Moving beyond cloud UC

Hosted services started off as a jalopy, became a bandwagon and is now a full scale runaway juggernaut, **writes Steve Tutt, Marketing Manager at VanillaIP**. As solutions have evolved cloud has become more than a service delivery and SaaS billing concept and is now a whole new go-to-market model. So what are some of the trends, opportunities and threats that are shaping our market in the next 12 months?

New market entrants: One new threat that cloud has brought is new market entrants in the form of US and German-based cloud vendors starting direct sales models in the UK. Never before has the channel had this degree of external competition. Previously, the complexity of premise-based systems meant that the channel was needed to manage the customer

Steve Tutt

side sales and deployment. There was a clear demarcation between vendors, distributors and resellers. That distinction has been greatly blurred with the move to the cloud.

Smarter customers need smarter solutions: The market for hosted PBX is moving beyond 'one size fits all'. Customers are becoming smarter and adopting cloud in all aspects of their businesses. A lot of innovation in telecoms comes from other tech areas, such as

presence, IM and collaboration. This means that channel sales teams are not necessarily the customers' technology thought leaders they were a decade ago. Resellers need a sophisticated product offering to close higher value cloud opportunities and avoid competing on price with products that are exactly the same as their competitors.

Mobility and apps: The ability to integrate mobile into the overall cloud solution is becoming essential. At VanillaIP our Unity Mobile app makes the GSM mobile function as an endpoint of the user's BroadSoft extension, with all the directories, call control, IM etc that they get on their IP phone and desktop apps. The underlying 07 number is completely masked for the making and receiving of calls. We believe that it will not be possible to compete strongly in the market without a sophisticated mobile play within 12 months.

Intelligent Working solutions: We focus on developing solutions that provide better opportunities for our channel partners to map the needs of customers. We call this 'Intelligent Working'. We have 50 software developers and all our wizards and widgets, apps and enhanced reporting have been developed in-house. If we don't innovate, how are we different from every other BroadSoft provider in the UK? How are you going to differentiate to win the higher value business?

For the channel the functionality in our Intelligent Working solution is only half the battle. Our Uboss platform is a front-end customer portal to help develop ecommerce automation and streamline back office provisioning and billing elements. This is crucial in being able to scale out your cloud business where you want to. Don't be 'me too', be 'only me' with VanillaIP. ∎