

MicroScope

INDISPENSABLE CHANNEL ANALYSIS

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Charging at cyber crime

SMEs need to face security challenges head-on

JOHANSWANEPOEL/ADOBE

EDITORIAL

Editor Simon Quicke

squicke@techtargt.com

Production editor Claire Cormack

ccormack@techtargt.com

Senior sub-editor Bob Wells

rbwells@techtargt.com

Senior sub-editor Jaime Lee Daniels

jdaniels@techtargt.com

Senior sub-editor Ryan Priest

rpriest@techtargt.com

ADVERTISING

Vice-president of sales, EMEA: Jat Hayer

jhayer@techtargt.com

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Channel should lead by example in security

There are things the channel sells and then there are things the channel uses. When it comes to security, there cannot be much difference, because what is sold is also used to protect the business. Resellers and managed service providers (MSPs) are just as much targets as the users they help to protect.

The focus on [supply chain security](#) is one that will only increase, but for the here and now there are opportunities for the channel to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with their security needs. [Billy MacInnes goes into more depth in his feature](#), but it's fair to say that the old chestnut that is security is still delivering for those who know how to sell and support it.

Every other day a survey comes out or a threat report is issued that repeats and updates the extent to which ransomware and other threats are affecting customers. But users are not going to run out and rush into the arms of anyone selling security. Increasingly, they want to make sure that the MSP won't itself become a point of weakness.

That means everyone needs to take security seriously. Luckily, most do, and the channel has identified and embraced the need for better levels of protection - both for their own businesses and for their customers.

Compliance regulations will demand more of that, but, as is so often the case with the channel, it is the customer that is leading the market on this issue. They want to be assured that the person selling them security really knows what they are talking about and uses similar tools themselves. Asking the channel what technology they use has not always been part of the customer conversation, but on this issue it is, and there is a real need for the industry to practice what it preaches when it comes to security. ■

Simon Quicke, editor

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Nuvias: Channel is positive on growth but divided on hybrid working impact

Distributor Nuvias shares its latest research into the state of the UK channel, with mixed views around hybrid working but a bright outlook surrounding growth, especially concerning the potential of cyber security. [Simon Quicke](#) reports

One quarter into 2022 and the channel is feeling positive about life, but there are mixed responses to the emergence of hybrid working.

Nuvias's latest [UK channel partner survey](#) has taken the temperature of the channel, with it clear that many are wrestling with hybrid working and trying to get the balance right with face-to-face interactions.

Most partners expect the growth that they experienced last year to continue, with 75% experiencing growth between 2-10% last year, and 62% expecting that to be the same again this year.

[Cyber security was seen as the biggest growth prospect](#), with the need for compliance continuing to drive investments. Demand for network visibility tools was also high on the list of areas where the channel could make some revenues in 2022.

If there was broad agreement about the growth prospects, matters became more fragmented when the channel was quizzed on [hybrid working](#). There were two camps – one accepting that remote working had [increased productivity](#) and helped

Main findings of the channel survey

The latest UK channel survey from Nuvias provided a snapshot of growth expectations and responses to hybrid working:

- 62% expect to grow by 2-10%, 35% by over 10% in 2022.
- 78% rate cyber security as their biggest growth prospect.
- 70% found remote working beneficial.
- 40% said remote working made the act of running their business harder.

strategic thinking; while the other, which was smaller, expressed their views that working remotely had made running the business more difficult.

The negatives around hybrid working included working longer hours, struggling to see customers and colleagues. Nuvias suggested that the different responses could be linked to

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generational divides and job categories. The channel has not been alone in recording varied responses to [hybrid working](#), and most customers are going through the same process of trying to strike a balance between the demand for flexibility and the need for some face-to-face interaction.

"2021 was always going to be a challenging year with the global pandemic, but we pulled together and made the most of our joint opportunities," said Lee Driscoll, UK managing director and vice-president of South Europe at the Nuvias Group.

"It's fantastic to see there was still strong growth over the past year. We have seen customers [demand for cyber security rise](#) and we have strengthened our portfolio accordingly. It was not a surprise to see the rise of network visibility as a new top category, in view of the need to manage extended networks," he added.

Nuvias also asked resellers what they wanted from distribution. Among the answers was a call for ongoing marketing and sales support, help with lead generation, and keeping [supply chains](#) running as smoothly as possible.

Channel partners were looking for support in a post-pandemic world as they reacted to a customer landscape that is adjusting to two years of Covid and opening up to hybrid working and running more distributed networks with a greater need for security.

"Our priority is to support partners in sustaining their revenue stream and business model in a changing landscape, by adjusting to new customer needs and market conditions, providing service-based offerings and expertly designed solutions that protect business networks," said Driscoll. ■



Tie-up between Kaseya and Datto will put pressure on market rivals

Initial response to multibillion-dollar deal is to talk up the managed service provider market as a whole and focus on companies' existing strategies, writes [Simon Quicke](#)

Kaseya's move to snap up fellow managed services technology specialist Datto for \$6.2bn will inevitably put pressure on their rival players in the market.

The deal was announced on 11 April with Fred Voccola, [Kaseya's](#) CEO, promising managed service providers (MSPs) that they will see benefits from the move, including "more functional, innovative and integrated solutions".

'A NATURAL FIT'

Voccola added: "The alignment of our missions and focus makes us a natural fit, which will help our greatly appreciated customers reach new levels of success. Kaseya is known for our outstanding track record of retaining the brands and cultures of the companies we acquire and supercharging product quality. Kaseya and Datto will be better together to serve our customers."

Tim Weller, CEO of [Datto](#), was also upbeat about the tie-up, saying: "Datto has always been committed to creating world-class technology for SMEs and delivering it through our global network

of MSPs to align our growth with the channel. Combining with Kaseya brings together a broader array of technology products to create additional opportunities for MSPs.

"I am encouraged by the continued investment in the rapidly expanding global MSP community, and this transaction is another important validation of the channel."

It was not that long ago that Weller was ringing the bell when Datto went public and positioned itself as one of the leading players in the MSP tools and services space.

MARKET BOOST

The reaction to the deal from competitors has started to trickle out, with the initial response appearing to focus on the boost it will give the MSP market as a whole, with a billion-dollar deal underlining just how valuable firms in this market have become.

"The news that both companies have been searching for a change has been public for some time, so this announcement was not a surprise," said John Pagliuca, CEO at [N-able](#). "We believe

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that a transaction of this magnitude is a clear validation of the value and power of this industry to serve the large and growing SME IT market."

But Pagliuca also had some words of warning for those expecting the consolidation of the two businesses to go smoothly. "It's also a calculated disruption undertaken by both Kaseya and Datto, where they obviously felt that this would net out to a positive outcome for their stakeholders," he said. "Transactions like this typically bring substantial challenges, such as successfully combining two different cultures and realising potential synergies."

“A TRANSACTION OF THIS MAGNITUDE IS A CLEAR VALIDATION OF THE VALUE AND POWER OF THIS INDUSTRY”

JOHN PAGLIUCA, N-ABLE

Pagliuca said N-able would remain focused on its strategy to support the MSP community and this merger of two of its rivals did not disrupt that. "The rules of the game aren't changing," he added. "When your people and partners are successful, the business is successful."

If it gets the necessary green lights, the Kaseya deal should close in the second half of the year. Datto plans to publish its first-quarter financial results this month, but understandably will not accompany them with an investor conference call. ■



Fred Voccola, Kaseya: "Kaseya and Datto will be better together to serve our customers"

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Print industry unclear on net zero definition

The print world knows it has to be more sustainable, and mentioning the need to reduce carbon seems to be a key part of that process, says Billy MacInnes

It would be an interesting experiment to find out how much paper has been expended by people and organisations writing about their plans to reduce their use of printing and paper consumption. Not hugely interesting, I admit, but the headline figure might be worth a second glance.

For many years now, the mantra from many organisations has been to reduce their use of print and their paper output. It still is. According to Quocirca's [Sustainability trends report 2022](#), which surveyed 212 IT decision-makers in the UK and the US, 71% said their company planned to reduce paper consumption by at least 30% by 2025. Also, 70% claimed they already recycled paper, 58% were implementing digital signatures, and 52% were adopting digital workflows to avoid printing.

That's good news. As is the fact that this focus on reducing paper and print means that 50% said their firm's net-zero goal [influenced their choice of print supplier](#) to a great extent, with 40% saying it influenced their choice to a moderate extent.

Net zero is a big deal for [many of these organisations](#), according to the report. Just under three-quarters (74%) said their companies had set net-zero goals, with 60% of their targets due by 2030, 31% by 2040, and 8% by 2050. All very admirable. However, to inject a note of caution, as Microsoft pointed out in its 2021 [Environmental sustainability report](#), no one seems to know exactly what net zero means.

"Progress relies on us all counting carbon consistently," the report stated. "The world lacks a common meaning of the term

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net zero and a common unit of measurement for assessing the climate impact of various net-zero approaches, and we must all focus on maturing the markets needed to achieve a net-zero carbon economy by 2050."

That could make things slightly awkward. Commenting on the Quocirca report, research director Louella Fernandes said the research showed that reducing environmental impact would be the top priority for businesses by 2025.

"This means it eclipses customer experience and cyber security concerns," said Fernandes. "A priority for customers must also be a priority for the industry, and we expect to see vendors focusing heavily on sustainability as they position themselves as valuable partners on the journey to net zero."

But how do they go on that journey if no one knows precisely where it is headed? The answer seems to be to mention "net zero" and "sustainability" as much as possible in terms of goals and strategy, then do your best to get to where you think that is.

For example, it should be fairly easy for companies to show customers that they are reducing their environmental impact and are placing a much greater emphasis on sustainability, because these are measurable against what they did in the past. The difficulty with net zero, it appears to me, is that it sounds like an absolute. As a result, it could be much harder to achieve.

When it comes to sustainability, only 19% of UK organisations surveyed had fully implemented a sustainability strategy, compared to 38% in the US. That's quite the gap, but, on the upside, 46% of UK respondents said reducing environmental impact was in their top three business priorities for 2022.

[Sustainability](#) has a much higher priority with smaller organisations than larger businesses. That's encouraging for channel partners who tend to have more of the former in their customer base than the latter. It's also potentially more challenging as they need to match their customers' sustainability strategies.

More than a third (36%) of small organisations had a fully implemented sustainability strategy, compared to only a fifth (20%) of large companies. Nearly half of small organisations (47%) identified sustainability as important to their business performance today, and 95% of them said their net-zero goal influenced supplier selection to a great or moderate extent.

THE DIFFICULTY WITH NET ZERO IS THAT IT SOUNDS LIKE AN ABSOLUTE. AS A RESULT, IT COULD BE MUCH HARDER TO ACHIEVE

Fernandes argued that vendors need to "ensure that sustainability factors are clearly in evidence when engaging with smaller business". She added: "Customers need tangible data, transparently communicated, so they can select the technology partner that will deliver the most appropriate solution for their business."

The same applies, clearly, to channel partners that will be helping vendors reach those smaller businesses. Hopefully, that tangible data does not need to be printed on a sheet of paper. ■

Sustainability is affecting public sector relationships

Steve Haskew, head of sustainability and social leadership at Circular Computing, shares insights into how the growth in the importance of sustainability is affecting the market

Supplier relationships with the public sector have come under increased scrutiny in recent years as strained supply chains, rising costs and [stronger demands around sustainability](#) have begun to make an impact. The public sector naturally has stricter rules of engagement with its suppliers than other industries due to the critical nature of the work it undertakes - and the pandemic has only amplified this.

However, with the increasing need to tackle wider planetary challenges, such as resource preservation and climate change, the sustainable rules of engagement are creating a new supplier dynamic.

Departments throughout the public sector - whether it be health, defence or education - all have key sustainability goals to hit. When businesses are supplying a service, the key question they must answer now is: how is what they are supplying going to help meet the sustainability and social goals of the sector? If they are unable to answer those questions, they will miss out on securing contracts altogether, and probably lose the contracts they are already engaged on.

For the IT industry in particular, there is one major target that all suppliers and partners should have in mind when working with the public sector - the [Greening government ICT and digital services strategy 2020-2025](#). This strategic policy sets out how the government will work in partnership with industry and other sectors to provide ICT and digital services to help achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, implement the UK government's [25-Year Environment Plan](#) and help meet the government's net-zero obligations and commitments.

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THE THREE RULES OF THE GREENING ICT POLICY

The supplier landscape has grown more challenging of late as [further sustainability targets](#) are added on top of continued disruption. Yet as a sector going through heavy digital transformation, there is strong demand for reliable, high-performance IT in the public sector. Within the greening government ICT policy, three business rules are outlined that suppliers are asked to follow to support the public sector and foster healthy relationships.

Sustainability is no longer a nice to have, it's now an imperative for working with the public sector. Grounding every interaction in these rules will help organisations meet sustainability targets and, ultimately, ensure suppliers have a better chance of securing and retaining contracts.

RULE 1: GOING NET ZERO IN CARBON

The public sector has the spotlight regarding hitting [net-zero](#) targets. With the government setting targets for other businesses to follow, ensuring it raises its own standards is essential. The current government message around reaching net zero is a target of 2050, but continued monitoring of progress is likely to mean a growing focus as years go by. By eliminating [Scope 3 emissions](#) where possible through its supply chain, the public sector can make huge steps towards carbon-neutral processes on the way to net zero.

Suppliers can help the public sector to go net zero by decarbonising their own processes, and using innovative procedures such as remanufactured hardware is a key way the IT channel can do so. By adopting carbon-neutral processes, suppliers can

help the public sector to reduce Scope 3 emissions by [cleaning up its supply chain](#), as well as assisting with knowledge and expertise on their specific industry. Using IT hardware that minimises its impact to the planet is a good first step, with remanufactured technology now a leading alternative to brand new.

RULE 2: CREATING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The long-term success of a sustainable public sector will ultimately depend on the development of a circular economy within its supplier base. Reducing carbon emissions in the short term is a priority, but the long-term success will depend on a developed circular economy to reduce the stress that carbon reduction has on processes. Protecting natural resources is also a growing concern and carbon offsetting can only go so far in the long term.

Resource preservation should be the number one overall goal of a sustainable public sector, ensuring that the natural environment is exploited as little as possible, while prolonging the already-scarce resources that the planet has. The circular economy is central to this by [re-utilising already-produced resources and materials](#).

The supplier's role in the future of the public sector's sustainability is not just decarbonising its own estate to support with net-zero targets, it's adopting processes rooted in the circular economy. By creating a circular economy that the public sector can operate within, suppliers in the IT channel can improve time to delivery, reducing the growing pile up of e-waste and positively affect their own bottom line by taking in old technology to be re-used.

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RULE 3: INCREASING ASSURANCE IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Reporting in public sector supply chains is a top priority, both to ensure environmental targets are hit, and that wider environmental, social and governance ([ESG](#)) initiatives are met. Lack of assurance is a key barrier to healthy supplier relationships, with public sector organisations demanding transparency over supply chains and needing the confidence that they can meet demand.

However, while sustainable targets might be the most widely reported focus, cleaning up the supply chain goes beyond the E of ESG targets. Social and governance initiatives will be looked at to ensure that forced, bonded and modern-day slave labour is eradicated from supply chains, as well as assurance that products are not made from conflict minerals.

WITH THE RECENT GLOBAL CHIP SHORTAGE AND DELAYS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, SUPPLY CHAINS HAVE SHOWN THEY ARE NOT BULLET-PROOF

Operational resilience also remains a key factor in assured supply chains to protect the critical services supplied by the sector. With the recent global chip shortage and delays due to the pandemic, supply chains have shown they are not bullet-proof and cannot always meet demand. With the new rules of engagement, creating an assured, resilient and transparent

supply chain can help suppliers not only win contracts, but also become reliable and trusted partners to the public sector.

With global disruption likely to continue, utilising the existing resources sat in the mountain of [e-waste](#) created over the past few decades is a good place to start. And with the technology available to us to create good-as-new second-life hardware, this should be the top of every supplier's priority list.

THE OPPORTUNITY LIES IN SUSTAINABILITY

There is a huge opportunity for the IT channel to be the front-runner in sustainable engagement with the public sector by abiding by the three rules outlined above. This will not only improve supplier relationships with the sector, but will also help it reach its sustainability goals. The public sector needs effective, up-to-date technology as it undergoes digital transformation but wants to do so sustainably and on a tight budget.

The latest innovative technology and processes such as remanufacturing allow resellers and suppliers to support the sector across its three rules of net zero, the circular economy and assurance. It has both short-term returns of cost saving and reliability of supply as well as long-term investment into the sector through sustainability and circular economy processes.

Working with the [public sector in a sustainable manner](#) is now a necessity and the IT industry should be taking the lead in best practice, but suppliers must either learn to adapt to meet the new sustainable rules of engagement or seek support in doing so, otherwise they will ultimately miss out on securing contracts because of a lack of focus on sustainability targets. ■

INCREASED RISKS MEAN SMEs MUST SPEND ON SECURITY

Facing growing threats and becoming even more frequent targets for criminals, the channel's key customer base needs to improve its level of protection if it is to thrive, writes Billy MacInnes



If there was a market where 70% of the companies expected to increase their budget spend by an average of 7%, it is fair to say a lot of them would be very interested in that market - especially if they were planning to spend that extra budget on a particular technology or service.

That is exactly what the recent [State of the market report](#) from N-able found, revealing that 70% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are planning to increase their security budget with an average rise of 7%, which "represents a solid opportunity for [MSPs](#) [managed service providers]". It argues that the conversation is no longer about whether security is important, but where the money should be spent and how to make the most of it.

It is easy to see why SMEs are planning to spend more on security when you consider the results of the annual [Business challenges survey](#) of more than 1,000 SME owners by card payments specialist Takepayments. It found that 27% identified cyber security as the biggest threat to their business in 2022. The corresponding figure for 2021 was only 8%.

But while there is no doubting the potential opportunity for MSPs, there are questions over how they (and vendors) deliver the best security to SMEs for their money that suits their purposes.

Daniel Marsh, Zyxel business development manager, says the optimum approach would be to "offer each SME customer the security solution that best reduces the cost of ownership, while protecting them from the greatest range of threats online".

He adds: "These solutions should enable SMEs to maintain access to centralised management and always-on monitoring, which enables vital rapid responses."

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How easy is that? James Griffiths, co-founder of Cyber Security Associates, says customers are taking a closer look at the services provided by MSPs as they seek to get the most value out of them. "This puts more pressure on the MSPs to make sure their clients are getting the best use of their licensing," he says, pointing out that some customers are "paying for a service, but aren't really sure what they're getting or what service levels are included".

As an example, he says the company has talked to many clients who thought they had [patch management](#) included as part of their service: "Yet when the contract was looked into, they found it was an on-demand service, meaning the client wouldn't be patched unless they requested it. Clearly, this poses a big security risk to the client."

Bruce Hockin, channel director at Picus Security, says MSPs need to focus on helping customers to identify where they are weak: "Selling products and services without first helping clients to better understand the risks they face and maximise the value of existing security investments benefits nobody."

Hockin adds that MSPs will need to demonstrate the need for spending in the right areas and to show the value of the solutions they deliver if they want to be "successful at gaining customer trust and loyalty in the long term".

According to Gregg Lalle, senior vice-president of international sales and strategy at ConnectWise, MSPs should concentrate on

[building a strong relationship](#) with customers. "Those that take the time to understand the ins and outs of their customers' business needs will be able to offer detailed expert advice on which security services best suit them," he says. If they put the effort into building a customer-centric approach, MSPs will be able to have conversations with their clients where they can talk through different options, says Lalle.

MSPs should also create detailed vulnerability reports to highlight the services or areas that are particular risks for customers,

making it easy for SMEs to see where their priorities should be and why. "This kind of report does take time and work to generate," says Lalle, "but it should be seen as an investment, as it has huge value in getting SMEs to purchase the right services for them."

One thing MSPs and SME customers can't complain about is a lack of choice. Greg Jones, EMEA business development director at Datto, says:

"There are an amazing number of great technologies and services to help build security and [cyber resiliency](#). MSPs and SMEs can purchase an endless number of products or services, including hardware, software or outsourced services. Much of the technology that was once only available for enterprise organisations is now accessible and affordable for SMEs."

But he warns that "rushing to buy such technology and services is not always the best approach" when building cyber resiliency.

“SELLING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES WITHOUT FIRST HELPING CLIENTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE RISKS THEY FACE BENEFITS NOBODY”

BRUCE HOCKIN, PICUS SECURITY

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MSPs and SMEs need to discover and identify gaps within their cyber resiliency plan and/or framework, he says. They should start with people and move on to processes before looking into technology and services.

But the range of choice may not be the panacea it appears, says Quantyn Taylor, Canon EMEA product and information security and global incident response senior director. "When it comes to meeting the needs of specific SMEs, the extensive product range offered by many MSPs can work both ways," he says. "To deliver the best security services to these businesses, providers must put customers before product and avoid over-complication by suggesting services that would be of limited use to the customer in question. They should seek to establish an open and honest partnership, showing they understand their prospect's business by assessing its risks and proposing a bespoke security solution."

Taylor adds: "Promising the latest and greatest in security means nothing if solutions are unaligned with the business's real-world threat. SMEs need cost-effective and streamlined services from an MSP able to consistently meet and manage threats. Going [back to basics](#) is often best."

This is a point that is wholeheartedly endorsed by Lee Wrall, director at MSP Everything Tech, who says the key element is "to get the basics right". He speaks of taking on a customer recently who had machines that were more than nine years old.

"Machines without anti-virus software, no IT policies, no strategy around technology," he says. "They had a really bad security vulnerability with no two-factor authentication, which is the absolute minimum of security these days. At the moment, the problem



Greggalle, ConnectWise: "MSPs that take on too much too fast may find their service standards start to slip"

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is there are a lot of poor MSPs that are just not getting the basics right - in fact, they're way off doing that."

Wrall argues that training is an issue that is often overlooked. "There's not enough emphasis on training at all in our industry," he says, questioning whether anyone joining an SME is offered formal training on the systems they will be using.

"People join a business, are given a laptop and their email address, and off they go," he says. "That's all right in some industries, but in others, businesses expect new starters to know Teams, [VPNs](#) [virtual private networks], and so on, but no formal training is offered. There needs to be a plan so when people join a business, they get regular training on software. It needs to be much better in the SME world."

What about the potential shortfalls between what is needed and what is available or affordable for SMEs? Zyxel's Marsh suggests that the biggest threat to an SME's security can often come from misunderstandings about how important their network security actually is, adding that the blame lies with MSPs or vendors that "won't support the SMEs beyond the point of sale".

SMEs are not keen to allocate budget to resources they aren't paying attention to, which is a problem because a successful security system requires little attention as it ensures business as usual. "Busy customers can become naive to the online threats their business is managing and the costly disruption they have evaded," says Marsh. MSPs and vendors should automate weekly

or monthly security reports to provide visibility around the type of attacks managed, when they took place, and the device or server they attempted to access, he adds. This will help customers to appreciate the value of network security to their business.

MSPs should also make sure they don't neglect proper aftercare, says Marsh. "SMEs are some of the most dynamic and challenged companies and they need to be able to rely on their MSP to provide continued support and educate them on which networking features and solutions will make their life easier." It's not about scheduling monthly phone calls to try to sell the latest product release, he adds. It's about understanding the business needs of each customer, whether it's growing and needs to scale up, managing a transition to hybrid shared offices or part of a sector (such as education), or reshaping its IT strategy.

Cyber Security Associates' Griffiths says it is important for the customer to know what they are getting from the MSP. What services and support are included in the contract, and what level of expertise does the MSP have in cyber and information security? Most MSPs will not have any cyber security professionals working in-house, says Griffiths, adding: "Instead, they will rely on IT personnel to manage and maintain their 'cyber' products."

He doesn't mean firewall management or account management here, but in-depth analysis of events and not relying on automation to create alerts to respond to. "Most MSPs don't have the resources to offer this service properly - and this is where [MSSPs](#)

“THERE’S NOT ENOUGH EMPHASIS ON TRAINING IN OUR INDUSTRY”
LEE WRALL, EVERYTHING TECH

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[managed security service providers] come into play," he says. "Knowing your client and understanding their actual issues is key. This may sound crazy, but so many MSPs will sell their customers something they don't really need. This, in turn, means the client isn't getting value for money, or even the correct services."

MSPs need to work closely with customers to identify services that would suit them, says Griffiths. "No two clients are the same, and there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Each client faces different risks and operates in different market verticals, so the MSP needs to understand this and adjust its services accordingly."

Ashlyn McLean, vice-president of global partner experience for eSentire, says: "The traditional security vendor channel strategy doesn't work for MSPs. For example, we have seen that traditional tiering is less useful for partners and MSPs than it used to be. Instead, we map our partner engagement and productivity over time as this helps us understand the overall experience customers get when they work with our partners and how well that work fulfils their needs. We can then work with our partners to target customers in the way that best suits them and the MSP."

McLean says this approach highlights the different ways customers want to consume cyber security services, helping partners to meet those needs, adding: "This drives more participation with partners, more success with customers and more revenue. This helps our MSPs to target SME customers in the right way."

Providing a distributor perspective, Nick Bannister, vice-president sales for Arrow's enterprise computing solutions business in the UK and Ireland, says: "More often than not, [in-house security skillsets](#) are limited and core security vendors have



Lisa Niekamp-Urwin, Tomorrow's Technology Today: "In today's climate, the industry needs to up its game"

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complex MSP channel programmes with inflexible pricing, making it difficult for MSPs to find a route to market." This is where distributors such as Arrow can address these issues with their own teams and programmes to offer support to MSP, helping with consultancy, pre-sales, lead generation, training and finance, underpinned by technical knowhow, "ultimately helping MSPs to go to market faster in a more sustainable way", says Bannister.

CYBER SECURITY AS A SERVICE

Sam Paris, vice-president of security and networking for Europe at Tech Data, says SMEs can be particularly vulnerable when it comes to cyber security: "They rarely have the size and scale to adequately shore up their [security posture using in-house expertise](#). This is where MSPs have a huge opportunity to step in and offer different forms of [cyber security as a service](#)."

MSPs can "white label" cyber security services from preferred distributors to get them up and running with minimum investment, says Paris. They can also offer help around training, certifications and financing. MSPs already providing services to SMEs can wrap security into them as an integral component with the help of distributors that provide security solutions. "SMEs will rely more and more on MSPs and their expertise for successful cyber security protection," he adds. "MSPs will, in turn, look to leverage their distribution partners to lower barriers, costs and risks."

ConnectWise's Lalle cautions that MSPs need to be careful how they address the opportunity presented by the increase in security investment by SMEs. "MSPs may expand too fast before they have their own house in order," he says. "MSPs that take on too

much too fast may find their service standards start to slip - or worse, put themselves at risk of a security breach."

And this is no idle fear. The N-able report found that 90% of MSPs had suffered a successful cyber attack of some sort in the past 18 months, and the same amount had seen an increase in the number of attacks they were preventing each month. On average, the number of attacks being prevented rose from six to 11.

Vendors can help by providing the products and knowhow to ensure their security is top-notch, says Lalle. They can also help MSPs get all the tech certifications they need and ensure they are meeting all compliance regulations as they expand.

INFORMED DECISIONS

But there is something much more fundamental at play for Jason Kent, director at Open Seas. "This is all about education," he says. "Vendors, MSPs and MSSPs frequently come across as scary with their messaging to SMEs, playing on their fears."

He suggests a complete *volte-face* by the cyber security industry towards "becoming a source of calm, moderated knowledge so that SME decision-makers can make informed decisions, with confidence, about their cyber security investment choices".

Lisa Niekamp-Urwin, CEO at Tomorrow's Technology Today, says: "When I joined this MSP 20 years ago, I didn't anticipate having a security engineer on staff full time. Yet here we are - it's a huge priority. In today's climate, the industry needs to up its game. MSPs need to do research, know what is happening to their community, interrogate their stack and ensure there are no holes. And follow the golden rule - [multi-factor authenticate](#) everything." ■

› What the channel can do to help customers concerned about data protection.

HOW ENTERPRISES ARE SHORING UP SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE WITH DATA

Using data to gain better visibility over their supply chains and forge closer connections between disparate links is helping organisations respond to disruptions faster. Sebastian Klovig Skelton reports



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Enterprises are looking to shore up their [supply chain resilience](#) by using data to improve visibility over and connectivity between disparate links, say data management and supply chain experts.

Decades of globalisation mean supply chains have become increasingly complex, but the onset of the [Covid-19 pandemic prompted sustained disruptions](#) that led many to abandon their prior laser focus on efficiency and “just in time” delivery to [also consider building in resilience and reliability](#).

To achieve this heightened resilience in the context of increasingly complex and globe-spanning supply chains, many enterprises have sought to increase their visibility over and connectivity with suppliers through improved data flows and integration.

The importance of gaining visibility and connectivity is highlighted to Computer Weekly by Henrik Smedberg, head of intelligent spend management at SAP, who relays the story of an unnamed SAP customer finding out two weeks after the fact that one of its pallets was on the [container ship that blocked the Suez Canal in March 2021](#).

A chief procurement officer told him: “Had we known sooner, we probably would have sent someone to get another pallet of these goods.” The problem was not an inability to source from elsewhere, but the fact the company did not even know it had cargo on the ship.

“Had they known, they could have redirected other traffic – that pallet would have been stuck, but their production wouldn’t have stopped, which it did [as a result of the stuck pallet],” he says.

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Tom Fairbairn, an engineer and supply chain expert at software firm Solace, says supply chains over the past two years have had significant pressure placed on them by a mixture of intermittent lockdowns resulting from the pandemic, general geopolitical instability, and increasing consumer demand for more complex and personalised products.

"The key message here is that these instabilities aren't getting any better, that there will be future supply chain shocks coming down the line. What we're seeing, especially from our advanced customers now, is that visibility only gets you so far," he says, adding that many businesses are moving to a more real-time data sharing model to communicate things as they happen.

MONITOR AND REACT

While modern supply chains have been designed for "just in time" production, says Fairbairn, the IT that sits behind it has been batch-based, "so you run a report every night and tweak things accordingly".

Unlike batch processing - where the data collected and stored is processed at a particular time - the event-based architecture of Solace's software allows its customers to monitor and react to "events" that affect the business as they occur.

"Visibility gives you the ability to see what's going inside the supply chain, and without that visibility you're not going to be

able to react [to changes]... but there's no point in being able to say 'my shipment isn't going to arrive on time' or 'my factory production is going to be delayed' if you can't do something about it," he says, adding that integration between systems, including with those operated by other suppliers, is vital to communicating between links in the chain.

"The ability to tie all these different systems together while enabling this real-time, event-driven capability is key, especially for large, global enterprises. But it's difficult because you've got to be able to talk in lots of different kinds of protocols - you can't use one integration standard, you've got to be able to talk about lots of different ones."

Smedberg adds that many of SAP's customers have also worked to gain better insights into their supply chains by more closely integrating with trading partners throughout the chain.

"Digital dialogue between trading partners is crucial, not just for

those two [direct trading partners], but also for the downstream effects," he says, adding that when it comes to supply chains and procurement, SAP's focus is on helping its customers ensure that the data "flows to the right trading partners so that they can make proactive decisions in moving assets, logistics and doing the right purchasing". He further adds that where supply chain considerations have traditionally been built around "cost, control and

"ONCE YOU HAVE ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FROM THE DATA, THEN REAL CHANGE HAPPENS, AND THAT'S REALLY WHAT COMPANIES ARE LOOKING FOR"

HENRIK SMEDBERG, SAP



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compliance", companies are now looking to incorporate "connectivity, conscience and convenience" alongside those other factors.

On the last point regarding convenience, Henrik says this refers to having "information at my fingertips when I need it", meaning it is important for companies to not only collect data on their operations, but to structure it in a way that drives actionable insights. "Once you have actionable insights from the data, then real change happens, and that's really what companies are looking for," he says.

A TALE OF TWO SUPPLY CHAINS

According to Leo Bonanni, co-founder and CEO of supply chain transparency firm Sourcemap, companies that had already

invested in creating these digital connections between links in the supply chain fared much better during the pandemic as they were able to be more responsive to unexpected changes.

"The pandemic was really a tale of two supply chains. Those companies that have been mapping supply chains down to the raw materials - what we call end-to-end visibility - were immediately able to check in with people around the world who they depend on for raw materials," he says.

Bonanni adds that Covid prompted a lot of companies to start digitising their supply chains to avoid similar disruptions going forward. "We saw five times growth in the last two years. A lot of companies realised that, for a very small cost, they could save enormous headaches," he says.

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On top of the visibility provided by digitally linking every tier of the supply chain down to the raw materials, Bonanni says the data collected through this process also helps to anticipate risks, whether that be operational, regulatory or sustainability related.

"If you have mapped your supply chain early enough, you can find where your weaknesses are and start to scout alternate regions to source from, alternate suppliers, alternate routes to get the goods to market," he says.

"It's really just a question of time. The worst case is to find out that you needed to have your supply chain mapped to solve the current crisis; the best case is when you've mapped your supply chain, identified the risks and put the contingency plans in place in the event something happens - and something happens."

However, a major barrier to achieving this level of integration, according to Bonanni, is the sheer volume of data that enterprises have to verify and analyse, as well as the need to build new business processes around that capability.

MASTERING THE DATA

Mike Kiersey, principal technologist at data management firm Boomi, adds that to have high-quality and trustworthy data insights, organisations need to scope out their own digital

estates as well as those of their partners - which, when it comes to larger providers, is likely a mixture of legacy and cloud-based technology - before integrating, so that all parts of the chain are communicating effectively.

Using a mixture of out-of-the-box connectors and bespoke application programming interfaces (APIs), Boomi is able to help customers integrate with a range of software providers and hardware manufacturers so that its clients can [manage data at a "master" level](#).

"They're going to have a mixture of legacy technology, a mixture of legacy integration technology, there's probably point-to-point and hardcoded, and probably built on a set of legacy APIs," he says. "Being able to connect to those various different systems... allows customers to speed up the fault resolution that they might have around a particular order."

He adds: "You can't take reactive, proactive or corrective action if you've got no insight into that data."

Pointing to how consumers are updated on the progress of deliveries by companies such as Amazon, Smedberg says "the way we transact at home on a Sunday is what people are now expecting to have on a Monday".

He adds that, ultimately, the use of data to enhance connectivity and visibility is part of a wider trend "to consumerise the behaviour of businesses". ■

**"YOU CAN'T TAKE REACTIVE,
PROACTIVE OR CORRECTIVE
ACTION IF YOU'VE GOT
NO INSIGHT INTO THE DATA"**

MIKE KIERSEY, BOOMI



SAM LINFORD, DEEP INSTINCT

MicroScope puts its questions to Sam Linford, vice-president of channel and MSSPs for EMEA at Deep Instinct

MORNING, SAM, TELL US WHAT YOU DO FOR A LIVING

My name is Sam Linford and I am the vice-president of channel and [managed security service providers](#) (MSSPs) for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) at [Deep Instinct](#). My role is to oversee and manage the channel team, strategy and decisions in EMEA for the business. I work with distributors, resellers and MSSPs to deliver our solutions to our customers.

WHY ARE YOU THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THIS JOB?

I've been working in the cyber security space for 17 years and I still find it the most interesting area of the technology industry. My interest in computers started when I was young and I would dismantle computers and put them back together again. This interest continued into adulthood where I gained a degree in computing and, eventually, a job in the industry as well.

I've worked in several roles in the cyber industry, from the technical side to sales management and channel management and strategy. I have lots of experience with different cultures in the EMEA market, which helps in understanding what is needed for each division within our EMEA strategy. I think my knowledge, genuine interest and my broad experience in the sector makes me the right person for this job.

WHAT GETS YOU UP IN THE MORNING?

Knowing I have the opportunity within Deep Instinct to drive the strategy and direction of the business, as well as be partly accountable for the success of the organisation, helps. Because Deep Instinct sells everything via

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the channel, my role is key in making sure we're successful. It's rewarding to see the fruits of my labour and how everything my team and I work on can have a ripple effect across the entire business. This all helps me get motivated and up in the morning.

WHO HELPED YOU GET TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

I worked for a company called Entrust for 12 years, and the vice-president of EMEA was the person who helped me get to the position I am in today. He drove me into the commercial side of the business from a tech role as he saw the potential value I could offer the business. He saw that I was good at communicating with prospects and customers and mentored me so that I could be a success.

WHAT DOES THE NEXT FIVE YEARS HOLD FOR THE CHANNEL?

The channel has evolved massively since I started my career, and it continues to do so. We will probably experience more and more of the traditional resellers transitioning toward a service-based offering by taking a number of vendor solutions and wrapping them up into one service to provide to a customer. I expect we'll see more of these resellers becoming MSSPs.

WHAT IS THE BEST OR WORST BUSINESS ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED AND FROM WHOM?

The best business advice I've received is that focus makes success far more achievable. This advice has been proven to me by many truly successful colleagues and friends throughout my career.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE STARTING OUT TODAY IN IT?

There are huge opportunities within the technology industry and there are so many paths to follow. My advice would be to take the time to truly understand who you are and what you want from life, because that will help you decide which path you want to follow and make a success out of.

“TAKE THE TIME TO TRULY UNDERSTAND WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU WANT FROM LIFE, BECAUSE THAT WILL HELP YOU DECIDE WHICH PATH YOU WANT TO FOLLOW”

SAM LINFORD, DEEP INSTINCT

IS IT POSSIBLE TO GET THROUGH AN INDUSTRY CONVERSATION WITHOUT MENTIONING 'DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION'?

Yes! The term [digital transformation](#) is so broad and, because it is such a general term, conversations are rarely about digital transformation itself. If I am having an industry conversation, I will be focused on one specific topic, and it won't have anything to do with digital transformation.

[Click here to read more five-minute interviews online.](#)

SCHANKZ/ADOBE

WHAT GOAL DO YOU HAVE TO ACHIEVE BEFORE YOU DIE, AND WHY?

As long as I've made a positive impact in the work I am doing and within the organisation I am working in, I will be happy.

TELL US SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU
I taught myself to juggle when I was young - apparently, it's like riding a bike. I'm still pretty good!

IF YOU COULD BE ANY ANIMAL FOR A DAY, WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

I'd like to be a bird because then I'll experience the feeling of what it is like to fly.

WHAT TEMPTATION CAN YOU NOT RESIST?
Stealing my children's sweets.

WHAT IS THE BEST BOOK YOU'VE EVER READ?
I very much enjoy fiction books - anything by Dean Koontz keeps me happy.

AND THE WORST FILM YOU'VE EVER SEEN?
The first *Scary Movie* film.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DESERT ISLAND MP3s?
Oasis's Talk Tonight, *Massive Attack's Tear Drop*, *Portishead's Roads*, *The Verve's Lucky Man*, *Superstar's Lupe Fiasco*, and *Alt-J's Tessellate*.

WHO WOULD YOU LEAST LIKE TO BE STUCK IN A LIFT WITH? WHY, WHAT DID THEY DO?

Jeremy Kyle - I don't think he's added anything positive to society.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CAR AND HOW DOES IT COMPARE WITH WHAT YOU DRIVE NOW?
My first car was an Austin Metro, and it is impossible to compare it to the car I drive today.

IF YOU WERE FACING AWESOME PERIL AND IMPOSSIBLE ODDS, WHICH REAL OR FICTIONAL PERSON WOULD YOU MOST WANT ON YOUR SIDE AND WHY?
I loved Superman and was in awe of his powers and capabilities when I was growing up, so he would still be the person I'd like to save me from awesome peril now. I probably wouldn't object if Superwoman turned up instead.

AND FINALLY, A GRIZZLY BEAR AND A SILVERBACK GORILLA ARE GETTING READY FOR A NO-HOLDS-BARRED RUMBLE. WHO IS YOUR MONEY ON AND WHY?
After watching *King Kong*, I would put my money on the gorilla - I don't recall any fiction films portraying bears in the same way. ■

"I'D LIKE TO BE A BIRD FOR A DAY TO EXPERIENCE THE FEELING OF WHAT IT IS LIKE TO FLY"
SAM LINFORD,
DEEP INSTINCT

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VLADGRIN/ADOBE

Proper planning for cloud requirements helps businesses find what they need and save costs

James Moore, vice-president of EMEA sales, DoIT International

According to research from Gartner, global public cloud spending will grow by 21.7% to reach [\\$482bn in 2022](#), a huge \$86bn jump from the previous year.

This acceleration is set to continue for some time, with [IDC projecting a compound annual growth rate of 12.4%](#) for compute and storage spending for cloud infrastructure over the coming three years. A lack of visibility of attributing cloud costs and the challenge of predicting future needs is costing businesses billions. As such, managing cloud costs has become a key issue for organisations – with chief information officers (CIOs) under intense scrutiny from their chief financial officers (CFOs) and looking to justify spiralling spending.

Specifically for customers who are digital natives, cloud costs are second only to staffing. While managing all this is certainly not an easy task, it also doesn't have to be so hard.

Increasingly, organisations are seeing the best way to manage cloud costs and find a long-term solution is to work with a specialist partner, with experience working with both growing businesses and major cloud providers.

“MANAGING CLOUD COSTS HAS BECOME A KEY ISSUE FOR ORGANISATIONS”

JAMES MOORE, DoIT INTERNATIONAL

Not only does partnering address the problem more quickly and effectively than purely internal efforts, but it frees up technical resources to focus on delivering against business goals.

By combining advanced cloud management tools with expert consultancy, cloud partners can help their customers to gain more

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granular visibility into where costs are coming from, effectively forecasting and scaling for upcoming changes, and automating provisioning to take advantage of savings that are otherwise left on the table.

“ONCE THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATIONS ARE LAID, SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS CAN BE REALISED”
JAMES MOORE, DOI T INTERNATIONAL

With S&P Global reporting that cloud consumers are currently [overlooking some \\$6bn](#) in savings by failing to take advantage of discount programmes, it is no wonder that CFOs are in the ears of their technology counterparts.

Although, historically, there might have been a reluctance to embrace savings plans – with imprecise predictions about future needs leading to overprovisioning and increased costs – once the right technology foundations are laid, significant savings can be realised by taking advantage of Amazon Web Services’ (AWS’s) reserved instances (RIs) and Google Cloud’s committed use discounts (CUDs).

Taking the technology advantage a step further, a tool such as FlexSave from DoiT enables customers to automate cloud cost savings and tap into maximum savings without any extra effort or commitment.

By bringing in strategic partners that are truly immersed in the inner workings of the public cloud and offer solutions for key challenges such as [cost optimisation](#), organisations can provision properly, stay abreast of change, control costs and realise a greater return on investment – unlocking value, growth and, crucially, keeping those CFOs happy. ■

Send your letters and comments to squicke@techtargt.com.