

Hailed as the next big thing in telecoms, Unified Communications was just a buzzword a few years ago; technology which meant different things to different people. Whilst there is still plenty of work to be done to create better understanding and clarity, a more universal picture is beginning to emerge.



Tim Freeth of Nimans

Tim Freeth, Head of System Sales at distributor Nimans, says increased knowledge is inspiring more UC sales as resellers have the confidence to identify and take advantage of new revenue opportunities.

"I think there are still people who misinterpret what UC actually is or don't really understand the full benefit it can have on an end user organisation. There is a lot of work being done in the market especially by manufacturers and distributors to get that understanding out there and progress is being

UC is more than a buzzword

made as sales begin to grow."

Freeth explained: "Initially UC was just a buzz word, which many people only partly understood. The biggest benefit it brings to business is increasing efficiency and cost savings especially in a much tougher economic world.

"The technology brings different forms of communication together on one device with one number if required - combining the functionality and convenience of a mobile and desk phone with powerful office application suites. Ultimately it makes life easier for businesses to operate; communicating and knowing the whereabouts of staff wherever they may be. In addition UC applications and intuitive mobile technology creates many opportunities for staff to work just as productively away from the traditional office such as at home - further boosting productivity and increasing customer satisfaction."

Freeth added: "UC and mobility applications are on the increase for us, as more resellers get to grips with them. Because they sit within both the voice and data arenas there is obviously a steeper learning curve for traditional voice resellers. That's something we recognise and have taken a pro-active stance in addressing. UC is becoming mainstream. Resellers have a much better understanding which creates more confidence which increases sales."

Many major manufacturers are developing dedicated systems around UC which further reinforces its market position. But he advised: "As a reseller if you are not involved in UC, there's the risk of getting left behind. Resellers need to embrace these technologies and move with them, rather than ignoring the situation. It all depends on what market place a reseller operates in and what new areas they want to expand into. UC is not necessarily going to benefit every business, particularly the very small ones with just a handful of staff."

Freeth concluded: "We work very closely with manufacturers to provide workshops, roadshows and marketing information to make resellers aware of the latest technology,

to identify sales opportunities and how to position and sell it. UC represents the future of integrated communication, galvanising voice and data technologies."

Elements

Steve Tutt, Marketing Manager at hosted telephony provider VanillaIP believes that there are two related elements to any UC solution.

"Firstly, the feature-set available to the customer and secondly, how deliverable is it for the Reseller and how can they make money on it? The first point is often the easy one.

"As a hosted provider all VanillaIP services sit in the cloud and are delivered to the customer over any combination of IP, TDM or GSM mobile circuits. This gives us the ability to easily knit remote sites, platforms, users and services together. Our UC capabilities include centralised reception, single mailbox [email, voicemail, fax], distributed call centre, CRM database integration and user centric services like presence, find-me/follow-me and our FMC solution where a Nokia E series mobile becomes a remote VanillaIP Wi-Fi extension.

"In our experience, the difficulty for Resellers is getting the various elements of the UC mix deployed quickly and accurately. Our Uboss provisioning system allows resellers to become Service Providers in their own right, provisioning WLR3 lines, UK geo [01,02,02], UK non-geo [08,09] and International numbers, ADSL, VanillaIP services and their own third party services within a single interface. All services are deployed in real-time with 100% billing accuracy.

"The difficulty resellers currently face is having to combine several different solutions, all with their own provisioning process.

"Resellers typically build their business around what they are good at; dealing with people, managing customer relationships and selling. No telecoms reseller ever went into business for the admin overhead. In real terms, streamlining the back end for any UC installation is probably reducing costs by 20% for the reseller."



MITEL MOBILITY

connect from anywhere

