

Mastering virtual sales

UCaaS providers are sure to enjoy a surge in popularity among end user organisations, but only if they master the art of selling via video conferencing, according to VanillaIP Sales Director Iain Sinnott.

The Covid-19 lockdown has done more than anything to accelerate the adoption of UCaaS – but mission accomplished? No. Crucial to a reseller's growth strategy is that selling via video will in large part replace face-to-face meetings, and success will depend on how far sales people can exploit the tragically created virtual selling opportunity that has emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic. "The lockdown has brought a new focus on time management and how much more can be achieved," stated Sinnott. "In a sales context, this means road warriors could soon become a thing of the past.

"The behaviour of customer-facing staff will change dramatically as new tools are now an accepted part of the engagement process. Face-to-face still has value but in big deals some of the meeting time will be shifted to virtual, and for small deals the

additional margin afforded by a virtual-only process will be irresistible. The customer is king and will have the ultimate say, but as there is a very real time dividend for them when moving activity virtual we are unlikely to see much push back."

Sales training must become an ever more inherent feature of a reseller's growth strategy – vital in fact. "The method of solution selling has not changed but the skills to take 'good' conversations virtual must be learned," added Sinnott. "Sales people must develop an ability to turn a meeting into a conversation using online ice-breakers in the same way as they open a face-to-face meeting. They must be able to bring their products to life virtually and have all the tools open and primed ready if the questions asked bring an interest from the customer. Sales people also need to keep the customer as the dominant speaker in a fact-find

Key consideration points...

- Virtual meetings should help to fact-find and ensure there is an agreed objective to a further meeting.
- Resellers need access to more stakeholders from within a business and virtual meetings are a powerful asset.
- Be skilled in face-to-face and virtual so the customer can dictate the choice of meeting.
- Don't just switch to including virtual in the process, master it, learn how to use it like you use a face-to-face meeting and demand that your sales professionals train hard to be at their best.
- Now it's more about 30 day contracts than five year leases. The deal is different and the sales process must be different.



Iain Sinnott

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meeting, as that is the only way to retain their focus."

In all this, the consumption model is key. "The option of 30-day contracts and minimising the risk will be vital to opening up the dialogue," stated Sinnott. "Customers are emerging into a recession after the biggest head spin of their working lives, long-term commitment will not be easy for them. This is not a model that resellers can continue to pay big salaries and big commissions to traditional hunters in the sales team, so that model needs to change.

"The deal starts with the first draft and never ends as the salesperson and the customer seek every ounce of human potential and process automation that technology can deliver

and which improves the customer's profitability."

Embrace change

Belief is critical in a successful sales team so resellers need to embrace change, urged Sinnott. "There is a massive opportunity for sales people to study the art of virtual meetings and use this medium to make themselves shine," he stated. "It is essentially the same game but in a different environment so you have to plan a different type of meeting craft and bring your product to life during the process. Bringing energy to a pitch is important but demonstrating a solution live, and in the form customers require, is the secret to a higher conversion ratio. This applies to an account manager up-selling one application as much as

it does a frontline seller pitching the core solution."

Businesses almost never get a chance to re-set and write a new plan. For resellers, this may be the vital element that keeps them in the game. "Resellers will have to think hard about how to compete with a true cloud model while paying the upfront overhead of the hunters in their team," stated Sinnott. "The cloud model is based around a farmer, a progressive and continuous relationship with the customer delivering increasing revenues but without the big bang cash injection. The 'True Cloud' model also removes the risk of technology adoption from the customer base, making the farmer's life easier as the customer becomes hungry for the technology dividend." ■