CHANNEL PARTNERS CONFERENCE & EXPO • APRIL 17-20, 2018 • THE VENETIAN & SANDS EXPO, LAS VEGAS

Channel Partners™

Spring 2018
$15 US

The Magic of Moxie

5 Tips for Winning 2018

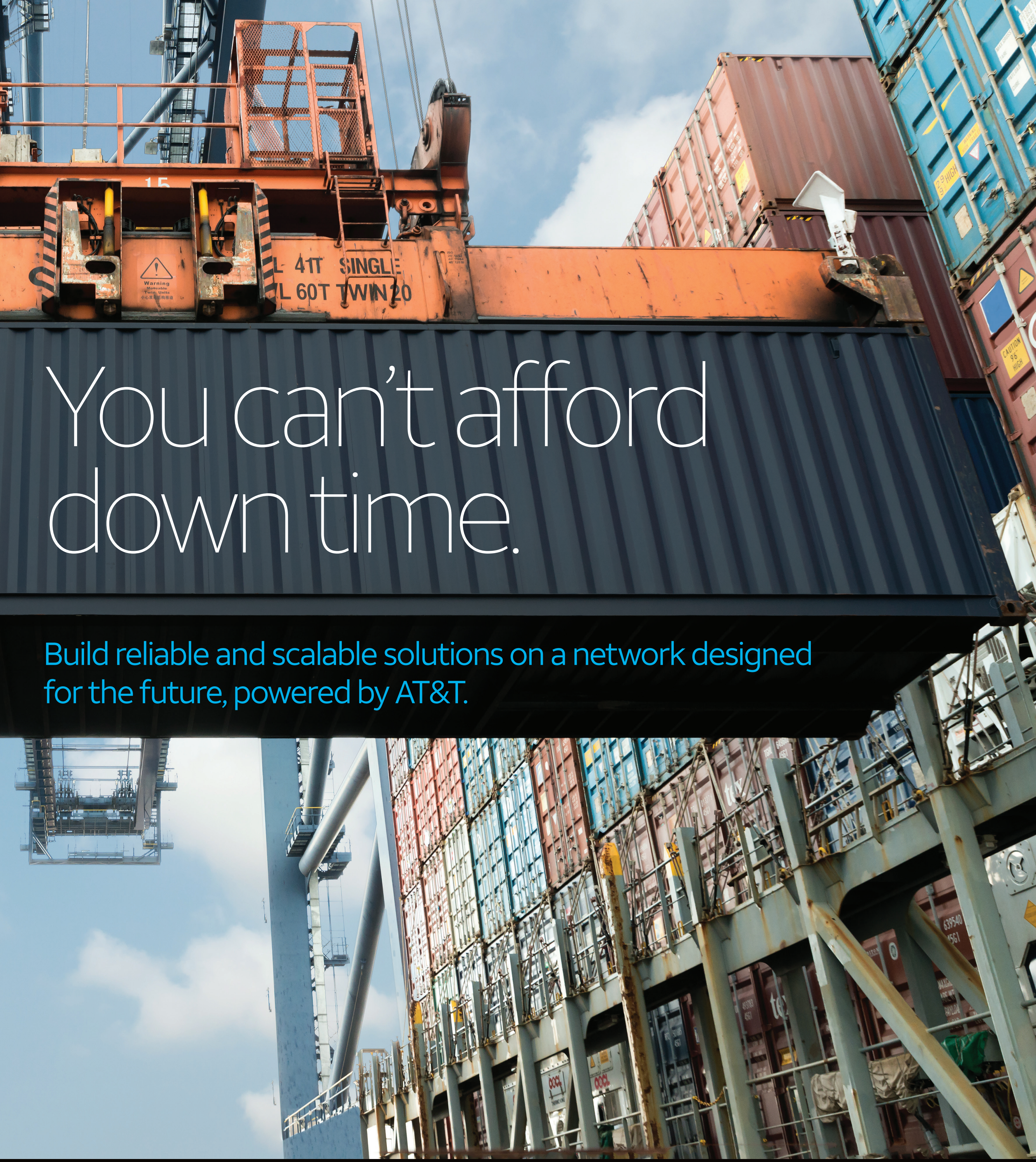
Influencers Driving the New Channel

There's a 'Me' in 'Time'

How Gavriella Schuster's earning trust, one partner at a time — and why she's our 2018 Channel Influencer of the Year

MICROSOFT'S ADVOCATE-IN-CHIEF

KNect365
TMT
an Informa business



Learn how the AT&T network is the one to rely on.

partnerexchange.att.com | att.com/alliance

AT&T

© 2018 AT&T Intellectual Property. All rights reserved. AT&T, the AT&T logo and all other AT&T marks contained herein are trademarks of AT&T Intellectual Property and/or AT&T affiliated companies.
The information contained herein is not an offer, commitment, representation or warranty by AT&T and is subject to change.

GOT MOXIE? AT&T, VMWARE AND CENTURYLINK DO

As I write this, we're exactly three months away from kicking off our 21st Channel Partners Conference & Expo. We're happy to be back at the Venetian, along with 6,000 members of an undeniably dynamic industry, and even happier about the all-star speakers we have lined up for both keynotes and conference sessions. You'll get better acquainted with one of them, Microsoft Channel Chief Gavriella Schuster, in this issue. Schuster will take the big stage on Tuesday, April 19. Her theme: Be bold — in building on your business strengths, defining your unique value proposition and connecting with the larger channel ecosystem.

It's great advice because good old-fashioned moxie is at a premium today. There's plenty of bluster, grousing, finger-pointing and grandstanding. That's not boldness, it's noise.

So what is chutzpah in action? The top stories of 2017 on Channel Futures and Channel Partners offer up plenty of examples. Here are three tales of gumption in the face of regulators, the channel world order and naysayers over "damn the torpedoes" scale M&A.

AT&T sticking to its guns on Time Warner. AT&T and Time Warner will see the DOJ in court, probably mid-2018, over their blocked $85 billion vertical merger deal. AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson signaled an unwillingness to cave by peeling off pieces of Time Warner, saying that, "Any agreement that results in us forfeiting control of CNN is a non-starter." Why should partners care? Because let's face it, AT&T, like all telcos (and IT vendors) that want to survive, is in fact a digital services provider, and it needs content to have a place in the business of what goes on the internet, not just how packets travel.

VMware buying VeloCloud, but not for the reason you think. As Avant CEO Ian Kieninger told my colleague T.C. Doyle, the buy could upend the economics of the channel as we know it by enabling VMware to create a virtual orchestration tool that can manage a variety of different infrastructures and networks, and — importantly — is simple enough to be used by almost any IT administrator. When it comes to channel practitioners, there is less need and reward for those who focus on infrastructure building blocks. If you're among those who turn up your nose at consultants and agents that focus on services, aka "just pass paper," VMware has issued a wake-up call.

CenturyLink acquiring Level 3. When CenturyLink completed its $34 billion Level 3 buy on Nov. 1, it became the second largest connectivity provider, leapfrogging Verizon to land just behind AT&T. That kind of exponential increase in scale doesn't come without some bumps, but the bottom line is, its network now connects more than 350 metro areas with more than 100,000 fiber-enabled, on-net buildings, including 10,000 in EMEA and Latin America.

You can see AT&T and CenturyLink as well as Avant's Kieninger, Forrester principal analyst Jay McBain and plenty of others who personify "bold" on our keynote stage and in our conference sessions. Until then, let me leave you with some Goethe, via Faust.

Lose this day loitering— 'twill be the same story
To-morrow–and the next more dilatory;
Then indecision brings its own delays,
And days are lost lamenting o'er lost days.
Are you in earnest? seize this very minute–
What you can do, or dream you can, begin it,
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it …

In this Channel Influencer's issue and in Las Vegas we're out to celebrate those who bring the genius, power and magic. Join us.

Lorna Garey

Lorna Garey is editor-in-chief of Channel Futures and Channel Partners.

Channel Partners

Editorial

ART WITTMANN
SVP, Content, TMT Technology and Connected Innovations
art.wittmann@informa.com

T.C. DOYLE
Senior Director of Content,
Channel Futures & Channel Partners
thomas.doyle@informa.com

LORNA GAREY
Editor-in-Chief, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
lorna.garey@informa.com

CRAIG GALBRAITH
Executive Editor, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
craig.galbraith@informa.com

BUFFY NAYLOR
Managing Editor, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
buffy.naylor@informa.com

KRIS BLACKMON
Content Director, MSPs and VARs,
Channel Futures & Channel Partners
kris.blackmon@informa.com

LYNN HABER
Content Director,
IT Channel, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
lynn.haber@informa.com

TOM KANESHIGE
Content Director, Customer Trends and Emerging Technologies,
Channel Futures & Channel Partners
tom.kaneshige@informa.com

JAMES ANDERSON
News Editor, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
james.d.anderson@informa.com

JESSICA ACKERMAN
Education Manager, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
jessica.ackerman@informa.com

EDWARD GATELY
Contributing Editor, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
edwardgately10@gmail.com

CHRIS TOZZI
Contributing Editor, Channel Futures & Channel Partners
christopher.tozzi@gmail.com

Sales
BRIAN SNORTHEIM
VP, Sales
brian.snortheim@informa.com, +1 917 670 0176

SIERRA COUGHLIN
Sales Operation Lead
sierra.coughlin@informa.com, +1 480 281 6089

CJ FOSTER
Senior Account Executive
cj.foster@informa.com, +1 303 907 7986

KEVIN MORRIS
Business Development Lead
kevin.morris@informa.com, +1 202 568 0974

THOMAS BAKER
Senior Account Executive
thomas.baker@informa.com, +1 602 463 0088

Marketing
BRITTANY WATTS Head of Marketing
KATIE EGLEY Media Marketing Manager
JESSIE TRUSCIO Marketing Manager

Events
SARAH WASCHLER Operations Director, US
JESSICA BARRERAS Event Program Manager
JEAN CADWELL Exhibit Operations Manager
JENNIFER NORTON Event Manager
LAURIEL WRIGHT Operations Coordinator

KNect365
TMT
an Informa business

CAROLYN DAWSON Managing Director, TMT, Telecoms

RUSSELL BACON Global Commercial Director, Telecoms

Published by Informa Exhibitions LLC
2020 N. Central Ave., Suite 400
Phoenix, AZ 85012
+1 480 990 1101
Email: channelpartners@informa.com
Web: channelpartnersonline.com

Contents

Channel Partners
Vol. 32, No. 1 | Spring 2018
channelpartnersonline.com

Photo Credit: Brian Smale

Cover photo: Brian Smale

Copyright © 2018 Informa Exhibitions LLC. All rights reserved. The publisher reserves the right to accept or reject any advertising or editorial material. Advertisers, and/or their agents, assume the responsibility for all content of published advertisements and assume responsibility for any claims against the publisher based on the advertisement. Editorial contributors assume responsibility for their published works and assume responsibility for any claims against the publisher based on the published work. Editorial content may not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. Materials contained on this site may not be reproduced, modified, distributed, republished or hosted (either directly or by linking) without our prior written permission. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of content. You may, however, download material from the site (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal, noncommercial use only. We reserve all rights in and title to all material downloaded. All items submitted to CHANNEL PARTNERS become the sole property of Informa Exhibitions LLC.

BEST CHOICE FOR POTS TO VoIP MIGRATION UNDER ONE ROOF

PROVEN PROCESS

Safe Controlled Environment

Capture POTS

Up to $50/Line Upfront*
+
12% Residual

Convert to VoIP

2X Upfront*
+
24% Residual

*Business rules apply.

Powered by BroadSoft
Polycom®
velocloud™

Get Paid **NOW** on POTS.
Get Paid **MORE** When They Convert!

www.bullseyetelecom.com
855-838-6932 | agents@bullseyetelecom.com

BULLSEYE TELECOM®

5 CHANNEL RESOLUTIONS FOR 2018

What advice are Paul Bay, Ken Bisnoff, Meredith Caram, Michael George, Jay McBain, Rob Rae and Todd Thibodeaux giving their partners? Fail fast, dive deep, embrace tech and stay a step ahead of customer needs. **By Dan Shapero**

It's February. Do you know where your New Year's resolutions are? If you're like most, vows to get more exercise, eat well, save better and travel more shriveled in the cold reality of January. To recharge your resolve, we asked seven top channel thinkers for their insights on new programs, new technologies to drive customer/client innovation, ways to grow revenue and improve margins, tips for business planning and even suggestions for "must-read" books for 2018.

Resolution 1: Adapt to Seismic Change, and Do It With a Smile

Jay McBain, principal analyst for global channels at Forrester Research, says it's "do or die time" for smaller resellers and VARs.

"With dropping numbers globally, huge demographic headwinds driving retirements, insolvency numbers creeping up and a buyer's market for M&A activity, smaller traditional IT companies will need to transform to survive," says McBain. We'll discuss how to get that transformation in gear.

Oh, and don't think suppliers are off the hook. McBain says the trend toward freezing out those small partners hurts everyone.

"A partner that only comes around once a year to do a deal may still be a loyal partner, and you may enjoy 100 percent wallet share," he says. "Instead of dumping them, figure out how to manage them less expensively, and when that yearly opportunity starts to take shape, go all-in for the time period required to win."

Ingram Micro Executive Vice President and Group President of the Americas Paul Bay is focusing his 2018 resolutions on five key areas: connection, convergence, community, expertise and getting back to the basics. For the latter, Bay is a big advocate for focusing on core competencies and advises Ingram's partners to recommit to operational excellence as an adaptation mechanism.

"Times are changing," he says. "Maybe you're doing business in an area where you're being marginalized. Don't try to be everything to everyone. Reassess, and focus your efforts."

He advises building peer partnerships in areas where you need help to be competitive.

"Fail fast and move on with a 'kill it' mentality if something isn't working," he says.

"In 2018, we'll be celebrating five years since AT&T Partner Exchange launched and remain focused on continuing the momentum to help our solutions providers win in the marketplace," says Meredith Caram, assistant vice president for market development at AT&T Partner Solutions. "It's all about growth."

She says AT&T will continue to put solution providers at the center of its program and invest in enabling them to sell through self-service, automation and instant quoting platforms. AT&T will also expand its fiber network to reach more businesses.

Her personal resolution? "To smile more," she says. "Smiling influences your brain and improves performance. As a bonus, smiles are contagious."

'Recommit yourselves to being tech junkies beyond your phone and laptop.'

—Todd Thibodeaux

Resolution 2: Embrace Technology Like You Mean It

"One of the things channel leaders have lost over the last decade has been their enthusiasm for tech in general," says **Todd Thibodeaux**, CEO of CompTIA. "Recommit yourselves to being tech junkies beyond your phone and laptop. Read Gizmodo and TechCrunch at least once a week. If you haven't already, try products like Google Home or Amazon's Echo. Try some connected-home devices or a robot vacuum. Take the time to understand where things are going with augmented reality and virtual reality. Find some good TED Talks on artificial intelligence."

Yes, that takes time, but Thibodeaux insists the investment will position you as a thought leader for customers.

"Another resolution might be to choose a couple verticals and dive deep into understanding how the technologies you're selling are truly impacting their business models," he says. "How is tech changing the hospitality industry? How are autonomous vehicles going to change the car business? How is the medical industry being transformed by tech? Or retail. Anything that gets you out of your comfort zone and forces you to explore will improve your ability to make good decisions by broadening your perspective."

One area changing fast is security. Datto's Vice President of Business Development Rob Rae says that knowledge can't be static because the range of threats customers face will continue to grow in 2018.

"Datto's second annual 2017 State of the Channel Ransomware report found that 99 percent of MSPs expect the frequency of attacks to increase over the next two years," says Rae. "MSPs need to be focused on combating this evolving threat, as new ransomware strains continue to develop. This includes educating staff and customers."

Rae also says partners must realize customers are moving fast to the cloud. He cites Datto's Backupify brand's just-announced G Suite Backup 2.0, to protect Google Team Drives alongside individuals' Gmail, Calendar, Contacts and Drive.

AT&T's Caram agrees maintaining a competitive edge means embracing new technologies, such as IoT and SDN.

"Set yourself apart by delivering solutions your customers need to grow," she says. "And invest in automation tools to drive scale and gain efficiencies within your own business."

Resolution 3: When It Comes to Customers' Business Needs, Don't Follow the Pack

"Look at where your customers are going, not where they've been," says TPx Channel Chief **Ken Bisnoff**. "Provide them solutions that go beyond phones and bandwidth."

In other words, extend adaptation and embracing tech to customer business trends and realities.

"Partners should resolve to keep on top of the transformational trends that are making devices, location and lowest price less important," says Bisnoff. "Customers expect solutions that adapt to them, not the other way around."

Bisnoff agrees with Rae on the primacy of security and continuity. "Businesses depend on being always up and running, without fail, because that's what their customers expect," he says. "Ransomware and other cyberattacks are increasing, targeting small businesses even more than they do big ones because they are easier targets."

"In 2018, the No. 1 reason that service providers will be fired by their end customers and a new one will be hired will be security," says **Michael George**, CEO of Continuum. "Clients expect that their service providers are taking every necessary step to secure them against cyberthreats. But, an escalating threat landscape means that there is a new set of attack vectors that those clients aren't prepared for — and a growing portfolio of security tools that they're not paying for."

Asking for more spending on security isn't easy, of course. But it's necessary.

"Service providers are going to face difficult conversations with their clients, in which they need to explain how the threat has changed and what the clients now need to be protected," says George. "These will be challenging talks, but with the marketplace rapidly retooling and retraining to meet this demand, these service providers must either face the difficult conversation or face being unseated by a more capable rival."

> **'Partners should resolve to keep on top of the transformational trends that are making devices, location and lowest price less important.'**
>
> *—Ken Bisnoff*

External factors are at play here, too, he says. While 2017's massive data breaches made headlines for a day or two, the headlines aren't the end of the story.

"Their effects will be felt for months and years to come as the stolen data is traded and exploited on the dark web well into 2018," says George. "Service providers need to decide if they want to have these tough conversations now, or in the aftermath of an attack their clients thought they were protected against."

Why The ASCII Group Could Be Right for You

Join over 1,300 MSP members across North America

Founded in 1984, we are the oldest and largest group of independent solution providers in the world

PROGRAMS
Gain access to our 70+ programs and services as well as a dedicated membership representative. Pick and choose the programs that work for your company.

SAVINGS
Our business programs provide an excellent ROI – more than offsetting your cost of membership. We offer distributor, manufacturer and business service discounts.

ADVOCACY
We are your advocate in the industry. If there is an issue with a partner, contact us. ASCII will reach out on your behalf and often get the issue resolved in one email.

OPPORTUNITY
Our group has over $9.6 Billion in system wide sales that we leverage for your benefit. We also have private group buys and offer competitive business insurance programs.

COMMUNITY
The ASCII Group is a community...we are vendor agnostic and do not require the use of any particular vendor or service.

RISK FREE
Membership in The ASCII Group is risk free. We offer a 100% refund after 90 days. No additional chapter costs or meeting expenses.

Use promo code **CHANNELPARTNERS when joining to receive our customizable HD video ($500 value) – The Importance of Hiring an IT Professional (valid until December 31, 2018)*

800-394-2724 | info@ascii.com | www.ascii.com

the ascii group inc.
The IT Community

CompTIA's Thibodeaux suggests partners pick a few customers and shadow their businesses for a few days. He predicts that after doing so, you'll find at least three new SaaS products you can introduce to make them more productive.Then, get the word out.

"Use tools like TypeForm and Zapier to supercharge [your] marketing," he adds.

Resolution 4: Make Like a Shark and Keep Moving Forward

"As the fine print always says, 'past success is no guarantee of future performance,'" says Bisnoff. "Our industry is undergoing a sea change that will make the comfort of business-as-usual routines a very cold and unprofitable one."

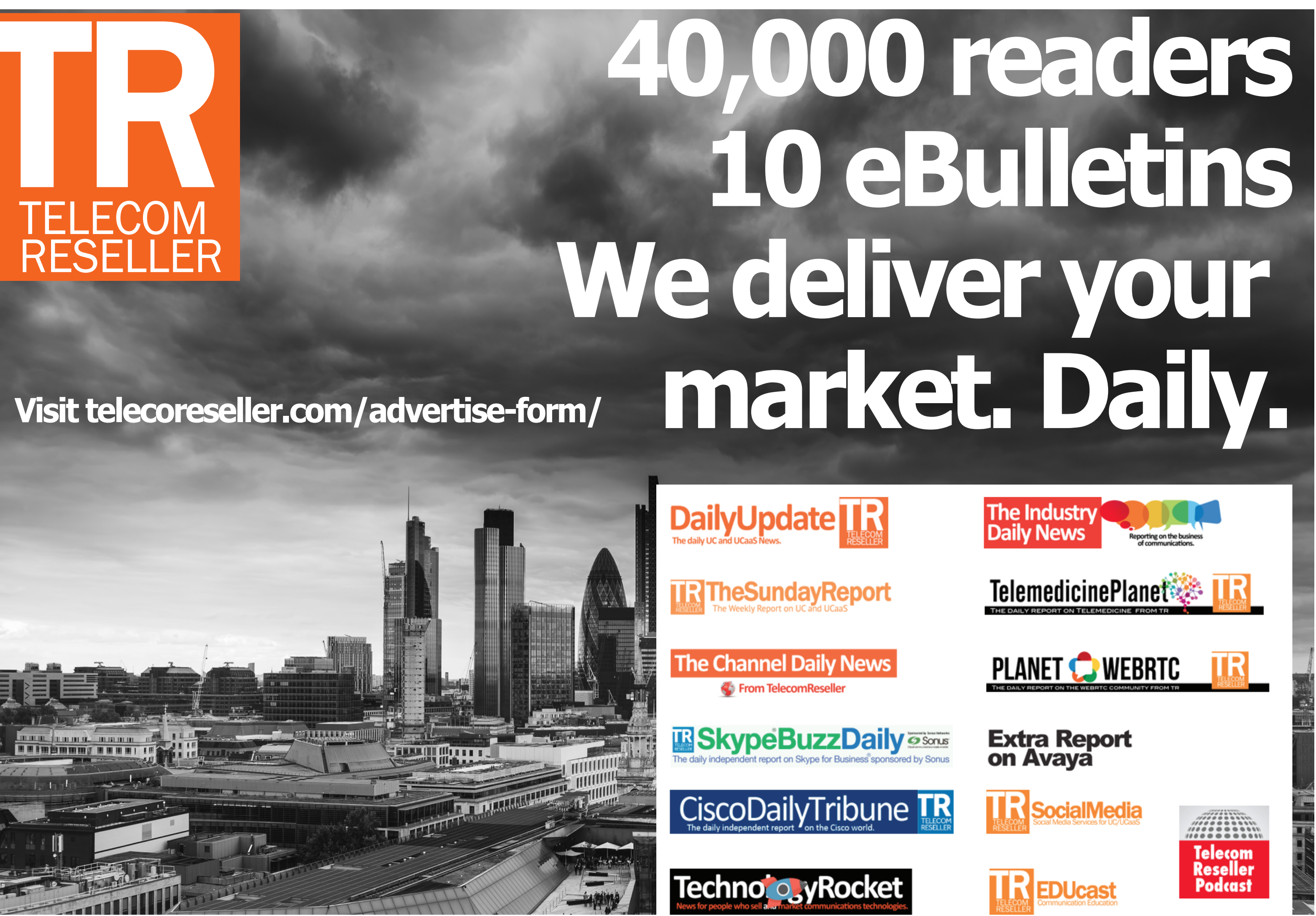
Channel pros know that this year Bisnoff had the opportunity to practice what he preaches.

"TPx pivoted from a successful run as a telecom company to an even more exciting life as a premier national managed services carrier," he says. "We're increasingly focused on agnostic access because bandwidth is a limiting, low-margin game that isn't going to regain its luster. So, a focus on managed services and how they can be made simpler and more effective for customers is key."

TPx is also increasing its focus on managed security and high-speed internet access via new and expanded relationships with national masters.

"We've been announcing new channel managers on an almost weekly basis as we close out the year, and now have 34 in key markets across the U.S.," he says. "Today the channel represents more than half of TPx's new business, and that number is only going to grow, since we do not intend to open up new direct sales offices across the country, but rather depend on growing and enhancing our already deep relationships with the channel."

Bisnoff advises partners to up their customer engagement games by communicating using a rich set of content for social media, with a focus on video. He recommends catering to people short on time by putting out a



> **‘Clients expect that their service providers are taking every necessary step to secure them against cyberthreats.’** *—Michael George*

series of concise video segments that get across one or two key points.

“The standard written white papers, data sheets and similar vehicles that we know and love are too long in the tooth and simply don’t reach the people we need to reach, in the way that they prefer,” he says. “But not everything old should be thrown out. Continue to invest in customer service and responsiveness — in people, technology and the communications that make you a partner of your customer, not simply a vendor.”

Continuum’s George offers tips for service providers seeking to be acquired in 2018.

“Partners need to focus on their ‘sales ability’ to avoid getting caught in an M&A ‘no-man’s-land,’” says George. “Acquirers are now paying a premium for providers that have either a sales capacity or a cost-effective service delivery capacity. If a provider isn’t excelling at either, they’ll struggle to survive in a market that’s consolidating at a rapid pace. Providers need to shift their organizational focus and economics from service delivery to becoming more in tune with their market and selling against their needs, or they could struggle to survive beyond 2019.”

Datto’s Rae suggests partners expand their horizons, as well.

“Take note of developments in the European and Asian markets,” says Rae. “The European market is well beyond the question of adoption, but the conversation has shifted from the value of the MSP model to creating better efficiencies for MSPs. In 2018, we’ll see a push in this direction, with more synergies being explored and leveraged to maximize the value that MSPs can offer to their customers. Conversely in Asia, the market is much quicker at adopting business models and technologies that have a proven track record.”

In fact, he sees rapidly growing interest in the MSP model in the region.

“We are going to experience really quick levels of adoption that will make Asia the market with more growth in 2018,” he says.

Ingram Micro’s Bay points out the fast growth we’re seeing so far in 2018 brings risk as well as reward.

“Building the right culture and team chemistry are two of the biggest challenges any business can face, especially when they are growing rapidly,” he says. “It’s important to note risk is often in the execution. Making the right decision is often easier than executing it.”

Ingram Micro does offer advice to help partners with financial services and gain new areas of expertise, such as in IoT. In a connected world, people, devices and outcomes are tied together, and partners must have a strong services portfolio.

“You have to embrace a connected world — from the device to the connection to the collaboration,” Bay says. “If you want to stand out from the competition, specialization and expertise are winning. Convergence is driving consolidation and more specialization, both at the vendor level and among channel partners.”

Resolution 5: Take Time to Read a Good Book and Do Some Good

Bisnoff says all the changes in our industry and channel make it a great time to re-read “Who Moved My Cheese?”

Caram has “Settle for More” by Megyn Kelly on her must-read list, while CTIA’s Thibodeaux says take time to study history and read “The First Tycoon.” This book chronicling Cornelius Vanderbilt’s rags-to-riches story parallels how tech titans with unicorn valuations are leading the next phase of automation and scale in our economy.

Thibodeaux’s personal resolution for 2018 is to write more short stories, while Rae says he’s looking forward to mentoring a millennial or speaking at a college class to make sure the MSP model stays strong in the future.

“A new generation is entering the market, and it is important that we give the workforce of tomorrow the tools that they need to succeed,” he says.

Dan Shapero is the newly appointed president of TeamLogic IT and founder of ClikCloud. He is also a member of the CompTIA Board of Directors.

linkedin.com/in/danshapero

@clikcloud

FreeConferenceCall.com®
For Business

BE A CONFERENCING HERO TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Increase your commissions and save customers money with **StartMeeting®**, brought to you by **FreeConferenceCall.com For Business™**. It's a fully-integrated conferencing solution — at up to 80% less than the other guys.

- Unprecedented commissions
- No channel conflict
- HD conferencing for up to 1,000 participants
- Enterprise managed services

We found it to be a robust collaboration tool with high-quality audio and video conferencing that rivals industry competitors at a fraction of the cost."

FROST & SULLIVAN

Want to move up market, close bigger deals and earn higher commissions?
Visit **www.freeconferencecall.com/partner** or call **(844) 801-2222** to find out how.

StartMeeting®
Brought to you by FreeConferenceCall.com For Business™


2018
CHANNEL
INFLUENCER

MICROSOFT'S ADVOCATE-IN-CHIEF

In a time of profound change in Redmond — and the tech industry as a whole — Gavriella Schuster has Satya Nadella's ear and the reins of one of the world's largest channel programs

BY LYNN HABER

You might argue that holding the top channel chief slot at a $290-billion multinational tech vendor, with the granddaddy of partner programs, makes you a shoo-in for stature and influence in that community — and you might be right. But one thing you don't hear when talking with Gavriella Schuster, corporate vice president, Commercial Partner Channels & Programs at Microsoft, is any hint of complacency.

Schuster has been considered Microsoft's channel chief since July 2016, when she replaced Phil Sorgen, who held the top slot for just over two years. At a time when disruption is running rampant in the IT industry, with vendors, channel partners, distributors and customers trying to find their "new normal," Microsoft's partners, many of whom are struggling to evolve their businesses, say Schuster's leadership style has earned their confidence.

"She's the right person at the right time," said Randy Steinle, vice president of Onsupport Corp., a technology consulting firm based in Austin, Texas, and president of the U.S. chapter of the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners. The IAMCP is an independent global organization of Microsoft partners, mostly small and midsize firms, with about 2,300 members globally and 700 in the United States. The word from IAMCP leaders, Steinle said, is that Schuster is making the right moves.

"She's personally engaged, she shows up, she shows her support, and that goes a long way," he said.

That trust is critical given major changes taking place in Redmond. Schuster describes Microsoft's revamp of its commercial sales program, an effort known as One Commercial Partner, as "the biggest change that the company has made to its sales model in more than a decade." The OCP initiative, formally introduced in July at the company's annual Microsoft Inspire partner conference, upended the way the company works with its channel.

Sure, change is a constant in technology. But OCP is a huge reshuffling, and partners haven't seen all the cards yet.

"We're having the conversations, hearing about the layoffs and restructuring, people moving into different positions, and that has a lot of partners anxious as we try to figure out where we'll fall after this," Steinle said.

If that sounds like a lot of upheaval, you're right. Now add in the sudden and unexpected departure in December, after less than one year on the job, of Ron Huddleston, who was picked to head OCP. But here's the thing: If partners are any more rattled now than before Huddleston's departure, they're not saying so — maybe because Schuster was immediately tapped to replace him.

Shaping up for the Job

When she was named corporate vice president, Microsoft Worldwide Partner Group (WPG), in 2016, Schuster stepped into the coveted global channel chief position after serving for just over two years as the general manager, Worldwide Programs and Marketing. But she's also a 20-year Microsoft veteran who has held 14 jobs at the company in several

Photo Credit: Brian Smale

groups, including Microsoft's Cloud and Enterprise Business, and in positions that run the gamut from sales, marketing, product management, licensing and pricing to services, training and certification to customer operations, with most roles touching the channel.

Clearly, she's earned her Microsoft pedigree. A good thing?

Back in 2013, when embattled Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer announced that he would step aside, the business world was certain that only an outsider could fix the bevy of problems — strategic, technical and cultural — that ailed the stumbling technology giant. CEO Satya Nadella, at the time of his appointment a 22-year Microsoft veteran, proved them all wrong. And Schuster, like Nadella, has come out right-side-up after years of hard-fought transformation at Microsoft.

"She's indoctrinated in that velocity, that wave, that came up to save Microsoft," said Larry Walsh, CEO and chief analyst at The 2112 Group.

A guide issued by The 2112 Group listing "10 Strategic KPIs for Channel Chief Success" highlights the attributes necessary to make channel magic happen — that is, to assemble a diverse group of partners, bring value systems together and create lift that results in a positive return to the company.

According to Walsh, to do that today as a channel chief you must be a diplomat and a leader, meaning you can get people to follow you; possess a sense of humor; be a tremendous listener; and, whatever your natural inclination, present an extroverted face to the world because good channel chiefs are rarely at home base. They're in partners' offices and meetings and are willing to step out on the stage, literally. Things they do well: Communicate in concise and simple terms to management about business and product road maps through a channel lens and translate plans back to partners. Constantly work on simplification to make programs more approachable. Broker relationships and be responsive to partner needs and concerns. From the partner perspective, a good channel chief knows how to charm end customers, can referee when partner-to-partner dealings get dicey and is willing to coach and mentor all those relationships because if the ecosystem stays well-tuned, everyone makes money and is more successful, engaged and relevant.

Schuster must also satisfy a demanding internal constituency, namely, Microsoft executives and sales leadership. Remember, while 95 percent of Microsoft's commercial revenue comes through partners, the company has a large consumer base and a diverse product portfolio. According to BusinessWeek, 28 percent of revenues come from Office, 22 percent from Windows Server and Azure, 11 percent from Xbox and 9 percent from Windows; the remainder is a mix of ads, Surface hardware and "other."

A big challenge for Schuster is translating how the strategic business changes taking place at Microsoft impact partners. Foremost among those shifts is the move to everything running as a service, preferably in Azure cloud.

> **'It's important for us to have clarity, to be transparent and to provide the inspiration, the view into the innovation for our partners.'**

Emblematic of that is how Redmond answered when we asked for a partner head count: "We can confirm that Microsoft has more than 64,000 cloud partners in its ecosystem, which is more cloud partners than AWS, Salesforce and Google combined."

There are, in fact, hundreds of thousands of partners, and the company said the number is constantly fluctuating and growing, with the Microsoft Partner Network adding, on average, 6,600 new logos per month. How do you manage that sort of scale?

"It's important for us to have clarity, to be transparent and to provide the inspiration, the view into the innovation for our partners," said Schuster. "To help them understand what is really important to the customer, to the market and to us." That includes not trying to be all things to all customers but instead to do "a few things really well."

Not so easy.

While OCP reduces the number of programs that touch partners, from 150 down to six core plans, and supports three key functions — build-with, go-to-market and sell-with — many partners are still left scrambling to figure out how to engage with Microsoft, and with whom.

Combine that with the business transformation being driven by Nadella, who announced a mobile-first, cloud-first world agenda just 52 days into his new role in 2014 and hasn't wavered. More recently at Microsoft Ignite, in September 2017, he asked the community to commit "to

EnergyWare

LIGHT THE WAY TO THE IoT's

"The agent partnership we've forged with EnergyWare has exceeded even our wildest expectations. EnergyWare is completely invested in your success and will provide any & all resources to make that success a reality. As an agent, we have never had an issue with commissions and every part of the process from quotes to sales to implementation are completely open and transparent. We at Zamm Advisors more than recommend becoming part of the EnergyWare family."

energywarellc.com

Booth #3000 (Next to AT&T)

(866) 305-8310

a world that's going to be made up of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge."

Viewed from ground level, most partners realize that Microsoft had to go all-in on the cloud, adopt a more open and integrated strategic vision and aggressively push partners to keep up.

They also realize, as an ecosystem, that some won't make the transition.

"People who were selling machines, hardware and software and running networks — it's challenging for them," said Steinle. "They don't make a living selling Office 365. You make a living coming up with creative solutions that work for people, that are specific to their business where you provide value, that you add on — that's table stakes now and not the end goal."

Schuster's take on the challenges Microsoft partners face? Not surprisingly, she couches it in terms of possibilities.

"I think that the biggest opportunity for partners is to rethink the way they sell technology and who they're selling to, because the buyers of technology have shifted," she said. Now, it's less often an IT sale than a chance to directly tell decision-makers how this service will make their businesses better, more profitable, more robust.

"Partners need to learn how to focus on the buyer, and the value proposition of the technology for that buyer, and think more expansively about what the solutions can do," she said. "The other thing that partners need to understand is, where is the value of their organization, and what is going to differentiate them?"

She reiterates the message some partners are, if they're being honest, getting tired of hearing: "There are a lot of commodity services, and many kinds of system integration services are not as required when people can buy point solutions that support them over the cloud."

Transform or Die

Another trend some are sick of, digital transformation, is also not going anywhere. Recent predictions from IDC report direct digital transformation investment will total $6.3 trillion for 2018 through 2020. By the end of 2019, worldwide spending will reach $1.7 trillion annually, a 42 percent increase from 2017.

For Microsoft, the digital transformation message is, "empower employees, engage customers, optimize operations and transform products."

'The other thing that partners need to understand is, where is the value of their organization.'

The challenge is to get buy-in from partners, to reboot that ecosystem for the cloud, Schuster acknowledges. Key to that is enablement — ensuring partner firms can hire and retain the talent to keep pace with Microsoft's road map and leverage the innovation it provides, particularly around machine learning and artificial intelligence. On that front, Microsoft is adding education; connecting partners to deliver complete solutions to customers; and encouraging co-selling with inside sales teams, which are rewarded for working with partners.

That and more is spelled out in the new OCP operating model. Microsoft did two key things, Schuster said.

"One, we got clarity with [partners] that we're in four core businesses," she said. Partners are encouraged to help build solutions around modern workplace, business applications, applications and infrastructure, and data and AI.

"And two, we said, 'We're going to help you in three ways: We're going to help build your businesses, we're going to help you build your go-to-market and we're going to sell with you," she said.

That precision of message flows from Nadella, and Schuster admits that it's no accident she's been with Microsoft for as long as she has. Much of her time at the company coincided with that of her CEO, who's helped make Microsoft cool again.

"He has the ability to take complexity and simplify things," she said. "It helped me be a better leader as well because I appreciate the value of the clarity he provides, and the prioritization. I practice that myself now."

That's not all. In a recent Microsoft Partner Network podcast, "Building an Authentic Career," Schuster discussed other factors to which she attributes her success, such as understanding that no one person can do it all and that you need to bring others to your vision because, collectively, you can make something more powerful.

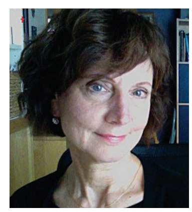
In other words, don't fall in love with your own ideas or think of them as proprietary.

"Contribute, build a vision and then bring other people along, scale through your partners, customers, investors," she said. "You need backing and support. Over time, you'll find it's bigger than yourself."

And, don't be afraid to challenge the status quo. No problem cannot be overcome, she said. You may just have to redefine the situation. If it still feels off track, you may have to re-examine, and take a few steps back. When necessary, acknowledge that you may have taken a wrong turn.

Finally, take your vision and drive it to execution.

Bottom line, Schuster's earned the respect of Microsoft's diverse partner base. Combine that with her long tenure and experience at Microsoft, her stick-to-itiveness when it comes to being authentic, and what she sees as the three constants that anyone, partners included, can use to cultivate leadership skills — think like a customer, understand both the mechanics of how technology works and the real business needs of the customer, and know your strengths and weaknesses and what conditions you need to be successful — and you'll understand why Microsoft's global channel chief is our Channel Partners and Channel Futures 2018 Channel Influencer of the Year.



Lynn Haber is content director, IT channel, for Channel Futures & Channel Partners.

linkedin.com/in/lynnhaber
@lynnhaber

BROOKS MCCORCLE: 'A REAL TRAILBLAZER'

Speaking of channel influencers, Brooks McCorcle, former president of AT&T Partner Solutions and a primary architect of the AT&T Partner Exchange program, has done as much as anyone to shape our industry. Attendees at the 2017 AT&T Partner Exchange Summit gave McCorcle a standing ovation in October when she retired and handed the reins to Zee Hussain.

"I have had a fantastic career," McCorcle told Channel Partners. "I've had so many opportunities to run large businesses, to run small teams, to start new things up like we did with AT&T Partner Exchange. What I hope is that as a result of some of that, customers are having better experiences today, that employees are growing and developing."

While she may no longer be at the helm, her influence is unmistakable, and AT&T's partners owe much of their success to her leadership.

McCorcle began her tenure with AT&T in the days when it was Southwestern Bell Corp. and later SBC Communications. In her 25 years with the company she wore a variety of hats with panache: investor relations, consumer marketing, telephone services, mergers and acquisitions, and finally, the channel.

'I feel good about where the business is.'

—Brooks McCorcle

She assumed the role of president of AT&T Partner Solutions in 2012 and grew to become one of the most recognizable faces of AT&T's, or any, channel team. She speaks of the creation of the Partner Exchange program as one of her proudest achievements. McCorcle led the formation of the reseller program, which was a pioneer in incorporating partner feedback and encouraging collaboration.

Partner Exchange now has more than 500 solution providers in its stable and a diverse portfolio of products and services.

"It's been a blast," she said. "Probably the most fun assignment I've ever had, and then we added ACC Business and Wholesale several years ago and got a lot of great synergy out of that. I feel good about where the business is, and I really just want to thank the solution providers that we've worked with who have helped us build this really unique experience." *—James Anderson*

2018 CHANNEL INFLUENCER AWARDS

50 PEOPLE, SUPPLIERS, TECHS AND TRENDS DRIVING THE NEW CHANNEL

Who's thinking big enough to shape the combined IT and telecom channel in 2018?

By Channel Partners & Channel Futures Staff

Not to get all Dickensian, but for the channel, it really is the best and the worst of times. You've heard the new conventional wisdom, all companies are now technology companies. Customers who think sitting out cloud or mobility or IoT until the tech is "fully baked" may find themselves in need of resurrection. The good news is, they need your help to realize the full "powered by" business potential.

The bad news? You're not the only one chasing that transformation budget.

Say hello to the new channel. This ecosystem comprises both traditional partners busy reinventing themselves and plenty of newcomers who see opportunities to deliver value and make some money. Think SaaS ecosystem consultants, vertical specialists and ISVs with the skills to customize generic software.

One lure for these come-latelies is a shift in budgetary power. Today, 65 percent of tech-purchasing decisions are made by line-of-business leaders, says Jay McBain, principal analyst, global channels at Forrester. Almost one-third of the time, your IT contacts aren't involved. There can be a dozen people in the decision chain, and research on products and services is largely done before anyone outside the customer gets a call.

Gartner agrees this trend isn't slowing — line-of-business leaders will directly control 80 percent of all spending by 2020. The CIOs, CTOs and IT managers who agents, consultants, digital services resellers, MSPs and VARs have dealt with for years? They're losing budget clout, fast.

Suppliers are noticing and tinkering with their channel programs. 2112 Group CEO Larry Walsh says deal registration is dead, or at least on life support. Telarus CEO Patrick Oborn said recently that partners need to realize they're not competing with one another; they're in a fight with direct reps undercutting on price.

Enough of the doom and gloom. Channel Futures and Channel Partners editors believe the outlook for the channel is bright, for those who choose to adapt. You have the skills to assemble hardware, software and connectivity into services to support customers' digital initiatives, from automation to AI to IoT, which is set to explode. Just look at Verizon's 2017 Internet of Things State of the Market report: While 73 percent of execs surveyed are researching or currently deploying IoT, for most, these are proofs of concept or simple projects to track data and send status alerts. Customers are on the verge of big things. LOB leaders might have the purse strings, but they also have an unhappy tendency to fall prey to inertia, lack of time and nagging doubts over the ability of their IT teams to execute and then secure new systems.

Who's going to allay those fears and light a fire under laggards?

You are, and we've found 50 technologies, trends, organizations and people that can help. Our editorial team combed through the biggest stories of 2017 and in January published a digital issue that recognized the movers and shakers who could make or break your business as we barrel into 2018.

This article spotlights two groups from that digital issue: the 25 companies that are thinking big and the eight individuals we believe will wield outsize influence in the year ahead. To learn about the eight technologies and the same number of business trends that are poised to take off, go to http://bit.ly/2AG2Xw3 and download the digital issue.

That adds up to 49. Turn to Page 12 and meet our first-ever Channel Influencer of the Year.

1 AT&T

AT&T continues to push the industry with 5G, IoT and its "software-defined everything" strategy. Its pending acquisition of Time Warner is shifting the way service providers think about the media content they deliver. As AT&T's industry continues to see M&A, legislative turmoil and the convergence of IT and telecom, the company itself is working on reinvention.

And as AT&T's scope of technology and resources gets deeper, its channel partners have additional reasons for excitement.

AT&T made a major change to its channel in the fall. Brooks McCorcle retired as vice president of AT&T Partner Solutions and passed the torch to Zee Hussain, who will undersee a major shift in the way AT&T does business with its partners. The telecommunications giant rolled its three indirect channel programs — Partner Exchange, ACC Business and Alliance Channel — underneath the AT&T Partner Solutions umbrella. That realignment has made AT&T's channel leadership structure more clear and allows partners to use tools and resources from the other programs.

The Alliance Channel also recently took strides in simplifying membership and giving payment flexibility to its partners.

AT&T's competition with Verizon, in both various technology arms races and in the channel, is sure to be a major theme in 2018. *—James Anderson*

---

2 AVANT

In 2009, born-in-the-cloud master agent/distributor Avant Communications launched in a marketplace of disruptive technologies with a disruptive business model: focus on selling engagement with the customer instead of selling the product.

The main thrust in the Chicago-based company's channel partner-empowering sales engine comes from its sales enablement-as-a-service (SEaaS) platform. The platform's four components — BattleApp, R&D, BattleLab and BattlePlan — provide partners with everything from guidance through the sales process and data for sales qualification and portfolio selection to a state-of-the-art sales enablement and immersion center and life cycle sales enablement engagement. In addition, Avant's channel support team pursues the newest and best products, tools and resources to help channel partners continuously enhance their IT sales capabilities.

That strategy appears to be working. And well.

In September, Avant president and co-founder Drew Lydecker told Channel Partners the company enjoyed tremendous growth over the past year. SD-WAN revenue tripled, and UCaaS revenue doubled — as did investments in partner resources and the size of its channel support team. Machine-learning capabilities added to BattleApp will help partners locate sales and marketing resources, and "concierge-style" support is available for installation management, quotes and order entry.

Lydecker says the entire team at Avant holds firm to a conviction that sales enablement for partners is key for master agents and distributors going forward. And they have plenty of evidence to support their case. *—Buffy Naylor*

3 AVAYA

Avaya began 2017 saddled with about $6.3 billion in debt and filing for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Looking ahead, 2018 will be a year of transformation as it emerges from its restructuring as a public company.

Avaya exited chapter 11 in December.

"We are focused on the success of our partners and customers, and you will continue to see Avaya evolve and lead the industry," said Gary Levy, vice president of U.S. channels. "We are investing in emerging technologies to enable our partners to succeed in the marketplace by delivering game-changing solutions to our customers."

One example is a five-year, $60 million mega deal with the Bosch Group, announced in October.

With new president and CEO Jim Chirico in place, Avaya is focused on simplifying operational processes and complexities to "empower our partners, employees and our customers — and to make it easier to do business with Avaya, all while providing best-in-class margins for partner profitability," Levy said. He insists the company will emerge from chapter 11 with a stronger balance sheet and greater freedom to invest in R&D and innovation, sales and M&A, not to mention expanding the ecosystem of technology and alliance partners.

Avaya is working on launching a new partner program that offers to modernize its base by introducing cloud and hybrid offerings aimed at accelerating partner success and delivering improved customer experiences, Levy said.

"Not only is Avaya coming back, we're coming back stronger than ever," he said. "That means there's never been a better time to be an Avaya partner. We've demonstrated the strength of our business model and the resilience of our customer base as we've moved through the debt restructuring process. We are ready to compete and win more aggressively in the market." —*Edward Gately*

4 box

Cloud file sharing and content management is practically a commodity at this point, which makes it a challenge for vendors who want to differentiate their offerings — not only to end users, but also for channel partners, who have more options than ever before.

To set its services apart, Box is making its cloud storage smarter, leaning heavily on machine learning technology by companies including Google and Microsoft. Rather than just providing a space to store and share files in the cloud, Box is developing a framework, called Box Skills, to help customers use machine learning to make files easier to find and organize by automatically assigning them context, such as facial recognition in photos and video. The initial skills automatically add intelligent metadata to images, audio and video files, providing context to the content Box customers upload to the cloud.

Box is also using machine learning to provide a customized user experience. Box Graph is a machine learning model that analyzes how people and content interact on Box, providing a personalized experience for users and surfacing relevant content through Box Feed.

For channel partners, machine learning in Box may drive customer engagement, expanding cloud storage deployments and improving renewal rates.
—*Nicole Henderson*

5 CenturyLink™

A year after it was announced, CenturyLink's $34 billion acquisition of Level 3 Communications is finally a done deal. The merger creates a telecom behemoth — the second-largest domestic communications provider serving global enterprise customers, second only to AT&T.

John DeLozier, vice president of CenturyLink Channel Alliance, said there's a lot to look forward to now that the merger is final, with much opportunity for strategic partners — that is, the top 25 partners throughout the country — as well as master agents and partners that operate on a regional basis.

"Not only do I have strategic and indirect partners, but I also have all of our alliances moving forward," DeLozier said. "That's our SIs, our strategic partnerships with companies like VMware and Cisco, and Avaya … as well as our software providers. There's a great place for those alliance partners in our world as well to sell solutions with them and through them to customers."

Level 3's assets increase CenturyLink's network by 200,000 route miles of fiber, including 64,000 route miles in 350 metropolitan areas and 33,000 subsea route miles connecting multiple continents. Accounting for those served by both companies, CenturyLink's on-net buildings are expected to increase by nearly 75 percent to about 75,000, including 10,000 buildings in EMEA and Latin America.

Al Sadowski, research vice president for 451 Research, said CenturyLink was a player before. But now, combined with Level 3, it adds a lot more network capability globally to compete with the likes of AT&T and Verizon and other big players such as NTT and British Telecom.

Of course, adding thousands of miles of fiber along with melding operations, engineering and IT, and a channel program is a massive undertaking. Still, Sadowski says CenturyLink has an advantage.

"For several years now, CenturyLink has been in the process of automating its business functions," he said. "So it's perhaps going to have an easier path than if it was just starting now, because they've started down a road toward that automation of network provisioning, for example, adding things like SD-WAN and having SAP HANA, it's looking to provide managed services beyond simple transport." *—Edward Gately*

6 COMCAST BUSINESS

2017 was a busy year for Comcast Business. The company expanded into SD-WAN, which enabled it to reach beyond its traditional base of small-business customers to enterprise accounts. Comcast Business also entered new relationships, including one with Avant in April.

Avant joins a growing list of Comcast Business master agents who have grown with the company since Comcast started selling cloud and communications services six years ago. This list includes Intelisys, Telarus, TBI and others. With help from Comcast Business, these distributors provide MSPs, agents, cloud service brokers and more enviable options for transforming their businesses.

Little wonder, then, that Comcast's sales continue to rise. In the third quarter which ended on Sept. 30, business services revenue increased almost 13 percent. One big reason why: indirect sales by new channel partners looking to grow their monthly services revenue. *—T.C. Doyle*

7 Continuum

IT management platform

With its announcement this fall that it will go all-in on security-as-a-service, Continuum fired what is likely to be the first shot in a new battle among toolset vendors for the cybersecurity loyalties of managed services providers.

The new offerings, announced during the company's annual Navigate user conference in October, include a comprehensive software-as-a-service solution, a 24/7/365 security operations center and aggressive support for marketing and end-user training.

"Your customers believe you are responsible for securing them today," CEO Michael George told the audience during a keynote. "If you don't get in this business, someone is going to take your customers."

The idea is to enable smaller MSPs, which often lack in-house resources to provide sophisticated security solutions and around-the-clock monitoring, to leverage Continuum's tools and talent.

Continuum pioneered this concept in the MSP space by offering a remote monitoring and management (RMM) platform that is natively integrated with an around-the-clock network operations center. Bringing that same operational efficiency to security could position Continuum as an early leader in what's likely to be an important new practice area.
—Aldrin Brown

---

8 Cyxtera

In May the combination of the CenturyLink data centers with an extensive security portfolio from private equity firms Medina Capital and BC Partners created a $2.8 billion "super max of data centers" — an apt analogy given the size of CenturyLink's footprint (57 data centers comprising 2.6 million square feet of raised-floor capacity) and the breadth of its security offerings.

Having former Terremark CEO Manuel Medina at the helm hasn't hurt, either.

In September, the company announced a global channel program with Avant, Westven and SageNet as inaugural partners. Tina Gravel, Cyxtera's senior vice president of global channels, structured the program to incentivize partners to sell the full suite.

Challenges remain in pulling together a unified offering comprising colocation and cloud with four security technologies: the Brainspace analytics platform for digital investigations, Cryptzone's secure perimeter offering, Catbird's security policy enforcement and Easy Solutions' electronic fraud detection and prevention. But the combined company is well-positioned to capture business from high-value, highly regulated verticals in the near term.

Looking further ahead, it's clear the future of IT is a mix of public and private cloud. Hybrid or multi, doesn't matter. Customers need a better way to grant access to their applications and systems than an IP address. Identity and context, like location or device, matter, a lot. By baking in policy-based analytics and enforcement and playing nice with public cloud vendors like AWS and Azure, Cyxtera has most bases covered. The model is a smart one for partners and customers alike.
—Lorna Garey

9 Extreme networks

At Extreme Networks' recent Global Partner Conference, Bob Gault, its chief revenue and services officer, said a year ago his company's stock price was $3.50 and it was the No. 13 networking company.

"A lot of customers didn't know where we were going," said Gault.

Flash-forward to today. The stock price is $11.42, and Extreme is now in the No. 3 market position, he said. And judging by comments from top executives, this is just the start of Extreme's strategy to steal more and more market share away from Cisco, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise (HPE) and other competitors. To beef up its portfolio this year, Extreme acquired Zebra Technologies' WLAN unit, Avaya's networking business and Brocade Communications Systems' data center networking business

"Going forward, we've got all the assets in place to not just compete, but win," Gault said. "The only thing that can stop us is us. If we can have a conversation with a customer on a unified solution … there's no doubt we can win."

The company insists competitors like Cisco and HPE lack Extreme's clarity of purpose, and that it now has "the broadest portfolio" to serve enterprise customers end to end, from the data center out to the access layer, with one unified management platform.

Cisco and HPE would likely dispute that characterization, but there's no doubt Extreme is now a legit option for enterprise networks, including for IoT projects.

Extreme's top goal for 2018 is achieving $1.1 billion in year-over-year revenue growth. In January, it began rolling out a new unified partner program that combines existing and acquired programs and technologies, and is designed to expand the end-user value proposition for global channel partners. *—Edward Gately*

---

10 GE

GE is leveraging its history in the industrial market to place a big bet on the Internet of Things as the path to digitization, claiming it will be a Top 10 software company by 2020. At the heart of this Herculean effort is GE Digital's Predix, an operating system for industrial IoT applications that is fast becoming the de facto platform.

More than 2,700 people from around the world attended GE Digital's annual Minds+Machines event in San Francisco last year, where virtually every major channel partner — from Accenture to PwC — promoted their IoT services. IoT projects require lots of integration, which means billions of dollars will flow through the channel: ABI Research predicts that IoT system integration and consulting revenues will surpass $35.7 billion in 2022, up from less than $17 billion this year. GE landed on Forrester's short list for major IoT platform providers.

GE Digital also has been expanding its channel program to help a growing number of independent software vendors (ISVs) use Predix. GE Digital says its ISV program has more than 100 registered partners, with more than 35 actively developing a commercial, industrial solution, and it expects this number to grow with the increased adoption of the industrial internet worldwide. Participants in the program have access to the Predix platform, which includes Predix capabilities, data services and security services, GE Digital says. ISV partners also receive application development support, including training. *—Tom Kaneshige*

11 Ingram Micro

Ingram Micro is clearly a company in transition, and in a big way. It was acquired by Chinese conglomerate HNA Group for about $6 billion in 2016, and around the same time purchased Parallels Odin Service Automation platform, which it was already using — one among many acquisitions. Not only is Ingram poised to play in the big China market, and expand global business opportunities for partners as well, but it will be interesting to see how U.S. partners benefit from increased availability of products.

The Odin purchase further reinforces Ingram's seriousness about its cloud business objectives, which began about a decade ago with the launch of a cloud services portfolio.

What to watch for: The distributor seems to be navigating the challenge of maintaining tight relationships with its small, midsize and large partners. On the cloud front, Ingram Micro continues to add functionality to the Odin Service Automation platform to help partners transact their cloud business, offered in conjunction with the Ingram Micro Cloud Marketplace. Ingram Micro also continues to offer a solid and well-respected annual Cloud Summit, and the distributor has strong cloud leadership with Renee Bergeron, senior vice president of Global Cloud.

But there are challenges in keeping a $43 billion, 20,000-person company agile. As Ingram Micro works to shed its "traditional distribution" reputation, it's angling to be seen as the go-to source for emerging technologies, vetting startups and as-a-service offerings, and expanding enablement offerings and finance options. *—Lynn Haber*

---

12 Microsoft Azure

Microsoft is driving artificial intelligence, or AI, into its core products, from Cortana Intelligence Suite to Dynamics 365. Microsoft Azure Machine Learning is part of Cortana that enables predictive analytics and interaction with data using natural language and speech. A Forrester survey of business and tech professionals found only a small number of companies with AI implementations now, yet more than half said they plan to invest in AI in the next 12 months. Specifically, 37 percent plan to implement intelligent assistants for customers, and 35 percent doing the same with cognitive products.

Speaking at Channel Visionaries in San Jose, California, last January, Larry Persaud, director of Azure strategy, gave an example of an AI chatbot helping an agent lock in a hotel reservation. Microsoft's AI technology also improves the Uber customer experience by ensuring drivers match their profile photos and securing passenger information.

"We want our partners to understand what this really means for the future [and] to learn about the business and technical aspects," Persaud said. "Data and intelligence are very tightly coupled. We're adding machine learning aspects, readying AI into our data platform."

Armed with the right know-how, channel partners can help customers tap the power of AI by adding algorithms to apps and leveraging cloud-based tools such as Microsoft Azure Machine Learning and Cortana. Everything from natural language processing and image recognition to visual search to machine learning can find their way into your toolbox. *—Tom Kaneshige*

4 KEYS to Technology Marketing Success

With so little time and so many tools and tactics vying for your attention, where should you focus your marketing efforts to have the biggest impact on your sales numbers? Below are four fundamental steps every technology business should take to deliver reliable results.

1 Market to Your Ideal Sales Prospect (Not Just The Decision-Maker)

Whether preparing a new email campaign or building a new website, focus your marketing efforts on your ideal sales prospect. Before identifying exactly who this is, ask yourself, “who is your first point of contact in the decision-making process?”

While the final decision maker may be someone in an executive leadership or a senior manager in a larger company, the first person you talk with may be mid-level or part of a small IT team. Your marketing message should speak to the day-to-day pain points of this mid-level / small team leader. This critical buyer persona is most likely to convert as an initial sales lead and proceed to champion your services to stakeholders. If you market directly to the final decision maker, you limit your points of contact and greatly increase the difficulty in generating new leads.

2 Realize that Your Website Is Never “Done”

Your business isn’t a static entity; it adjusts to the products and services you offer, the market, your customers, your employees, and yourself. So why let your website sit unchanged for years at a time? It should consistently evolve to reflect the ever changing face of your business.

Outside of referrals, your website is the most effective source of leads. And also your most scalable. There are a two critical things you should be doing in order to ensure you’re getting traffic and converting leads:

Always be blogging. This will keep your audience engaged and add fresh, relevant content to your site to attract organic visitors from search engines.

Announce everything you do. Provide visitors multiple opportunities to convert by updating your main web pages with news regarding your offerings, services, and notable staff additions.

3 Differentiate Yourself Against Your Nearest Competitors

What do you do that’s different from your competitors? Promises of quality service, aggressive prices, and 24/7 availability aren’t going to cut it – your competitors make the same promises.

The good news is that your marketing presence can give you a leg up. Here are a few ways you can stand out and make an impression on new prospects:

Cultivate your brand’s personality: Be intentional and invest in high-quality marketing assets that convey the spirit of your business. This includes your logo, color palette, personalized imagery, illustrated graphics, and copywriting style.

Get testimonials from happy clients: Video is best, because it is easiest to consume, and it puts a relatable, human touch on the narrative. Prospects will imagine themselves in the same position when they pick up the phone.

Become an authority in your area: Contact your local publications and join regional business and community groups. Make yourself available for comment, advice, and even informational presentations. Then link to these groups from your site. They’ll appreciate the reciprocal traffic and you’ll look like the trusted expert you are.

4 Align Your Marketing Activities To Your Sales Funnel

Always know where in the buying process your ideal prospect is when you market to them. The marketing message and tactic that works best at the top of your funnel when your prospect first visits your site isn’t best for the bottom of the funnel after purchase.

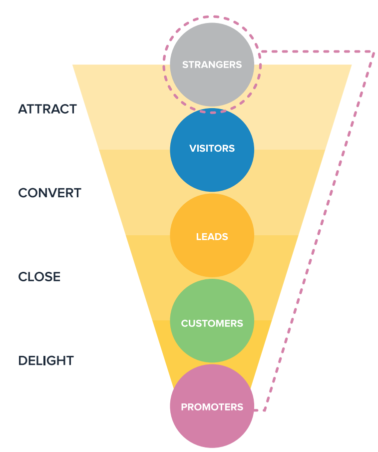
This starts with a definition of each stage in your funnel. Then you can decide which message is best for what stage. Here’s a simple way to think about it:

Attract – Getting people to your website and your marketing materials, enticing them with value-oriented headlines and useful information.

Convert – Capturing lead information using high quality, value-laden resources.

Close – Moving a captured lead down the funnel to sale, a process which can take weeks or even months.

Delight – Maintaining connection with customers and past clients to provide value and build a strong relationship.



pronto marketing

Pronto Marketing is a website and marketing services company that’s been in business serving MSPs, VARs, and all varieties of IT pros since 2009. We serve our over 1000+ IT clients with a managed services model that delivers huge value for your marketing dollar: We do it all for you and we make it easy. You pay one low monthly fee for a brand new custom website, highly-effective marketing, and unlimited support without the high costs of a typical website build or the headache of managing multiple vendors to get results. Visit ProntoMarketing.com and contact us to learn more about Pronto for your business or about our reseller program. ***For a limited time, mention Channel Partners and get $499 off when you join.***

www.prontomarketing.com | sales@prontomarketing.com | (855) 997-2608

13 OPTIV

It's not often we see VARs become true market forces. Traditional reseller business models have difficulty scaling up because of their commodities-based revenues. One of the few ways to grow a VAR practice is to add new employees, and the increased cost often offsets any growing profits. But today's automation tools and cloud technology make scaling a tech business easier and less expensive.

Though making the transition toward a service-based model, security reseller-turned-service provider Optiv still operates in large part as a traditional VAR. It was formed in 2015 by the merger of Accuvant and FishNet Security. Together, the two entities had revenues totaling $1.5 billion in 2014.

Then, Optiv embarked on a series of acquisitions: In April 2016, the company snapped up identity and access management firm Advancive, May brought third-party risk application vendor Evantix into the fold, and Optiv swallowed New England-based Adaptive Communications in June. In March 2017, it acquired Pennsylvania-based Comm Solutions to gain a foothold in the Northeast market.

The deal reflects a growing trend of resellers-turned-service providers finding big success with packaged solutions, especially as equity firms look for companies with established recurring revenue streams.

In a high-profile announcement in September, former FireEye and McAfee CEO Dave DeWalt and retired United States Army General and former CIA Director David Petraeus joined Optiv's board, adding more heft to the company's rapidly growing market presence.

Today, Optiv occupies a top 10 spot in cybersecurity consulting firms with revenues that increased by 15.5 percent to $373 million in the year following the KKR acquisition — not a bad place to be in an industry projected to reach $170 billion in the next three years. And just last November it snapped up Toronto-based Conexsys, expanding its reach into Canada, as well as the government vertical. *—Kris Blackmon*

14 ParkMyCloud

As cloud adoption by organizations of all types and sizes continues to accelerate, innovative software companies are finding opportunities to develop cutting-edge tools to solve emerging problems.

ParkMyCloud is just such a provider.

Among the biggest advantages of public cloud is the ability to easily scale computing and storage to use only the resources one needs. But too often, MSPs and customer IT teams fail to shut down VMs and storage instances when they're not needed, leading to wasted cloud spend. ParkMyCloud offers a way to automate the turning on — and off — of cloud resources to maximize the cost-effectiveness of public cloud.

The idea that companies are spending billions of dollars a year on 24 x 7 servers, when many of those resources are idle much of the time, is what got ParkMyCloud co-founder and CEO Jay Chapel $1.65 million in seed funding in late 2016. Chapel says simply pausing nonproduction servers used for tasks such as development, staging, testing and QA when they aren't needed can save companies up to 60 percent on their AWS bills.

Originally rolled out just for AWS, the product is now compatible with Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud Platform. As firms increasingly look for ways to maximize cloud dollars, companies like ParkMyCloud could find themselves big beneficiaries in the year ahead. *—Aldrin Brown*

EARN UP TO 500%

OF THE SOLD MRR ON CLOUD-BASED OPPORTUNITIES

For details, visit
EVOLVEIP.NET/2018SPIFF

WE'VE GOT YOUR
aaS
COVERED

Disaster recovery, contact centers, desktops, phone systems and infrastructure.
Best of breed solutions integrated together.

Experience Cloud as a Strategy™

EVOLVE IP
THE CLOUD STRATEGY COMPANY™

15 pax8

Pax8 loves to distinguish itself from "traditional distributors" and their cloud strategies — its "Escape from distribution, you need a wingman" tagline and "born in the cloud" cred are straight up shots across the bows of the likes of Ingram Micro and Tech Data. Pax8 makes no bones about its view that hardware, billing and support baggage weighs down and distracts traditional distributors from providing partners with an unburdened cloud strategy.

The company's marketing is fierce, attractive and expansive, and Pax8 backs up its swagger with programs to help partners learn how to market and sell cloud and a streamlined cloud marketplace with quote, build and provisioning on a single screen. Company leaders boast about its exclusive focus on cloud, its aggregation of leading cloud solutions for MSPs to deliver to their SMB customers and enablement to help partners build a successful cloud practice and subscription business.

Pax8's goal in 2017 was to double the number of partners it does business with, from 1,000 to 2,000, as well as double the number of employees. Well, Pax8 reports having 2,500 partners to date, and more than 125 employees. Looking ahead to 2018, Pax8 is again gearing up for significant growth of its partner base. —*Lynn Haber*

---

16 rackspace®

If you think "colocation" when you hear "Rackspace," it's time to take another look. The company, which bills itself as the No. 1 managed cloud provider, wants to be the go-to source for partners looking to help customers move to the cloud. To that end it offers integrations with AWS, Azure and Google; support for VMware; and an updated slate of management and security services.

Last November, Rackspace brought on a new CTO, Joel Friedman, the former chief technology and security officer at Datapipe, which it acquired that same month. Datapipe will help customers move critical workloads out of their corporate data centers and into the cloud. Also in November, Rackspace announced a deal with HPE to deliver its OpenStack Private Cloud on HPE hardware as a managed service sold on a pay-for-what-you-use basis — two main benefits of public cloud. The private cloud may be housed in a customer data center, a third-party colocation facility or, of course, a Rackspace data center.

And last year, Rackspace reiterated its open source cred by taking Innovator of the Year honors at the Red Hat Summit and making key announcements at the OpenStack Summit.

Little-known fact: Along with NASA, Rackspace invented OpenStack in 2010.

On the channel side, Rackspace recently added a new incentive program that matches dollar for dollar deals that new and existing agents generate when selling managed hosting services valued between $10,000 and $150,000 in monthly recurring revenue. —*Lorna Garey*

17

SaaSMax was named a cool vendor by Gartner in 2017, and it's easy to see why. Although the company stays low on the radar, innovative CEO Dina Moskowitz is using technology to change the vendor-partner relationship, while paving the way for other women in tech.

Moskowitz says SaaSMax is a marketplace or aggregator of SaaS solutions and the channel. The company helps match partners and SaaS ISVs looking to leverage the channel, acting as a personal concierge and creating new business opportunities for both software companies and partners, while giving them the tools to do business together.

Another way the born-in-the-cloud distributor distinguishes its cloud marketplace is by opening up the range of SaaS offerings for lines of business — marketing, sales, accounting, ERP and other business intelligence applications that might not find a home in other cloud marketplaces.

And, it practices what it preaches, using a business intelligence solution, Partner Optimizer, to use data and automation to matchmake vendors and partners by creating strategic profiles of channel partners and prospects. *—Lynn Haber*

18

Salesforce continues to be one of the most disruptive vendors in the software as a service market — itself a force reshaping IT. The company has been investing in artificial intelligence capabilities on the product side, while growing its AppExchange marketplace.

Introduced a year ago, Salesforce Einstein AI is powering new offerings across its platform, including Einstein Forecasting, a new, fully automated solution that uses all of a company's historical CRM data to "take the guesswork out of forecasting." According to Salesforce, Einstein is delivering more than 475 million predictions daily.

More recently, Salesforce's business app marketplace, AppExchange, hit 5 million installs — a number that reflects a growing opportunity for its partners, according to Leyla Seka, executive vice president, AppExchange, Salesforce.

"The success and scale of the AppExchange reinforces the power of apps and is a true testament to the power of ecosystems as a business differentiator," Seka wrote in a post on Medium. "Ecosystems also offer a unique opportunity for partners to go to market together, resulting in sales cycles that are more personalized, efficient and tailored to solving complex customer challenges."

In 2018, Salesforce will continue its momentum in building its app ecosystem and leveraging new insights from Einstein, which will help partners deliver solutions to customers across industry verticals. *—Nicole Henderson*

19 SIRIUS

The mandate for traditional VARs to evolve into managed services providers is a topic of discussion at any channel partner conference you can name. But saying it is different from doing it.

If you're looking for inspiration, let's hold Sirius Computer Solutions up as an example.

It was only a few years ago that Sirius ran a solid VAR operation. Although it achieved enough success to operate on a large scale, its business model echoed that of many small to midsize traditional resellers. It was an IBM shop and built its relationships and reputation on reselling and integrating IBM solutions — a true VAR success story.

When Sirius decided to expand into managed services, it first sought to beef up its existing revenue base by bringing competitor MSI Systems Integrators into its fold in 2010. In 2016, it bet big on its security solution business when it bought Force 3, then continued to bolster that business with its acquisition earlier last year of Continuum Worldwide.

And just last summer, it acquired Forsythe Technologies in a high-profile, big bucks transaction that secured a joint annual security revenue of more than $500 million. The acquisition expanded the company's reach into the profitable professional services vertical.

Though its transition from VAR to MSP is still new, Sirius isn't resting on its laurels. The company has a sharp eye on the changing nature of the channel and is already positioning itself to compete with new partner types with the launch of a digital marketing agency last year. This business is specifically designed to target the profitable marketing technology sector, offering everything from digital strategy to automation solutions.

Sirius's forward-thinking approach and agility that belies its size drove its inclusion on our 2018 companies to watch — and maybe learn a lesson from.

—Kris Blackmon

---

20 scansource + INTELISYS

In August 2016, ScanSource bought technology services distributor Intelisys for $83.6 million. With roots in bar-code devices, point of sales systems and physical security systems, ScanSource recognized the need to blaze a new trail, and Intelisys was further along than they when it came to selling tech services that produced a recurring revenue stream. Since then, the two companies have learned tough lessons. VARs and telecom agents have not converged en masse as expected. But ScanSource deserves recognition for visionary thinking.

Today, its communications and services accounts for 33 percent of the combined companies' business. The combined companies now serve more than 500 vendors and carriers, plus 35,000 VARs and sales agents.

Better yet, ScanSource is poised to make the most of IoT opportunities, leads the way in knowledge transfer with its Cloud Services University and contributes thought leadership through its participation in the Channel Futures Think Tank and other forums.

As for Intelisys, to borrow from William Shakespeare, some master agents are born disruptive (think Avant) and some have disruption thrust upon them. Being acquired by ScanSource provided them with resources that have fueled notable expansion over the past year.

Its annual partner conference, Channel Connect, held last October, was moved to a venue to accommodate an expanded attendee population and broke sponsorship records.

In an interview with Channel Partners during the conference, Intelisys discussed the expansion of its channel support team; more than 40 positions were added in the past year, including channel managers and national solutions engineering team members. Super9 is expanding, as well. The three-day intensive training program, part of Intelisys' Cloud Services University, is designed to make partner businesses and their sales staffs more productive. In 2018, there will be more training content and new program options.

—T.C. Doyle & Buffy Naylor

WOW! business
PARTNER ALLIANCE

Did You Know You Have a Cable Alternative?

Add WOW! Business to Your Portfolio & Start Earning 2x Upfront!

If you're looking to sell the best value to your clients, WOW! is the better alternative to traditional Broadband providers. We're a *Cable-Overbuilder*, which means our solely owned state-of-the-art fiber network is available in the same communities as established providers.

WOW! Business Benefits

- Higher capacity products, 1 Gbps!
- Disruptive pricing and aggressive SLAs
- Exceptional customer service

2x UPFRONT IS GOOD!

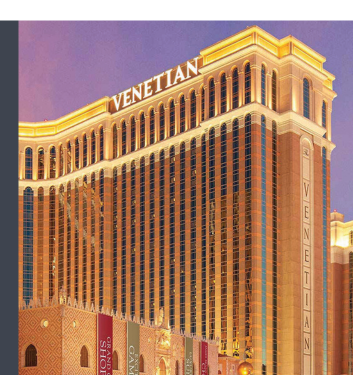
Plus, we offer a generous 2x upfront spiff to show our commitment to you.

Check out rates and details at www.wowforbusiness.com/partner-alliance.

MEET US

If you're attending the Channel Partners Conference in Las Vegas this April we'd love to get to know you.

Call Ken Worcester at 612-986-3551 to arrange a specific meeting time. We look forward to it!



21 SOPHOS

It's hard to think of a more channel-friendly vendor that covers as many bases in its market as Sophos does in security. Selling exclusively through partners, the company is in the leader square of Gartner's Magic Quadrants for endpoint protection platform and unified threat management and a visionary in enterprise mobility management. It recently announced new ransomware protection and advances in network security around its XG Firewall, which Kendra Krause, vice president of global channels, told Channel Partners is Sophos' fastest-growing product, contributing to a 40 percent Q316 increase in the number of global partners selling its endpoint and network protection.

The attraction, in large part, is a Synchronized Security ecosystem that covers endpoints, mobile devices and servers with integration into the Sophos Central platform. The system surfaces insights gained by constantly chattering nodes. That adds iterative value the more products you sell to a customer.

In response, 2017 saw plenty of security providers pulling together consortia to help partners assemble multivendor product and service bundles, depending on APIs to deliver that sort of a unified view. But given a tight security skills market, Sophos' focus on making a full suite of endpoint and network security products communicate out of the box is a compelling argument for an integrated suite from one vendor.

As of Sophos' FY17, the company had about a 90-plus percent renewal rate among current customers, generating $632.1 million in FY17 billings. That's more than 24 percent growth, with 81 percent of that recurring subscriptions. It now has some 34,000 global partners, up from 26,000 in September 2016. *–Lorna Garey*

22 THE 20

Today, VARs and MSPs have an avalanche of different components they must be knowledgeable about, and changing customer demographics demand highly specialized solutions. It can be hard to keep up.

If only there were a way to combine forces with other solution providers to offer a wider breadth of knowledge and deeper customer support, a consortium in which partners symbiotically worked together to grow their own businesses, while also helping companies that are technically competitors.

That's why Tim Conkle founded The 20, a syndicate in which MSPs from varying verticals, technical specializations and geographic locations pool resources to grow their businesses and better serve their customers.

"We are able to deliver technology in a way we'd always dreamed about in the past and always aspired to do for our clients," says Charles Henson, managing partner at Nashville Computer Company and a member of The 20.

Say an MSP has a solid health care solutions practice and wants to expand into finance. The company has no experience in fintech solutions and isn't quite sure how to best capitalize on the new market. That MSP just calls up a member of The 20 that has built a solid fintech business, and the two partners work together in a fluid alliance that allows them both to benefit from the first MSPs expansion efforts.

When a company joins The 20, it signs an ironclad NDA designed to keep Conkle's "secret sauce" to channel success under wraps. But Conkle would say this much about how he trains partners to be successful: "If you can figure out three things, you can be successful: Lead gen, sales and scale," he says. "And I've figured out all three." *—Kris Blackmon*

23 velocloud™

VeloCloud spent 2017 breaking away from the pack and becoming one of the most well-known names in the burgeoning SD-WAN industry. It has scored more than 60 partnerships with large service providers, launched a security technology partner program and recently announced a new policy implementation approach.

VMware's plan to purchase VeloCloud rocked the SD-WAN industry when the companies announced the deal in November. VMware is buying VeloCloud with the goal of implementing its technology to expand VMware's NSX virtual networking stack. VeloCloud's synergy with service providers was also one of the major attractions for VMware.

Most industry analysts declare that VeloCloud is the market leader for SD-WAN and that it is in a two-horse race with Viptela, which Cisco purchased in 2017. Maybe, maybe not. But the VMware-VeloCloud deal is a prime example of consolidation in the SD-WAN market and is making rival vendors consider if organic growth is a legitimate strategy to compete.

Questions surround how VeloCloud will operate under the umbrella of VMware. Do the two companies have a strong synergy? Will the much larger parent company slow innovation for VeloCloud as it tries to stay abreast of the quickly developing SD-WAN market? We'll see. *—James Anderson*

24 verizon✓

Verizon's channel partners saw plenty of change in 2017. The telecommunications company made a major shift in its go-to-market model at around the same time it acquired the fiber optic business of XO Communications. The newly implemented Verizon Business Markets program targets small businesses, as well as local and state governments and educational institutions, and the program goes through the Verizon Partner Program when it sells indirectly. Verizon took pains to avoid overlap between the two programs by putting channel chief Janet Schijns on the executive leadership team of VBM, while also maintaining XO's channel program as its own entity.

Schijns' departure for Office Depot last summer prompted a shift in personnel. Joe Chuisano took the role of director of global channels and looks to provide support and consistency to partners.

At the same time, Verizon is in a technology arms race with other large telcos, battling on the 5G, IoT and software-defined networking fronts. So far, it's holding its own: The company recently reported a 13 percent year-over-year increase in IoT revenues, while working to maintain its wireless standing. The key will be how well channel partners bring in those SMB customers and SLED customers as growth, organic and inorganic, proceeds. *—James Anderson*

25 ZERO STACK

ZeroStack delivers a private cloud platform that promises users the simplicity of a public cloud with the security and performance of a private cloud. As customers sensitive to data sovereignty and cost explore their options, vendors like ZeroStack, that make the process of standing up a private cloud easier, could see more interest from channel partners that want to provide that choice.

The company says its AI-driven architecture and integrated self-healing design eliminates most operational complexities and costs for managed service providers. ZeroStack also provides a built-in app store where partners or customers can deploy tools with one-click, including apps around container and orchestration, big data and PaaS.

ZeroStack runs on industry-standard servers, which makes it easy to deploy, and it integrates with AWS for customers who want to run hybrid clouds. The platform also provides automated provisioning of container clusters.

With cloud security being of paramount importance to customers, the ability for patching and built-in monitoring to be automated in ZeroStack could also lift some of the burden from channel partners, who may not have enough staff or the right cloud expertise to manually keep up with these tasks. *—Nicole Henderson*

The Channel – Magnified

Since 2001, iAgentNetwork has provided tens of thousands of channel partners the latest information on products, services, promos, conferences, training events, roadshows, magazines, newsletters, webinars, press releases, career opportunities and much more via our industry leading e-blast service.

iAgentNetwork manages the most comprehensive email database of Agents, VARs, Solution Providers, Integrators, MSP's, Carriers, Resellers & CLECs in the telecom industry. We have established long-standing relationships with key publications, shows/conferences and associations within the telecom channel.

What does that mean to you? We've done all the legwork to identify the potential partners to help you resell your telecom product or service!

Database + Design + Deliverability = RESULTS
info@iagentnetwork.com • www.iagentnetwork.com

iAgentNetwork
Targeted Telecom Marketing

8 INNOVATORS FOR 2018

The channel is about people. These forces to be reckoned with include analysts, industry executives and thought leaders who are paving the way to the new channel.

JOHN DELOZIER

John DeLozier hit the ground running when he became vice president of CenturyLink Channel Alliance in 2016. DeLozier has worked to make CenturyLink accommodating for all types of partners and increase partner opportunities with various technologies. And now with CenturyLink's acquisition of Level 3 Communications finalized, he has an even bigger playing field in the channel, working side by side with Garrett Gee, Level 3's channel chief. DeLozier will play a prominent role in guiding CenturyLink's next chapter starting in January. —*Edward Gately*

HILARY GADDA

As director of channel development for TPx, Hilary Gadda has the contacts, expertise and chops to get the job done — and done well. The "new channel" is one of cooperation and collaboration — two areas in which Gadda has excelled for years, helping others realize their full potential and achieve their goals and objectives. The co-founder and president of Women in the Channel has more than 20 years in the channel, the last 16 with TPx, where she facilitated triple-digit channel sales growth. —*Buffy Naylor*

ZEE HUSSAIN

Late last year Zee Hussain was handed the keys to AT&T Partner Solutions by Brooks McCorcle, who will be a tough act to follow. But we're betting that when Hussain takes responsibility for AT&T's three realigned indirect channel programs — Partner Exchange, Alliance Channel and ACC Business — and puts them all under the same umbrella for the first time ever, he'll be able to tease out new synergies that will benefit AT&T and its partners. Hussain promises that each channel will grow without taking resources and energy away from the other two programs. *—James Anderson*

JAY MCBAIN

Forrester analyst Jay McBain is unique in that he stands at the intersection of digital transformation technologies, especially the Internet of Things, and the channel. He has deep knowledge and expertise about the transitional challenges the channel faces in the new digital economy. McBain speaks at numerous events, is very active on social media and has an extensive channel network. Most importantly, channel pros listen to him when he raises alarms over the need to specialize and embrace new technologies. *—Lynn Haber & Tom Kaneshige*

JANET SCHIJNS

You didn't think that Janet Schijns' move from Verizon to Office Depot was taking her out of the channel game, did you? If anything, in her new role, Schijns could make an even bigger impact on partners. She's intent on harnessing the Office Depot brand, as well as IT services provider CompuCom, which Office Depot plans to acquire for approximately $1 billion, and making creative use of the retailer's brick and mortar locations. She's signed on Michelle Ragusa-McBain as senior director of technology sales and services, and Heather Tenuto as vice president of channels to help. Watch for more at Channel Partners Conference and Expo. *—Lorna Garey*

CRAIG SCHLAGBAUM

As vice president of indirect channels at Comcast, Craig Schlagbaum has been instrumental in driving some serious growth and positioning Comcast Business as a serious player in cloud services. The job is doubly difficult because Comcast Business has fierce competitors and an aggressive direct sales arm. But Schlagbaum's team have prevailed. The last few months have been some of the best-ever for them. One key reason is the organization's close ties with key master agents. Another is the thought leadership Schalgbaum brings to the table. Few channel chiefs understand channel economics to the degree he does. *—T.C. Doyle*

Office DEPOT
OfficeMax
Taking care of business

2018 CHANNEL INFLUENCER
Channel Partners. Channel Futures.

Congratulations
JANET SCHIJNS
on your Channel Influencer Award

From your Office Depot® family

We invite you to visit the Office Depot® booth at the Channel Partners Expo and learn all about our new BizBox and Tech-Zone services.

We look forward to seeing you!

EVP, Chief Merchant & Services Officer
Office Depot®, Inc.

BIZ BOX
powered by Office DEPOT

tech-zone

Office Depot is a trademark of The Office Club, Inc. ©2018 Office Depot, Inc. All rights reserved

ROB RAE

Datto was already on fire for most of the year with its continued international expansion and extension of its product line into wireless networking. The merger with Autotask just adds interest. Datto remains a solid contributor to its partners and has the potential of disrupting other sectors of the market. A large part of this has to do with Rob Rae's efforts, bolstered by support from Austin McCord. Last year, McBain ranked Datto Vice President of Business Development Rob Rae the top influencer in the channel, and we don't predict his presence will shrink anytime soon. *—Larry Walsh & Kris Blackmon*

GEEMAN YIP

Geeman Yip founded BitTitan in 2007 from his Seattle basement and has grown the company over the past decade to focus on helping MSPs be successful in the cloud. Yip is passionate about enabling MSPs to embrace what makes them different, and helping them protect their intellectual property. BitTitan made the decision at the end of 2017 to lay off 30 employees, or 15 percent of its workforce, in part to bring the company back to its "startup roots" and to position it for a year of new growth in 2018. It will be interesting to see how Yip leads the company through this transition. *—Nicole Henderson*

VARs and Resellers have plenty of challenges to be successful

One big challenge is being visible to the line of business managers that need your solutions and expertise.

Teckedin.com is a technology library:

- A place where a person can go to that is quiet.
- Where they can research and read information on their terms.
- Where they can check out (save information) that is useful to them.
- And where they can connect with the resources to help them meet their business needs.

Teckedin.com's goal is to be the number one site that technology users visit:

- To stay up on technology innovations
- To find lessons learned and best practices and read how-tos and case studies
- To save information for future reference
- To find solution providers that meet their unique requirements

Teckedin.com

Please visit us in Booth 6081. Offering Solution Providers 2 free months to try us out.

888-290-1283 ***https://www.teckedin.com***

Channel Partners™

The Official Media of Channel Partners Evolution

For nearly 30 years, Channel Partners has been the go-to resource for industry news, articles, opinion columns and in-depth reports.

Here are a few of the exciting resources from Channel Partners:

Industry News

Our editors keep you up to date on what's happening around the channel, from new products and programs to the latest business strategies.

Opinion

Our Peer to Peer columns bring perspective from your colleagues on topics from sales to technology.

Galleries

Channel Partners galleries bring you highlights and recaps from industry events, plus roundups of monthly news you might have missed.

Reports

These in-depth Reports from industry experts take deep dives into major technologies that directly impact the channel.

Podcasts

Fun podcasts with Channel Partners' Craig Galbraith and Kevin Morris featuring some of the biggest names in the channel.

Stay in the loop on what's new and trending.
Follow us on social media!

@Channel_Online
Channel Partners Network
Channel Partners

The resources you need, from the industry leader you trust.
channelpartnersonline.com

The Doyle Report: If “Executive Time” Sounds Ludicrous to You, Maybe You’re Thinking About Your Calendar Wrong

By T.C. Doyle

Question: How many hours a day do you spend working?

Six? Eight? Ten or more?

If you’re like most tech professionals, the number is probably staggering. But now let me rephrase the question and ask you this: How many hours a day do you spend on tasks that contribute to desired outcomes or help achieve core business objectives?

After you subtract time spent in perfunctory meetings, business dinners, airport security lines, email boxes and the like, I am betting the number is depressingly small. The American Time Use Survey reveals that employees of big companies devote a scant 45 percent of their days to primary duties. The rest is spent on a jumble of non-strategic stuff and “interruptions.”

I’m not suggesting that the prescription for increasing output is the four-hour work week — but, hey, nice work if you can get it. What I am suggesting is that you consider a little more “executive time.”

Yes, I am referring to the oft-maligned phrase that punctuates Michael Wolff’s book on U.S. President Donald Trump, “Fire and Fury.” Regardless of what you think of Wolff — or Trump for that matter — consider for a moment the value of “executive time.” Wouldn’t you achieve more if you zealously carved out some minutes or hours for yourself? Time to think, reflect and execute? Research and new thinking indicate you might.

Consider the finding from a study completed by Morten Hansen, a professor of management at the University of California, Berkeley. Writing recently for The Wall Street Journal, Hansen reconsiders what many of us have come to believe about hard work and success: More of the former leads to the latter. Turns out conventional wisdom is bunk: “Hard work isn’t always the best work,” Hansen writes. “The key is to work smarter.”

What exactly does that mean? Success often comes from doing less, he found. Top achievers, Hansen says, do fewer things but do them exceptionally well. Here he explains in his own words:

> **The typical middle manager in America spends one-third of his or her day on email alone.**

“The common practice we found among the highest-ranked performers in our study wasn’t at all what we expected. It wasn’t a better ability to organize or delegate. Instead, top performers mastered selectivity. Whenever they could, they carefully selected which priorities, tasks, meetings, customers, ideas or steps to undertake and which to let go. They then applied intense, targeted effort on those few priorities in order to excel.”

So how does one go about doing less or “letting go” in today’s corporate environment? It’s not easy. Given the hundreds of emails that businesspeople deal with each day, the numerous Snapchat requests, Skype for Business meeting invites, LinkedIn notifications, IM chats, Slack discussions and more, it’s a wonder anyone gets anything done. The typical middle manager in America, for example, spends one-third of his or her day on email alone. Why? I wonder.

After a decade or more of being told that collaboration is the key to greater productivity, there is scant evidence to support this. In fact, there is mounting data that reveal just the opposite — that collaboration is killing our productivity.

I’m not saying that collaboration is in and of itself the problem; instead, it’s the way we currently do it.

High achievers have known this for years. Many have their own personal rules for working more productively. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld, for example, says the key to his high output is, “Don’t break the chain” of days where you’ve met goals. The late Stephen Covey made an entire career out of defining the “Seven Habits of Highly Successful People.” Not a damn one of his ideas involves attending more meetings. Instead the best advice he and others have come up with involves putting first things first and honing one’s abilities over a sustained period of time.

Don’t get me wrong: Covey and others absolutely believe in the value of teamwork; it’s vital, they say.

But when teamwork overwhelms, consider carving out a little “executive time” so you can get things done. While there may be no “I” in team, there sure as hell is a “me” in there.

Sometimes you just need to be reminded.

T.C. Doyle is senior director of content for Channel Futures and Channel Partners.

linkedin.com/in/tcdoyle
@tcdutah


Channel Partners™
CONFERENCE & EXPO
VENETIAN
Expecting 6,000+ Participants
Join Us for Our Biggest Show Ever!
April 17-20, 2018
The Venetian & Sands Expo
Las Vegas, NV
channelpartnersconference.com

advisory board 2017–2018

Channel Partners Business Advisory Board

LORI BONENFANT
Director of Channel Marketing
VERIZON

VINCE BRADLEY
CEO
WTG

KRISTI BROWN
Vice President, Marketing
VONAGE

MEREDITH CARAM
Assistant Vice President, AT&T Partner Exchange
AT&T

ALEX DANYLUK
Chief Strategy Officer
AVANT

BERT GILLESPIE
Director, Business Development
KORE TELEMATICS

TINA GRAVEL
Vice President, Strategic Alliances
CRYPTZONE

CORAL HIGBY
Senior Events Manager
CENTURYLINK

MICHELLE KADLACEK
Senior Director, Partner Channel
TIME WARNER CABLE

DAVID PORTNOWITZ
Vice President, Marketing
STAR2STAR COMMUNICATIONS

BILL POWER
CEO
THE ALLIANCE PARTNERS

BRENT REEVES
Vice President, Business Development
SURETAX

MICHAEL STEPHENS
Assistant Vice President, Agent and VAR Channels
RACKSPACE

CARMEN SORICE III
Senior Vice President, Channels
SUNGARD AVAILABILITY SERVICES

CARY TENGLER
Executive Director, National Partner Program
COMCAST BUSINESS

Channel Partners Editorial Advisory Board

AVANT COMMUNICATIONS
Jennifer Gallego
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHANNEL SALES, WEST

CARRIER ACCESS INC.
Shane Stark
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS

CLOUD GIRLS
Jo Peterson
CO-FOUNDER
VICE PRESIDENT, CLOUD SERVICES, CLARIFY 360

CLOUDTECH1
Rick Beckers
PRESIDENT AND CEO

COMPTIA
Carolyn April
DIRECTOR, INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

FORRESTER RESEARCH
Jay McBain
PRINCIPAL ANALYST, GLOBAL CHANNELS

IDC
Sean Riley
DIRECTOR, CLOUD PANEL MANAGEMENT

INGRAM MICRO
John Tonthat
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MAJOR ACCOUNTS

PAX8
Jennifer Bodell
VICE PRESIDENT, CHANNEL

RICHARDSON COMMUNICATIONS & CONSULTING
Rachel McNeese
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER

SCANSOURCE
Rhonda Trainor
DIRECTOR, MERCHANDISING

TBI
Bryan Reynolds
SENIOR MANAGER, POST SALES

TECH DATA
Michelle Curtis
DIRECTOR, IoT PRACTICE, NORTH AMERICA

TELARUS
Angela Hefner
DIRECTOR, PARTNER SUPPORT, SOUTHEAST

THE 2112 GROUP
Larry Walsh
CEO AND CHIEF ANALYST

WOMEN IN THE CHANNEL
Amy Bailey
CONFERENCE CALL CHAIR
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING, TELARUS

WTG
Julie Dzubay
VICE PRESIDENT, SALES OPERATIONS

at your service

CHANNEL PARTNERS MAGAZINE

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES:
Write us at CP_Subscriptions@informa.com. Please remember to provide your complete address, including ZIP code

CHANNEL PARTNERS ONLINE

WEB:
Visit Channel Partners Online for daily news, exclusive articles, blogs, resource centers, industry directories and more at channelpartnersonline.com.

Join
channelpartnersonline.com/linkedin
Follow
@channel_online
Like
Channel Partners

CHANNEL PARTNERS CONFERENCE & EXPO

April 17-20, 2018
The Venetian & Sands Expo, Las Vegas

WEB:
For information and updates on Channel Partners Conference & Expo, visit channelpartnersconference.com.

Follow
@channel_expo and #CPExpo
Like Us
Channel Partners Conference & Expo

CHANNEL PARTNERS EVOLUTION

October 9-12, 2018
Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia

WEB:
For information and updates on Channel Partners Evolution, visit channelpartnersevolution.com.

Follow
@channel_expo and #CPEvolution
Like Us
Channel Partners Evolution

Channel Partners (ISSN 1046-2007) is published 2 times per year by Informa Exhibitions LLC, 2020 N. Central Ave., Ste. 400, Phoenix, AZ 85004; +1 480 9901101, Fax +1 480 990 0819. Periodicals postage paid at Phoenix, AZ and additional offices. POSTMASTER: PLEASE SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: CHANNEL PARTNERS, 2020 N. CENTRAL AVE., STE. 400, PHOENIX, AZ 85004. Volume 32, Number 1. Channel Partners Subscription rates: one year Domestic $85, one-year Canada USD $120, one-year Foreign USD $160. All subscriptions are non-refundable. Copyright © 2018 Informa Exhibitions LLC. All rights reserved. The publisher reserves the right to accept or reject any advertising or editorial material. Advertisers, and/or their agents, assume the responsibility for all content of published advertisements and assume responsibility for any claims against the publisher based on the advertisement. Editorial contributors assume responsibility for their published works and assume responsibility for any claims against the publisher based on the published work. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher. All items submitted to Channel Partners become the sole property of Informa Exhibitions LLC. Editorial content may not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. All correspondence and inquiries should be addressed to: Channel Partners, 2020 N. Central Ave., Ste. 400, Phoenix, AZ 85004.

Granite

More than analog lines.

The leader in multi-location support.

Next Generation Solutions.

Consistent Management.

Financial Stability.

Move your clients' POTS to Granite, earn immediate commissions while transforming their environment to the next generation of solutions.
WAN. VoIP. Wireless. Granite.

www.granitechannels.com | channel-sales@granitenet.com | 877.884.5200


Local is the new global.
Find out how you can connect your customers to a whole new world of opportunities.
www.Verizon.com/BusinessMarkets
verizon
#CommunityMaker