantifiable ROI. Instead, they take on the easy wins - not the bigger, lasting changes that provide the long-term benefits.

3

THIRDLY, AND THIS IS WHERE THE OLD ADAGE 'YOU CAN'T MANAGE WHAT YOU DON'T MEASURE' COMES IN TO PLAY

Almost every company today measures the customer experience with real-time and in-depth feedback, volumes of data and personal observation.

However, it doesn't matter how expensive or sophisticated the systems to gather are or aren't, most companies aren't using them to learn and manage relationships better. In other words, they are not managing their measurements.

The smart money can be seen in those companies that design a measurement system with actions in mind then find where they can make the biggest impact on the customer experience.

LASTLY, IS IT ALL WORTH IT?

Well, companies that recognise these internal barriers to creating great customer experiences and overcome them can see serious results. Received wisdom suggests that companies that provide higher quality experiences than their competitors also:

- Acquire customers at a faster rate
- Obtain a greater share of wallet
- Retain a larger portion of their customers
- Command higher prices for their products and services, and
- Reduce their costs to serve.

As a service provider, Gamma can not only provide the systems for ever-more precise and accurate customer insights and journey analytics, but also recognises the barriers many organisation face in their effective implementation.

HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS UNLOCK THE BENEFITS OF REMOTE WORKING

If the recent National Work from Home Day is anything to go by, remote working is here to stay. Far from being a trend along with office dogs and free beer in the fridge, the last few years (and a significant body of research) has shown that most businesses could benefit from at least offering employees the freedom to work from home.

But effective remote working is only possible with the help of the right communications infrastructure – and that means channel resellers need to help customers make the leap.Why remote working?

The benefits of remote working are varied, and you should certainly encourage your customers to take advantage. A recent study showed that 99% of workers said they'd like to work away from the office at least some of the time throughout their careers, with many citing benefits like flexibility and the freedom to travel as motivating factors.

Remote workers also regard themselves as more productive, with many saying they get more done than their colleagues in open plan offices. So it's not just employees who benefit: senior decision makers may see a productivity boost as a result. Not to mention the fact it can help to save on office costs.

The flipside of the coin
Yet for all the benefits of remote working, there are also a number of potential downsides – so channel resellers must be prepared to help customers address these issues. Not least because they could be used as customer objections during the sales process.

The biggest problem caused by remote working is often a social one. The quality of communication can suffer when in-office time is reduced; there's no denying it's easier to talk, collaborate and build relationships when you're in the same room.

When the Bustler study asked respondents about their biggest remote working struggle, 'loneliness' and 'collaboration and/or communication' were two of the most commonly cited issues. Another report found that '70% of remote employees feel left out of the workplace'.

It's not hard to see why. The reality is that while many businesses have embraced remote working, some haven't invested heavily enough in the tech to support it, meaning employees are relying on fairly basic tools with no real integration.

Using tech to tackle challenges
While mobile phones and laptops are certainly essential pieces of kit for those working out of the office, dialling into a conference where everybody else is sat around a table can be a disjointed, uncomfortable experience. And, as pleasant as working from home can be, many will miss the banter of the office and the ability to chat with colleagues as they work.

There's a balance to be had, and you can steer your customers towards achieving it. For example, by providing an ultra-reliable business class mobile network and the right handsets, you can help to ensure that employees are always able to communicate with each other – whether they're working from home, getting in touch from the road, or even sat in a local coffee shop.

Or, a tool like Gamma Collaborate can offer a unified experience with video calling, instant conferencing, and instant messaging, as well as calls. This can empower employees to seamlessly communicate with one another across a range of channels, moving between platforms as required for maximum efficiency.

Employees can even utilise a 'Presence' feature which shows how a staff member is best contactable – all of which should tackle some of the inherent problems of remote working, as well as improving the employee experience.

Remote working: the new normal
Increasingly, remote working is less of an employee perk, and more of a basic expectation. To attract and retain the best staff, your customers will need to get on board – meaning the number of potential businesses looking to implement the relevant technology will undoubtedly increase over the coming years. Channel resellers should be prepared to adjust to this new normal, with a clear strategy in place to help customers get the tools and platforms they need.

CRITERION SYSTEMS

Criterion pride themselves on offering great value business communication, telephone systems, mobiles and line rental services to their customers, including hosted, hybrid and pure IP business phone systems. Based in Stockport near Manchester, they work with small and medium-sized enterprises, from 2 to 5000 users.

"We have no doubt that Accelerate has done what it says on the tin and has 'accelerated' our business. The pre-configured content is fantastic; we have run several campaigns already and intend to run many more. The Gamma marketing team are always helpful and have a good understanding of our industry, as well as our products and services."

Lee Smith, Managing Director, Criterion Systems Ltd

THE CHALLENGE

With different marketing activities being run across multiple platforms, including Mailchimp, SendGrid, HubSpot and Beanstalk, Criterion had no real method of accurately measuring their return on investment.

With telephony relatively low on most businesses priority until things go wrong, combined with the competitive and fast-moving pace of the industry, Criterion were finding that most of the old-fashioned marketing strategies failed to get past the receptionist.

THE SOLUTION

Criterion have embraced the Accelerate platform as their 'go to' marketing platform of choice. Through Accelerate's lead nurture capabilities, they're ensuring they're at the forefront of their prospects minds at the optimum time – whether it's prompted by an urgent fault or part of a system review.
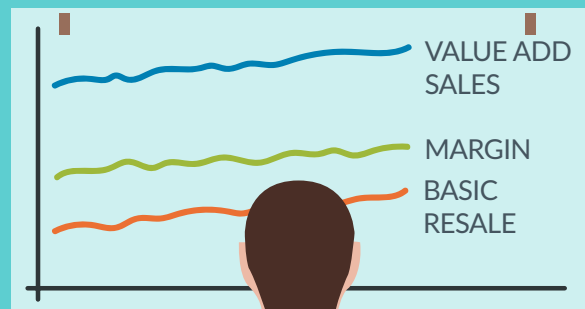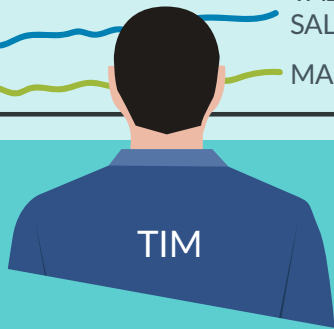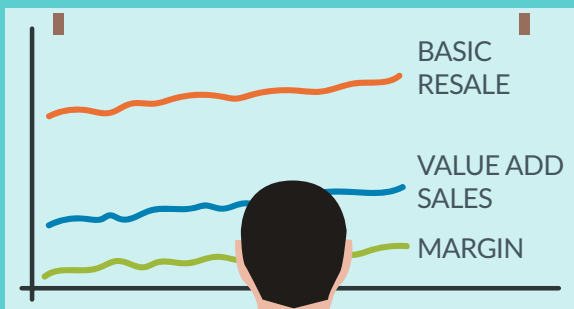
They've run several campaigns through Accelerate, making the most of both the customisable white label campaign material available, as well as the ability to send their regular customer communications through it.

THE RESULT

Criterion have generated around 90 hot leads since they started using the platform and gained several new customers as a result of their Accelerate marketing campaigns, with many more opportunities being nurtured and still to be reaped.

By making use of the high quality, well-presented white label emails, Criterions unsubscribe rate is very low. They've also noticed a positive improvement on their marketing campaigns consistently reaching and resonating with the right decision makers.

WITHOUT THE NETWORK NOTHING WORKS

Richard Thomas, CEO at Highlight explores the network.

It's easy to get carried away. Applications are cool. There's that slick user interface. The ability to pull up names, numbers, sales figures wherever you are. Create conference calls and screen-shares. Link from one service to the other and into the Cloud. And the sheer satisfaction of delivering something that makes your customer smile.

It's easy to get carried away. Applications are cool. There's that slick user interface. The ability to pull up names, numbers, sales figures wherever you are. Create conference calls and screen-shares. Link from one service to the other and into the Cloud. And the sheer satisfaction of delivering something that makes your customer smile.

So as a channel reseller, that's your space. You're working hard to build a better service than your competitors. Unified Communications, Collaboration, Security… naturally, you want to focus on the applications - but it's too easy to take your eye off what's happening underneath.

I'm talking about the network. The underlying connectivity. Because all the applications, all the traffic shaping, all the Software-Defined cleverness in the world won't help you if the network they're running on is broken, slow, erratic or badly managed. Bandwidth may seem like a commodity, and in some ways it is, but that doesn't mean you can forget about it.

Bread – that simple staff-of-life stuff – is a commodity, and yet there is a giant range of breads available, from crunchy, still-warm artisan sourdough that you can't stop eating, to plastic-wrapped sandwich loaves which basically just give you something to hold the cheese while you eat it. And if you don't think about bread – if all you ever do is just grab a basic loaf off the shelf, out of habit, because you're too busy thinking about what you're going to put in the sandwich - then you're not in control of things. While you're not looking, bread suppliers can gradually change what's in the wrapper, use simpler ingredients, boost their margins. As long as they keep the packaging the same, you're buying the same thing, right? Worse, you don't realise the value that great bread can add to a sandwich, you can't price it properly, and you can't match it to your chosen market. Getting the quality right lets you charge more, and retain those customers who'll otherwise drift away to one of your competitors who is paying attention to each and every layer.

OK, using "Layer" there was a cheap segue back into networking. But the principle remains the same. Applications are cool, but without the network, nothing works - so who you buy your connectivity from and how you use it, monitor it and work with it, matters a lot. Bandwidth is not just bandwidth. As your customers demand mobility and cost-control,

applications that sat comfortably on Ethernet now have to work over WiFi, Broadband Internet, 4G/5G. So try these two things:

1. Recognise that you are quite possibly the first person ever to try running that application, with that usage pattern, over that network technology. If you don't do it already, allocate some resources in your business to testing and getting to know these network types in a controlled manner: what you can and can't expect, what promises you can and can't make.

2. Have visibility of the connectivity you're building your business on, in two timeframes: when problems hit, have a fast, defined way to establish whether the network is still up and behaving; and at the end of a month or quarter, be able to look back and see the overall quality of what you're buying.

Ultimately, the choice of whether you build your sandwiches on perfect crusty sourdough, or a cheap sliced loaf, is up to you. Both can actually lead to a successful business, but only if you know and understand what you're buying.

TOP TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CUSTOMERS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

Business leaders know about the need for operational efficiency. They also know that digital transformation is probably the best way to get there. Many businesses are already pursuing change, with Forrester predicting this would be the year that we'd cross the 50% threshold for cloud platform adoption in enterprises.

However, there are still many roadblocks to transformation being experienced by your customers. We uncovered some of the main ones in this recent blog, including resource and resistance, legacy infrastructure, and a lack of clarity around the goal of transformation. Below, we've compiled our top tips for helping your customers overcome challenges like these, and how to support them, as a trusted channel partner.Educating customers on legacy alternatives.

Many businesses are still reliant on legacy infrastructure, especially older ones. Our blog on why we're still talking about legacy in telecoms details the reasons for this. Including, of course, the rapid rise and adoption of cloud-based technologies and business applications.

And while there are many reasons why businesses should be reducing their reliance on legacy – like the fact that it slows business down, stifles innovation, and is costly to maintain – it's true that the complexity of this infrastructure can make a move away from it feel like a daunting undertaking. The only way to get around this being a blocker to digital transformation is to educate your customers on the alternatives to legacy, and on the advantages gained by adopting them.

Filling them in on the substitutes for ISDN is an obvious place to start, especially since BT has announced it's aiming to begin withdrawing ISDN functionality from 2020 and to have it fully phased out by 2025. With Gamma's SIP trunks, you can offer your customers with a PBX alternative that's not only significantly cheaper than ISDN, but also more flexible and resilient.

There's probably no end of digital updates to be made to your customers' IT and telecoms. Perhaps they don't know about them, fully understand them, or have misconceptions about them – whatever it is, the trick for you is to educate them on the alternatives they could be using, and all from a single provider.

> ISDN will be phased out completely by 2025, with BT already announcing the withdrawal of this functionality from 2020.

> **Our research shows that 78% of companies wish their own digital transformation initiatives were going faster.**

Presenting a clear business case
Another common problem, perhaps slowing down digital transformation for some of your customers, is business-wide understanding and backing. IT leaders often struggle to get the budget or buy-in from the wider business, to make digitally-driven change happen. In fact, our own research shows that 78% of companies wish their own digital transformation initiatives were going faster. And just over a third (34%) say the incentive for digital transformation was IT-led, with leadership feeling more inclined to respond to business or customer-led problems or needs.

But updating ageing assets, infrastructure or processes will always bring benefits, whether or not it's in response to a different kind of challenge. So it's up to you to help your customers build the business case for change. Whether it's a switch to VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services or the rollout of a UC (Unified Communications) strategy, the elements to be included in any business case are clear: from cost and efficiency savings, to the opportunity for improved margins, agility and productivity.

Positioning yourself as a strategic partner
Successfully helping your customer build a business case for digital transformation is just the start. You also need to be able to back it up with the goods. And the good news is that, as a Gamma channel partner, you can do just that. Which means being able to position yourself as an indispensable strategic partner who will facilitate their journey to digital transformation.

By being able to offer an integrated family of cost-effective IT and communications solutions, all delivered via Gamma's resilient, next generation network, you can help your customers do things in new ways that wouldn't otherwise be possible. Removing complexity from communications and propelling their digital transformation along the way, all while helping them to be a more progressive business – one that's truly fit for the future.
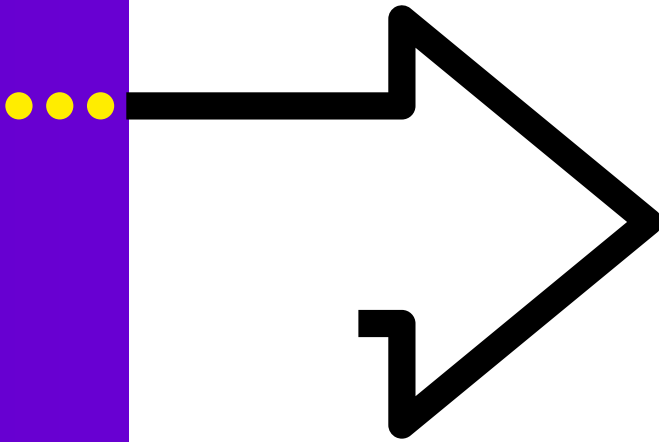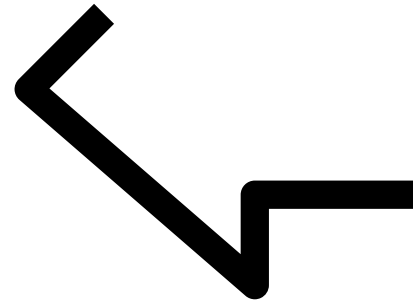
SD-WAN
THE
OPPORTUNITY
FOR
THE CHANNEL

In some organisations, a strong and immediate case can be made for SD-WAN. IT departments that pride themselves on leading the curve rather than following it will already be actively exploring, trialling or perhaps even in some full deployment. Some see an investment in the underlying bandwidth as a more beneficial approach as is seen with the march to full fibre Ethernet based networks.

Building a use case

The adoption of a cloud-based infrastructure, for both storage and applications, means that demand for bandwidth grows in line with usage of these services, especially if these applications live in the public cloud.

Moreover, key enterprise applications such as Unified Communications (UC) are becoming richer and more sophisticated, placing greater demand on the network in terms of latency and bandwidth.

Video is arguably the biggest driver. The multi device, multi application trend pervasive in business today means that users are consuming more rich media in both a personal and business capacity, sucking up the bandwidth on their smartphones and tablets; placing additional demands on the underlying infrastructure that wasn't necessarily designed for this new rich mix of competing application types and styles.

But it's not just consumer applications that are to blame. More and more enterprises have adopted video for conference calling and remote working, and a sudden burst of simultaneous usage can have a knock-on effect on latency-sensitive applications and result in a negative experience all round.

The building blocks:

An SD-WAN solution if properly designed, implemented and managed, should be capable of delivering:

- Agility for rapid deployments and change

- Improved network performance for critical applications

- Cost efficiencies

To achieve these headline gains an SD-WAN solution needs four key features:

1

Hardware replacement
SD-WAN hardware should make dedicated routers redundant by allowing direct termination of incoming wide area services. It should be noted that at the moment very few manufacturers offer direct DSL termination, so the minimum expectation should be for Ethernet and 4G/LTE capability.

A key consideration here, is understand if by removing the hardware you also find carrier service levels are reduced. Note most carriers use edge termination devices to proactively monitor the connection. Removing this may leave them reactive only to service issues.

2

Traffic control and visibility
The central orchestration platform should allow dynamic distribution of traffic across multiple WAN connections based on the needs of applications as well as on rules using IP addresses and specific circuits. It must also be circuit-agnostic allowing Internet, MPLS and other flavours of circuit to be used.

3

Network segmentation
It should automate the creation of wide area segments, allowing the easy separation of business units or different application traffic types for increasing security, performance and compliance. Don't assume all services are equal in this area - understand the use and application beyond the vendors feature name.

4

Integration of additional network services

It should support service chaining by integrating with WAN optimisation controllers, firewalls, web gateways, cloud providers and security devices and solutions.

BUYER BEWARE

The remarkable hype surrounding SD-WAN makes it more important than ever for potential buyers to test in the most robust way possible the claims made by contending vendors. Buyers must be prepared for answers couched in terms that make-like-for-like comparison harder than it would be with a more mature technology.

The cost savings claimed for SD-WAN derive from three main areas.

- **CONNECTIVITY**
- **HARDWARE**
- **MANAGEMENT OVERHEADS**

Will SD-WAN make MPLS redundant?

SD-WAN vendors claim that they can introduce QoS, prioritisation and acceleration, but keep in mind that SD-WAN is an edge technology and that the internet is a public network that lacks end-to-end control.

SD-WAN offers increased flexibility and capability, but at Gamma we are not seeing significant displacement. In the UK, MPLS is continuing to come down in cost, and many enterprises are responding by driving towards hybrid networking rather than swapping all-private for all-public networks. We see some enterprises flirt with SD-WAN, but decide to put their money into lower cost fibre Ethernet which at the moment offers a more favourable bandwidth vs cost return.

Globally, a recent Gartner survey indicates that only 20% of enterprises that have deployed SD-WAN have completely replaced MPLS.

Even in regions such as the US where MPLS is much more costly than in Europe, key enterprise applications including voice still need latency and bandwidth guarantees.

It should be noted too that the extent of SD-WAN deployment has a profound impact on forecast returns. If only a few MPLS circuits are replaced with SD-WAN, then any potential reduction in costs will be curtailed. Overall, we believe that the decision of whether to use MPLS or the Internet should not be based on cost alone. Rather it should be led by the applications being used, their criticality to the enterprise, and their particular needs. If applications are not sensitive to latency, packet loss and jitter, then maybe MPLS is not needed. However, if voice and video are being used and are critical applications, then only MPLS can provide a guaranteed business grade service.

We caution would-be buyers of SD-WAN that even in ideal circumstances it may be up to three years before savings are realised from changes in circuit type alone.

We have a toolset and the expertise to help organisations understand the likely savings and evaluate what blend of technologies is best able to support their applications.

5 REASONS
WHY YOUR CUSTOMERS
SAY NO TO
UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

Chances are, many of your customers are already embracing Unified Communications (UC), lured by the prospect of simplicity, agility and better communication. It's a fantastic upgrade on traditional telecoms infrastructure that creates the opportunity for increased productivity and business growth. All of which means businesses should be jumping up and down with excitement, ready to embrace this new way of working.

But what about those that aren't so keen? There are several reasons your customers might say no to UC. However, for every potential objection, there's a valid counter-objection.

1

WE'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT

This objection is becoming increasingly uncommon, as UC gains popularity – but you might find that your customers simply aren't aware of what UC is, or what it can do. Fortunately, this situation can be quickly remedied: the simplest way to explain UC is that it's a technology stack in which channels like voice, video, data and IM are integrated into a single package.

Within this, Gamma offers different products – like Horizon Collaborate – which can support better communication, flexible mobile working, and more freedom for businesses. And instead of working across disparate channels, employees can move seamlessly from platform to platform, ensuring the best possible outcomes for customers.

2

WE DON'T SEE THE BUSINESS NEED

Your prospective customers may well think their existing solution is 'good enough' as it stands, and they don't feel a need to make a change. If you encounter this objection, make sure you're fully confident in all the benefits UC has to offer – there's bound to be at least one that resonates.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Access to a more flexible, scalable solution
- A simpler monthly billing process
- Improved employee engagement
- More effective remote working
- Enhanced customer service across a range of channels
- The opportunity for business growth as a result of the two points above
- Boosted green credentials, as UC makes it easier to communicate around the world without needing to meet face-to-face

3

IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE TO UPGRADE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Once the benefits are properly explained, you'd be hard pressed to find a business that doesn't see the value. But many will object that they simply can't afford new telecoms infrastructure. And surely a high-tech solution will be even more expensive than their current set-up?

Actually, Gamma's UC solution is an extremely cost-effective option requiring minimal capital outlay. Plus, once set-up is complete, billing is simple, with a straightforward monthly cost per user.

Beyond the initial investment, there are also longer-term cost efficiencies to be made. UC can help to improve business operations and productivity, helping to grow the business and therefore revenue.

4

WE DON'T WANT TO RISK DISRUPTING OPERATIONS

For those who have unwieldy legacy systems in place, the thought of change can be off-putting, especially if services are interrupted in the meantime.

As a Gamma channel partner, you'll be well placed to lay these concerns to rest. Gamma's many years of experience in IP networking mean we are highly experienced in building flexible solutions that can be deployed and onboarded quickly.

That means you can reassure your customers that replacing their legacy systems won't be a disruptive process. The switch can be made smoothly and in good time, with minimal effort on their behalf.

5

IT SOUNDS TOO COMPLICATED – AND WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME

IT decision makers are often busy juggling multiple priorities, trying to troubleshoot problems and manage operational strategies. So, they can sometimes be resistant to anything that sounds as if it might add additional complexity to their lives.

Particularly if you work with smaller businesses, you may encounter clients who feel that UC fits into this bracket – and is therefore not worth bothering with. But the reality is that Gamma's UC is extremely straightforward to implement.

And once it's up and running, it can simplify an IT manager's day-to-day life, giving a single point of service for all channels. The right UC system can be much easier to manage, whether troubleshooting, scaling up and down services, or setting up new users.

GET READY TO LEAD THE UC CHARGE

The wave of UC uptake is only set to grow, and channel resellers are ideally placed to spearhead the widespread adoption of this technology. But you're sure to encounter resistance for various reasons, so be prepared and plan accordingly.

In doing so, you can delight your customers and develop a sustainable business stream for the next decade.

A Game Changer for Secure Card Payments

Cirrus Link Pay+ 🔗

A simple and secure pay-per link card payment solution for any channel and any device.

Balancing security and compliance against the needs of a channel-hopping customer base can be challenging. Link Pay+ from Cirrus delivers a secure, PCI & GDPR compliant method of card payment across multiple channels. Link Pay+ supports multiple currencies and multiple payment methods, protecting your business from data breaches and delivering an enhanced customer experience.

Cirrus and Gamma Telecom:
Combining the best in Omnichannel, AI and Voice to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

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