

battleground for suppliers to integrate back office functions into software packages. For many Channel Partners the billing platform will be the only piece of bespoke software they deploy and as a central hub it makes sense to opt for something which comes with additional benefits like CRM.

Sean Marsh commented “The increased blending of billing and CRM into one solution is exactly what the channel needs going forward. Resellers simply provide three core functions; billing, customer service (support), and sales. These three core functions are mutually dependent on each other. Without any sales, there is no need for support or billing, without support there’s no provisioning and service so again no need to sell or bill and finally without billing what’s the point of selling and supporting the customer. By combining the three functions into one simple solution enables a smooth business process from end to end.”

Disneur commented, “Incorporating functionality from other types of applications into the billing platform, CRM and accounts functionality for example, may sound good on paper but, in reality, is unlikely to deliver the results a CP is looking for.

What reasonable expectation could any billing software vendor have of emulating the range of functionality available in mass market CRMs such as Microsoft’s Dynamics CRM or Salesforce?

The one exception to this rule is in the area of service management. Functionality that’s specific to network service management is likely to be useful in a billing platform and unlikely to come from anywhere else. This is especially the case if the billing platform also offers functionality for provisioning lines and managing faults with WLR3.

The truth is that no one software solution will ever do everything. An effective back office solution must be formed with ‘best-of-breed’ software packages that are integrated with APIs. This will deliver far greater results than one product alone could ever hope to achieve.”

Dave Dadds, CEO, VanillaIP said, “As a channel we can’t avoid CRM simply because they could end up as competitors attacking the customer’s telephony. Especially when you consider CRM providers purchasing SBC vendors such as Oracle and Acme Packet, notwithstanding that Oracle is more than just a CRM provider.