



Prospering Partnerships

Comms Business Magazine spoke to recently appointed Sales Director at ScanSource Communication Europe Kim Jennings about her plans for 2013

Comms Business Magazine (CBM): What new initiatives will we see from ScanSource in the UK this year?

Kim Jennings (KJ): Video communications is a rapidly growing market and represents a great opportunity for our channel partners. We have recently added Radvision into our portfolio, which represents our first steps into the video market in the UK. However, we will be able to draw upon the extensive application expertise we have working with LifeSize and Polycom in continental Europe to support this.

From a service point of view we'll be continuing to focus on training, and even expanding the curriculum of our training programme ScanSource University. We will be building upon our huge success in 2012 when we delivered over 60 courses to more than 500 resellers ranging from small hands-on technical workshops to more general commercial training. ScanSource will be looking for ways to strengthen our partnerships and work as closely as we can with our resellers to help them grow their businesses. We highly value their partnership and their trust.

We're especially honoured that we were voted Distributor of the Year for the last two years by Comms Business Magazine readers. We'll be careful not to become complacent and will work to build on the confidence that resellers place in our service.

CBM: What new challenges are resellers facing and how will ScanSource help their channel partners overcome those problems?

KJ: We talk to resellers every day and from the conversations we've been having recently have noticed four general areas where resellers are facing the most significant challenges.

Predictability - People like to know what's around the corner, but with so much technological change and an ever-increasing pace it has become more difficult to achieve. What will the market do? What do I need to do to succeed? Am I doing the right thing? We believe talking to our customers, meeting with them at our partner events, developing real partnerships and giving them the tools to stay up-to-date with the latest trends can help to add stability to their businesses and allow them to be ready for the future.

Expertise - All this change means resellers need to be constantly looking to add new skills and gain new knowledge. The list of things we need to learn about and build expertise in might seem long, but we believe it's the distributor's role to make it all manageable. This is the principal reason why we run the ScanSource University programme.

Growth - One of the biggest challenges we're hearing about is not just how resellers can grow their business, but in some cases even just

maintaining the previous year's levels of activity is a challenge. We tell all our partners to make a plan which we can build with them should they wish. A well developed and executed plan really can lead to growth and we've seen that happen numerous times.

Margins - We all feel pressure on margins. The simple advice business professionals give anyone facing this challenge is to either remove costs from your business or start combining your low-margin business with

higher-margin products. We believe a genuine VAD has a responsibility to offer resellers options to do just this.

Professional Services (services contracts, maintenance, installation) are margin boosting services that resellers can take advantage of, and they can also add and upsell accessories with orders to achieve this. The first step to removing costs is letting the distributor take care of holding stock and the logistics of a project. These are just some of the ways working with ScanSource can help a reseller in this regard.

CBM: There is general disquiet in the channel regarding the cost of vendor accreditation. Do you think that these costs are justified and what is ScanSource doing to ensure that resellers are receiving value for money?

KJ: Following a vendor's accreditation process is a benefit to resellers. The knowledge and skills gained add a level of stability and competence to the channel, while also adding value to the reseller's offering and laying down the building blocks for their plans for the future. Accreditation schemes are largely designed to provide the end user better

service from the channel and make them more likely to become returning customers.

Many of these courses are offered by certain vendors cost-free and we know they work hard to simplify and improve the delivery of those. From our side, we make all efforts to guide our reseller partners along the right track through ScanSource University, making sure they have the right accreditations and tailoring that training to their specific situation where requested.

CBM: What are the main challenges you face in your new role as Sales Director?

KJ: I would say the challenges are very much the same as in my previous role, but I'm looking for ever better ways to empower my team to provide a great service and help resellers achieve their goals. In addition, I need to be continually making sure that the structure we've implemented is the best way to provide focussed support to our partners, and adjusting it whenever an even better way is discovered.



Kim Jennings