

Why show and tell is key

Despite modern technology, it is traditional ideas of demonstration, education and use cases that are key to cloud and mobility sales success, according to VanillaIP Sales and Marketing Director Iain Sinnott.

The age of traditional comms is waning, replaced by the age of mobility and the cloud. But the channel's sales approaches are yet to adjust fully to the upheaval of digitalisation and mobile. Not surprisingly, as technology advances at pace, and 5G beckons, traditional sales techniques have lost their glamour, yet they will be needed now more than ever if we are to avoid a slow creep towards realising what is possible. In issuing a wake up call to the channel, Sinnott has descended on this subject and on what it means for the channel's trading status with customers.

It is perhaps an irony, he says, that to unlock the market for hot new technologies, such as those with a mobility flavour, a reversion to long-held tried and tested tactics is required. Just as significant, the steady stream of new products with the capacity to change the world of work continues to flow. How this will play to the current sales approaches of many resellers is clear – they too need to change. But the market's floodgates will only open through the practical application of communication and education by knowledgeable resellers. "We see that happening through informative demonstrations of useful new tools," stated Sinnott.

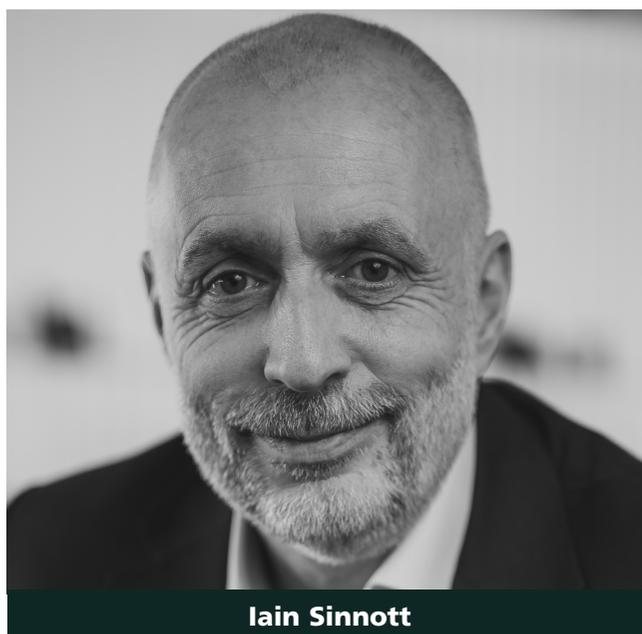
For workers, the attraction of mobile devices, or a PC-mobile mix, will become

ever irresistible and will surely, over time, catalyse the shift to a 'mobile majority' environment. For resellers, this evolving dynamic presents a challenge – how best to capitalise on the opportunity at hand. "For resellers in the mobile space, retaining the core mobile voice service and building on smart cloud communications could be the most profitable route for them to follow," commented Sinnott. "For those who don't currently own the mobile fleets, selling a 'one number' solution through OTT UC apps, working on staff-purchased smartphones could give them the advantage. But education is key."

Digital natives

That said, the evolution of the workspace is falling short of expectations in terms of speed of change, but as more digital natives take management roles, or as recruitment challenges make the environmental package more important, we will see demand for workplace flexibility tools and virtual collaboration increase, believes Sinnott. How well a reseller responds operationally to these market trends is an important point of consideration, and pushing sales training and customer education towards the top of the agenda is imperative.

It is a fact that most SMBs are not familiar with the tools that can deliver big increases in staff productivity and advances in customer



Iain Sinnott

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experiences. Sales staff not only need pertinent knowledge, they must use their knowhow effectively. To that end, VanillaIP is arming reseller staff with a virtual tool demo kit, which is worth circa £1,000 per annum per sales person. "Show and tell is a vital part of the LEAD (listen, educate, advise, design) sales technique we promote, but unless the sales person has the tools we can't guarantee the right impact," added Sinnott.

It is calculated that 20 per cent of staff in SMBs deliver a higher performance when boosted by mobility tools. "Account management,

sales of soft phone, mobile call control and mobile SIM extensions are enhancing the effectiveness and revenue commitment of existing bases," commented Sinnott. "Resellers who have committed to this cross-sell and up-sell strategy are seeing the results, and we have added two new training courses this year to help staff in this space sharpen their skills and become real profit generators."

In terms of the biggest opportunities, there are two wins on offer, noted Sinnott – increasing the value of existing cloud customers and winning a

higher percentage of new business pitches, delivered and supported by trained sales and account manager staff with the wherewithal to inform customers and identify productivity and cost benefits. "Mobility in all its forms are some of the easiest benefits to introduce," added Sinnott. "Mobility can be delivered in a number of ways, the key is to make it appropriate to the user, not the profit model. Profit is a long-term strategy these days, so we stick to the mantra of delivering a 'feature appropriate' service at user level.

"The longer resellers wait to join the new world, the less likely they are to be seen as a trusted advisor. You become a well-meaning friend but business is business and a good sales person with a great portfolio will tip your customer over the edge – as might a freemium product like 365."

Another industry game changer, observed Sinnott, is the much anticipated arrival of 5G which will make 'almost anywhere' as effective as 'at my desk', he believes. "Resellers can't rely on customers finding their way from the old world to the new," said Sinnott. "They need to inspire them through demonstrations and case studies. A brochure simply does not cut it. If you are promoting true cloud UC then you must demonstrate it live effectively, either face-to-face or virtually, anytime, anyplace, anywhere." ■