

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Comms Business reports back from the Zen Internet channel partner conference in London last month where the network services company had a number of forward looking announcements to make.

We have attended the last three of the seven annual Zen events and each time significant developments have been announced that lead to increased opportunities for their channel partners.

This year there were three key announcements'

1. Huawei was unveiled as Zen's new network technology partner
2. Zen has struck a wireless leased line deal with Metronet (UK)
3. Zen has partnered with VanillaIP to bring BroadSoft-based UC solutions to its UK channel.

The Huawei announcement is key for Zen as upgrades to its network prepare and position the company to compete in the digital transformation market with an agile and flexible solution for the channel.

Zen had kept this upgrade pretty much under wraps so when they announced the project, known as Plexus, would be completed by 16 December 2016 there were a few gasps of surprise amongst the audience.

The next generation, 'SDN ready' infrastructure will allow Zen to decouple the services it offers to channel partners from the underlying physical architecture, leaving a network that is more cost-effective, agile, scalable and efficient.

Specifically, Zen will be installing Huawei's NetEngine 'NE' series routers in its Manchester, Rochdale, Leeds

and London core sites as a standard building block in a new modular, horizontally scalable design. This simplifies the network while greatly expanding its capacity and the variety of services Zen can offer to customers.

At the edge Zen is leveraging both Huawei MultiAccess 'MA' series and smaller companion NE series routers to extend the intelligent network capability directly to the edge with designs for the full range of unbundled local exchange services.

The result will see Zen's number of Points of Presence (PoPs) in BT exchanges rise from 270 to over 400 in the next few months, and expand their robust, cost-effective on-net reach to well over 500,000 postcodes, covering nearly every corner of the UK.

Shiweiliang, UK Managing Director for Huawei Enterprise Business, commented, "Huawei are incredibly proud to be chosen as Zen's network technology partner. We're fully committed to Zen and we're very excited about the future together, as we align our teams to deliver for Zen's customers and partners."

Wireless Advantage

The deal with Metronet is interesting. Wireless leased lines offer all the benefits of a dedicated fibre leased line but without the sometimes hidden costs and delivery constraints of a fibre connection. The new service is not dependent on BT infrastructure, which means it can often be delivered more quickly than fibre alternatives (up to 25 days compared to 60-90 days), reducing the time to revenue for partners.

Working in conjunction with Metronet (UK), Zen can offer partners this fast, reliable and uncongested internet connectivity, which guarantees bandwidth for critical applications. The service is based on a highly resilient and diversified network, and offers a 99.95% uptime guarantee.

Stephen Warburton, managing director, Zen Channel Partners, comments: "This new service from Zen offers partners another way to meet their customers' connectivity needs using wireless technology. It is a great

solution as a backup to a fixed circuit or as an alternative solution in the event of costly Excess Construction Charges (ECCs).

With Zen, partners have their own account manager to provide proactive support, and can manage their services through Zen's intuitive and dedicated partner portal. A quick quote tool gives partners instant access to all the information they need, showing availability in the area, install costs, monthly costs and maximum speeds available.

Cloud Telephony

Selecting the right partner through which to create a hosted or cloud based telephony and UC offering can take a while any firm and Zen, after an early false start, is now fully lined up with industry veterans VanillaIP and their Broadsoft based, Uboss driven, UC solution.

By leveraging the combined strength of the two companies, Zen believes it can offer channel partners a more sophisticated offering as the cloud market evolves. Stephen Warburton told us, "The market is moving beyond Hosted PBX where you are essentially replicating PBX service from the cloud, to a solution that is more apps-based than device-based. The continual R&D VanillaIP demonstrated in adding their own services to the BroadSoft platform convinced us they had the innovation we need."

Underlying the new partnership is Zen's robust connectivity with an Assured service which supports IP voice traffic only, along with a Converged service which supports prioritised IP Voice Traffic and Data.

VanillaIP, who had a booth at the partner event, were clearly the busiest team in the room.



Shiweiliang, UK Managing Director for Huawei Enterprise Business and Richard Tang, CEO of Zen Internet.

ED SAYS...

Zen continues to organically grow its profitable business whilst making the right kind of investments that that will position the company and its partners for the future.