

Arming the channel for Unified Communications

The Unified Communications market is moving up the adoption curve and Horizon Equip, in partnership with Nortel, plans to accelerate its uptake by arming the channel with the tools, knowledge and resources to deliver winning business solutions.



Matt Tedstone

Matt Tedstone, Horizon Equip sales director, explains why the market is ready for acceleration and why the partnership with Nortel is so important, "The Unified Communications market has been evolving for the last few years at a pace often governed by a reluctance of traditional vendors and resellers to upset the status quo."

"This has meant that what is capable of being delivered now exceeds the general knowledge and skills in the channel."

"The recent extension of the distribution agreement between Horizon Equip and Nortel to include Nortel's Voice products, including the newly launched SCS 500, aims to accelerate the channels ability to deliver Unified Communications solutions and build on the latent demand of end users to utilise Unified Communications features to change their business processes and increase their efficiency and profitability."

We have chosen Nortel as our main partner for Unified Communications because of their breadth of experience in many markets and technologies, especially in voice."

"They also were the first of the traditional voice vendors to understand the importance of software applications as part of the Unified Communications portfolio and developed close relationships with the two main software application vendors Microsoft and IBM."

"In fact through the Innovative Communications Alliance (ICA) with Microsoft they are the only vendor whose products are fully integrated with Microsoft's OCS (Office Communications Server)."

The importance of Nortel's relationship with Horizon Equip is explained by Mario DiMascio, Leader, UK direct touch and channels at Nortel, "The expansion of our distribution relationship with Horizon Equip is a strategic move to help the channel capitalise on the up take of Unified Communications."

"Over the last 18 months, through the Innovative Communications Alliance (ICA) with Microsoft we have developed a range of Unified Communications solutions that

have been in market for over six months. The agreement with Horizon Equip is intended to help channel partners get the training and support required to deliver these solutions in the UK whether their skills are from the traditional voice or data areas."

Horizon Equip feel very confident that they can quickly mobilise the channel to take up the Unified Communications challenge because the timing is now right as Matt Tedstone explains, "The resellers and distributors who have been distinctly average about selling Unified Communications to date have been selling it as an add on functionality to IP Telephony."

"They have not fully understood what Unified Communications is all about and how it fundamentally changes the desktops we all use and the way we will communicate in the future."

"Horizon Equip is at the opposite end of the spectrum. We and our partners understand the implications."

"Horizon Equip is geared up to take its partners from zero to competent very quickly."

To achieve this Horizon Equip has looked at Unified Communications as a whole solution and partnered with experts who are already working with the channel in both voice and Microsoft OCS to fill in the skills gaps.

Matt Tedstone explains, "To rapidly enable our partners to skill up we have partnered with APSL, experts in Nortel voice services for the channel and Modality Systems, one of Microsoft's top consultancy partners."

"These companies are helping us build demonstration and lab facilities, provided sales and technical training for us and our partners and will provide pre sales support and post sales services through our partners to ensure their early installations are successful."

"Over the next few pages you will read more about all our partnerships and most importantly how we can partner with you to be successful in Unified Communications."

Partnerships: 'Best of breed' supporting the channel

Due to the rapid pace of change occurring in the ICT industry, partnerships and alliances have become an imperative for all successful solution providers. Clients are looking for complete end to end solutions and expect their solution provider to be able to deliver.

In the past the ICT channel has been fragmented with much specialisation. This came about due to the complexity of technology and the differing needs of clients. However just like all other industries the ICT channel now needs to create partnerships, leveraging their specialist knowledge of the client, combined with the skills of other organisations to deliver complete solutions.

Horizon Equip has been one of the leaders over the years in bringing together channel players with different expertise to build client solutions and thus have embraced the philosophy themselves to bring Unified Communications to its channel partners.

Matt Tedstone introduces Horizon Equip's Unified Communications partners, "With Nortel's Unified Communications solutions we will be taking the same approach by helping partners deliver the whole end to end solution for their clients. It will not matter whether our channel partner's background is in the voice or data arena we will address the skills gap to ensure they are successful."

"To help us achieve this we have supplemented our own skills with those from APSL and Modality Systems, both specialists in their own fields, who already work with channels moving into Unified Communications."

The first of these partners is APSL, part of the Unified Group, a Nortel gold solutions partner. "APSL has many years of experience delivering Nortel voice solutions," explained Jo Bradley, Sales Manager at APSL.

"We will be providing a virtual team to work alongside Horizon Equip and its partners as soon as an opportunity arises."

"We will assist throughout the whole sales cycle, from assessing the original opportunity through the configuration and quotation stage to successful implementation."

"In particular we will build the configuration into

Nortel's system to get an accurate quotation. This is one of the most important areas and often the most difficult for partners in the early stages."

"Where necessary we will be alongside the partner providing installation and support services and providing maintenance services post sale."

Horizon's second partner is Modality Systems, a specialist Microsoft Unified Communications consultancy. "Modality Systems is an accredited Microsoft partner with experience deploying over 350,000 seats of Microsoft's LCS (Live Communications Server) and OCS (Office

Communications Server)," claimed James Rodd, Modality Systems' Director of Sales and Business Development.

"We specialise in Unified Communications. Our staff includes a former Microsoft OCS software engineer and a former Microsoft OCS product manager. We've been at the fore-front of deployment for OCS."

"Our partnership with Horizon Equip is about helping their channel partners understand what the Microsoft Unified Communications solutions are about, how they

integrate with Nortel's solutions and how to sell and deliver them."

"We are helping Horizon Equip set up demonstration facilities for the channel as well as technical training workshops. Our help will not just be theory, we will also be involved in customer visits with them to help define specific solutions."

Matt Tedstone sums up how the partnerships will work, "Our aim is to help our channel partners win business now not have to wait till they have been on all the courses and become accredited."

"The partnerships with APSL and Modality Systems means that our channel will have 'best of breed' help to identify opportunities and close business now. These are two very experienced partners who are used to working with the channel."

"We believe in making our partners successful in the quickest possible time with a customer base that is solid and satisfied with their solutions. This bedrock of success will be built on these partnerships."



Nortel SCS 500: Unified Communications redefined

Nortel has recently introduced a SIP-centric unified communications solution based on open source technology and complete with presence/instant messaging, IP telephony, conferencing, video, and other advanced applications.

The Nortel Software Communication System (SCS) 500 brings Unified Communications within the grasp of most small to medium sized organisations and sets a new standard in openness and compatibility.

As the product name suggests the SCS 500 is a software based solution that has been launched on platforms from Dell and IBM.

"The SCS 500 is an important step for Nortel showing what open standards and working with other industry giants can achieve," claimed Helen van Nuil, Nortel Business Manager at Horizon Equip.

"Scalable from 30 to 500 users and beyond, the SCS 500 has integrated voice/unified messaging, Call Forwarding (Find Me/Follow Me), advanced Conferencing (Meet Me, Scheduled and Instant), Auto Attendant and Personal Auto Attendant, Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) and a powerful 'plug-and-play' web-based configuration and management system. Rounding out the SCS 500 solution is a full suite of desk phones, soft phones and application plug-ins."

"The SCS 500 sits on a pre-loaded server on the network and connects via the network to desk phones, via gateways to the PSTN and fax machines and via a session boarder controller to remote workers and service providers offering SIP trunking services."

"Most importantly the SCS 500 has plug ins to integrate with Microsoft Outlook and IBM Sametime/Lotus Notes ensuring full interoperability with the organisations messaging services."

The Unified Communications facilities embedded into the SCS 500 are designed to increase business efficiency and according to Sage Research their effects can truly be



measured. In their research of companies moving to a Unified Communications solution they showed positive business impacts of a 29% improvement in customer satisfaction, a 27% increase in employee satisfaction, an 18% increase in sales and a 30% reduction in conferencing expenses.

An example of one of the most impressive features of the SCS 500 is Personal Auto Attendant. This is similar to an Auto Attendant but is really focused at the end-user level by providing employees with advanced yet simple-to-use menu options in their personal mailbox. For example, they can allow incoming callers to press 1 for the individual's assistant, 2 for their cell phone, 3 for their home office, and so on, making it easy for employees to remain accessible and for customers to obtain the information they're looking for.

When you combine the SCS 500 with the Nortel Data portfolio which includes the Business Access Point 120, the Business Secure Routers 222/252, and the Business Ethernet Switches 50/100/200/1000 — you get a comprehensive, end-to-end solution. All of these products are standards-based offerings that complement the SCS 500 with Quality of Service (QoS) and Power over Ethernet (PoE) capabilities.

"The SCS 500 redefines what Unified Communications means for the smaller business," claims Helen van Nuil. "Many competitors at this level are purely offering IP Telephony solutions with a few add on facilities emulating what Unified Communications should deliver. They are often on proprietary platforms, using proprietary software."

"The SCS 500 delivers full Unified Communications facilities using open standards on industry standard hardware platforms."

"The future of Unified Communications is demonstrated in the SCS 500. There can be no turning back."

For more details on the SCS 500 visit www.nortel.com/scs500



Unified Communications: Success is in the breeding

Success in any business undertaking is built on the solid foundations of experience, skill and tenacity supplemented by 'best of breed' products, quality partnerships and first class service.

Horizon Equip is steeped in this philosophy and bases its entry into Unified Communications on the back of these fundamentals.

Helen Van Nuil, Nortel Business Manager, Horizon Equip emphasises these points, "Horizon Equip has extensive knowledge and experience deploying Nortel solutions through the UK channel. In 2007 we received the award for Best Nortel Distributor in EMEA and for the last 3 years our staff received best Salesperson of the Year awards."

"These accolades show our commitment and focus to being the best and we only achieve that by being successful helping partners grow their businesses."

This attitude is reflected right across the Horizon Group as Helen explains, "The Equip division of Horizon is just one part of a very successful group that has a channel development ethos at its heart. We understand that success comes from skills transfer to the channel, working alongside them with their clients and providing the resources that the partner requires to offer real solutions to their clients."

"By bringing this channel development model to the Nortel Unified Communications opportunity we know that we will be able to help partners from both the voice and data channels be successful."

Horizon Equip are also investing heavily in making this opportunity work for its partners as Helen explains, "In the Nortel team at Horizon Equip we have a breadth of experience from all areas and believe we are a safe pair of hands for our partners. We have invested in recruiting extra people, training sales and technical support staff and building state-of-the-art labs for demonstration and proof of concept testing."



Helen van Nuil

"We have also involved our partners APSL and Modality Systems in ensuring our own staff and facilities are up to the mark and have built their skills and services into our go to market strategy."

David Hiscock, Nortel UK Distribution Sales Director supports the approach of Horizon Equip, "With such a successful relationship behind us it was natural that we decided to work with Horizon Equip to grow the Unified Communications opportunity for the UK channel."

"Their approach will work well in this complex but fast growing market. Their ability to recruit, train and develop partners is what is needed as the voice and data worlds converge."

"Their partnerships with APSL and Modality Systems are an example of a fresh and innovative approach which ensures that channel partners will be able to call on specialist resources at all stages of the sales cycle."

Matt Tedstone of Horizon Equip is bullish about the opportunity for them and their partners, "Unified Communications is the next step for us and many of our partners. It is the IT solution that will have the greatest impact on organisations in the future and will be at the heart of business process change and profitability."

"To be involved at the early majority stage of the adoption curve of such a major technology, and to be able to have an influence in its adoption is exciting. We hope there are many partners who want to join Horizon Equip and Nortel on this journey."

"If you are involved in Unified Communications and profit is what your company wants then why not contact us at unifiedcomms@horizon.co.uk