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A LIST 2020

*MEET SOME OF THE MOVERS
AND SHAKERS THAT MAKE
UP THE CHANNEL ELITE*

SUPPORTING THE A-LIST
STARS OF THE CHANNEL



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Welcome to the CRN A-List 2020

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History could have been very different if the channel elite featured in this year's *CRN A-List* had had their way.

Conspiracy theories relating to the assassination of JFK and the first moon landing would not exist, the attendance at England's World Cup victory in 1966 would have been slightly higher, and seven people would be able to answer the ultimate questions: where did we come from?

There would also be a lot of politicians, and a few *Love Islanders*, with sore faces...

It is the purpose of the *CRN A-List* to unearth this valuable information, and once again we've teased it out of the channel's finest with 12 questions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the channel's competitive nature, many of you grew up dreaming of being a professional sportsman. But there were also 13 aspiring astronauts, five vets, two ballerinas and one wannabe *Charlie's Angel*.

But did you know that ANS chief executive Paul Shannon dreamed of being a music journalist? Or that SoftwareONE sales director Richard Best wanted to be a Jedi Knight?

This year's *CRN A-List* sees 145 leading channel execs quizzed on their favourite

partner conference destination, what they wanted to be when they were growing up, and the TV shows they've binged watched this year.

We also asked them to name the biggest challenge facing the channel, as we prepare to enter a year that will no doubt be swamped in political unrest.

Now entering its third decade, the *CRN A-List* gives the channel's biggest names the opportunity to show their playful side and, as always, everyone has answered our (slightly strange) questions in good humour.

We hope you enjoy reading their thoughtful, and often amusing, responses. A big thank-you – and congratulations – to everyone featured in this year's edition.

Tom Wright,
managing editor



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Incise Media, New London House, 172 Drury Lane, London WC2B 5QR Tel: (020) 7484 9700
Editor Doug Woodburn (020) 7484 9817 **Managing editor** Tom Wright 9797 **Reporter** Marian McHugh 9883 **Channel Partner Insight Editor** Josh Budd 9854 **Multimedia editor** Nima Green 9781 **Production editor** Amy Micklewright **Production executive** Hyrie Mehmet 9779 **Commercial director** Advertising sales **Head of channel** Matt Dalton 9896 **Head of global sales** Nina Patel 9943 **Global account director** Jessica Feldman 9839 **Account manager** Jessica Richards 9923 **Incise Media London Managing director, Technology division** Alan Loader **Managing director, Incise Media** Jonathon Whiteley **Circulation, back issues & licensing** Address changes, circulation, subscriptions and back issues 0845 1551846, email incisivemedia@optimabiz.co.uk. To subscribe to CRN visit: www.wdis.co.uk/crn. CRN is available for international licensing. Contact joanna.mitchell@incisivemedia.com.
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Partnerships are key

For the second year in a row, Agilitas is proud to be supporting the *CRN A-List*, an annual guide that celebrates the most recognisable and influential figures in the UK channel. Being selected as one of the industry influencers included on the list is a truly great honour for me, and both Agilitas and I are excited to be a part of the *CRN A-List 2020*.

For this reason, we are also delighted to be hosting, in partnership with *CRN*, this year's A-List dinner at the Gherkin on 4 December. A select group from the *A-List* will receive a VIP invite to attend and discuss how they are transforming their own businesses in order to remain relevant to a changing market.

In these turbulent times, when almost every sector has been impacted by the changing political and economic climate, it's harder than ever to predict what the future holds for the IT channel. During this uncertainty, wouldn't it be beneficial to have a barometer for change to measure attitudes and provide forecasts for the market?

As part of our own business transformation, and a pivotal part of our 'CONNECT – Voice of the Channel' campaign, Agilitas has launched its inaugural Channel Confidence Index, a barometer for change, measuring the general feeling of optimism and confidence in the channel. The index is intended to give channel businesses a strong indication for the future direction of the channel. This report and the insights within it offer a way to measure and monitor change in our industry, providing customer-driven predictions for the future direction of the channel market.

Surprisingly, despite the constant disruption in today's channel market and having been presented with an increased number of complex scenarios, it seems that channel businesses embrace change, and even thrive on it.

Collaboration critical

In order to keep up with the demands of our channel partners, here at Agilitas we are giving our people and subject matter experts more autonomy to make decisions by removing the need for all decisions to be made centrally. This has accelerated transformation in our business, making us more agile to adapt, and has encouraged a more collaborative environment.



This collaboration is critical; alongside change, disruption and the need for agility, there is one other overarching theme that is critical to all those operating in the global IT channel: partnerships. This is evident even from the way channel companies refer to themselves and each other – 'channel partners'. Working well together is essential, and is a particular strength of our industry.

In the era of constant change and unpredictability, it is vital that channel companies continue to collaborate and find ways to work together. The *CRN A-List* is a great opportunity to keep doing this, motivating business leaders to discuss the key topics affecting our industry. We are delighted to congratulate all those channel leaders who made this year's *CRN A-List*. This is a well-deserved recognition of the most influential leaders in our industry, which we are thrilled to be involved with.

Shaun Lynn, CEO of Agilitas

A



MARK ARMSTRONG

Vice president sales, HPE

What was your dream career as a child?

A spy. I still have my Warlord "Sir Peter Flint" spy case – spy glasses included, if MI6 are recruiting.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

Competing my 50 half marathons before 50 challenge.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Jeremy Corbyn – why not? He is intent on destroying business in this country.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?

My external hard drive with all family photos from the last 20 years on it, and my running medals.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

I predicted that Brexit would be delayed.

What TV show have you binge watched this year?

Peaky Blinders.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

It's been a great year. We've moved our business towards hybrid-private and managed Datacentre-as-a-Service and it's really resonating with customers. Meanwhile, our Aruba team continue to deliver real innovation for its customers, allowing data to be captured and used in ways never previously possible at the Edge.

What annoys you most about your commute? Coughers and splutterers.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be?

The first moon landing.

How do you explain the channel to people?

The channel offers customers real value by taking best-of-breed technologies, software and service, putting them together and delivering them as true solutions and delivering huge value. To suppliers they offer the ability to reach markets at scale far quicker and more efficiently than with a direct salesforce alone.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Miami Beach – perfect; Disneyland Paris in November – dismal.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Keeping up with the pace of change from both vendors and customer, and having to be more and more discretionary about which investments to take to stay at the forefront.

MARK ASH

Chief sales & marketing officer, Altodigital

What was your dream career as a child?

Either to be a rock star or play for Man Utd. Sadly, I'm tone deaf and have two left feet – not that that would be a problem this season!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

Seeing the team embrace cross-selling and making telco and AV part of our managed service offering.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Donald Trump. He is a bully and is undoing all of the good that his predecessor did.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?

That's easy – my two road bikes. Without them, life wouldn't be worth living!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

Predictions are for gamblers and pundits, who invariably call them wrong. I prefer a growth mindset and play the cards that are in front of me.

What TV show have you binge watched this year?

It's a toss up between *Stranger Things*, *Altered Carbon* and *The Punisher*. Netflix rocks!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

It has been an interesting year where we put in place the foundations to grow our business rapidly. This always takes time and progress isn't as visible/satisfying as 'above ground work'; however, it's a necessary part of the journey.

What annoys you most about your commute?

Don't get me started – read Sara Yirrell's book! This one is



easy – when my rail provider replaces my train with one with no tables, seat back trays, power or café car, thus rendering working nigh-on impossible.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? England winning the World Cup. It's an event that is ingrained on the psyche of our nation and thus far a once in a lifetime event!

How do you explain the channel to people? It's where distribution sells to and end users buy from, when manufacturers do not sell direct.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Monaco is always a great partner conference and somewhere that has a sense of occasion, whereas any of the print shows in Germany/Netherlands outside of the big cities are typically hard to deliver a good partner conference.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Brexit.



JANE ASHWORTH
SMB & channel director UK&I,
Lenovo

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to be a teacher and follow in my Mum's footsteps.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Bringing together the extended UK channel team to work collaboratively to formulate our 2019 ambition and strategy. Seeing the team working together and sharing their voice really inspired me as a leader.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Avoiding the numerous

personalities in today's politics, Paul Hollywood: to wipe off his superior smirk, for ditching Mary Berry and taking the money from C4. How can he take baking bread and cakes so seriously?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog, Eddie. He's such a character and I love my time walking him, it's my time to pause and reflect. And a pair of gold earrings which have been handed down four generations in our family – so many memories and so much history attached to them.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Friends*, as my daughters have both got into it and I'm loving some '90s nostalgia.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? We're breaking records every quarter in the Lenovo channel business. We're challenging the norm, listening to our customers, executing on our promises and ultimately seeing the results in our exceptional double-digit growth.

What annoys you most about your commute? I really enjoy listening to Chris Evans on Virgin Radio, but it's really annoying at points in my journey when the signal drops and inevitably just at a crucial part!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? 20 July 1969 when the first man landed on the moon. The moment wasn't just about Armstrong, but the team who got him there and the support and commitment of the US government, determined to explore the bounds of the earth.

How do you explain the channel to people? Look at partners as a community of consultants working with companies in the UK to understand their IT needs and deliver solutions to drive efficiency and results.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I'm lucky enough to visit some fantastic locations, and I can't name one that was worse than the rest. My only complaint is that I never

have time to see much of the locations apart from an airport, conference room or hotel. But the Lenovo Partner conference in Southern Ireland, Kilkenny, this year was pretty stunning with exceptional service, fantastic partners, plenty of Guinness and super-cars thrown in.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Reselling products is no longer enough to create real customer value and successful business outcomes. The role of the channel needs to constantly evolve to reflect the demand for true systems integration. This means that the channel needs to further extend its portfolio of standard off-the-shelf products and move towards a more bespoke strategy to deliver to customers' requirements. All of that needs to be supported by investments in upskilling of employees to support the change.



JON ATHERTON
Group director, CI-Distribution

What was your dream career as a child? To be like my engineering father and brothers, all highly skilled toolmakers who could repair and fix anything. For me though, my career took a different path: the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 were released and I became the first-generation geek!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing my daughter leave a state secondary school with 7 A, A*s: a very proud father. Why do parents send their children to private school, I ask?

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Sadly far too many to list – could I have a varied strength of slap? From Trump, Boris, Weinstein to all the contestants of *Love Island* and the millions of viewers! All the politicians on *Question Time* over the last 36 months who simply have lost touch with society.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Obviously I would already be dressed, as this could be an awful sight. My phone would be with me. So that leaves me choosing a picture of my late mother and my large selection of handkerchiefs! Priceless.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That we would become Europe's largest client distributor for rugged devices, Panasonic No1 and now Getac No1. I'm proud of the team.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I cannot choose just one! I have started to watch *Stranger Things*, which my daughter told me to 'get into' and the marvellous *Peaky Blinders* is back on the screen after a lengthy time away. It's close to my heart being a Black Country lad. Don't mess (or words to that effect) with the *Peaky Blinders*!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Magic! Better than expected, very strong H1 with some downturn in H2 due to this thing called 'Brexit'. Our Rugged sales were very strong, while components was steady.

What annoys you most about your commute? That HQ is in Basingstoke and the traffic is just horrendous. Why are councils building thousands of homes without thinking about the infrastructure, pressure on schools, hospitals and so on? Thankfully, I live in the Midlands, which is a far more civilised place to live and drive – and somewhat cheaper!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? It would have to be the birth of the most talked

about individual over the past 2,000 years, Jesus Christ. Did he actually turn water into wine? Now that I have to see...

How do you explain the channel to people? A diverse 'tech-ology' with many verticals, comprising of vendor-distributor-reseller... if they are still interested at this stage I have done well.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? This is a difficult one. The events over the years set a daily agenda so you do not get much chance to enjoy the city/area where the event is taking place. The evenings the same – that said, I never get bored of visiting CES in Las Vegas. The overall quality of the hotels, restaurants and entertainment is always first class. I do enjoy now visiting new places, with Austin, Texas a personal highlight this year. I am currently organising our fourth Rugged World event for 2020 with a focus on the unusual/different, ranging from a cruise liner in Gibraltar, to holding the event at a vineyard in Perpignan. Exciting times.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I may be a little controversial but it is not Brexit. We currently do have decent business outside the UK specifically around Rugged devices into Scandinavia. We have plans/options in place, whichever way Boris takes us. Our current challenge is finding the skillset required to fill positions – the area we are in is so competitive and difficult. To combat this, the business has invested time and a large amount of money in our new 'Management Empowerment' program, where team leaders to directors are receiving first-class management training and a overhaul of our accreditation training to our sales and technical teams to empower them with the skillsets we as a business need. Finally, our graduate program has been a huge success over the years, and each year we welcome back the graduates who have left university as new employees.

B



DANIEL BAILEY
Co-founder, Altinet

What was your dream career as a child? A footballer – I peaked at under 9s, scoring 15 goals in one game! Unfortunately my memory is different to some of my team mates, who attribute many of the 15 to goal-hanging before we played offside.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I've made it home for more than 95% of all bath and bed times for my daughter who was born last September. It gives me a huge sense of pride finding a great work-life balance.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Piers Morgan – even when you unfollow him from Twitter he still manages to be in your face in the media, sucking up to anyone famous.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My AirPods and iPad – I'd alternate between Football Manager and Netflix to take my mind off not having a house anymore.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? We made a big bet that Office365 adoption would continue apace (not a tough prediction,

I know) and, more importantly, that organisations would have a growing skills gap in securing email, data and users in Office 365. Altinet has had another hugely successful year helping customers with Office365 migrations, security and data protection as a result.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I normally watch one series with my wife and one by myself. With my wife it's been *Top Boy* and by myself it's been *Hard Knocks*, which follows a different NFL team's pre-season every year as they cut their squad from 90+ to 53.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 for Altinet has been the most successful year yet. We're honing in on Office365 and public cloud security and data protection, building a sales and technical team that is hugely knowledgeable in this area, as the skills gap for security in particular is widening all the time. Our sales team has almost doubled this year and it's incredible to see the potential realised that we've built and continue to build for.

What annoys you most about your commute? I get the train from Manchester to Leeds every day. If I manage to get a seat and find myself next to someone coughing or sneezing then I'll end up standing for the journey and reaching frantically for the anti-bacterial hand gel.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'm going to answer with sports history – I would love to have seen Muhammed Ali fight Joe Frazier at Madison Square Garden. Some of the most important social and political issues of the time were wrapped up in a sporting event that turned out to be the start of a classic rivalry.

How do you explain the channel to people? I always explain that a lot of the time the channel works a lot like PC World, with a lot of businesses advertising products that they sell without doing anything to apart from taking a payment and calling you a customer. Then I talk about the top few

percent or partners, like Altinet, who are like mechanics that take a standard car, tune it and maintain it so it always performs to the best of its ability.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My least favourite was on the outskirts of London; the best was Dubai, which we did with Barracuda a couple of years ago at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It depends who you are. The big guys who don't add much value at all will need to figure out a way to do that. The smaller guys who offer the value but don't figure out a way to survive when cashflow becomes tighter in a world of monthly payments need to address that. The public cloud will be the centre of the IT universe sooner than we expect.

ROB BARDWELL

Group executive chairman, Pinacel

What was your dream career as a child? A motorcycle roadracer – I competed in the Manx Grand Prix for 10 years, but that's as far as I got.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Leading the negotiations that led to being acquired by a forward-looking venture capitalist group, keeping everyone in place and giving everyone an even brighter future.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Not a person but the whole of the UK Government (inept doesn't come close).

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My iPad and MP3 player (where would I be without searching the internet and music, which is the food of life).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Pinacel would be acquired.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Stranger Things*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great but challenging – but if it was easy, what is the point?

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing: 10 minutes through the beautiful countryside of North Wales.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The discovery of electricity.

How do you explain the channel to people? A harmonious collection of interdependent companies selling to end users, where everyone knows their place (with tongue very firmly in cheek).

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Phoenix Arizona and Nice are the favourites; I've not had any that qualify as least favourite.



What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Understanding that each company has its part to play based on the value it brings and that there are no shortcuts in the long term.



PAUL BARLOW
Chief executive, Servium

What was your dream career as a child? Officer in the Royal Marines.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My children's successes. My son passed all his GCSEs, my eldest daughter was selected to play hockey for Surrey and my youngest daughter competed in the Surrey Youth Games. Oh, and managing to convince my wife I am still a good catch!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Michael Owen, for being unable to say anything useful while commentating on a football match!

What two things (apart from your family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A letter opener my late mum gave me and my secret stash of chocolate that the kids do not know about!

What of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Absolutely none of them!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Designated Survivor* and *Lethal Weapon*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Excellent, despite our politicians' best efforts to trash UK business confidence.

What annoys you most about your commute? The fact I should cycle it and most of the time I take the car instead.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Dunkirk, to see how to turn a disaster into a victory!

How do you explain the channel to people? I compare it to the car industry! Then waffle on until they lose interest...

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My best is Monaco; my worst is Coventry (sorry, Coventry).

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Keeping up with the speed of change in IT.

ANDY BARROW
Chief technology officer, ANS

What was your dream career as a child? I actually wanted to be a pilot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Too many to name: seeing my son take his first steps to completing a brilliant acquisition and meeting more great people to work with! **Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?** Probably half the cast of *TOWIE*. You know why.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A bottle of gin and some tonic.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That I wouldn't be able to cut out meat for longer than three days.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Narcos*. **How has 2019 been from a**



business perspective? Brilliant – we've achieved so much in the last three years to see our plan come to fruition; well done to the team for all their hard work. We are looking forward to what 2020 brings and have more exciting things to share over the coming months.

What annoys you most about your commute? I live eight miles from our Manchester HQ and I could get to Spain quicker.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'd love to have been in the stadium when England won the World Cup in 1966.

How do you explain the channel to people? A suite of businesses that design, deploy and manage IT solutions to provide great business outcomes.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Vegas is always great (obviously), as is Barcelona. One year I was told the conference was in Rome – but it was an hour away on an industrial park. Rome was amazing, albeit a two-hour round trip; the industrial park not so much.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Modernisation of customer offerings and

WHEN I GROW UP...

Our sporty A-Listers (40 of them, in fact) fancied themselves as **sportspeople**, with footballer (21) being the most popular career to follow (racing driver 5, cricketer 4 and rugby player 3 came next)

28% wanted to be a **professional sportsperson**

15% dreamed of taking to the skies as a **pilot**

1 in 11 A-Listers had dreams of blasting into space as an **astronaut**

6 wanted to help animals in the role of a **vet**



Other dream careers

Lawyer (5), journalist (5), police officer (5), actor (3), business owner (3), work in IT (3), musician (3), rock/pop star (3), teacher (3), air hostess (2), author (2), doctor (2), ballerina (2), stockbroker (2), train driver (2), combine harvester driver (1), stunt girl (1), pathologist (1)

inserting partner innovation in the supply chain. Customer demands are changing – channel partners need to be built to change, not built to last and this involves a good look at processes and customer touchpoints. Our customers talk digital transformation, but many in the channel still have 20-year-old procedures and processes. The channel has to ‘create’, not just ‘resell’.

ALASTAIR BELL

Non-executive chairman, Bell Integration

What was your dream career as a child? A commercial diver and I was lucky enough to be one for several years.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing the bloody year unfolding was enough! No one could predict that year of ours.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I’ve been told to keep it short but all the usual suspects.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your



house was on fire? Clash bootleg and the nearest bottle of (decent) wine.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Bell is still profitably growing in all geographies. Also, our new start-up Squalk is signing new clients with unique telco offerings, proving new thinking in established categories still works.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Chernobyl* and the superb *Peaky Blinders* with a dash of *Fortitude*. (Thanks to Singapore Airlines.)

How has 2019 been from a

business perspective? Exceptional – it is great to see growth in our geographies/revenues and our unique offerings.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing – it’s 800 yards to the office.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? 29

August 1976: The Sex Pistols, The Clash and Buzzcocks played Screen on the Green, Islington. Music changed away from large venues to dance halls and became immediate.

How do you explain the channel to people? *Layer Cake* with more of the good elements and a lot less of the bad.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Canals for all the right reasons as a great partner event; thankfully I blanked out the worst.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It is really no different to other years – a level of unique, profitable offerings to customers with a roadmap to deliver on.



ANNABEL BERRY
Chief executive, Sapphire
What was your dream career as a child?

I wanted to be a war correspondent; Kate Adie was my hero back then. I've recently watched the film *A Private War* about Marie Colvin's life and I'm not sure I would have been cut out for it at all!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Logging off for a whole week while on holiday. It was a first in a long time and much needed – I'm trying to carve out a better work/life balance.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Any of the reality TV wannabes whose sole goal in life is to be famous for the sake of being famous, rather than having some real ambition.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Definitely precious family photos that I don't have digitally and so couldn't be replaced.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I'll tell you next year. It's not quite over yet!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Suits* – having watched it initially just to see what all the hype was about, I got completely hooked and binged watched the first eight seasons.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? The cybersecurity industry is growing at a rate of knots, so it's been busy! Long may that continue.

What annoys you most about your commute? I don't have a regular commute as I circle around to our three offices most weeks. If I had to pick something, it would be people who recline their seat on a flight that only takes an hour.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? That's a tough question! Probably Operation Dynamo – it was an extraordinary feat of coordination to get the 700 Little Ships to help rescue the troops from the beaches of Dunkirk during the Second World War. The bravery of the civilians who sailed that day was amazing.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's the layer of expertise, delivery and customer care that resides between the people who make the products and the people that buy the products, to ensure success.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite so far has been San Francisco. My least favourite is probably London, but only because I live there.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It's probably still how to attract and retain talent to ensure a more diverse and successful workforce.



RICHARD BEST
UK sales director, SoftwareONE
What was your dream career as a child? Pretty standard for a kid born

in the 1970s, I think – racing driver, jet pilot, Jedi Knight.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? It's been a good year for family time away. We've been blessed with great locations and superb weather, from the slopes to the beaches. I was particularly pleased to get lots of surfing trips in with family and friends over the year. A stand out summer! (I'm still mourning it).

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Respecting I'd have to negotiate my way through a team of Secret Service agents, Donald Trump makes the case for putting that effort in with breattaking regularity. Whatever your views on his politics or the business acumen of the man, he's a challenging human being for all the wrong reasons. Hearing 'President of the United States' and 'Leader of the Free World' used in the same sentence was once commonplace. Fair to say, not lately.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A small box of my father's personal effects and an oil painting of a favourite Cornish beach by a local Royal Academy artist and family friend, a gift from my mother. Both are of huge sentimental value.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Brexit wouldn't happen on 29 March. I think we were all on that tip though. England to win the Rugby World Cup 2019. It's been a good start!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Brooklyn 99* is a favourite on permanent loop. *Umbrella Academy* was excellent too. *Last Breath*, an unbelievable story but most prominent has to be *Chernobyl*. It proves the point that in every disaster story there are sub plots of heroism and victory. A brilliantly produced series.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

The acquisition of Comparex by SoftwareONE has made this year exceptional from every angle. The

commitment from both teams as we come together has been truly humbling. Integration workloads dissipate in no time with a passion and energy that inspires confidence in the united team. The quality of execution has been consistently outstanding too. The epitome of 'team effort'. The culture of the two businesses has integrated seamlessly and our mid-year kick off in July was an enormous success. That event really sealed the 'One Team' deal for everyone.

Throughout the integration we've kept our focus on our existing customers while continuing to win new ones. Our evolution to delivering transformational projects and managed services hasn't missed a step either. Consequently, we've won exceptional business this year, delivering through our newly integrated services teams and enlightening our customers (and sometimes ourselves!) as to our excellent and advancing capabilities. The acquisitive nature of our business means that the portfolio of services will continue to build. That's really exciting for our future.

On a personal level the integration has meant I'm working back alongside ex-team mates and it's nice to be back in touch with those guys, seeing how their careers have developed and hopefully playing a constructive part in the future, all while I'm able to continue to enjoy the relationships I've formed over the previous two years with the legacy Comparex team as well as meeting new team members too. The best of all worlds. My role spans all the UK offices and I love the variety of travelling between Harrow, Wimbledon and York, catching up with the team, listening to the enthusiasm for the future. It's completely inspiring.

What annoys you most about your commute? When I'm in the car, the very average standard of British driving. I've driven through France a couple of times this year and you notice the difference as soon as you arrive back on the M20. A good solution has been Audible and listening to all the business

books I've failed to read over the years, a great way to make dead time productive and takes your mind off the stupidity unravelling around you. When I'm on the train, South Western Railway inability to run an effective timetable. LNER on the other hand, I salute you.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Tough question – I couldn't decide between these two. A great pal of mine was a professional sportsman and many years back introduced me to a passage from Theodore Roosevelt, delivered in a speech at the Sorbonne, Paris in 1910 called 'The Man In The Arena'. It's a lesson in resilience and I have gone back to it a few times in the past. To have heard it from the man himself would have been even more inspiring.

More superficially perhaps, on the journey with the England Rugby team for the 2003 World Cup win. Clive Woodward's book *Winning* gives you an insight into the commitment and preparation of that team. An incredible story with valuable business lessons too but to be on the inside of that camp for the journey and celebration would have been phenomenal. I did my best outside the camp, but everything after that drop goal is a blur!

How do you explain the channel to people? I don't. Like many of us in the industry, "I'm in IT" is enough to stop most conversations with the uninitiated dead in their tracks or at least enough to take it towards a request for help with a dysfunctional printer, laptop, router and so on. What do I think the channel delivers? Relationships that transcend products and services, durability, competence, assurance and confidence, scale and not least value and long-standing friendships.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Toronto. A great city, quality night life, super friendly atmosphere and people and a decent/operable summertime temperature. I've been a couple times,

and it's consistently excellent. Closely followed by Las Vegas and New Orleans. My least favourite is Birmingham. I probably don't need to elaborate there... no disrespect to my Brummie mates.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Differentiation and transferability. The channel has blended, previously niche players play in more populated and subsequently competitive spaces. With that comes the necessity to be able to stand out from the crowd and to be able to effectively transfer your skillset in customers' and strategic vendors' minds from what you've been known for historically, to where you are today and will be in the future. Professional respect for your competitors is a key component for success here. If you lack that, there are tough times ahead.



ALANZO BLACKSTOCK
Head of channel sales, UK&I, VMware

What was your dream career as a child? I really wanted to be a carpenter.

I had a fantastic woodwork teacher at school who was a great mentor and guided me in making a few household items. I still remember designing and crafting my first coffee table. That dream quickly ended when my application for a carpentry apprenticeship at a local construction company was rejected.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I was fortunate

enough to be able to climb Mount Kilimanjaro over seven days with a few of my brothers and cousins. We summited

Kilimanjaro at sunrise on 1 January. It was a great way to start the year.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? There are so many that I can think of. But the one that stands out for me is the columnist Katie Hopkins. What really baffles me about Katie is her lack of compassion and communion. If I like her, everyone was to 'say it as they see it', then we would constantly be at war with each other.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I feel a little sad in stating this, but one item would be my phone. However, it would be for practical reasons more than anything: all my data and money is either on or accessible by my phone. I would also need to call the fire brigade. I don't have any pets so the second thing would be some clothes as no one wants to see a grown man running naked down the street.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted that my new year resolution to work smarter, eat less and sleep more wouldn't last beyond the first half of the year.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I recently watched the new series of *Top Boy* on Netflix. This crime drama is set on the streets of East London where two drug dealers battle for business and trade in order to be the kingpin of a local community. It was a fascinating storyline of plots and sub plots, which I binge watched 10 episodes over two days.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? VMware continues to go from strength to strength, particularly with our increasing breadth of technology that provides our customers with the ability to transform their business at speed with less complexity. Our recent acquisitions have resonated with partners and customers.

What annoys you most about your commute? I live in Oxford and the commute to the office is extremely unpredictable and pretty annoying. On one day, the 50-mile journey can

take less than an hour. On a different day it can take almost two hours. The more governments invest in road infrastructure, the busier they get.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would really like to attend the wedding of my paternal grandparents. There are so many gaps in the branches of my family tree and some have only been recorded through word of mouth. So, I'd like to take my laptop to my grandparents' wedding in order to interview and record the details of all of the family members that would have attended.

How do you explain the channel to people? Everyone experiences the channel in their everyday lives. I would give a retail example with a brand such as Coca-Cola. You can buy Coca-Cola products at a convenience store, a petrol station, a supermarket and at many other retail outlets. These are all 'channels' that Coca-Cola uses to get its product to its customers. Coca-Cola uses multiple channels so it can reach as many consumers at their convenience and their choice. It's pretty much the same in our industry, albeit with some different B2B complexities. Additionally, I would use the drama series *Top Boy* to explain what really happens in the channel!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I really like locations that are a little different and out of the norm. For example, the TechData Live partner conference at Ascot Racecourse this year was a great venue for networking. I am tired of Las Vegas, having been there several times over the years for conferences.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The challenge and the opportunity are two sides of the same coin. The momentum around cloud and subscription services will continue to grow and at pace. The channel will need to adapt its business models at a faster pace in order to benefit from better customer interaction, collaboration and intimacy.



BEN BOSWELL
*Formerly AVP, Europe,
Worldwide Technology*

What was your dream career as a child? As a child I wanted to be a professional sportsman. Football, basketball or running. I was captain of my school and local team, proving that I may have lacked the talent, but I definitely talked a good game.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Completing the first phase of INSEAD's Global Management Certificate in Fontainebleau. It has been so good to go back to school within such a rich tapestry of global thinking, along with so many talented colleagues from all corners of the world. I am also enjoying working with the Princes Trust – such a great organisation genuinely trying to help young people to become entrepreneurs or find worthwhile employment.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Our political elite! Probably not a slap, but definitely a forceful nudge. Whether you are "remain or leave", it is unforgivable that as a country we find ourselves in the current position. Anyone who works in the business community will know that if we approached our jobs and customer interaction with so little discipline, honesty, understanding of the facts and without measuring the implications of our actions, we would be fired immediately and rightly so!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Easy: my photos from mayhem, moments and memories captured from many amazing adventures around the world, and the backup of my electronic music collection. I would be broken hearted to lose both.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Liverpool didn't win the Premier League. I am thinking that is about to change though!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? My 2.5-year-old daughter and I have really enjoyed *Our Planet* with Sir David Attenborough. The ending of *Game of Thrones* was such a disappointment.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Exciting. I have moved on from WWT after nearly seven years, I left (in my humble opinion) the most talented team in the current technology space. WWT has become so relevant for global companies striving to drive technology transformation and is primed for continued exponential growth in 2019, while impressively still ranking as one of the UK's best and most vibrant places to work.

What annoys you most about your commute? I am so lucky to live in Central London. I compromise space for location so do not put myself through the pain of that every day. I genuinely feel sorry for my colleagues that do!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Live Aid, 13 July 1985 – what an amazing show packed with musical icons of our lifetime, that opened the public's eyes to the catastrophe that was, and in some places still is, happening in Africa.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's a big family (often with only seven degrees of separation between us), full of talent, that work in a fabulous industry moving at 100mph. We are collectively at the forefront of technology, trying to get it all to work together with the fundamental aim to make people's lives better at home and work.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Madrid and for heaven's sake let's all go somewhere other than Las Vegas!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Beyond embracing a potential no-deal Brexit, as an industry we must challenge the institutional thinking from clients and OEMs by focusing on driving value creation for their customers through the successful integration of the "right," not necessarily the "best," technology while in parallel delivering an exceptional customer experience.

We must focus on diverse, inclusive recruitment and retention strategies to underpin the services execution of the above. There is so much talent in both the graduate and senior client buy-side. The right blend of youth and genuine client experience will provide the platform needed to successfully monetise the benefits of AI, machine learning and automation. You cannot build a sustainable culture of innovation without leveraging these skills from both ends of the spectrum.



DARREN BRODRICK

UK general manager, SHI UK

What was your dream career as a child? To be a professional footballer and play at Wembley. The closest I got was being a ball boy at the old Wembley and a two-year YTS apprenticeship at Fulham back in the early '90s. I ended up playing 10+ years at semi-pro level.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

As a first-time cyclist, completing close to 400 miles over four days, cycling from Bordeaux to Beziers in France with 55 fellow athletes from Milton Keynes rugby club.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jose Mourinho for being such a miserable git.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? First the dog, then the cat. I would try and also grab my golf clubs and watch.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Hopefully this turns out to be right, England winning the rugby World Cup.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? There is so much rubbish on TV these days, I prefer the Golf Channel and Sky Sports.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Another exciting year slowed down slightly due to Brexit. Once that sorts itself out, it will be full steam ahead scaling and building out new capabilities to service our customers.

What annoys you most about your commute? I'm one of the lucky ones, being only a 10-minute drive away from the office.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The 1966 World Cup final, arguably the greatest sporting achievement as a country. I would have loved to watch Mike Tyson in his prime as well.

How do you explain the channel to people? It consists of a bunch of creative, forward-thinking, competitive and innovative individuals that help organisations shape the way they do business in this digital world. They then fall asleep.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I have only been to a couple this year, thank God. Vegas is always a good crack/destination, Barcelona isn't too bad either.

What is the biggest challenge

A-LIST 2020

facing the channel in 2020? The Brexit outcome and recovery will be high on everyone's agenda. Also, as Amazon Business expands, we all need to sell based on value to retain our existing business and win new customers to keep them away.



COLIN BROWN

Managing director, Softcat

What was your dream career as a child? Lorry driver – the long, open roads, lunches at roadside cafes, listening to the radio all day long. Ah, the naivety of youth!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? With Softcat, taking the company through the \$1bn revenue milestone – about two years earlier than I'd even dreamed of when I joined in 2012. And on a personal basis, completing the Great North Run in September, a truly life-affirming experience.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Ignoring politicians (too obvious, too many), I'd say Adam Neumann, the WeWork founder – an Icarus story if ever there was one.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? None that I can recall, and it looks like Ireland to win the Rugby World Cup is another miserable prediction fail!

What TV show have you binge

watched this year? It was only four episodes but I binged on *The Virtues*, a series written by the unparalleled Shane Meadows and featuring Stephen Graham as well as original music by PJ Harvey. It was emotionally draining, the last episode utterly eviscerating – TV at its best.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Excellent overall – strong growth in most areas and particularly pleased to see our hybrid cloud and datacentre business rocketing.

What annoys you most about your commute? Most days it's fine, actually!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? My good friend from school, who's a music journalist and broadcaster, MCed the concert in Belfast in 1998 where Bono introduced David Trimble and John Hume as two men who were making history, referring to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement which signalled the end of nearly 30 years of extreme violence in Northern Ireland (where I'm from). I so wish I could have been there to witness it, and I so hope that this Brexit nightmare doesn't jeopardise the peace the people there fought so hard to enjoy.

How do you explain the channel to people? We are like master chefs – we take the raw ingredients supplied by the vendors and add our own blend of ingenuity to turn them into delicious, exciting and desirable dishes! Every recipe is a well-guarded secret.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite – a few days in Budapest this year stands out. Least favourite – I'm so done with Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It's going to be fascinating to see how "market places", being driven by the big hosters, develop. It's another challenge the channel will need to face up to and identify ways to innovate, add value and deliver a superior customer experience.



KAY BRUEN

Managing director, Clipsham IT

What was your dream career as a child? To be a Hollywood actress!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? A fabulous five-day party in Spain for a good friend's 60th birthday.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Donald Trump – but it would not be gentle, more like a beating! Why? Because he is an ignorant, stupid and dangerous idiot.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog Harley and my photo albums.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I am not going to win the lottery.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Killing Eve*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very successful – hard work but worth it.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing – it is 30ft from my house to my office!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? VE Day – it must have been incredible to celebrate the end of Hitler's regime and the war.

How do you explain the channel to people? It is very simple – a wholesaler (distie), a supermarket (channel partner), a shopper (end user)!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

My favourite was San Francisco, and least favourite was London.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I still think the biggest challenge is adapting business models to cloud-based sales and the impact that has on revenues and compensation.



PAUL BRYAN

UK&I managing director, Exertis

What was your dream career as a child? I had many – astronaut, movie star, rugby international, among others. Clearly, I didn't know the wonders of IT at that time (nervous laugh).

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? An amazing family holiday in California driving the Pacific Coast – beautiful.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Trump. It's disturbing how he is normalising extreme behaviour; a very slippery slope.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Nothing – I have no objects of emotional value.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That our politicians will continue to be hopeless.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Stranger Things* 3 – the kids forced me to, honest.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Steady. I think we're all hoping for some certainty around Brexit as this has definitely slowed things down.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nicky Campbell. **If you could witness one past event, what would it be?** The birth of the universe. No, wait a minute... Michael Thomas' goal v Liverpool, 26 May 1989. Because that ain't gonna happen again for a while!

How do you explain the channel to people? Thousands of manufacturers, distributors and resellers, working together to deliver technology, products and services to a vast array of businesses and public sector verticals.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was obviously 'Plug-in to Exertis' at Silverstone; the least was in Milton Keynes.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Still Brexit. Boring I know, but let's hope we can finally move on.



CHRIS BUNCH

General manager – EMEA, Cloudreach

What was your dream career as a child? Playing alongside Ian Rush on the fields of Anfield Road. Or an astronaut. Neither were likely.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? A trip to South

Africa during the summer – incredible scenery and wildlife.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I'm a lover, not a fighter. Although perhaps Boris Johnson is worthy of consideration.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Our cats, and my fabulous collection of Fabergé eggs (that last one is just a joke, burglars).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The public cloud markets are continuing to expand aggressively, Boris is our PM, and Liverpool won the Champions League. **What TV show have you binge watched this year?** *Sex Education* is worth a watch. Currently I'm re-watching *Sherlock*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great. Cloudreach continues to grow in a positive way across our lines of business and in all territories. There is no sign of a slow down in cloud uptake yet. **What annoys you most about your commute?** Delays... always the delays. Such is the life of a Thameslink commuter.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The moon landing alongside Neil and Buzz. The 50-year anniversary coverage has been incredible.

How do you explain the channel to people? Companies helping other companies to sell more effectively to their chosen markets, by providing access, scale and expertise.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite: Toronto for Microsoft Inspire a few years ago. Toronto in the summer is a beautiful place to be. My least favourite: generally I enjoy them all, but the current 'Las Vegas overload' is probably a bit too much – especially in the summer heat.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Staying relevant in a fast-moving world.

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RICHARD CALLIS

Co-founder & MD, Metaphor IT

What was your dream career as a child? A fighter pilot but rubbish

eyesight put an end to that one!

What has been your personal

highlight of 2019? It's cheesy, but at home just seeing my young family grow up. At work, Metaphor continues to hit/exceed the targets we set.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Most of our MPs for obvious reasons.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Old (not digital) photos and some football memorabilia.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I'm not sure I had any predictions.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I'm far too impatient to watch most TV programmes but I do watch a decent amount of football.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great. We set ourselves some ambitious targets with very specific service oriented targets and we're ahead of those, which is a testament to the whole team.

What annoys you most about your commute? Not much now. There are new trains on my line, air conditioned and I'm lucky enough to miss the rush hours most of the time.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'm lucky enough to have seen my home team win the Premier League so I'll go for landing on the moon.

How do you explain the channel to people? A network of people that always want to help!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? For the fun aspect, LA has been the best – I managed to sneak in trips to San Diego, San Francisco and Vegas. I least liked Berlin but only because it was my third visit in that particular year.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Vendors seem to want to take more and more directly so resellers need to offer a different value-add. I think as an MSP, Metaphor are ahead of the game here but it'll still be a challenge to adapt to a changing market.

MARC CHANG

Chief executive, Block

What was your dream career as a child? Growing up I always wanted to

be a fighter pilot, but as time went on and I didn't stop growing I quickly lost that as an option! So it was back to kicking a ball around on the streets, dreaming of playing at Anfield. Suffice to say, that one didn't work out either!

What has been your personal

highlight of 2019? Working alongside Barts Health NHS Trust, not only as our local NHS partner but also the largest in the country, has been an incredible experience. Having worked closely with the Trust for several years, it is wonderful to see our technology partnership bringing about such positive change to healthcare in the community.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I would be caught somewhere between David Cameron, Boris Johnston and Jeremy Corbyn; and I'm sure little explanation is required!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I'd have to go for my old vinyl collection from the days when I was trying to make it as a DJ, though I have a fairly sizeable collection that may take several trips. I'm not sure this counts as two items!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? My prediction was that Cisco's Software Defined Access solution would resonate with our clients. As a company we invested heavily into developing our capability to sell, deliver and support it. This is a key technology in helping our clients as they transition to a more digital future.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? The one I probably enjoyed most was *After Life*. I thought it had a great mix of humour and cynicism while also addressing something we will all have in common:



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SHELBY PLAYED A BLINDER...

21 Shooting its way to the top of the binge watch charts with 14.5% of the vote, *Peaky Blinders* was a hit with our gangster-loving A-Listers

14 *GAME OF THRONES*

12 *STRANGER THINGS*

9 *CHERNOBYL*

8 *KILLING EVE*

Best of the rest
Succession (6), *Suits* (4), *After Life* (3), *Fleabag* (3), *Line of Duty* (3), *The Boys* (3), *Billions* (2), *Breaking Bad* (2), *Brooklyn Nine Nine* (2), *Friends* (2), *Mindhunter* (2), *Narcos* (2), *Outlander* (2), *Ozark* (2), *Sneaky Pete* (2), *The Blacklist* (2), *The Handmaid's Tale* (2), *Top Boy* (2)

the departure of a loved one. The guilty pleasure has probably been *Schitts Creek* – I love Catherine O'Hara.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 has seen our biggest contract wins in our history so it's been pretty exciting for us so far. We've also brought some wonderful new people into the team with a breadth of knowledge, skills and expertise to help us continue delivering optimal value to our clients. We remain resolutely focused on what we do best, which is reflected in our financial performance over the last FY and gives us a very healthy and positive outlook for 2019 and beyond.

What annoys you most about your commute? If you had asked me this two weeks ago, I would have probably said nothing as I literally drove 10 minutes from my house to our Old Street Office in London. However, I have just moved and am coming to terms with driving across London in rush hour traffic (NB: electric car) – the number of

expletives have increased dramatically! **If you could witness one past event, what would it be?** I'd have loved to have seen the last time The Beatles played together on the roof of the Apple Studios in 1969. They've played a big part in the soundtrack of my life growing up; I lived next to Strawberry Fields and went to school on Penny Lane.

How do you explain the channel to people? That is surprisingly difficult! It is like trying to explain the plot of *Twin Peaks*. My best Wikipedia-like answer is it is a collection of people that buy, distribute and sell technology with a shared passion for it.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I personally hate the chaos of Vegas, which I know is strange and of course is where the Cisco conference is this year. I really enjoyed San Francisco with its diversity, huge Chinatown and European feel.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? There

are so many great technologies emerging that will have a profound impact on society such as robotics and AI, and I think there will be many challenges in tech leadership as we ensure these technologies help, assist and improve lives in an ethical way, as well as of course increasing productivity within the UK.



ZOE CHATLEY
 Associate partner, *Wallace Hind Selection*

What was your dream career as a child? I actually wanted to be a vet. I

love animals but sadly couldn't quite get the grades!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I flew out to New Zealand for my sister's wedding and then travelled the north island with my husband; it was incredible!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Boris Johnson... I mean, who wouldn't?!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Kenwood Chef (I'm a keen baker) and my family photos.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Sadly, Boris as PM! I predicted it and it happened.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Line of Duty* (so, so good). We only started watching it this summer and got through all five seasons in a month.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? The first half of the year has been very good; as a business we hit our company target and have given ourselves a good head start going into the second half of the year.

What annoys you most about your commute? Haha, my commute is less than a mile so if I complain I think everyone would give me a (gentle) slap.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Live Aid in 1985. I was born that year so I was a little young, but wow, would that have been amazing!

How do you explain the channel to people? This is interesting because I have had to explain the channel to my colleagues quite a lot! I explain that it's how products and services make it from manufacturer to end user, starting at the top with the manufacturing, sold to distribution for them to market, sell and ship the products, then finally to reseller/retailer and for the reseller to sell on to the end user or consumer.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I haven't

been to any partner conferences this year yet. However, I wish I had gone to the Women in Tech event – I was on holiday and that looked like such a fantastic event.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I still think retaining talent across the channel is a challenge and getting more women into technology generally.



SIMON CHURCH
General manager & executive VP, Europe Optiv

What was your dream career as a child? To be a racing driver – my brother and his friends used to race and I always wanted to join them.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing all my children out of university, working, but also realising there's more to life than work – it took me 25 years to figure that out.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Anybody who thinks they're more famous than they actually are.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Nothing – I'd let it all burn to save the bother of decluttering.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The mainstream market is starting to recognise that cybersecurity is really broken.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I don't really watch TV, let alone binge watch anything!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Definitely exciting. Building up business for Optiv and servicing a real market need has been a great opportunity.

What annoys you most about your commute? I cycle into London, so it has to be people on their phones stepping out in front of you without looking.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? It may sound cheesy for a tech executive to say, but the breaking of the enigma code has always fascinated me.

How do you explain the channel to people? A convoluted and out-dated way of servicing a market that is always changing.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? You never get to see them anyway, so it doesn't matter – getting in and out of the conference efficiently is my main focus.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Relevance and real value – not the channel's perceived value.



ADAM CLARK
National sales director, SCC

What was your dream career as a child? Like many young boys I dreamt of being either an international cricketer or footballer – or the national sales director at SCC!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Since taking over

as sales director, SCC has achieved 17% growth in turnover and 28% growth in public sector revenue, both of which I've been thrilled to see. It shows the hard work and sheer determination of our people.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? It would have to be one of these reality TV stars, someone like Gemma Collins. It's people who are famous for nothing and then appear all over TV, just being irritating.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Golf clubs and Spurs top.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Like many, I predicted AI would begin to pop up more and more and it certainly has. I think there's a growing confidence in the technology and companies are now working to incorporate it into more of what they do.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *The Blacklist*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Fantastic! As I mentioned, we've had 17% growth this year – a brilliant achievement, especially given these politically uncertain times. But numbers aside, as a business, we've really upped our CSR game this year, supporting more good causes than ever before. This has led to us winning several awards for our contribution.

What annoys you most about your commute? Speed cameras!
If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The 1966 World Cup final – it would have been such an experience to be there to see England lift the trophy.

How do you explain the channel to people? Like one, big, slightly dysfunctional family!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I'm a bit of a homebody so prefer to attend events where I'm able to travel home to my family after.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I

think 2020 will see a knock-on effect of the UK departing the EU. No one fully knows what the effect of Brexit will be, but I can't help but feel it will raise some tough challenges.



ELLA COCKERELL
Business Development Manager, IoT, EMEA, Microsoft

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be a prima ballerina.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Landing a new role in the IoT world, that also gives me plenty of opportunity for travel, which I love.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Piers Morgan. I can't bear him.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I'd say my dogs, Bhajee and Red, but they are most definitely part of my family. I can't think of a single inanimate object that I care enough about to take with me.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Well, I suspected Brexit was going to be a mess...

What TV show have you binge watched this year? In preparation for the final season, I re-watched every single *Game of Thrones* episode. It was quite a commitment.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great! It has been very busy, and with loads of learning and opportunity.

What annoys you most about your commute? The upgrade to smart motorway along the M4 means that 80% of my commute is crawling along at 50mph.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would have loved to have experienced some of the suffragette movement and witnessing the moment that **all** women got the vote in 1928 would have been awesome. Although 1918 is often celebrated as the year women got the vote, it was not on wholly equal terms with men until 1928, and since I believe in equality, that's the year I recognise.

How do you explain the channel to people? A complex and fabulous collection of smart people and organisations working together to create a smarter world.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Microsoft hold our partner conference, Inspire, in Las Vegas every year. I love the conference, but I have had enough of Vegas. One year we held it in Toronto, which was a great destination. I stayed on for the weekend afterwards to explore.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? How we evolve and transform quickly enough to fully leverage the new world of data and all the opportunities it represents. We don't have enough data scientists right now and it will be these sorts of roles that will enable us to understand, harness and use data effectively to bring our next level of growth.



DINO COOPER

Co-founder & chief executive, Viadex

What was your dream career as a child? A footballer or fighter pilot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Running my first 15km road race, Hout Bay to Camps Bay in 1hr 22m.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Junker, Trump and Corbyn – pick anyone of them, isn't it obvious why?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My pets! If they count as family then my Rolling Stones records.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Southampton FC staying up under great management.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Masters of Sex*, *Sneaky Pete* and *Chernobyl*. I tend to download and watch them on long-haul flights.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

Evolutionary, easy to say, harder to do.

What annoys you most about

your commute? Nothing – it's 10 minutes long, it's a coastal drive in Cape Town. If anything it's too short!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be?

Southampton winning the FA Cup in 1976 – it's the only thing they have ever won!

How do you explain the channel to people? That's a tough one. It depends on the audience and how much time I have!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is San Francisco. My least favourite is Las Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The continued and accelerated adoption of cloud.



EDEL CREELY

Group managing director, Trilogy Technologies

What was your dream career as a child? To be an astronaut.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Being the winner of the coveted 'Company of the Year' in the Irish Technology Industry Awards.

Which famous person deserves

a (gentle) slap? Those in positions of leadership who call facts they don't want to hear, "fake news".

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Easy, my Wee-Chon Toby and my violin.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That the issue of climate change would rise high on the world's agenda, socially and politically.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Downton Abbey* (all of which I watched for the first time this year plus I've just seen the movie).

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 has been a very good year for the group. With the addition of Zinopy to our business, we now have great depth in our portfolio of cybersecurity SOC services and Citrix Digital Workspace solutions.

What annoys you most about your commute? We moved office recently and I am no longer within walking distance. With no direct bus route available, I have to drive.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The first moon landing (in person as one of the astronauts).

How do you explain the channel to people? We are the intermediary between the technology creators and the customer, translating IT requirements into working solutions through value-added services and advice.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Anywhere in Europe works well for me; I've too many favourite places to name one. In the US, I prefer Washington and Boston, whereas west coast locations add too much travel time.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? As new technologies and solutions come to market at a rapid pace, keeping people's skills current plus attracting and retaining talent in a market where there is a global shortage of IT skills is a major challenge.



PAUL CUBBAGE

Managing director, Target Components

What was your dream career as a child? Centre forward for Bolton Wanderers (surely every child's dream?).

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? We've just had our open day so at this point that feels like the highlight. It's our main chance in the year to catch up with so many familiar faces and – even after 21 years in the business – make new friends.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? There are too many to mention, but mostly politicians. Anyone who tries to collapse complex, serious issues into trite slogans. Put simply, anyone knowingly pursuing something for personal benefit at the expense of others. There are plenty to choose from at the moment.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Do the dogs count as family? If not, I'd have to grab three things (the cats can fend for themselves). Possessions wise, not a clue but most things are replaceable anyway.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? After a bright start, I thought Bolton might have a decent season. Obviously that's one that didn't pan out.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I binged on quite a few. Not the most watched – as there's only one season – but one of my favourites was *Chernobyl*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? We've had some very successful brand launches this year, hit record sales for our March year end and are well on course to comfortably beat it this year. There's always lots happening in business, but after several years of successive record sales we had to do the hard graft on infrastructure, systems and people to enable us to keep growing. We're now starting to see the benefits, which is enormously satisfying, and it's an exciting time for Target.

What annoys you most about your commute? My normal commute's about eight minutes door to door. So nothing.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? My first response was some of the famous battles – Agincourt or Waterloo maybe. On reflection, I'm not sure it's much of a spectator sport. Probably the 1923 FA Cup final – the first one at Wembley and the famous white horse final. I can't remember who won it...

How do you explain the channel to people? I tend not to. If someone outside the channel asks what I do I'll generally tell them I 'sell computer stuff'. If they're daft enough to pursue the conversation, I'll happily talk for hours – and probably bore them to death – about the business. Especially after a few beers.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I only tend to do UK ones, and none have particularly stood out one way or the other. Our earliest open days were in a big tent in our carpark – that was pretty special.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The biggest challenges are rarely channel-specific. The biggest external factor is always the economy. As it's been for the last few years, that comes down to Brexit; if and when it happens, what it looks like and what effect it has on business and consumer confidence. At micro level,

the biggest challenge remains flexibility – businesses that can adapt quickly to change can thrive. Those that can't, won't.

D



MIKE DANSON

Chief executive, Natilik

What was your dream career as a child? International sportsman.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing Natilik break £50m revenue.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Boris Johnson.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Photo albums (yes, proper photos!) and golf clubs!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That we still wouldn't have sorted out Brexit.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Fleabag*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Amazing – 33% organic growth, a client net promoter score of 60 and being ranked #1 Best Technology Company to work for in the UK!

What annoys you most about your commute? When South Western Trains run late!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The final live Beatles performance on the rooftop of No 3 Savile Row.

How do you explain the channel to people? We're the people who make

sense of the vendors' technology so that our clients get the outcomes they want.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Vegas gets the best and the worst!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Continuing to have a valuable and differentiated proposition in the midst of the transformational changes occurring in our industry.



EMMA DE SOUSA

Managing Director UK, SVP Marketing EMEA, Insight

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be an air hostess and travel the world.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Spending time with my family is always a highlight. Holidaying with them this year has been extra-special – at seven and three years old, they're the perfect age for guaranteed fun.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Just about everyone involved in world politics right now!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My bed (if I could carry it) – it's the comfiest thing in the world. And a fabulous pair of shoes!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Succession* – it's outrageous and I'm hooked!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been an incredibly exciting year – we're seeing

the investments in our services practices paying off, we've hired some exceptional new talent and extended our client reach through the acquisition of PCM.

What annoys you most about your commute? Other people ahead of me at the Costa drive through!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? It would have to be my parents' wedding. They've been married for more than 40 years and are the best role models I could wish for. To be able to witness their special day would be amazing.

How do you explain the channel to people? For me, the channel is all about connections – it's about connecting clients with the right technology solutions that will ultimately help them achieve the business outcomes they are looking for.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Lake Como is my favourite. It's a great place to escape from the chaos and really focus. Vegas is my worst because it's the exact opposite!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The biggest challenge continues to be attracting and retaining A+ talent. As leaders, building solid teams is the most important part of what we do – our success depends on it.

ANGELO DI VENTURA

Chief sales & marketing director, MTI Technology

What was your dream career as a child? I thought I was going to be a professional footballer. Sadly a minor issue got in the way – I wasn't good enough.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? In business it was winning the largest contract in our company's history, a contract which spans all of MTI's core specialisations. Outside of work, I experienced my first taste of Ibiza (late starter) and yes, I am going back.



Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Am I allowed to pick more than one? Most politicians I can think of have been a disgrace to this country in how they have behaved, so it's difficult to single one out, but if I had to, Jacob Rees-Mogg – enough said!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and wallet (keys would be surplus to requirement if the house burns down).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That security managed services demand would ramp massively and that RPA would not be the nirvana everyone was shouting about.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Succession* – just brilliant.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? For MTI it has been a brilliant year; in fact, this year will be our most successful yet. It has been three years in the making but incredibly satisfying to see all the hard work come through in our results.

What annoys you most about your commute? All of it. I wasn't made to travel on tubes. If you could take the people away it would be fine.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? There are far too many to mention but if I had to pick one, I'd go with the lunar landing. I was totally glued to the events earlier this year – I just found it fascinating what mankind was able to achieve with the technology available at the time.

A-LIST 2020

How do you explain the channel to people? It's the 'machine' that takes vendor products, combines them with people and turns them into something useful that customers need.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I've only been to one this year and that was Dell Tech World in Vegas – I managed to break two ribs, so I'd have to say it ticks both favourite and least favourite boxes.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The continued transformation from delivering products, services and solution to business outcomes for customers because it involves fundamentally redefining every aspect of your business – especially the people side. The re-training of staff and recruitment of new skills to drive this change is the single biggest hurdle to overcome.

SCOTT DODDS

Chief executive, Ultima Business Solutions

What was your dream career as a child? An astronaut or pilot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Investment in Ultima by Apse Capital.



Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I wouldn't slap anyone as they may hit back.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Labrador dog and his lead.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Automation is now the key to the future of our business.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Ozark*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Exciting and challenging, as always.

What annoys you most about your commute? Not having an autonomous vehicle.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The launch of the Apollo 11 Saturn V rocket.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's the glue between technology and business outcomes.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite – Hawaii. My least favourite – Las Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Predicting the channel changes that will be driven by the strategic vendors.



CHRIS DUNNING

Chief executive & founder, TechQuarters

What was your dream career as a child? A professional cyclist or swimmer.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I have two - competing in my first Iron Man event and I won Cloud Visionary of the Year at the UK Cloud Awards!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Whoever at the International Football Association Board got VAR written into the laws of the game, as now we have to wait after every goal to see if it counts.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My golf clubs and my Zwift, as I need my sports gear to train and de-stress.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Brexit still isn't sorted!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Killing Eve* – I had to find out what happened after the end of season one.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great! We've really taken advantage of flexible working opportunities and taken both our team and client list international.

What annoys you most about your commute? I cycle into London a lot but also compete in triathlons, so I'd

say all the other people slowing me down! **If you could witness one past event, what would it be?** Roger Bannister breaking the four-minute mile record in 1954 – I know it's been beaten many times over since then but would have been amazing at the time.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is basically a group of organisations, where some create to software, hardware and cloud products and some sell and implement them directly to businesses who need them.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Vegas as it's such a unique place and I got the chance to do a Grand Canyon rafting trip after, then fly to Peru and trek Machu Picchu. Luckily, I didn't have to visit any bad ones in 2019.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The cloud is much more mainstream now, which affects the channel as IT providers need to really be unique and sharpen up their services to stay on top.

E



SIMON ENGLAND
Chief executive, Nuvias

What was your dream career as a child? Captain of a professional

football team, then being really old, becoming a coach.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Son #2 marrying his sweetheart on the beach in Florida.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? A gentle, well done slap on the back for Jürgen Klopp for fooling everybody he was 'the normal one' at least for a while.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My seaman's chest with unrecoverable personal and family 'treasures', yep and my phone.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Core growth in our industry outside of key technology segments slowing down, increasing the need for growth supporting partners.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Sorry, I am not a TV man.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Inspiring and invigorating with lots of opportunities opening up coming into my role at Nuvias.

What annoys you most about your commute? Flight delays on 'red eye' early flights.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? 8 May 1945, VE Day to see the joy and relief of the second world war in Europe ending.

How do you explain the channel to people? The business partners needed in the IT world to take technology to market and help deliver the intended outcome.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is Barcelona (always a treat); least favourite is Las Vegas (seriously, despite the shows and post-dinner drinks and duelling piano acts).

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The same as in 2019: having to stay ahead of the game, differentiating, placing bets on the right supporting partnerships.

F



STUART FENTON
Chief executive, QuantiQ

What was your dream career as a child? I had always planned to be a musician – however, my skills lagged my ambition.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? We had a number of plans this year including the opening of our Manila office, entering the public sector market and developing more skills in the Microsoft PowerApps stack. I am pleased to reflect that we achieved all of our big plans for this year thanks to some terrific teamwork.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I try not to fantasise about hitting politicians.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My daughter's 'blanket' and my son's favourite toy car (a Herbie Beetle).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That co-selling would become far more important in the channel and by the vendors.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *After Life*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It has continued to be very successful, meeting almost all of our objectives.

What annoys you most about your commute? Standing on the train and tube for over an hour.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Live Aid at Wembley – stupidly I stayed home.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's like a bunch of shops that buy and sell technology goods and sometimes add services. There are good ones, bad ones, big chains, little chains, international ones, and my one.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Microsoft had a habit of holding Inspire/WPC in Southern US states in the summer. Hot and humid. It's now Las Vegas, which is hot, dry and terribly superficial – but OK.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? My area of the channel is quite specific to Microsoft Dynamics. The major challenge relates to the massive increase of functionality, modules, complexity and applications. This challenges the sellers, pre-sales specialists and delivery skills in all areas.

MARK FORSTER

Managing director, Comms-care

What was your dream career as a child?

I never really had a dream career as a child; I just knew I wanted to be the best at 'something'. I didn't know what 'something' was... and I still don't!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Well, I have a 15-year-old daughter who is my highlight of every year. In terms of business, Comms-care closed our single largest deal in the company's history which was a complete solution from product and pre-sales to manage and optimise. Watching the team (which includes the partner and end customer) work so well together... that was the highlight.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Steering clear of the emotive world of politics (and the



list being too extensive), I would give a gentle slap to whoever thought VAR was a good idea.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I fairly recently bought a house and I don't like the kitchen so I think I would grab the house insurance documents and some marshmallows.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? In 2018 when I became managing director, the first thing Comms-care did was invest in a dedicated and specialist service design function as I expected the channel demand for solution-based services and enablement to rocket. I am glad we did! And Man City to win the league.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I am a massive *Peaky Blinders* fan (I wore the hats before the series!) but I also like light-hearted shows that I don't really need to watch, like *Still Game* and *The Office* (UK version only; yes, I know how old it is).

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Excellent – I couldn't be happier with our performance in 2019. We have had some exceptional wins, which has the whole company buzzing and we are loving the journey that our partners are on with us. There

seems to be a greater appetite than ever before to take on end user challenges together and that collaboration is something we are really passionate about. We are investing in new services to help partners respond to the challenges posed by their customer base and it is great to be part of that evolution, which is having a positive effect on every element of the business.

What annoys you most about your commute? Why a country, with our economic and technological strength, can't seem to get a really stable cellular connection is beyond me. I have been known to get a little emotional when having phone signal challenges.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I think I would like to have attended some great musical events that I missed out on, like the last Oasis gig or Woodstock.

How do you explain the channel to people? I tend to wheel out different metaphors depending on who I am talking too but generally I find outdated terms such as "resellers" and "ultimate end customer" are still the ones people relate to the most!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Las Vegas and Las Vegas. I have had some amazing times in Vegas and it caters so well for large partner conferences, but in the same breath I think you can also get a little "Vegas'd out".

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The three P's: People, Pace and Partners! People and recruitment continues to be a challenge as the channel scrambles for resource with 'in-demand' skills. Pace and the speed to react to an increasingly knowledgeable customer and pressures from vendors to adopt the technologies they are investing in will add to the pressure of channel strategies. In order to react to the first two challenges, partnering will be increasingly important. The complexity of selecting the correct partner can be a challenge but the

upfront work of scratching under the surface to build confidence in the right partner will make the world of difference to the longevity of the relationship.



CLIFF FOX

Group chief operating officer, Pure Technology Group

What was your dream career as a child? An astronaut but I wouldn't have cut the maths.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Getting on the EA FIFA 20 beta trial – it made me very popular at home for a change.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Just line up the whole of the House of Commons for a mass slapping session. Sell tickets; it'd be hugely popular.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My watch and my phone. I'm insured, in the cloud, backed-up and we need a clear out anyway.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? No predictions made; life's too short for that shit.

What TV show have you binge-watched this year? *Game of Thrones* – I watched seasons 1-7 in six weeks flat before the start of season 8. Fantastic story, characters and cinematography.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been great; we've closed another record-breaking year and are going from strength to strength.

What annoys you most about your commute? There are just too

many cars on the road and it's a problem that's only increasing each year. It's time to make cars fly, that'd definitely make the commute more interesting.

If you could witness one important past event, what would it be? Bletchley Park when they cracked the enigma. I am really pleased that Alan Turing will be on the new £50 note but shame on our nation how he was treated.

How do you explain the channel to people? I don't. I tell everyone I work in insurance, so they don't ask me to fix something.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Seychelles and Reading – no explanation needed I guess.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Brexit and the aftermath from the end of October 2019 or beyond. By the time this is published we'll be dealing with whatever that looks like – deal or no deal, general election, hung parliament or extended indecision. It's not great for anyone, is it?

G



YOLANTA GILL

Chief executive, European Electronique

What was your dream career as a child? A lawyer.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Some of the successes of the business have been my personal highlights of 2019. But on a more personal note, a couple of exciting trips this year, both to the US. One included travelling through Arizona, Utah and Nevada; seeing the canyons and Monument Valley was incredible. The second one travelling through Florida, including the Florida Keys, Everglades, Thousand Island and finishing off with a visit to Kennedy Space Station.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Boris Johnson, just because...

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog and my phone.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? None so far, which is probably a good thing!

What TV show have you binge-watched this year? *Chernobyl*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? So far 2019 has been a good year for EE. We have won a number of large contracts and have further established our position as a provider of networking and cybersecurity infrastructure and services.

What annoys you most about your commute? The sheer volume of Oxford traffic.

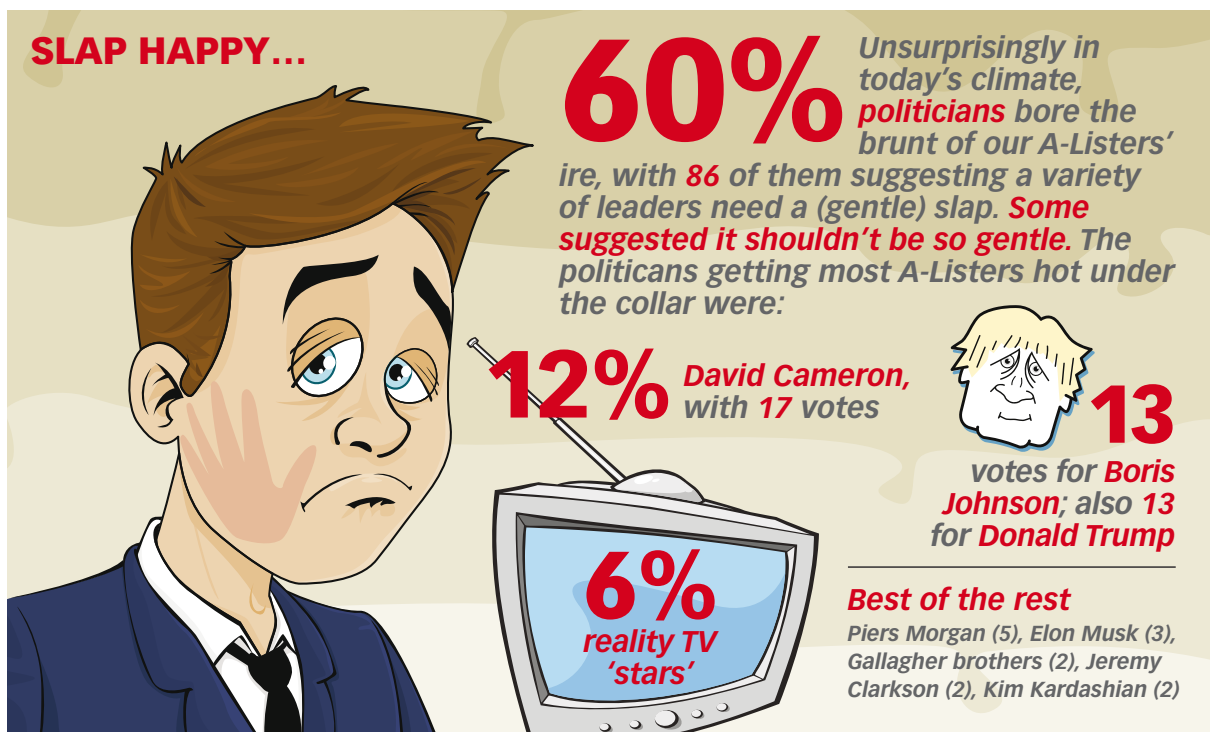
If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I

have a general interest in history and particularly ancient Roman and Greek, so meeting Cicero or Julius Caesar would be fascinating.

How do you explain the channel to people? When I find out, I will let you know!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Generally with conferences you are more concerned with the content rather than the event destination. However, it is nice to combine some sightseeing along with the business trip – how many times can



one visit Las Vegas? Although if you fly to Phoenix and drive to Las Vegas, it does make the trip twice as interesting!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Possibly a hard Brexit could bring a few challenges, the introduction of tariffs, the effect on the rate of exchange sterling to dollars, and also the possible effect of funding within the public sector. We will have to wait and see what it brings.

NICK GLYNNE

Chief executive, Buy It Direct Group

What was your dream career as a child? Running an airport.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Turning around Trojan Electronics – a great business in Wales specialising in dealing with electrical returns on behalf of brands, retailers and distributors.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron – he



should have known better when calling for a referendum.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wife's shoes and my son's iPad – otherwise my life won't be worth living.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Brexit wouldn't happen (so far).

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Octonauts* with my four-year-old.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? A huge contrast between fear of a slowdown and an actual stunning performance.

What annoys you most about your commute? Speed bumps and intermittent DAB reception.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I always fantasised as a kid that I could somehow intervene at a Nazi party event and thereby prevent the Holocaust.

How do you explain the channel to people? A way of each business focusing on doing what they do best.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? IFA – confusing layout, wrong mix of vendors. Besides, Berlin is creepy!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The biggest threat to CE is Chinese sellers going direct to UK consumers and SMEs via Amazon, ebay and other marketplaces.



TIM GRIFFIN

Managing director, DCC Technology and Exertis Group

What was your dream career as a child? Teacher.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My son's school leavers party!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron... obvs!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Passport and sun cream...

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Tomorrow will be better still... multi-tenant edge compute! Oh, and Wales winning the Rugby World Cup!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*.
How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Sparkling.

More customers, more products, more geographies – doing more!

What annoys you most about your commute? Zoe Ball.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a dream' speech –

because we **all** now dare to dream.

How do you explain the channel to people? We provide brands with reach and access to markets, we offer leverage to resellers and retailers enabling them to focus on their core business – doing more for customers – and we simplify the supply chain for both.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Lake Como and Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Talent and direct subscription – XaaS.



RUFUS GRIG

Chief technology & strategy director, Maintel

What was your dream career as a child? A musician/train driver/astronaut hybrid.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I turned 50 and still have (non-grey) hair.

Which famous person deserves a

(gentle) slap? Boris Johnson, although I'd struggle with the gentle part... Do I need to say why?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and my cello.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That we wouldn't have left the EU at the end of March and that our world would become even more about the cloud.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Killing Eve*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been challenging navigating the uncertainty, but fascinating being part of such a rapidly changing market.

What annoys you most about your commute? It's that I have to do it at all! I may not have believed the hype when I was a child about everyone in the 21st century having their own personal jet-pack, but I did think we'd all spend a bit less time travelling.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The moon landing in 1969.

How do you explain the channel to people? If I ever work it out, I'll let you know.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? It seems churlish to say London, but see my answer to the commuting question above. Message to US tech vendors – "We have conference facilities in Europe too, you know!" Having said that, I do like San Francisco.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Finding its place in the shifting world as SaaS, cloud, software and services dominate. Tomorrow's skill requirements and yesterday's skill requirement are a long way apart – as are commercial models, partner relationships and the metrics by which we measure success. The next couple of years will be formative in defining our future.



AIDAN GROOM
Managing director, Total Computers

What was your dream career as a child? As a child I never really had a clear career goal; if I could roll back the clock it would have been to work in the field of sports science.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Being a lifelong Spurs fan, seeing them make the Champions League final.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Outside of most of our politicians, I'd say Kim Kardashian. I'm not sure I need to say anything more.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? If I didn't say the dog and the cat I don't think my daughters would ever forgive me.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That we wouldn't leave the European Union on 29 March.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I'm not expecting anyone to shed a tear but with four daughters and a busy job, I really don't find much time to watch TV. The last series I managed to watch was *Narcos*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Another solid year of growth while continuing to make progress with our longer-term objectives.

What annoys you most about your commute? I'm fortunate to only live five minutes from the office. The downside being that after a bad day there isn't much time to destress before I walk through the front door.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? There are so many. Being a big sports fan, it would have to be The Rumble in the Jungle.

How do you explain the channel to people? Talking from a reseller perspective, "We do the bit in the middle".

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? It's difficult to answer as often all I see is a hotel and a conference centre. That said, both would be within the US: I was disappointed with Houston but loved Chicago. As far as my wife is concerned, my response is they're always disappointing!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The same as it has always been: to continually evolve with the market.



MUKESH GUPTA
Chief executive & founder, e92plus

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to be a policeman.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? e92plus celebrating

our 30th birthday, which I'm very proud of – and I got to have a second 30th birthday party!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron. I think we can all understand that one...

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and car keys – everything is replaceable or in the cloud!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? None in the entirety; Brexit has made a total mess of everything this year.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*, which I have only just got into but already watched all of.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? See the answer about Brexit! We've had a good year, but it's been a challenge.

What annoys you most about your commute? It's not long enough to make all my calls! Being in the car can be very productive.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'd rather travel forward, and take part in the first civilian space exploration. The possibilities are incredibly exciting.

How do you explain the channel to people? For vendors, we are a commission-only sales force, so they just Pay As You Go. We never rest on our laurels!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? The inside of most hotels are fantastic! Most of the time you never get a chance to escape to see the actual city, which is a shame considering some of the amazing locations.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The three public cloud giants, but particular AWS and their approach to the channel. They are fantastic in what they do, but it's another revolution that we must all address and adapt to.

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HELEN HALL

Managing director, AVR International

What was your dream career as a child? Legal secretary although with hindsight, I would have been terrible at it – there's no selling involved!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Coming back into the business after two years maternity leave. I loved being at home with my daughter but missed the business terribly. Taking back the reigns, a major re-brand and a number of new significant hires has been exciting and stands us in great stead for the year ahead.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Steven Knight for giving us such a poor ending to season five of *Peaky Blinders*! Oh, and Boris and Trump but we don't have the time to go there.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My mum's bracelet and the two cats if I can find them! My phone will already be tucked into my trouser pocket.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Brexit. What a mess and where on earth will it end?

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders* and *Poldark*. I really looked forward to *Stranger Things* but haven't got past episode three yet.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Challenging!

It has been a real rollercoaster of a year. I came back from maternity leave in January, and have had a lot of work to do since. But it's excited for what the future holds.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing, I really quite enjoy it... There's time to process the day and to enjoy the drive with no little people in the car or having to listen to a *Peppa Pig* CD.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'd like to have been in the crowds in London to celebrate on VE Day.

How do you explain the channel to people? It depends on who I'm speaking to but always a version of we sell vendor solutions for them and help make them work.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? In 2001 I was helicoptered into the British Grand Prix. I love motorsport so that's a definite favourite – what a great day! My least favourite? A day out in Reading at the Madejski Stadium. We're based just down the road in Twyford.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Brexit and everything it is affecting from currency fluctuations and customer hesitancy to legislation changes. Along with age-old issue of recruiting and developing the right people.

HOWARD HALL

Group managing director, DTP Group

What was your dream career as a child? I was very sporty as a child – cricket and golf in particular – but I must have had the knowledge that I could play at a high level, but just not high enough, so wanted to be a journalist, which considering I am on the scale for dyslexia must have been me setting myself a challenge to overcome.



What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Being part of the IT industry Byte Night charity, a rough sleeping activity where the IT industry comes together to raise money to end youth homelessness, as I find it hard to believe that tonight more than 80,000 young people will be sleeping rough, sofa surfing or in temporary accommodation through no fault of their own.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Maybe a double header here – Boris and Jeremy, bringing both my forehand and backhand into play! Do I need to explain why?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? As long as my laptop is backed up, I don't have a lot of other physical valuables to speak of that I could not lose.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The rise of intelligent spaces/smart buildings; the new Spurs ground and the Ryder Cup venue being two I could mention.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I am not typically a binge watcher, and am pretty disciplined (or old fashioned) rationing myself to one a week, but I did enjoy a number of shows including *Summer of Rockets*, *Riviera* and of course *Game of Thrones*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It has been a good one, but hard work.

What annoys you most about your commute? That there was not a

good coffee shop on it until very recently.
If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Back to the Boris/Jeremy answer of sorts, and being present to lobby for a two-vote Brexit, a year apart, as we voted on blank page manifestos.

How do you explain the channel to people? A too price-oriented supermarket for IT – not that that business model does not work!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Being a HP/HPE-only partner, it has been a choice of two this year, Houston and Vegas, with Vegas winning out slightly as we went a day early and caught Tyson Fury's first Vegas fight – all four minutes of it.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Staying relevant as the pace of change is only getting faster as clients leverage the power of IT to transform their businesses, but also the channel not eating its own dog food in many cases, such as MPS industry which is ripe for Uberisation.



JOHN HARBER
Managing director, Arrow Business Communications
What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be James Hunt.
What has been your personal highlight of 2019? We have an in-house IT development team and we re-built and re-launched POD, our

CRM and Customer Portal for Pulse, our energy broker. It can report on live energy consumption data and help people manage and reduce it. We have since had two customers roll it out to large numbers of employees and their energy consumption is now 7-10% lower than two years ago.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Most people with the letters MP after their name.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Nothing much to be honest, as long as my family are safe. Car keys and warm clothes?

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? England winning the Rugby World Cup (when are you printing this?).

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I watched Ricky Gervais's *After Life* start to finish in two evenings. Heart-breaking and hilarious all at the same time.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Fantastic. We bought seven companies during 2017 and 2018. 2019 was a break from acquisitions to make sure we integrated them all properly. That's tough work but a great feeling when you come out the other end with even better performance and the feeling that we've built one, big, high-performing team.

What annoys you most about your commute? My friends tell me off for moaning about trains on Twitter, so I really shouldn't start here. But honestly, South Western Railways!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I lived in Berlin for a couple of years in the early 2000s. I'd love to have been there on 9 November 1989 when the wall fell.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is the magical step that brings technology to life. We take stuff out of boxes and give it a vital role within a company. Hardware doesn't add value. Solutions do. We build solutions.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I was lucky enough to work for Sony during its absolute glory years. Most Januarys were spent somewhere long haul with customers. Tokyo, Jamaica, Thailand, South Africa and many more.

And I've been to Telford.
What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Economic uncertainty for our customers will delay larger capital expenditure for many. Amortising Capex into monthly Opex-style charges will become more and more the norm for us, I expect.



SIMON HARBRIDGE
Chief executive, Stone Group
What was your dream career as a child? To be a pilot, influenced by my dad who flew for the RAF in the Second World War. I have early memories of looking through an album of photographs taken when he was learning to fly in Oklahoma and also of playing with the contents of an old tin in which he kept his old cap badges, RAF wings and a set of medals.
What has been your personal highlight of 2019? From a business perspective, we've grown exponentially in 2019. A lot of the existing team have stepped up and we've also been in recruitment mode. Seeing staff old and new taking their opportunities and progressing as individuals has been very inspiring and my highlight.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I wouldn't want to slap anyone (honestly!), but occasionally I do like seeing someone get a well-deserved comeuppance. I particularly enjoyed seeing Piers Morgan, having slagged off the Australian pace attack, facing them in the nets and bowler Brett Lee taking the opportunity to cover him in bruises – better than a slap!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Well firstly, if I was naked, I would probably grab some clothes, but aside from that, probably the most sensible option would be iPhone and wallet.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That the circular economy would only become more important and that there would need to be more of a focus on sustainability in technology. That the pace of change only ever accelerates. Last year I was excited by the growing adoption of subscription models, and solutions such as Device- and Infrastructure-as-a-Service continue to mature. And, of course there would be no Brexit on 31 March!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I don't have a lot of time for TV, but when I do, I like a drama or fantasy show. *Peaky Blinders* has been a favourite, as has *Game of Thrones*. Contrary to popular belief, I thought they came up with a good finale, unpredictable and surprising to the end.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been really positive. We've grown strongly in all our markets, taking on new customers and expanding our expertise and range of solutions as we continue to mature as a VAR with our own branded products part of a growing and balanced portfolio.

What annoys you most about your commute? In contrast to most of my career, I currently enjoy a relatively untroubled run down country lanes. There are points though where narrow single track chicanes are in place to calm the traffic with clearly

signposted rights of way from one side. There's always someone who doesn't think it applies to them!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? There are lots you could choose, but I would go back 13.8 billion years plus a day to just before the big bang, because we'd finally know for sure what was there before.

How do you explain the channel to people? Where to begin? It's a vibrant place full of really interesting people, who bring the wonderful and ever-changing world of technology through to customers in a meaningful and valuable way that makes a difference in the world.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Seattle or Portland are great destinations. I really love the whole North West coast vibe – it's such a great environment, laid back but buzzing at the same time, a great place to be. Dublin was great and I loved Las Vegas too. It was great fun and a really inspiring conference, even if it was 46c outside!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I said security last year, and I stand by that in 2020 – it's still one of the biggest issues for the channel. As an industry though we also face the constant need to innovate and attract the right talent. There's a skills gap that needs to be addressed and it's incumbent on people in the channel to help find and develop the right people in a fully inclusive way.

JAMES HARDY
Managing director, CCS Media

What was your dream career as a child? I pretty much wanted to be a professional at whatever sport I'd watched on *Grandstand* each week.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Supporting my wife through a career change; it's usually her supporting me so it's a nice change.

Which famous person deserves

a (gentle) slap? Ivan Drago (Dolph Lundgren) in *Rocky IV* because no one likes a big bully or a cheat. I'd then run away as fast as I could!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? As long as my two dogs are included within the family category (they should be!), it would be an old book and a photo album.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I didn't make any predictions in terms of business.

I made some bold predictions on a marathon finish time and missed the mark somewhat.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I did try to watch *Manifest* but only managed to get halfway through.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 has been positive at CCS. We have a great team and we are continuing to make progress across all areas of the business on our success journey. That said, there is and always will be lots to do. Absolutely no room for complacency.



What annoys you most about your commute? Thinking (I try not to) about how much time I spend travelling annoys me more than the actual commute. For the most part, it's fine and just part of my working life.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a dream' speech, Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC, 1963. What a message! As relevant today as it was then. Timeless wisdom.

How do you explain the channel to people? I have tried this a few times and it never makes sense to anyone.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My least favourite would be Venice – I don't particularly like boats. Barcelona must be my favourite destination for conference events. A few hours on a flight, no jet lag and a city that has everything. An early start running along the sea front before meetings/events is just perfect!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Complacency and ambiguity.



SEETA HARIHARAN
*General manager & group head,
Tata Consultancy Services Digital
Software & Solutions Group*

What was your dream career as a child? I was taught to serve others so I wanted to be a doctor. But then as a teenager in zoology class I opened a jar of formaldehyde with a very dead

frog in it. The smell alone convinced me medicine wasn't for me. Instead, I chose technology. The transformations I have witnessed in this industry as well as what is happening now have been amazing. Thankfully, this field has still allowed me to help make people's lives better.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? A personal victory was recovering from surgery for an injury I sustained while exercising. Ironically, getting better required much greater persistence with my workouts. I could have easily given up exercise, but I knew I had to rededicate myself if I wanted to meet my fitness goals. No matter how much pain I was in, I worked out every morning. It helped me understand that for all my personal goals, I had to take consistency and perseverance to another level.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I would give a gentle shake to some of the leaders at top banks who still seem to think they're too big to fail. I would explain the urgency of digital transformation.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I begin and end my day meditating beside two pictures of saints from India, so I would grab them. Mindfulness has been an integral part of my life since childhood. Like exercise, it trains the mind with the goal of getting better every day.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I've been saying there is a need to elevate digital trust to address cybersecurity and consumer privacy. In 2019, there were major missteps by social networks, retailers, banks and governments as well as mounting concerns about personal data collected by devices that make up the Internet of Things. This put digital trust in the spotlight and raised consumer expectations on privacy and security to new heights.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? As a lifelong student of history, I indulge myself in

documentaries and historical dramas. My favourite this year was *Chernobyl*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? This year we're seeing enterprises getting serious about making the customer experience the cornerstone of their digital transformation. This trend helped us sign up new channel partners in 2019 and it bodes well for the market opportunity going forward. There's no shortage of opportunities for the channel to help retailers, banks and other consumer-facing businesses to deliver better customer experiences to compete against born-on-the-web rivals.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing! Like many of my DS&S Group colleagues outside of India, I work from home. Unlike traditional start-ups, DS&S operates inside a large, global organisation so we consider ourselves intrapreneurs. When we launched five years ago, we figured we could attract the best and brightest by offering an enviable work environment. We wanted to get the right people for our organisation irrespective of where they were.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? It would be the Reconstruction Era following the American Civil War. I was raised to stand up for anything that is not right or just. So when I watched the film *12 Years a Slave*, it made me wonder how I would have reacted in the face of so much injustice committed against disenfranchised people.

How do you explain the channel to people? I would compare it to how a consumer acquires a mobile phone. What are the routes to market – a store, online or network provider? What kinds of add-ons like apps can customise it? Which sales channel would allow the manufacturer to make a good profit, reduce overhead and invest in innovation? Is buying it a one-time transaction or a journey of continuous value for both buyer and seller? These are all aspects of the channel.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

I would prefer to attend conferences in cities such as Paris where I could also visit partners, customers and of course, new business prospects.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Without question it's making channel firms vital partners in the digital transformation journeys of their customers. Yet to become transformation partners, many channel players must transform themselves – starting with the way they think, their culture. They must keep pace with technology changes by picking partners with products that add value today but offer a vision for the future. It comes down to choosing a technology partner that is a trusted advisor in their own transformation.



JUSTIN HARLING

Chief executive, CAE Technology Services

What was your dream career as a child?

Once I realised (very early) that I was never going to play for Liverpool at Anfield, I wanted to be a journalist working from Fleet Street, travelling the world writing life-changing news stories.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

Watching CAE flourish having completed an MBO at the back end of 2018, knowing all the passion

and planning was absolutely worth it.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? The obvious one is politicians, but you have only allowed a gentle slap opposed to what is really required to get them to take their actual responsibilities to the country seriously.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and a fire extinguisher to try and put it out!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I'm leaving those to my five-year-old daughter who is two from two in the Grand National, although I made amends in Hamilton at the launch of our Scottish Office.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I really enjoyed *The Capture* and can always re-watch *The West Wing*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? A fantastic study in working on what is in our control and ignoring distractions in order to produce some great results. Our faith is definitely in our people, customers and partners instead of those people who do nothing but espouse opinion as fact.

What annoys you most about your commute? Knowing it should be 35 minutes when it has lasted over an hour or hearing the fateful beginning to the rail announcers' sentence: "We apologise for..."

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? To be at the moon landings in order to satisfy my own curiosity on whether they actually happened, and how.

How do you explain the channel to people? We make sure that customers get what they really need from the wide variety of technology available to them.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I think I am going to get mixed reactions from the Canadian Tourist Board here. My favourite has been Toronto but least favourite was Montreal.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The hardest decisions are prioritising investments and deciding what not to do, given the sheer scale of opportunity that exists at the moment.



ROGER HARRY

Founder, Circle IT

What was your dream career as a child?

As a farmer's boy seeing the vet treat the farm animals made me always want to be one. Then I realised how clever you needed to be for that, so I did a YTS instead.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Bringing in a new management team and stepping aside. It was a bit of a change but all for the best!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? It has to be Trump. Annoying as hell and full of sh*t.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My bike as it's worth more than the car, and my Garmin watch.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I never make predictions apart from the forecast for the business, which is always correct.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Line of Duty* – who is "H"?

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? OK. It could always be better but we're still here and profitable, so roll on 2020!

What annoys you most about your commute? The five cars queuing at the

one roundabout in Cardiff – gridlock. Some days there's as many as 10! I live a few miles from the office in the opposite direction of the traffic so it's easy but I am hardly ever in the office so commute for me could be anywhere in the UK, usually London or Scotland!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Nothing comes to mind other than sporting events and reliving one of them around Wales sport as there's not too many.

How do you explain the channel to people? We sell IT stuff to businesses who don't know they need it.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite would be Barcelona as it's an easy flight and lovely city if you go to the right places. My least favourite is Vegas as it's always massive conferences, which loses the value and you always think I could have stayed home and watched this on the PC and learnt as much!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Nothing major; same old I guess but the need to engage strategically with the C-level around business outcomes is the main driver that lots will struggle with to get a competitive edge. But it will just roll on as normal and some channel companies will get this and smash it.



GARY HAYCOCK-WEST
Chief executive and founder,
Blue Cube Security

What was your dream career as a child? To work in the police force, but

life had other plans for me. I went in a different direction and was running my own businesses by the age of 31 before setting up Blue Cube Security in 2000.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? This is an easy

one – watching my children grow and develop into their next stages of education, careers and adulthood.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? It would have to be Donald Trump. As a provocative leader he is also stimulating action, but it's whether that action is positive or negative and if the world be a better place because of him!?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Without a doubt my classic cars and photos albums – my family would probably disapprove of that order!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? First, I would highlight the erosion of margin within technology deals, which in turn has enabled us to push the growth of our services business through our Cynergy professional services team. Something else that I predicted and see being a huge focus over the coming months and years is the maturity of the public cloud messaging and route to market.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? With my interest in the military I came across *Combat Dealers* on Sky Discovery. *Combat Dealers* follows the adventures of Bruce Crompton (Essex lad like myself), a buyer and seller of old military kit. He travels around the barns and battlefields of Europe and the old Eastern Bloc, hunting down everything from old radio kits to Second World War tanks.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? What can I say? Roll on the Brexit deal so we can get some clarity back in the market. The margin in deals this year have been the tightest I have ever known. It would seem that business is no longer based on relationships and value, but just on price.

What annoys you most about your commute? Being a business owner, I have ensured my commute is very convenient with a minimal journey time to the office. The only way it could get better is if the company worked in my house!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would like to have witnessed The Berlin Wall falling on 9 November 1989 to see families and friends reuniting after a very challenging political period.

How do you explain the channel to people? The simple term that I have always found to work is that it is like owning a shop – the shop owner buys from a wholesaler (distribution) and sells this on.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite would have to be Monaco with its extravagance and wealth. My least would have to be a basement with no character somewhere in London.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The fallout and political clarity of Brexit and how we get back to running business as usual.



JOE HEMANI
Chairman, Westcoast

What was your dream career as a child? Airline pilot. Failing that, a train driver.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Becoming a grandad.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Boris and Trump – it's obvious why.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? None of them.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? None.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Excellent.

What annoys you most about your commute? Road traffic.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Adam and Eve.

How do you explain the channel to people? With difficulty.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I only attend Canals and it's inspiring.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Trade wars.



JOEY HEMINGBROUGH

Sales & marketing director, SICL

What was your dream career as a child? To be an actress and get a leading role in *Star Wars*.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing my sister be nominated for the 2019 Entrepreneur of the Year.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? There are too many to list and most are politicians.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Surface Pro and mobile phone.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I don't make predictions.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I am currently bingeing on *Absolutely Fabulous* and *Benidorm*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great – we have grown as a business; what more could I ask for?

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing. My commute is my alone thinking time, which is so important to me. It's where I come up with some of my best ideas.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Woodstock. I bet it was a great experience and probably the best festival in the history of festivals.

How do you explain the channel to people? A community of like-minded individuals and businesses working together to provide organisations with transformational IT solutions and services that really do make a difference.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I have liked all the destinations I have attended this year; however, the US is a killer for the jet lag.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Finding great talent. The skills shortage the channel is currently seeing is not only from a technical perspective, but from all roles in the sector including sales, marketing, finance, product, procurement and management. Finding good people with not only the core and soft skills but knowledge of the sector is becoming increasingly difficult.



CARL HENRIKSEN

Chief executive, OryxAlign

What was your dream career as a child? To be a professional squash player.

Squash was a major part of my early days and I have fond memories of going to the squash club with my dad, finding broken squash rackets, fixing them and playing with them until they broke again. I got very close to realising my childhood ambition and turned “semi-pro” with a sponsor, in the last few years in Namibia before I came to the UK to further my squash career.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Spending [more] time with my three little kids and seeing them achieve, learn and get into the swing of life. A constant highlight. Another one is getting back on the squash court and playing county league after a 10-year break.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jacob Zuma and Robert Mugabe, and it wouldn't be gentle. They were both appalling beings and the most corrupt “leaders” in Southern Africa who led to the demise of great countries, which are now broken.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A crystal wine decanter belonging to my late parents, and photos of them enjoying life back in the day.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I didn't make any predictions, so none.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Vikings* and *Peaky Blinders*, both of which were superb.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been our most successful year ever. We have comfortably exceeded our financial targets [FY2018-19] underpinned by a CAGR of 28%. Having set higher and very ambitious targets for FY2019-20, I'm delighted that we are tracking ahead at the end of H1.

We have continued to invest in our people, our infrastructure and our governance as this is essential for sustained and healthy growth. Two of our amazing women, who have been instrumental to our ongoing success, were finalists in *CRN's* Women in Channel Awards, and OryxAlign is a finalist for MSP of the Year 2019. All in all, it has been an excellent year!

What annoys you most about your commute? My commute to work is great considering I travel into London from the home counties. However, on the very rare occasion I don't get a seat, I get annoyed. No seat means no laptop!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? There are so many obvious ones to choose (first flight, moon landing, discovery of fire, Live Aid and Woodstock), but something brutally different would have been watching a gladiator fight in the Coliseum. To have witnessed the intensity of mortal combat in an epic venue such as the Coliseum alongside 50,000 wild people, would have been unforgettable.

How do you explain the channel to people? Is the channel that hard to explain? A series of organisations through which goods and services pass until it reaches the end user.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is Amsterdam. My least favourite, Excel London.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Evolution. The previous [and current] vendor-dictated model that controls the channel needs to change in order to align to and drive a "business outcomes" model for the end user.

The channel therefore needs to adapt to the way partners and end users want to consume services and the preference is for a flexible, scalable pay-as-you-grow engagement.



SIMONE HINDMARCH
Managing director, Commercial Group

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be an air hostess.

As a child we travelled to and from Trinidad – where my mum was from – and they used to let me pretend to be an air hostess.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? The launch of our smart technologies division.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Richard Gere, on the bottom. For obvious reasons!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My father's sweater and tie, and my jewellery.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? In 2018 I predicted that we would see a wider and deeper understanding of climate change and its effects.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *The Crown*. I also love Netflix documentaries and one of the most inspirational has been *The Dawn Wall*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Fantastic! It's my first full year as MD, and I'm really proud of what the leadership team has achieved. We've created an environment where everyone can do their most courageous thinking together.

What annoys you most about your commute? I walk to work, so nothing apart from pouring rain.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'd like to have been present at the moon landing.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Investing in the right technology, utilising it to its full potential, and turning promises into reality. That means making those promises work at a company, individual and customer level.

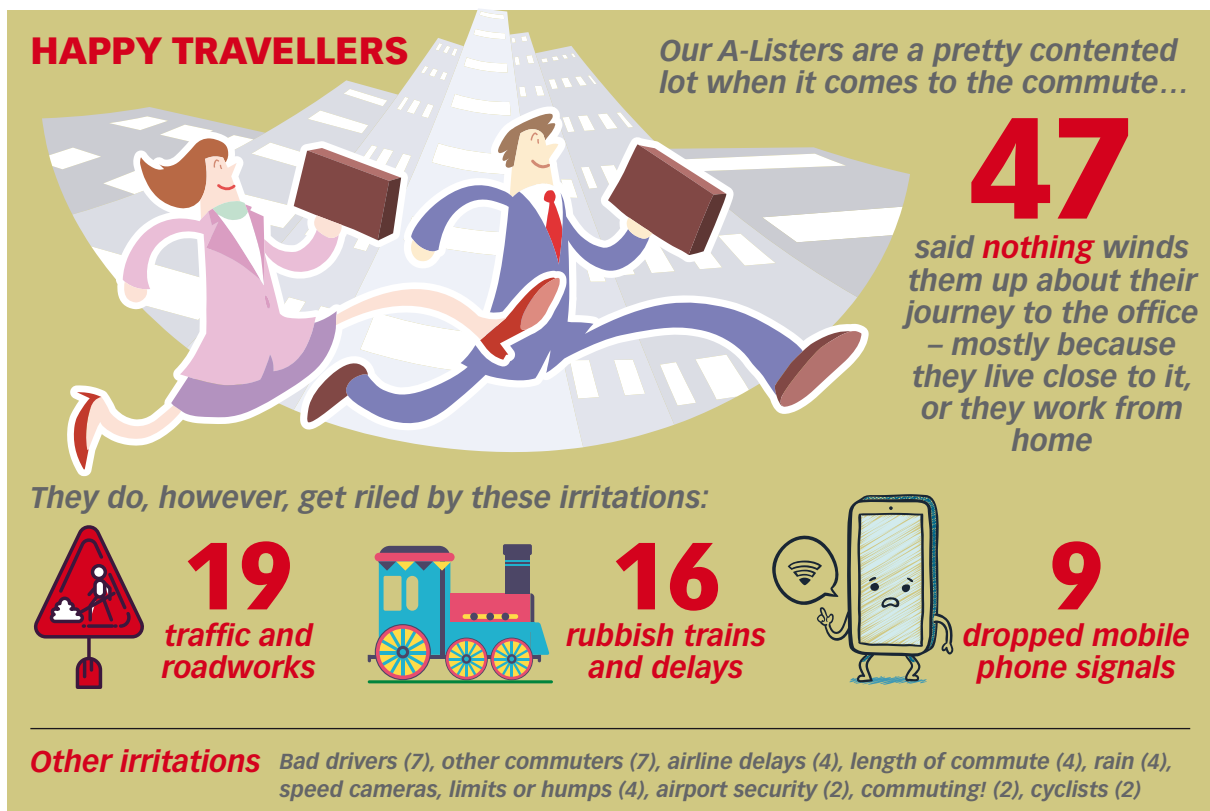


GUY HOCKING
Group managing director, Utilize

What was your dream career as a child? An explorer. I actually wanted to be a mountaineer like Edmund Hillary first and foremost. Him and Ranulph Fiennes were my childhood idols.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Building our new offices. We recently converted a warehouse into an amazing space and environment for the team to work in; really putting our people at the centre of our business.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Lewis Hamilton. Perhaps controversial I know – but he has to be the most moody, miserable and whinging sportsperson ever! Cheer up!



What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Surface Pro (sad but true) and my Arc'teryx climbing jacket – I live in that thing and it's a bomb-proof all weather monster and has many stories to tell!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Brexit hasn't made a negative difference to the need for businesses to embrace and invest in technology. It hasn't halted our client engagements at all!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*, although this last series hasn't been as good (it reminds me of another popular throne-related show).

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Best year yet. Despite the distraction of building and moving our HQ, we have had a record year and used that to help build

an amazing place for our people to work. That is testament to our amazing team.

What annoys you most about your commute? The fact that I can't hold a phone conversation for the 30-minute commute down the A127 without it dropping out 4-5 times. Sort out our UK mobile/4G coverage before worrying about upgrading to 5G!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? There are so many. The biggest personal one for me has to be whether George Mallory was actually the first person to summit Everest. We will sadly never know.

How do you explain the channel to people? That big stretch of wet stuff that separates us from Europe!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Favourite = Vegas. Least favourite = Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge

facing the channel in 2020? We need to ramp up fixing this digital skills and talent shortage. From our perspective we are embarking on some exciting partnerships with Microsoft and local colleges. Watch this space!

JASON HOLLOWAY
Managing director, Bridgeway Security Solutions

What was your dream career as a child? To be a pilot. I wanted to join the RAF and become a Sea Harrier pilot, but I was unfortunately too tall. However, 13 years ago I studied for my glider and power pilot's licence and now fly as often as I can.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I'm very proud of my son achieving a First following his first year of studying Business Management at the University of



Sheffield. I'm also chuffed that I took part in my first ever gliding competition at our club and won! It was the first time I'd tried flying competitively and I hadn't previously realised how much fun it could be.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Does it have to be gentle? Bill Gates for having the opportunity to vastly improve the interoperability, security and scalability of the Microsoft products and services but instead choosing to make them proprietary.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?

My phone to call the fire brigade and my rucksack that contains my laptop, iPad and passport! I suppose the common answer would be items that used to be irreplaceable, like photographs, but nowadays so many are stored in the cloud.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

The exponential rise in security threats rising disproportionately faster than the investment in information security. Plus, the foreign exchange uncertainty caused by Brexit and associated delays. I wish I'd be wrong on both counts.

What TV show have you binge watched this year?

The crime series *La Casa De Papel* (*Money Heist*). Rather than robbing a bank, they rob the Spanish equivalent of the Royal Mint and the nice twist isn't that they're stealing a

small amount of ready printed cash, but they're printing loads of their own.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

2019 is an inflection point for Bridgeway. We have grown to become a medium-sized organisation and it feels like we have grown up. I'm pleased with how well our new recruits are doing, we've attained ISO 27001 and 9001 accreditation and we've introduced a number of managed services that are being well received by prospects and customers alike.

What annoys you most about your commute?

The A14 roadworks. It should be a short commute but almost every day there are new bridges, slip-roads, relief roads, roundabouts, all appearing with seemingly little rhyme nor reason. And poor signage seemingly designed to utterly confuse the unwary.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be?

It would be something momentous such as the Battle of Britain, the signing of the Magna Carta or the first atomic bomb test to see whether those involved at the time really felt the huge significance of the event.

Or perhaps when they invented the television and for the first time saw the flickering images show up on the screen.

How do you explain the channel to people?

It's a stretch of water between England and France.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Helsinki for both favourite and least favourite.

In the spring and summer, it's colourful and full of life, everyone is so happy radiating warmth and friendship and it can be surprisingly hot in the summer. Unfortunately, in the dead of winter it can be cold, dark and miserable.

Everyone is very down and blue, in more ways than one, and it seems like a completely different country. However, I still have a soft spot for the Finnish people and Finland itself.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

How to maintain relevance with the customer

base, especially with the move to simpler self-managed cloud services and easier integration. A lot of the channel rely hugely on integration services and/or reselling licences, and if they're not needed, or are being sold online directly by the vendors, the relevance of the channel is greatly diminished. There is still a role for the channel in the future but it's a very different one to what we've seen in the past.



CHERIE HOWLETT

Marketing director, Jola

What was your dream career as a child?

I wanted to be a ballerina in the Royal Ballet and dance on the stage.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

Winning the very first Comms Business, Women in Channel Award. I was up against tough competition, so was really thrilled to win. It was fantastic to be recognised for my contribution to the growth of Griffin and Jola over the last 15 years. They are both channel-only organisations, focused on helping resellers to grow their businesses, with products that are easy to sell and generate profitable, recurring revenues. We were the first to launch many industry leading propositions such as white-label managed broadband and more recently managed 4G, private 4G,

Direct Routing for Microsoft Teams Phone System and eSIMs, a network-agnostic white label plastic or embedded mobile data SIM, designed to help MSPs compete with the mobile networks in IoT.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I wouldn't slap anyone but I do think that there are a few celebrities that could use their influence for good, but choose not to. I do worry about the impact of instant fame on the people involved, and the harm trolling can cause. Instant fame via reality TV or social media channels is becoming more attractive and I worry about the impact this is having on the career aspirations for future generations.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Items I wouldn't want to live without are my memory boxes, books, music and photo albums.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Like many people, I saw the growth of mobile data coming and the potential for MSPs and IT resellers to monetise mobile broadband, M2M and IoT solutions. We have partners in retail using our 4G SIMs for backup and digital signage, partners in security using 4G for CCTV and backup for door entry systems, partners in transport and logistics using 4G for Wi-Fi and in dashcams for buses, coaches and lorries, and traditional voice resellers using our 4G to package mobile broadband propositions for rural areas and construction sites.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Scorpion* on Netflix. It is an American TV show based on the life of Walter O'Brien, who has the highest recorded IQ of 192 and his team of geniuses, who solve problems no one else can fix, for the US government.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great – we just won two prestigious industry awards for Best Wholesale Provider and Best Mobile Distributor. We have been expanding our SIM portfolio and were chosen by the Three mobile network

to be their wholesale provider of M2M and IoT SIMs to the channel. We were the first to launch direct routing for the Microsoft Teams Phone System and are about to launch eSIMs. It has been fast-paced with high growth and we have attracted new talent into the industry from apprenticeship schemes and part-time working for full-time parents looking for a new challenge.

What annoys you most about your commute? It takes 20 minutes up a dual carriageway, so I count myself lucky. Traffic can be heavy, especially in bad weather, but I also have the option to work from home, so I can't complain.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would like to go back and witness the birth of the universe, how it all began and how life on earth started. I am interested in evolution and how living things can thrive in the right environment.

How do you explain the channel to people? I describe the channel as an amazing place to work. It's run by entrepreneurs spotting opportunities in the business communications market and delivering effective solutions. There is always new technology to learn and opportunities to take. It is an innovative community supporting UK business.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? We are based in the Midlands, so it is great when events take place locally as it is less of a commute and easier to transport kit to. For me, the best conferences focus on the content. They offer panels, which provide balanced, current information and relevant suppliers to meet.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? We need to adapt to thrive in changing market conditions. With the amazing growth of Microsoft Teams Phone System and Direct Routing, I think 2020 will be a challenge for resellers committed to hosted voice and a great opportunity for MSPs who are Microsoft-certified partners.



MARY HUNTER
*Business Unit Executive,
Columbus UK*

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to be a lawyer. I loved the thought of defending the innocent and ensuring they were let go.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Moving to our perfect family home that we were part of designing.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? No one. Although there are many politicians I could name.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Phone and passports. We may as well grab a family holiday and create happy times versus being upset in a local hotel.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Customer experience and service will matter more in 2019 than ever before.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? A year of embracing and driving great innovation and change.

What annoys you most about your commute? Sitting stationary in traffic.

How do you explain the channel to people? A community of companies working in the technology industry.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My

favourite this year is Berlin. So much history all around you that can be fast experienced while travelling on business. My least favourite is Las Vegas. The heat when on business, the noise and the environment simply don't appeal.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The shortage of people. We all have to play our part to attract great people from other industries and return to work mums and the next generation to come join us.



PAUL HUNTER
Global channel chief, HPE

What was your dream career as a child? I didn't really have a dream job in mind, but I always had an interest in business, which I got from my dad. I landed in sales by accident. When I first worked for NCR it was where the fun seemed to be.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My wife got a new job at Pivotal. We had a family reunion on the US east coast, where we all met for a long weekend. Work wise, I am excited with the collaboration we enjoy with our partners and the results that are coming from that.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Damir Skomina, the Champions League final referee in 2019, who essentially spoiled the next 89

minutes of the game for all independent (if there's such a thing) watchers. My son is a Spurs fan as well, so it took some time for him to manage his emotions.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A box of family memorabilia and the family passports. We'd need a holiday.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I would continue to fail to listen to my own advice. There is a lot of advice I give myself which I don't have the discipline to follow. We continue to get better as a company every day.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? This is a fairly long list. The most impactful was *Chernobyl*. But I have a guilty pleasure of watching History Channel reality TV series like *American Pickers*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Rewarding, challenging, changing, stressful, fun, energizing. All the reasons why being in business is enjoyable.

What annoys you most about your commute? It depends on the method of transport, but the trains in California are infrequent. There can be one an hour at peak times and they are very slow. It reminds me how good European train services are. At the same time it's difficult to be annoyed when the sun is shining.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Landing man on the moon. I'd love to have a sense for the excitement in the art of the possible that existed at that time. I suspect it was a great time for global imagination.

How do you explain the channel to people? A network of thousands of companies around the world, that help customers provide an IT service to their business, utilising the solutions of hundreds of technology companies.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Orlando I like the least. There's very little personality to be had there. We've had

great partner events in Madrid which I enjoyed (except when the taxi drivers were striking).

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Keeping their expertise relevant.



DONAVAN HUTCHINSON
Managing Director UK & International, PCM Technology Solutions UK

What was your dream career as a child? For those who know me well my dream job has always and continues to be that of setting up a riding for disabled facility. I have always wanted to work towards setting up the RDA facility since a young age and after working closely with Jane Hemmingway, one of the leaders of the society alongside with Princess Anne, the benefits of seeing people of all ages with varying levels of disabilities being able to embrace and lift their moods through being with horses – which are just in themselves majestic creatures – gave me real pleasure and a sense of happiness being able to help others.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? There have been many highlights for 2019; however, the biggest for me has to be finally marrying my husband on 10 August. It was an

amazing event joined by our close friends and family and a day I will never forget.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I don't think there's ever a person I would want to slap, gentle or not.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? The two items I would absolutely grab would have to be my cat and my dog. The house may be in flames but material objects have no meaning to me and often can be replaced. If however the cat and dog were both safe with my family then I would probably just grab the keys to my car so at least the family has shelter and can travel to family with ease away from the fire.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I generally don't have much time in the day to binge watch TV series; however, I have enjoyed both *American Horror Story* and *Game of Thrones*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? From a business perspective, 2019 has been one of excitement as the organisation continued to grow sequentially and YoY by more than 50%. We have had a number of challenges but we have been able to overcome these with the excellent team we have in place who are forward thinking in all they do. 2019 also has seen a couple of positive surprises to include that of the joining of the PCM and Insight brands and it is certainly exciting times ahead as each organisation's strengths in both product delivery and digital transformation services are brought together.

What annoys you most about your commute? My commute is relatively easy to our main head office as it's only 12 minutes away. However, if I am travelling to other sites like Glasgow for instance then I've learned to drive and not fly, given I always have delays with airlines no matter where I am going to.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would

have liked to have witnessed the Stonewall Rebellion on 28 June 1969.

These riots at the time, although classed as violent demonstrations against the police in NYC, did pave the way to the LGBTQ uprising and liberation movement resulting in LGBTQ rights, not just in the US but worldwide. As an active LGBTQ sponsor and openly gay leader, I am privileged and thankful to all those who acted in good faith for equality, which has resulted in much positive change over the years for humanity.

How do you explain the channel to people? I would typically describe it as the place where technology is leading the way for our future. Although vague to many, I tend to have to describe the channel as the route to market for many vendors being able to sell their products to both consumers and businesses and that there are multiple layers that provide added value to enhance the offerings and technological capabilities of the vendors' products.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I would say that Vegas seems to be the most common place for vendors to have their partner conference and while Vegas can be great, it does also get boring when there's repetition. The best places I have had conferences are the Bahamas, Portugal and Croatia, which are all beautiful but my favourite will always be Barcelona.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The ability to attract and hire top talent from across Europe and beyond into the UK will become more challenging as the UK adopts its Brexit plans. The market is still very ripe right now and we have certainly seen that from the growth announcements across the industry. However, this could be short-lived if organisations do not have the right talent within their organisations to help execute against the businesses strategy and growth plans.

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KEVIN JAMES
*Chief commercial officer,
Computacenter*

What was your dream career as a child? From an early age I simply wanted to be a professional sportsman – football, cricket or as an F1 driver and much later golf. I always had the competitive nature, just simply lacked the talent!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? As I spend more time with our US acquisition, I'm starting to see with even more clarity the global nature of this business and the channel specifically, and the dominance and influence of the US leaders of our partners. It is not just what we are achieving over there, but by looking both sides of the pond, I'm seeing the power of being global to our own business, our customers and our vendors. The other (very personal) highlight for me over the last 12-18 months was finally managing to lose some weight (2st-plus) and achieve a level of fitness which I was beginning to think was beyond me. Now I need to "go again" and achieve even more improvement.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron, which is a shame as I was a big fan. Frankly the distraction over the last few years with

Brexit has tarnished so many things. For me it was always a political rather than economic decision. While I respect him for trying to fix the issue once and for all with the referendum, the way he did it achieved the complete opposite. I'm afraid that it has become a running sore; I'm struggling to see how it will come to an end in the short/mid term.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My golf clubs and my wine rack!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Brexit would not be resolved, that our technology sourcing (product supply) business will continue to grow, and I would continue to have the best job in Computacenter (possibly in the industry!) and (sadly) that my wife would end up with a lower golf handicap than me! All 100% correct.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders* and *Killing Eve*. Both excellent, but quite a few others as well. Binge TV watching helps travelling a lot!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very strong, across all territories and across all business lines with all our main partners and some key new ones.

What annoys you most about your commute? My main commute is to LHR... so BA delays! Other than that, nothing annoys me, as it is either very short to the Reading office or to a different place every single day. The worst thing about commuting is the repetition. I'm lucky that every day is genuinely different, as variety is the spice of life. I should say I used to hate the daily commute into London by train (it still drives me crazy when I have to do it in rush hour).

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Easy question. The 1966 World Cup final. Obvious reasons!

How do you explain the channel to people? I get asked this a lot and

my answer is: effectively we deal with large enterprise organisations and large global vendors, neither of which can adequately flex, and we help them both do that, matching customer demands to vendors' technology and make it easier to enable their technology by combining tech and services to build solutions. Our deep customer intimacy helps the tech vendors go wider and deeper working with us, and helps customers to get access to the right technology for them at the right time. The broader channel, albeit not really CC, gives the vendors reach into the mid market.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? It's amazing that we go to some fab cities, but all we see is an airport terminal, a taxi and a conference hotel, and normally many of the same people (while we are competitors, we normally manage to enjoy a glass of wine and the social "engagement"!)). Therefore, I've been keen recently to try and combine the conferences where possible with seeing more of the cities we visit, and on a number of occasions my wife has joined me afterwards to enjoy Madrid, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Barcelona, Paris and others. It can't always be possible – I have to say she wasn't too happy when I went to both Venice and Seville without her!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

There are always challenges of a macro economic nature ahead of us – Brexit, US/China trade, economic slowdown as well as inevitable change in our markets. However, the challenge we have in 2020 is the same as it has been every year, our ability to add significant value for customers and partners and to define and then execute on our own strategies. Those channel players who have genuine focus (on whatever their segment/targets are) will be the ones who succeed. More specifically, I do believe that as our customers' buyers become more "millennial" they will drive a demand

for a more simplified, technology based model for procuring technology and solutions, in some form of consumption/XaaS motion. Whether that will really land in 2020 or soon after, it is a challenge ahead of the industry, which we will all need to be ready for.



DEREK JONES

Advisor to the Board, Synaxon

What was your dream career

as a child? My first plan was to be a professional sailing instructor; this was closely following by joining the Royal Navy.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing Synaxon central purchasing and CSP systems delivering results for the channel.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? About half of our politicians but especially Jeremy Corbyn – what a muppet.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I would certainly start with my mobile phone followed by a good coat, both for practical reasons.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That I would step down from the position of MD at Synaxon UK.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? It's not something I would ever do under any circumstances. I don't know how people find the time.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? With all of the uncertainty around Brexit, I think it

has been a difficult year for all.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing at all: no long drives, no trains, boats or planes. **If you could witness one past event, what would it be?** VE

Day – May 1945 in London. After all of the unbelievably difficult years, people actually got a chance to celebrate and look forward to the future.

How do you explain the channel to people? In broad brushstroke terms, the route to market for technology products and services.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? An invitation to South Korea with Samsung tops all and I don't really have a least favourite location or conference. I think we should always get something out of every conference or networking opportunity.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It has to be the unpredictability of the UK economy post-Brexit, developing a winning strategy in a volatile and uncertain market is incredibly difficult.



GRAHAM JONES
UK managing director, Exclusive Networks

What was your dream career as a child? Being a Liverpool lad, football was always a big part of my childhood. Like many others my age, my dream was to play professionally. I actually ended up playing a few games for Merseyside football team, but then work, girls and

career got in the way – in that order.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? This has definitely got to be the way the Exclusive Networks team has adapted to the consistent challenges of running a distributor throughout the Brexit chaos and the way that they have handled the pressure that this has put on our vendors and partners.

In my personal life, I feel like my golf is finally improving!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Undoubtedly Theresa May for wasting two years of all of our lives and confounding our businesses. **What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?** An old picture of my Mum at 18, which we only recently found, and my LP collection (yes, vinyl).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The fact that cloud is finally turning into sales, the Brexit chaos is continuing and the cybersecurity market is maturing at last.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *The Boys* on Netflix. It's a real send up of superheroes.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very tricky as I have mentioned above! There have been large deals delayed and orders have been taking longer to close. With more consolidation on both the vendor and VAR side of the business, there has been a large focus for us to continue being agile and fill the services and skills gaps where needed.

What annoys you most about your commute? My commute is three miles of country lanes so I'm very lucky to have such a scenic route into work. However, it does take me past my gym, so I have no excuses not to go!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would have loved to have been in the control room when Apollo 13 re-entered the atmosphere. I can't even imagine how emotional that must have been!

How do you explain the channel to people? In one sentence I would

say that the channel is basically made up of clever people who sell smart stuff to end users. Like us, they have to live on margins, not revenues.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? The best destination for me was Vienna. It was very clean and refined – the wine and cake was great. The worst has got to be Vegas – I think it's a destination which is just a bit overdone now.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Staying relevant in the face of the more and more uneducated purchasing manager, and qualifying that the deal you do all the work on comes your way!



MARTIN JONES
Managing director, LAN3

What was your dream career as a child? Like so many kids, I dreamed of being a sportsman, with cricket being 'my bag'. As it turned out, I was horribly average at cricket, and less than average at all other sports. Outside the world of sport, I had no specific dreams. I just wanted a career where I got to talk a lot, even if that meant every now and then I'd need to listen too.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? 2019 has been an 'interesting' year, with the never-ending farce of Brexit looming over our heads. However, there have been highlights both at work and at home. My eldest daughter 'smashed' her GCSEs, Liverpool FC won the Champions League and at LAN3 we

have continued to fight against the Brexit tide and win high-profile business.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Lewis Carnie (Controller of Radio 2), for making Radio 2 so much less appealing than it was.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog and one of my cats...

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I am no good at all at making big insightful predictions. I thought there would be some big company buy-outs in 2019, but I was not clever enough to guess who would buy whom.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Stranger Things*. I am very jumpy, so my family refuse to watch it with me.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It has not been without its challenges, but I am proud of how the team have worked together to continue business growth. It has been particularly rewarding to watch the managed services business continue to soar, with such great customer feedback.

What annoys you most about your commute? I can't grumble really – I chose the location of the office! It certainly wouldn't hurt to see the back of the temporary traffic lights that blight the road that links our office to my house. They can easily add another three minutes (25%) to the drive in!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall to witness the conversations that Obama had with his staff prior to handing over the White House to Mr Donald J Trump.

How do you explain the channel to people? The tidal waterway that separates France from England. I might then expand by saying I have a mate who swam it. (Sorry).

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourites are Orlando and Vegas,

obviously! Although I always try to remain teetotal and close to my laptop, at all times. My least favourite is any conference where I haven't had to board a plane first.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

E-Commerce (especially for cloud and software solutions). It does mean that the channel must continue to provide additional value to prospects and customers... or face obsolescence.

K



TOM KELLY
Chairman, Agilitas

What was your dream career as a child? Airline pilot but my eyesight was not 20/20, which was then a prerequisite.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing the smaller cloud 'born' partners thrive and be clever.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? It has to be Mark Zuckerberg for his total arrogance and self belief, which is unwarranted.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My iPad and the keys to the McClaren!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I didn't make any in this uncertain world.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Killing Eve*,

Confession and Succession. All brilliant and in this order.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Business continues to thrive but agility and forward-looking insights are key to ongoing success – never be complacent.

What annoys you most about your commute? Late trains and no apologies!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The one that never happened: Hitler signing a surrender document.

How do you explain the channel to people? Ha ha! We are the GTM for the OEM! Any wiser now?

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Boston is a great go-to place as it is small yet has the buzz of the US and Europe, whereas Hawaii is a long, long way away.

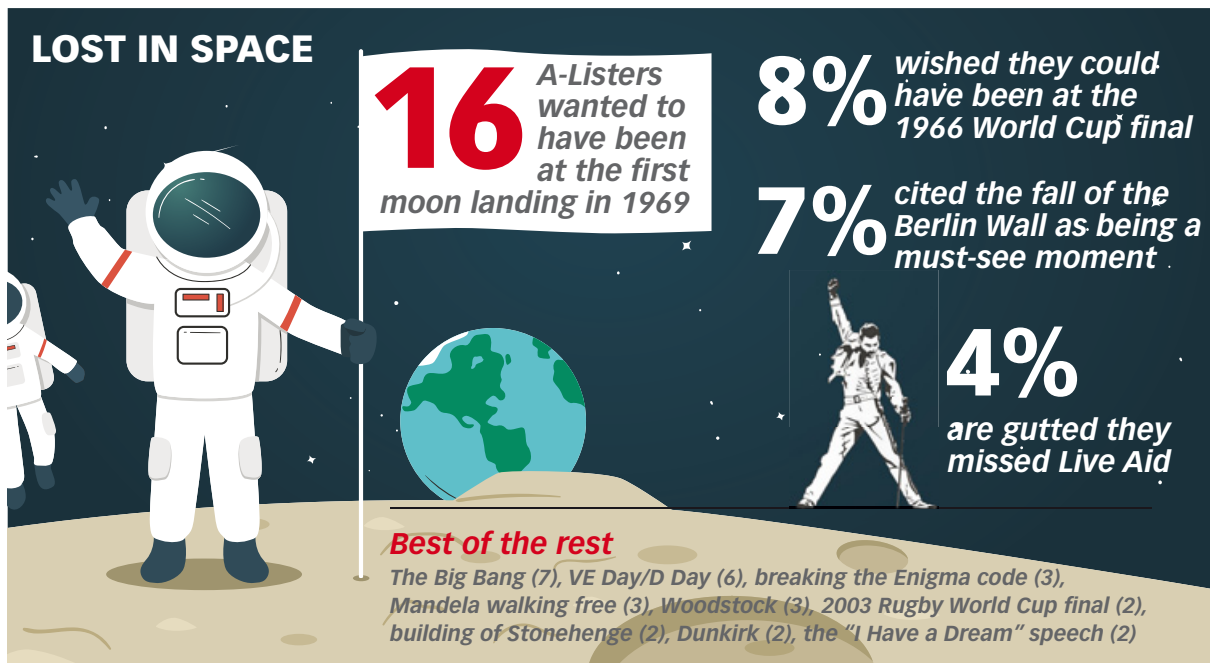
What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The OEMs must begin to take apart their partner channels and unconstrain them from the chains that they have put in place over the years, with minimum requirements for compliance.



JAMES KNIGHT
Chief executive, Printerland.co.uk

What was your dream career as a child? Barman... and I realised that dream with my first job.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I'm still alive!



Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Nobody. I'm a lover, not a fighter!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My toothbrush and the insurance policy.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Printerland's success with Managed Print. We've seen an 800% year-on-year growth.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Coronation Street*; I can't get enough of it!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Fantastic! We're set for another record-breaking year in both profit and turnover.

What annoys you most about your commute? My chauffeur's driving.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Grand National. I'd make a fortune.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's a stretch of water separating France and England.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner

conference destinations? None. They're all a waste of time and money.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Anyone trying to swim it!



IAN KILPATRICK
Strategic advisor cybersecurity, Nuvias

What was your dream career as a child? To be a scientist; what kind was undetermined then. And history has shown it was just a dream.

Which famous person deserves a

(gentle) slap? Boris – I think we have dissimilar ethical standards.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My photo and music servers.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Cybersecurity is getting more complicated.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I don't have time to watch TV, really.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? For us at Nuvias, the opportunity has been dealing with expansion and growth.

What annoys you most about your commute? That's not really a major issue when you mainly work from home. Perhaps the long walk to the kitchen for a cup of tea, or logging on too early for video conferences.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The asteroid strike that wiped out the dinosaurs, because it truly changed the world.

How do you explain the channel

to people? If it's vendors I explain that it's how you can add value and significantly multiply your revenue, as well as reduce costs.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? In cybersecurity it is making the right choices to continue to be relevant as trusted partners, in what is an increasingly challenging and complex market.



ANDREW KING
Group chief executive, Grey Matter

What was your dream career as a child? To join the Royal Navy – but unfortunately at the time I was not impressed with their IT!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? To retain our omnichannel (resale and distribution) direct status with Microsoft for CSP.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Any famous person who profits from the UK, but avoids paying their fair share of UK tax.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone (to call for help) and my Sage coffee machine.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That resellers and distributors who focus on turnover, not long-term customer satisfaction, continue to fail.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? None!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Organic, profitable growth.

What annoys you most about your commute? I mainly work from home,

but I love the commute down to Devon.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The coronation of Elizabeth II. An amazing and uplifting occasion after what must have been a dreary post-war period.

How do you explain the channel to people? We advise and help customers implement software solutions.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is San Francisco. My least favourite by a long stretch – Las Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Continuing to invest in adding value, such as more services, but remaining profitable.



KELVIN KIRBY
Chief executive, Technology Associates

What was your dream career as a child? To be an astronaut. I was eight years old when the moon landings took place in 1969 and I was fascinated by it, one might even say obsessed. I have been a huge sci-fi fan ever since. However, it wasn't to be and I ended up going into automotive engineering instead. I started my career with British Leyland (BL Cars) but most of your readers will be too young to remember them!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Several awards, and some really high-profile customers. I created my own Mastermind Group to help, assist and act as a catalyst to help business owners grow and develop their businesses. I now run two

separate groups (monthly meetings with telephone support in between) and the members are achieving average growth rates of 214%, which is very encouraging. It's good to know that my wisdom and experience counts for something and that I am able to mentor and coach others in this way. I see it as a way of giving back. I have always devoted some of my time to helping and developing other business owners. I spent many years doing it on a voluntary basis as IAMCP (International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners), so this is a logical next step.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Ernie Wise? After all, Eric Morecambe got away with it for years!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My laptop and mobile – I couldn't live without those two things. I know it's clichéd but it's true.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Last year I predicted significant growth in IoT and Quantum computing. While both of these areas are still growing and developing, IoT has truly gone mainstream this year. I think we'll see huge advances in Quantum computing in the next 18 months that will revolutionise the way we deal with data and analyse it. This will have massive implications for marketing, sales, data analysis, data storage and social analysis (among others).

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I don't really get time to binge watch, but I finally got to start watching *Suits*. Generally I don't get much time for TV so it's nice to have time to sit down and watch something that both the other half and I can enjoy. I also watched the Netflix series *Another Life* while on holiday (mostly on the plane!) and just started *The Hot Zone* on National Geographic.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Awesome. We have a 28% growth in revenues and sales, which considering market factors, Brexit and a few other things is pretty

good for us this year. We pulled back from business in the EU (mainly driven by customers in the EU worried about Brexit – a trend that started early last year). Since we are primarily a services business, this has been a key factor. But the UK market has grown to compensate above and beyond so that wasn't quite what we expected, but it's all good news and we have a very healthy pipeline into next year, which is great.

What annoys you most about your commute? I live five minutes from the office so there's not much to complain about. Having said that, I travel all over the country. This month I'll be lucky to spend even two days in the office because we are so busy. A large proportion of my time is still spent with customers, or in London where I have other business interests. I run several companies and I am an investor in many others. When I combine that with my Mastermind Groups, life is pretty busy, but I like it that way. I'm always a moving target and hard to pin down!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'm really not sure on this one. I don't really focus on history, I'm more interested in the future and how I might influence that. History is history, and short of having a Tardis to hand, I wouldn't count any one historic event as being any more significant (from my perspective) as any other. I guess if you asked me if there was one historic event that affected me the most and I would want to re-live, it would be the birth of my daughter – one of the most emotional events of my life. To me, that is historic!

How do you explain the channel to people? Generally I don't! I just say that I am in IT and leave it at that! If I try to start to explain it to people that don't already know it, the eyes glaze over and I know at that point I've lost them... so I just don't any more!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Washington DC was my big favourite.

For many different reasons but somehow being in the home of US political power seemed to be empowering (don't ask me why). I also liked Orlando and Los Angeles (although only certain parts of LA) – I had my 50th birthday at The Standard Hotel in LA, so maybe that's why! My least favourite would have to be Las Vegas – way too hot and too many distractions, if you know what I mean!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? One of the key challenges will be those in adapting business models to meet both changing technologies (AI, robotics) and in meeting the demands of new/revised Partner Programs.

On my first point we will see increasing convergence of AI and robotics markets in both business and small business/domestic markets, which will challenge distribution models. Businesses will want to capitalise on the growth of home-based technology sectors versus business as workers become more diverse, more mobile and more independent (working freelance vs employed). This trend for a more mobile workforce has been around for a while but 2020 will see a huge shift in this model. And the trend will be fuelled by more pay-as-you-go models for equipment/technology rental in much the same way as mobile phone contracts work today.

On my second point about Partner Programs, I think we will see a massive shift in these models. For many years we have seen the large technology companies try and "retro-fit" and modify their programs to fit an increasingly rapid adoption of new technologies and platforms and today many of them just don't fit the model that's really appropriate for the market and for the partners. I am sure Microsoft is rethinking its model right now in the wake of a backlash in the summer over IUR, so I would expect to see a significant and bold announcement from Microsoft some time next year, and I would expect other vendors to be following suit. We'll see...

L



JONATHAN LASSMAN
Director, Epaton

What was your dream career as a child? Musician. In one of my psychometric tests I scored the highest for music and also the highest for sales.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Getting child number one into university and child number 2 through GCSEs. Both have now got further than I did in the education system.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Arsene Wenger for not letting go sooner.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and my wallet.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? None yet – talk to me on 31 October.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *The Boys*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Best year yet.

What annoys you most about your commute? Too much traffic, too many road changes and too many cyclists.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Hitler's suicide, just to be sure he was dead.

How do you explain the channel to people? If the correct channel is working with you then they become an extension of your IT team and it is a way for end users to protect themselves from

making bad technology decisions.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

My favourite is Barcelona; my least favourite is anywhere with more than one-hour time difference.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Vendors not understanding the value of channel and stripping the margin from deals.



LOAY LAWRENCE

Director, Vohkus

What was your dream career as a child?

A writer inspired by a variety of authors, the likes of Joseph Heller, Aldus Huxley, James Joyce and George Orwell.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Realising that both my children are more than capable of standing on their own two feet, with a solid education behind them giving them choices in this ever-shrinking world.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Not one but too many to mention, mostly politicians across the world.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wallet and passport. Everything else can be re-established; memories are now digital, and can be reinstated.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The challenge of quality recruitment.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? None, I'm not a binge watching kind of person.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

It has been a year of milestones from a company, customer and vendor perspective.

What annoys you most about your commute? The lack of continuity in the connectivity infrastructure, frustrating the ability to keep either a conversation or other forms of communication ongoing without interruptions.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be?

The industrial revolution, which is a forerunner to where we are today with technology. One would have seen the rapid changes, introduction of rapid transportation, factories and the growth of cities, which then in turn delivered a very much needed service industry.

How do you explain the channel to people? I explain what our origination does, which is delivering outcomes that a company requires via technology.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

My favourite is anywhere in the UK – less time taken out of your week – and least is Las Vegas for many reasons but mostly it has been overdone.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

I think good people are the core of any organisation, and recruiting to fit in with a company's ethos as well as delivering is a challenge for us all.

PAUL LLOYD

Director, Sellyerly.co.uk

What was your dream career as a child?

I always wanted to be a doctor and ended up as a swimming pool attendant. Yes, the bloke that sits on the big tall chair.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? The arrival of my granddaughter, the Ginger Ninja.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? 650 MPs. I would like to see them offer leadership and maybe



put the good of the country before their careers and parties.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Bialetti coffee pot and a tin of Illy coffee. I cannot manage without my coffee.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I'm still waiting to see!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders* was possibly the best and only one from start to finish; I have an affinity with the Brummies. Although their accents are not too good!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? This has been a great year so far, following on from a couple of good years. The opportunities seem to be endless – anyone not doing business at the moment needs to take a look at themselves.

What annoys you most about your commute? I sometimes fall over the cat as I walk across the landing. Working from home does have benefits.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Ben Stokes winning the Headingley test: outstanding to see an English player giving his all and coming through against the odds.

How do you explain the channel to people? It is a strip of water about 23 miles across that keeps us separate from Europe.

A-LIST 2020

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? This is more about the vendor you would like to be and not wish to be with. Having been to these for the last 30 years, there have been many changes and some improvements. I object to being charged to attend, which is becoming a thing. You pay to attend to be sold to for a few days.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Amazon and staying relevant. Wherever you are in the supply chain, you need to add value, that being value measured in the eyes of the client. If you are not adding value, then you are a cost and you become dispensable.



RICHARD LOCKEY

UK country manager, Crayon

What was your dream career as a child? Like a lot of young boys, I wanted to be a footballer, and like a lot – unfortunately – I didn't make the grade!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Securing Crayon's largest ever deal.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Piers Morgan. He's just annoying and seems to voice opinions to get reactions rather than because he has something credible to say.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog and my son's iPad!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I try not to make predictions but seeing the state of

our current political agenda was fairly predictable!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Outlander* and *Question Time*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Really positive. The business has grown both at a local and a global level, with lots of exciting initiatives still to come.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing, I live very close to the office!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Live Aid – what a concert that was!

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel are the experts that implement, integrate and operate the technology that manufacturers and publishers produce, helping businesses run, evolve and innovate.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? This year, my least favourite was London, and favourite was Dubai.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Probably the skills shortage, with AI and ML coming to the fore, and with the current longevity of staff averaging about 2.5 years (I read somewhere), making sure you have the right staffing levels with the right skillsets is a big ask.

NIGEL LOMAS

Chief operating officer: AdePT IT Services, AdePT Technology Group

What was your dream career as a child? Playing left back for Arsenal. Kenny Samson, Nigel Winterburn and Ashley Cole all beat me to it.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Becoming a grandfather.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron for the Brexit EU referendum and the constitutional crisis this has caused.



What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A bottle of red wine and my football boots (realistically more likely money and phone).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I didn't make any.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Game of Thrones*. I finally got around to watching it and binged.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very good.

Revenue, managed services revenue, EBITDA, profitability, earnings per share have all increased in our latest results. AdePT continues to grow and acquire companies.

What annoys you most about your commute? Lack of a decent radio station – ad free.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The demise of the Berlin Wall. It would have been great to be there on the evening of 9 November 1989 to witness the start of events.

How do you explain the channel to people? I've given up trying to explain to my family about the cloud and so on.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? The best partner conference I ever attended was in Japan. The last one I attended was in Derby!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Profit margins as the larger vendors continue to introduce new products and services directly into the MSP market space.

ALEX LOUTH

Managing director, Logicalis

What was your dream career

as a child? As I'm sure is the case for many people, my dream career as a child couldn't be more different to what I do now. I used to love a TV show called *CHiPs* about two police officers – Ponch and Jon – who go around California busting crime. Unsurprisingly, after watching many, many episodes of the show, all I wanted was to grow up and do the same.

As I got older though I realised that I liked the warmth and comfort that an office job brought with it and that perhaps I wasn't cut out to be a police officer after all.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I can't say that anything overly eventful has happened in my personal life this year – but to me that's definitely a good thing. All of the main live events like getting married, having children and buying our dream home and the (good) stress that accompanies them have all been done in previous years so it's nice to be able to just enjoy having stability and living the life that we spent a lot of time building.

However, last weekend I watched two of my children lose heavily in football – and I probably found it more amusing than I should have! That was definitely one highlight of this year.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I'm going to have to go with Elon Musk. Don't get me wrong, he's done some incredible things and in many ways is truly inspirational. I just think it's such a shame that he ruins this by portraying himself so badly in the media. We all have opinions and thoughts that we maybe shouldn't have but we can't put our every thought on the internet. It's not



just Elon Musk though, it's any celebrity that uses social media badly. What are you thinking?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?

The first thing to save would be my dog Daisy. Even though I'm not that attached to her, my wife is and she would be lost without her!

The second thing would be my car. It's a fantastic 1962 Porsche 356 – a truly beautiful car – and I would be devastated if it was ruined! It also has sentimental value because it was the one thing I treated myself to after I sold my last business. It represents everything that I worked so hard for.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? From a personal perspective, I'm not sure if this counts but I predicted that I would get a new job and I did – not altogether surprising as I was actively looking for one!

In terms of industry predictions, I predicted that cloud would be important but that we would never be 100% cloud. This year we have definitely seen that not all workloads have gone to the cloud – cloud is important but there will always be industries and workloads that just don't suit the model.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? One TV show I've loved this year is *The Handmaid's Tale*. In my opinion it's one of the few cases where the TV adaptation is actually

better than the book. Margaret Atwood is a great writer but she's extremely descriptive so the book felt a bit slow-moving at times, whereas the TV show was just great. My son has also been studying the book as part of his A-level course so I've enjoyed us watching the series together. I also loved *Stranger Things*, because it made me feel a bit nostalgic. For those who don't know, the latest series is set in the 1980s when *Back to the Future* was just released. I can't wait for the next series!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? The obvious thing to note this year is Brexit and the increasing uncertainty of what is to come. I think this year everyone in the UK has realised that Brexit will more than likely have an impact to their businesses. It will slow down some areas and speed up others. This instability and uncertainty has certainly changed the market and meant that many businesses are less likely to make major decisions or take risks until they are certain about what impact Brexit will have to them. It will be interesting to see how this will change in 2020.

What annoys you most about your commute? I take the train to work every day and one thing that can be irritating is when people take bikes on the train during busy periods. It's not an issue when the train is quieter but it's frustrating to see people bring

bikes during rush hour that take up the equivalent space of two or three people. With Boris bikes around London I just don't understand the need to take your bike on the train!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would have loved to have witnessed the falling of the Berlin Wall. When the wall came down I was still at school and the event was all over the television. In those days there were only four channels to choose from and all of them were focusing on it for weeks. The collapse of the Berlin Wall seemed so monumental/significant at that time because I was at a very influential age – I was only 12 or 13 years old. I think many members of my generation also see this event as being significant for the same reason. Interestingly, when I was in Berlin on a stag do a few years ago my peers were equally interested in seeing the remains of the wall and exploring the history, whereas younger members of the group who hadn't heard about it growing up weren't as bothered!

It also happened at a time in my life when I became interested in Europe and business. The falling of the wall happened so close to the UK and had a big impact to Europe as a whole – it was a momentous time in history that I would have loved to have witnessed.

How do you explain the channel to people? Imagine you had a dairy farm with a bunch of cows who are there to make milk and therefore money. However, without a milkman you wouldn't actually get anything to your customers. The channel is the milkman. It is a group of partners that help companies all over the world of all sizes to increase and spread the value of their products and services. The channel allows companies to get into markets via partner networks, which is extremely valuable in this day and age.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My least favourite is definitely Vegas. I'll admit

that it was brilliant the first time I went but it's one of those places that loses its allure very quickly! Once you've seen the casinos and done the drinking and gambling there isn't really much else and it's just a bit... Vegas? I think it's also because I've been there far too much. There aren't many other destinations that can host 60,000 people. However, San Francisco is the complete antithesis. Every time I visit there's a different buzz – different events and things to explore. It's a very interesting city!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It's definitely that customers are looking to work with IT differently, asking more of both the vendor and partner. This, in turn, means shrinking value for procurement relationships. Customers are looking for long-term value from their partner relationships – I'm talking eight to ten years – meaning that it's never been more important to establish a value-added relationship.

That's not to say that shorter relationships don't exist or that there's no appetite. But for both partners and vendors, it can be difficult to establish how to do more for customers and how to make the relationship a more meaningful one that adds true value.

MARTIN LULHAM
Managing director, M-Tech Systems

What was your dream career as a child? Fighter pilot – is it time to buzz the tower?

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? (Hopefully) getting my pilot's licence.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Clarkson, in light of his recent ranting about the general aviation community.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wine collection and my rubber duck Bert.

Which of your 2019 predictions



have come to pass? That Liverpool would win the league – oh...

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very successful. More than 20% growth on last year with the same exceptional team, culture and ethics, facilitated by key relationships with great vendors, and a big push in recurring revenue managed services.

What annoys you most about your commute? Not being able to cut through the local college to reduce my seven-minute commute to five!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The gun powder plot. Intel could come in handy for Brexit purposes.

How do you explain the channel to people? The frustrating passage of technology products from vendor to end user.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Nice was Nice, Vienna has excellent kebabs. Copenhagen required a re-mortgage.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Building cloud revenue through the existing channel model in an ever-increasing direct market, while trying to differentiate from the pack.



SHAUN LYNN

Chief executive, Agilitas

What was your dream career as a child? Corporate lawyer.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? The continued growth of Agilitas and the huge digital transformation of our business.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Elon Musk: less opining and more thinking equals a better world.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Nespresso machine and vanilla syrup – the world's a better place after a vanilla latte!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? All of them, of course... relevance is the phrase everyone is using.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Money Heist*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Booming, transformational and tiring!

What annoys you most about your commute? The length of it – three hours minimum.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The extinction of the dinosaurs – entirely relevant to the IT industry!

How do you explain the channel to people? A daily battle between vanity and sanity.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Hawaii and Birmingham.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Sustainability as there are so many revenue focused short termists that don't understand the dual concepts of adding real value and remaining relevant.

M



JOE MACRI

VP, UK commercial partner, Microsoft

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to be an astronaut. While that career was sadly not meant to be, I did get to hear from Major Tim Peake and Helen Sharman at Microsoft's Future Decoded event recently, which was an amazing experience.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My summer vacations with my family and extended family were an amazing opportunity to spend quality time together and to get some rest.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Of course, I don't condone violence, so I don't think slapping is the way forward. But I would say there are a few politicians around the world that need to re-evaluate how they behave!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I have a folder where I keep my most important

documents and a box where we keep our family photo albums. These two things are very important to me and hold a lot of memories and vital information, so I would make sure I grabbed these on my way out of the house!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Brexit is still not defined.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I've recently started re-watching *Mad Men*. Although I don't support all aspects of Don Draper's behaviour, one can't avoid the thrill of creativity and closing big deals while watching it.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been an incredibly strong year. Microsoft has continued to build very good momentum and alongside this, the technology industry in the UK as a whole is thriving. These two things combined make us very excited about the present and what the future has to bring.

What annoys you most about your commute? I actually really enjoy my commute. I live close to the office so I enjoy walking to and from it each day. It's a great opportunity to clear the mind and take in the happenings of London.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I was a young child when Neil Armstrong first stepped on the moon so I have no memory of it. I'd love to have been just a little older and have memories of that momentous occasion so that I could have talked to him about that moment when I got the chance to meet him in 2006.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is made up of an ecosystem of organisations who sell technology hardware, solutions and services. We call them our partners and they can be traditional system integrators, advisory firms or the newest app developers or digital agencies and others. This is an incredibly valuable community for any company looking for technology to transform and accelerate their business.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Las Vegas is both my most favourite and least favourite destination. The surrounding landscape is incredible and it's a great city, but it can get too hot and you rarely get to experience cities when you're just visiting for conferences, which is a shame.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The answer has to be the impact of the digital revolution within our business. It has such a wide-ranging impact, affecting not only our products and business models towards managed services and IP solutions, but also new skills that our society needs to learn and new habits which organisations need to create. It's an exciting journey to say the least and the fact that we are all in it together makes it a bit easier, and more exciting, to go through.

NICK MADHAVJI

*Chief executive & founder,
Joskos Solutions*

What was your dream career as a child?

To be a 'business man' or a stock broker so that I could one day have the same car (a Ford Capri) and mobile phone (the Motorola brick) as my uncle. I was told I was too dumb to be any of them so I pretty much gave up trying, but deep inside I knew it was possible – I didn't know how but I knew it was. Anyway, I started my first business while at school and I started trading first at 18 and then again more strategically when I had a bit more to play with! These days I spend as much time as I can with the younger generations (the future of our country and planet) encouraging them to find their inner genius, leverage their passion and to be persistent in achieving their goals – far too many playground ambitions go to the graveyard unrealised. This is one of the key reasons I started Joskos and work in and serve education.

What has been your personal



highlight of 2019? Spending quality time with my children and helping them to work on their dreams and goals – they're busy becoming YouTube stars – winning Brazilian JiuJitsu medals and winning in the goal of challenging daddy's patience at times.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

None in particular I'd like to slap; I would, however, high-five Arnold Schwarzenegger. His story, grit, attitude, persistence and his achievements despite his early challenging are very inspiring. His autobiography, *Total Recall*, is one I would definitely recommend reading.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone, so that I could organise another place to stay! And the old-school family archives and photos. Memories appreciate in value and those snapshots in time tell a valuable story.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

That 2019 would be another year of growth and success. We've won some significant and multi-year national contracts, and our customers keep sharing that we are making a positive difference – that's what success means to us.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Isn't YouTube

the new TV these days? The TV is monopolised by the children, so if I do ever get sight of the TV I'm being subjected to toy reviews on YouTube!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

Interesting, non-stop, demanding, successful and we'll be growing circa 20% this year. We are now more than 100 team members, we've restructured, changed the way we do a lot of things and have created some new positions all geared towards creating outstanding customer and people experiences as we head into 2020 and beyond.

What annoys you most about your commute?

I drive to the office and usually make calls on my way in or sink my head into an audiobook. So traffic has got to be the biggest bugbear for me.

How do you explain the channel to people?

It is the glue between manufactures and customers that holds it all together through a competitive market. Well, something like that!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

I have honestly enjoyed all of the destinations, so much so that I've added a couple of days to the itinerary to enjoy and explore the destinations!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The channel itself! Brexit is something everyone keeps speaking about and it's a distraction (and opportunity). How about we focus on what is within our control and find ways to collaborate to create an even better competitive advantage and situation for our companies, people and customers.

NATHAN MARKE

*Chief digital officer, Digital
Wholesale Solutions*

What was your dream career as a child? A helicopter pilot.

What has been your personal

highlight of 2019? Joining DWS as



part of the demerger of Daisy Group and meeting a brilliant team of normal but slightly crazy people – they are the best sort of people, aren't they?

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Corbyn – just when we needed a decent opposition...

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Archie, Bagpuss, Mimi and Pinky Patch (4 kids, 4 favourite toys, don't make me choose).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? England winning the Cricket World Cup.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Fleabag*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Brilliant. DWS goes from strength to strength, inspired by an incredible, growing channel that is doing amazing things for UK business.

What annoys you most about your commute? When they say "Please accept our apologies, but we appear to have only got five carriages on this train".

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? My all-time hero is Joshua Slocum, the first man to sail around the world alone. I would love to have been in Rhode Island when he arrived home almost unnoticed – to notice him.

How do you explain the channel

to people? I'd say it is the businesses that make tech work for businesses that don't do tech.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? San Francisco and Birmingham – guess which is which!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? There is so much opportunity to go after. Picking, prioritising and focusing on just a few things – and doing them brilliantly – is what makes great channel companies stand out.



GARY MATSON
Director, channel sales EMEA core, Pure Storage

What was your dream career as a child? To play football for England and Tottenham – I was obsessed as a kid. These days I consider myself at least still part child and the dream is now to become a rock star – which is equally as unlikely, unfortunately.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Spurs making the Champions League final was a highlight; the result was not! My son's first hat-trick, my daughter's first word. Can I say my nomination for *CRN* Channel Chief? Get your votes in please!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? No need for violence, hugs all round.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? BPO (a meerkat dressed like BB8 from *Star Wars*)

and Monkey, my kids' go-to soft toys. Everything else can be replaced.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The global macro-economic environment is becoming increasingly challenging but this in turn presents an opportunity where we see truly differentiated, modern propositions like Pure's succeed and displace legacy technology even more rapidly.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I was late to the party with *Stranger Things* on Netflix – I'm now into series three and loving it!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Pure continues to disrupt the data industry in 2019 with innovative technology and consumption models that customers love. We are helping organisations unlock the power of their data and that's driving 10x better growth than our nearest competitor.

What annoys you most about your commute? My commute is pretty varied because I travel a lot, so in general it's the time away from family, the time lost in queues or on planes without Wi-Fi... oh, and the people who still haven't figured out what you can and can't take through airport security and that you need to empty your pockets!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The start of the universe – it's the ultimate historical event, isn't it?

How do you explain the channel to people? If somebody had no idea you would have to strip it down to the basics: the channel is the supply chain from manufacturer/vendor through to consumer and everything in between. In our world that usually includes a distributor and a solution provider (reseller/GSI/MSP). The channel can only survive so long as the ecosystem is adding value.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? The destination is often largely irrelevant

A-LIST 2020

as you rarely get to see the place you're staying in! I would probably go for Venice as the favourite and Coventry the least favourite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The biggest challenge is to embrace disruptive technologies, platforms and consumption models that will help end users to realise far better business outcomes. Organisations want to be able to focus on innovation and the power of IT to support their business objectives and they want to do it with flexible financial models.

YVONNE MATZK

Director, partners & marketing, CDW

What was your dream career as a child? I always thought it would be pretty cool to be a stunt girl.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Getting to work with the Stemettes and host our first Hackathon.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron, for being the worst prime minister on record.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your

house was on fire? My phone and my cat.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Boris

Johnson would become prime minister.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Killing Eve*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great.

Business is good and looking very positive.

What annoys you most about your commute? Trying to get on the Central Line at St Paul's, in the height of summer.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Billie Jean King beating Bobby Riggs in the 'Battle of the Sexes' match. Not only do I love tennis, she played the match to fight for the rights of women's tennis, not just to win the money or prove a point.

How do you explain the channel to people? I tell them it's a mechanism for both existing and emerging technology to reach the end customer.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was definitely the Bahamas; my least favourite was Las Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Diversity, talent acquisition and retention.



ROB MAY

Managing director, ramsac

What was your dream career as a child? To be a pilot in the RAF.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? To do a keynote speech on cybersecurity at The O2.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My iPhone and my car keys.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Aston Villa got promoted back to the Premier League.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Suits* – all nine seasons were excellent, and it ended superbly.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Fantastic, we've seen and taken advantage of numerous fantastic opportunities and continued to attract more new aspirational clients.

What annoys you most about your commute? Potholes!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The tearing down of the Berlin Wall. When it came down in 1989, it signified the end of communist rule and the birth of the voice of the German people.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel represents IT vendors, replacing (or sometimes supplementing) its direct sales function. It comprises value-added resellers (VARs), distributors or partners, and together they are the 'channel'.



What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

My favourite is Barcelona (I've now lost count of how many events I've been there); my least favourite is Venice – while beautiful to holiday in, the water-based logistics for a large-scale conference make it a nightmare.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Brexit and the resulting uncertain economy.



BILL MCGLOIN
Chief technologist,
Computacenter

What was your dream career as a child?

Obviously I'm living the dream now. Once I decided (or other people decided for me) that I wasn't making it as a professional footballer, something in IT or physics appealed to me. I discovered IT was more interesting and paid more.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

Being selected for the *CRN A-List*? The market realisation that data can transform every business.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Bear Grylls – I've seen him speak three times, and he gets more annoying every time.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?

My signed photo of Henrik Larsson's second goal in the 2003 Uefa Cup final and my acoustic guitar (the electric one can burn).

Which of your 2019 predictions

have come to pass? The UK didn't win *Eurovision*, Celtic won the Treble Treble and that AI and the wider analytics market would change the way customers view technology and how they consume IT.

What TV show have you binge watched this year?

A few – I tend to watch if I travel late at night, so *Good Omens*, *The Boys*, *Stranger Things 3*, *Bodyguard*, *Sneaky Pete* and *Derry Girls*.
How has 2019 been from a business perspective? In a word, Getting better all the time (sorry, poor joke). It's a time of great change, which keeps life interesting and presents lots of opportunity, with new vendors and new solutions to take to market.

What annoys you most about your commute?

I spend lots of time at airports, so flights that board on time then sit on the runway for an hour (Heathrow, I'm looking at you).
If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'd stand on the grassy knoll in Dallas as JFK drove by, filming everything in HD on my phone. I'd love to know where the bullet came from.

How do you explain the channel to people?

The glue between vendors and end customers, keeping vendors honest, adding value to the customer by giving them the best outcome using the best technology at the best price.
What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I'm a big fan of some European venues – Berlin and Copenhagen particularly. I'm not a fan of Las Vegas but it's necessary sometimes. I was hugely disappointed in New Orleans.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Coping with the continually changing ways that customers want to consume IT, understanding and monetising the changing vendor landscape with the move from purchase, to subscription, to consumption. However, that's not different to any other year... bring it on!



DAVID MCLEMAN
Chief executive, Ancoris

What was your dream career as a child?

To be a professional sailor.
What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Taking a three-month sabbatical and sailing 7,000 nautical miles from the UK down to the Cape Verde Islands off the West Coast of Africa then across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. It was a great way to recharge the batteries!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Predictably it would probably have to be David Cameron for kicking off this period of "B" uncertainty!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?

A tough one, apart from a weakness for boats and cars which aren't in the house. I've been more into experiences than precious possessions. As I know that my family are safe and my data, photos are secure in the cloud I think I'd just get out quick and let the fire services do their bit.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

The pace of innovation continues to accelerate. I think it's one of the most exciting times in our industry.
What TV show have you binge

watched this year? The re-run of *Ashes to Ashes*. A reminder of how far we've progressed in 20 years (but Gene Hunt's Audi Quattro was a fine piece of machinery!).

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been another really good year for Ancoris. We continue to grow revenue and profit, hire great people at an exciting rate and undertake exciting cloud and mobile projects with our wonderful clients. We are delighted to be recognised with further industry awards such as the Most Innovative Cloud Vendor at the 2019 Cloud Excellence Awards run by CRN's sister publication, *Computing*.

What annoys you most about your commute? There's nothing to get annoyed about when it only takes seven minutes!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The first telephone call by Alexander Graham Bell, to his assistant, Thomas Watson in 1876. Seeing reactions when demonstrating the "art of the possible" is always a buzz.

How do you explain the channel to people? The network of organisations that helps clients get business value from technology.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I always enjoy San Francisco, equally just can't understand Las Vegas!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? For most of our clients adopting the cloud is no longer primarily about cost-efficiencies and agility. It is becoming their most critical, and dependable, source of sustained technology innovations. Successful service providers need to become the catalysts for their clients' digital transformation, not mere suppliers of technology and related services. We need to co-create the IP that will support the ongoing development of their businesses and focus on the customer experience in each use case to provide competitive advantage.



TODD MCQUILKIN
Chief executive, Air-IT & managing partner, Air-MSP

What was your dream career as a child? I fancied myself as a professional sportsman, having played years of semi-professional indoor cricket. It wasn't to be. Funny how fate led me into the technology sector, running my own business.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Extending my public speaking engagements, particularly to our local Chamber of Commerce. Sharing my family story and business experiences has been very humbling.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Without being dragged into the Brexit debate, it has to be John Bercow, current Speaker of the House.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your

house was on fire? Our bulldogs and my picture of my mum.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The All Blacks winning the World Cup. At time of writing it's still a prediction though!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I'm not really a TV binger. I did try *Breaking Glass* and *Homeland* but didn't make it past series one.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Another record year for sales and EBIT, plus national exposure. We're positioned as a serious player in the UK SME space. I'm incredibly proud of what James and his leadership team have achieved in three years. He's taken the business to places I would have struggled to achieve these days.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing – I love my commute as it gives me some time to think and listen to Audible. We are always learning and Audible is perfect!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The battle of Waterloo. Napoleon made some huge tactical errors which were unusual – I'd like to know why.

How do you explain the channel to people? Read about the acronyms – MSP, MSSP, TSP, ISP, CSP. The list goes on! But it might confuse them even more.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I love them all – I spend quality time with my peers and vendors, listening and learning, building knowledge and taking it back and used to analyse future trends. One clear favourite has to be ConnectWise's annual US conference, ITNation. It's well run, it has great content and the parties are off-the-scale.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The consolidation of our market, and unrealistic expectations in business valuation when it's time for owners to de-risk.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE FOR BUSY CHANNEL EXECUTIVES



CRN Essential is a premium market intelligence service designed to help busy channel executives make smarter business decisions. Via weekly executive briefings and monthly in-depth

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research, subscribers will get the inside track on the most important market trends and developments, as well as what they mean for their business.



RUPERT MILLS
Chief executive, Krome Technologies

What was your dream career as a child? Definitely a racing driver; I'm not into football so that was the other 'boyhood' option, I guess. Although in my very early childhood I thought I wanted to be a vicar, I suspect in hindsight it was because it came with a good benefits package in terms of the big house.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Moving Krome into new, bigger, offices after nine or so years in our previous ones and continuing to grow our team. We're about to go to New York as a big group of the '10 years served' team, which will be fun, so I suspect it will be that by the time this is in print.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Pick a politician, (almost) any politician... I wasn't too keen on them in my answers to this last year either! Career politicians should be banned; it should be people who have seen a life outside of politics as well.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? The USB Backup disk of all our family photos and history and a beer from the fridge to drink while I wait for the fire brigade.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Charles

Leclerc has been more than a match for Sebastian Vettel! Other than that, we're seeing an increasing appetite for hybrid cloud environments where people find one size doesn't necessarily fit all and a large increase in cybersecurity projects, both of which we were expecting.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Elementary* – it is a great alternative take on Holmes and Watson.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very good so far. We've seen growth in our traditional business and expansion into some new markets. Krome's intention is to grow across the board and an expansion in our management team is helping create the bandwidth to look at new opportunities as they present themselves.

What annoys you most about your commute? People who can't drive their huge 4x4s blocking the roads outside schools because they can't park them.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? For a single event, I'd quite like to watch them build Stonehenge so I could see how they actually did it and ask why. If it was a wider time frame, I'd love to have lived in America during the early days of NASA with the excitement of the moon landings.

How do you explain the channel to people? Traditionally it would have been the car dealership, but these days with the evolution of service-based offerings, I'd suggest it's the equivalent of being a good butler. We need to be organised, prepared and there to help.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite would be London as being selfish it means I don't have to get out of the business for too long. My least favourite would be Vegas – it's just so over done in this industry.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Differentiation, I think. There are so many "me too" offerings out there in our

market that you either have to have a product that's somehow different or you need to really offer a different level of service and quality to be able to succeed. Ideally you do both – we're trying.



EAMON MOORE
Co-founder & chief executive, Hikari Data Solutions

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to run my own business, right from an early age. The appeal of being in control of my own destiny and being able to seize opportunities really drew me in. I had the chance to set up my first business straight after university and I've never looked back.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Launching our first business intelligence product, Legal BI. We saw a gap in the market to build a solution that offers law firms cutting-edge business intelligence and analytics. Since launch, many of Ireland's leading law firms have signed up as customers and we are beginning to make our first steps into the UK market. We will bring a similar solution to the accountancy sector this month.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? The Gallagher brothers for depriving us of the Oasis reunion tour that would allow me to relive my youth!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and



my original signed copy of *Secrets to Success: Inspiring Stories from Leading Entrepreneurs*. I'm featured in Chapter 9!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Business intelligence would become mainstream in the market and for channel partners, artificial intelligence would provide opportunities to build solutions that weren't in reach previously.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Rewatching *Breaking Bad* before the movie was released.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? We're a year in business with Hikari which is always a milestone achievement for a startup in my view. It has been a year of significant investment as we built our first line of BI products to bring to the market and our early success is making all the hard work really pay off. Personally, I have learned a huge amount about the software business and I'm delighted that others have come

on board to join us on this new journey.

What annoys you most about your commute? The fact that most cars (including mine!) only have one person in them.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Miracle in Medinah as it is widely considered to be one of the greatest comebacks in Ryder Cup history. It was fantastic to watch on TV but I would have loved to be there in person.

How do you explain the channel to people? A network of promoters, partners and supporters that is critical for an organisation to achieve scale and market share.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite must be Toronto with Microsoft in 2016. A fantastic location made all the better with my previous company EMIT winning Global Partner of the Year for SMB Cloud Solutions. My

least favourite is Dublin as it is difficult to convince both the vendor and my wife that I need overnight accommodation!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Fragmentation. I think partners need to come together to deliver real value to customers. This can be done through various partner-to-partner initiatives, but I also think further consolidation is needed in the market. Our exit and sale of our managed services and cloud business EMIT in 2018 is a great example of knowing when the time is right to exit for the benefit of both the customers and the team. Spinning out our BI business into Hikari has allowed us to enter a high-growth market both in Ireland and globally. In fact, many of our old competitors are now our commercial partners, given that we no longer compete. Everyone wins with our new model – the partners, the vendor, the distributor and most importantly, the customer.



ADAM MUIR
Director, Misco

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to be a vet;

unfortunately I was not clever enough.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Without a doubt, relaunching the Misco brand into the market. Roll on 2020.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? That's easy: David Cameron, need I say more?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I would probably grab both fire extinguishers.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Man Utd still can't win anything...

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Game of Thrones*, the best series I have watched in a long time.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Extremely positive, full of challenges and testing.

What annoys you most about your commute? That's simple: traffic. My journey should be 20 minutes; if it's over that, traffic is to blame.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? D-Day in the Second World War. I think we all should understand the sacrifice given.

How do you explain the channel to people? Seriously hard work, but rewarding.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I don't really have a least favourite, but the best by far for me was Canals last year.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Amazon is by far the biggest challenge the entire channel will face next year.



NEIL MURPHY
Group managing director, Bytes Technology Group

What was your dream career as a child? Chief question maker upperer for *CRN*.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? The one just to the left of my centre parting.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Probably Mike Tyson – it would be dangerous to slap him any harder...

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Some kebab skewers and the marshmallows.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted that alien life would be identified on earth and that has been proved correct as one of them has taken over the White House.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? The news – it's a fascinating but frightening dystopian daily fictional program that could never be played out in real life.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? I didn't realise 2019 was a business.

What annoys you most about your commute? All the other commuters, how come they don't get to work a bit earlier?

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrillo Princip – I would try and make it look like it was some sort of accident or a suicide instead of the tinder that caused the First World War.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's a narrow channel of sea that divides the European continent from the British Isles.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite has to be London as I can get the train home from Waterloo and the worst has got to be Las Vegas because it takes ages to get home by train from there.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Stopping people from trying to swim across one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. They are a real hazard.

SCOTT MURPHY
Director cloud UK&I, Ingram Micro Cloud

What was your dream career as a child? I was fascinated with cars and really wanted to become a racing driver.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? 2019 has been a very strong year for me personally. I've been with Ingram a little over two years and we've gone from strength to strength building the team out, onboarding new vendors and evolving our GTM to be more technology focused, which I'm proud of. Leading the pitch to secure exclusivity for McAfee, launching AWS and continuing to grow our cloud business is a massive highlight for me personally as I feel this demonstrates



how far we're come as a business in the enterprise technology space.

I even managed to get my son's U10s team, which I manage, to start to win a few games, too!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? There's a few, to be fair! In all seriousness though I don't think it's appropriate for me to answer this with the current climate and focus on language being used, I wouldn't want it to be construed in the wrong way.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I'd say my dogs but include them in my family so it would unfortunately be my phone (I can't live without it) and my car key!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I'm passionate that end users want/need problems solving rather than point solutions delivering, which I think has accelerated in 2019. Technology focus is more and more important (rather than product). That and the fact Manchester United have won nothing, to my frustration!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? There has been a few but *Peaky Blinders* is up at the top. Great characters and really good, gripping storylines!

How has 2019 been from a

business perspective? 2019 has been a great year and we've continued to grow our enterprise business across cloud, hardware and software. This is across existing vendors and signing up new vendors that fit our strategy across cybersecurity, UCC and cloud.

What annoys you most about your commute? I have a good balance for my commute as I'm not always in the office. I have a good train connection from Manchester to Milton Keynes with good links from Manchester across the country and the world.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I'd love to be in the room when Sir Winston Churchill gave his speech. When I hear it, I feel immensely proud for what that generation defended for us and it always makes the hairs stand up on my neck.

How do you explain the channel to people? I use sports shops & brands like Nike/Adidas. The sports shop you buy your trainers from are like channel partners and those shops get the items either directly from Nike/Adidas (the vendors) or from wholesalers (distribution). If the wholesalers work closely with the sports shop to help with promotions, advertising and sales techniques, then they become "value added".

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I went to San Diego for our WW Cloud summit. It's an amazing place, great venue for conference as the Gaslamp district is an incredibly welcoming place to socialise while being conveniently located to the conference facilities. I don't really have a least favourite – obviously Las Vegas is used a lot but I like it!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Differentiation. With the continuing evolution of technology and the need for business to innovate at pace, the channel needs to be prepared to meet these demands and make the right decisions (and commitment) to partnerships.

N



JAMES NAPP
Managing director, Bechtle UK

What was your dream career as a child? Becoming a professional footballer. It's fairly safe to say that it is starting to drift out of reach.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Watching my children grow and develop different skills and quirks.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I'd never really advocate violence, but Gregg Wallace springs to mind for some reason.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My old photo albums and then the garden hose!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? It's a boring answer, but I honestly can't remember making any.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? TV shows aren't really my thing. Amazon Prime tennis coverage has been great value though.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Exciting.

There's so much opportunity and so many new areas to develop solutions for and to grow into.

What annoys you most about your commute? The mobile signal cuts out going through the dips just before South Wrexham on the return leg.

A-LIST 2020

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? To be a spectator, knowing what we know now, at the very dawn of time.

How do you explain the channel to people? Using three circles and a few lines.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Barcelona is always a great destination – it's close, warm with great food. My least favourite: Houston.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Not letting the tailwind of digital transformation and subsequent stellar growth lead to any complacency in terms of continued investment into good people and technical resources.



JP NORMAN

Technology, security & governance director, Amicus ITS

What was your dream career as a child? Astronaut.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Spending more time with family and friends.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Schrodinger; that's no way to treat cats.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My mobile phone and my first teddy bear (handmade and given to me by a neighbour).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Microsoft and Samsung working closer together.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Better Call Saul*.
How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Challenging in a good way.

What annoys you most about your commute? Changeable weather shortening walks.

How do you explain the channel to people? A way to tap into people, skills, items and other help without needing to have the accompanying infrastructure yourself.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Manchester and Solihull.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? True innovation that is cost effective.

O



TERRY O'BRIEN

Chief executive, Digital Wholesale Solutions

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be the Pope.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? The rebranding and repositioning of our business to

DWS. It was a really enjoyable process, executed really well and taken really well by the partners we work with.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron – for his mismanagement that led to the last three years of stalling UK development.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog Daisy and my house rabbit Dobbie. Everything else can be replaced – life can't.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Man Utd having a very disappointing season.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Succession*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Awesome.

I'm loving it. I love this sector, love the channel, love the constant innovation.

I'm enjoying going to work each day.

What annoys you most about your commute? Sitting next to

someone who sucks hard boiled sweets really loudly or someone who constantly takes small sips from a plastic bottle of water and cracks the bottle each time. I like to chill on the train and reflect on the day.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? England winning the football World Cup. It's an amazing event that brings a country together. We could do with re-uniting again right now with a common purpose.

How do you explain the channel to people? The most powerful and talented salesforce of tens of thousands of people you could hope to have selling your products or services that you don't even pay for.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was Alton Towers; my least favourite was Birmingham Metropole.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Always doing more for their customers than they do today. Being their customers' expert in this evolving digital economy.



APAY OBANG-OYWAY
Director channels & alliances sales – northern Europe, Symantec

What was your dream career as a child? An airline pilot. It was a dream of mine while growing up. I was accepted to flying school, however, changed my decision when I found out they did not have a hockey team. Priorities when you are young.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Building many new exciting new connections and learning lots more about enabling the digital transformation of our customers and partners.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Unai Emery for appointing Granit Xhaka as Arsenal captain. Leadership positions such as this are critical and those within them must exhibit the right behaviours to inspire those around them.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My mobile phone – to call the fire brigade, book a hotel and manage all the things I need to in the aftermath of the fire on all the various apps of my service providers. And my African traditional attire I wore to my wedding.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The breakthrough in the development of

quantum computing. Further major reported public data breaches. I also thought the *Game of Thrones* finale would be a disappointment, and it was.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? In this crazy year, it's been all about news channels for me.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Excellent – the first half of the year has been notable for consistent growth and closing off a great Symantec FY end; the second half has been building to an exciting future.

What annoys you most about your commute? How consistently trains are unreliable.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The signing of the Race Relations Act where the country took another giant leap in addressing inequality and this time it was race equality. Equality and inclusivity for all is what makes us great.

How do you explain the channel to people? Santa's Workshop. Clients/customers are the girls and boys on the 'Good' list who get the tech/toys.

Santa himself is the resellers driving the exciting technologies to the market; the distributors are the Reindeers driving the engine; and the Elves are the vendors who make the tech/toys.

What have been your favourite

and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is Miami. It has a diversity of everything: food, people, music, businesses and much more in one place day or night. My least favourite is Houston, Texas – there is nothing there but heat and dull buildings.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It continues to be skills shortage alongside diversity and inclusivity.

MICHAEL O'HARA
Group managing director, Data Solutions Distribution

What was your dream career as a child? Well it certainly wasn't in the IT industry! I'm old enough to have being a child growing up in the 1970s in Ireland and back then IT didn't feature in my world. My parents ran a family business (bar and grocery) and growing up in that environment I always envisaged going into some kind of business role.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? At the time of writing this Ireland are still in the group stages of the Rugby World Cup, the team has had a shaky start to the campaign beating Scotland and Russia but losing to Japan. I'm hoping that my personal



highlight for 2019 will be Ireland winning the Rugby World Cup! #DreamBig

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Gentle slap! Boris Johnson and Donald Trump come to mind, for some strange reason!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? This actually happened to a friend of mine who panicked when he realised that his house was on fire. He grabbed the grocery shopping off the kitchen table and left it on his lawn. When the fire brigade arrived they hosed down his house and lawn putting out the fire but also destroying his grocery shopping that he saved. I would probably panic too and grab the keys for the house and of course my phone.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Apart from Ireland winning the RWC? Data Solutions hit our key growth prediction of 30%+ growth pa this year (our year end is 31 March). As a business, Data Solutions has set a target to achieve €100m in revenues in three years' time. For the current year we are on course to achieve €60m+, which represents another year of 30%+ growth! Two more years of exponential growth (30%+) will see Data Solutions hit the €100m target.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Apart from the obvious *Game of Thrones*? I really enjoyed the *Loudest Voice* about the life of TV executive Roger Ailes. Russell Crowe, who plays Ailes, is fantastic in the role and barely recognisable due to the prosthetic body fat suit he wears.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? As mentioned above, Data Solutions is in the middle of strong growth spurt! In fact we are currently in year four of exponential growth for Data Solutions, growing revenues each year at 30% plus. #LeaningIntoGrowth

The IT industry is very buoyant and robust for the last ten years or so but specifically for Data Solutions and the

markets we focus on – IT security and datacentres/cloud.

What annoys you most about your commute? My daily commute to the office here in Dublin is only about 30 minutes so I have no real complaints. However, I am regularly in the UK meeting reseller and vendor partners and the glamour of short haul flying is well and truly gone! #RedEyeFlights

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Nelson Mandela was freed in 1990 and I would have loved to have been in South Africa to witness it. Why? Because Mandela was probably our last great political hero. It's especially true when you look at who we are dealing with around the world today.

How do you explain the channel to people? Data Solutions is fortunate to be a distributor for a number of worldwide market-leading IT vendors such as Citrix, Nutanix, HPE Aruba and Check Point. However, sometimes I do have to explain our business to people outside of the industry. The easiest way I find to do it is to say that distributing for our vendors is like having the distribution franchise for Red Bull and selling it to our channel partners throughout the country. That usually works.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Favourite: Barcelona; least favourite: Barcelona. Barcelona is a great city: it's got culture, it's got sun and it's got great night life (not to mention a great football team). The problem is that every year you could end up going to three or four different conferences there. I'm suffering from Barcelona fatigue!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Brexit is definitely a massive issue, especially as I write this. We are all none the wiser as to what the final exit will look like. Uncertainty like this creates caution, which in turn leads to delays in decision making, which will ultimately affect sales. Hopefully it all comes to a happy ending in the coming weeks/months.



STEFNI OLIVER
Chief executive, Daisy Corporate Services

What was your dream career as a child? Funnily enough, the same as it is now – something that involves being outdoors a lot in the sunshine (so clearly not in England!) with lots of dogs and horses to look after.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Buying my 1998 Land Rover Defender 110! It's old and knackered but the most fun car in the world to drive – and for my four kids to rattle about on the bench seats in the back. It has always been my dream car and has more than lived up to expectations!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? There's too many to choose from if you look at politicians in the UK and US at the minute! Politics aside though, it has to be Paul McCartney. It's totally unfounded and I'm sure he's a really nice guy – he just gets on my nerves!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? The first one is my Irish Doodle (Red Setter/Poodle-cross) who has stolen my heart in the biggest way possible, and second one is the keys for my Defender!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The gender of my new nephew is certainly the most accurate one!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I don't have a TV. I do watch Netflix on my laptop

sometimes though and this year it has been *Stranger Things*, *The OA* and *Russian Doll*. I love the weird ones!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? With household names collapsing, the pressures of economic uncertainty and global companies consolidating their suppliers outside of the UK, it's been challenging to say the least. But overall, things are pretty stable and progressing well despite the chaos.

What annoys you most about your commute? I'm lucky enough to live somewhere where the biggest causes of congestion are sheep and cows moving between fields, but that's usually entertaining rather than annoying – and the beautiful countryside views are good for the soul and set me up for the day.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Queen performing at Live Aid. I've watched it a million times and would have loved to have been there in person.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is a collection of partners that provide skills, knowledge and experience that link technology, vendor and carrier products, and services to the customer.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I haven't been to any outside of the UK so my best and worst are both London!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Staying relevant to customer needs and demands and not getting lost in the next new shiny thing that, most of the time, neither customers nor the channel really know how to take full advantage of.

P

CLARE PARRY-JONES

Sector director – enterprise, Computacenter

What was your dream career as a child? To be a *Charlie's Angel*.



What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Taking a nine-week sabbatical (May & June) to support my children through their A-levels and GCSEs.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Angelina Jolie – she has no girl code!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Gin and lip gloss.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Change in our industry is the only constant.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Love Island* for the first time.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? We have seen successful completion of some exciting projects for our customers and seen new customers come on board. We are satisfied but there is still plenty to do to ensure we maintain our long-term customer relationships and growth agenda.

What annoys you most about your commute? Having a team and customers that span the UK, rarely are any two days the same. However, backpacks in my face while sat on the train is a real bugbear of mine!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would like to have been sat round the Cabinet table when David Cameron decided to go to the country and put the decision around Brexit into the hands of the UK electorate. I'd love to understand the advice he was getting at the time, what he thought the outcome was going to be and what was the final thing that made his mind up to go to referendum.

How do you explain the channel to people? We act as trusted advisors initially on determining the right technology to meet requirements. Using our experience, capability and subject matter expertise to source, deploy and ultimately managing that environment for our customers.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I rarely get invited to vendor conferences. However, my favourite location for a Computacenter event was Barcelona and my least favourite location would be many years ago when I worked for Compaq. We had a conference in Brighton at the Grand Hotel and the bombing that had happened a couple of years before still felt very fresh in my mind!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The same as it was in 2019 – how to monetise cloud-based services.



NICK PAUL

Sales director, Cisilion

What was your dream career as a child? Professional footballer.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Moving house.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Corbyn, because he'll scare off our best entrepreneurs who are vital for growth, innovation and future opportunities.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wallet and phone out of instinct.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Brexit would dominate the news and Boris Johnson would become prime minister.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great. Our business has continued to grow, we've hired some amazing talent and are working with and providing services to many industry leading businesses.

What annoys you most about your commute? Not much as it's a 15-minute walk. However, rain is probably my biggest annoyance.

If you could witness one past

event, what would it be? England winning the football World Cup as it hasn't happened so far in my lifetime.

How do you explain the channel to people? The bridge between vendors and end users. We are an extension of the vendors we partner with and trusted advisors to our clients, ensuring they have the right solutions and services to drive their businesses forward.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite has been Las Vegas and least favourite would be Dallas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? People and skills. People, because great people are what make and differentiate our business. And skills because the industry is constantly changing, and we need to stay ahead of the curve.



MURRAY PEARCE

Managing director, Infinigate UK

What was your dream career as a child? I don't recall when I was very young; as a teenager I knew I wanted to work in IT.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Being a dad to my nine-year-old daughter and six-year-old son. I love being on the journey with them. Every moment is precious – they give me so much positive energy and perspective.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron. Does anyone need to ask why right now? What a mess.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Tatty and Kiki... other parents will understand!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That we would continue to be blessed with the worst politicians in our life time.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Blacklist* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. I like a little light entertainment and glass of red with my wife at the end of a long week.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? We are now entering our best trading months of the year and it is looking good.

We won five significant new vendor agreements this year (Aerohive, Netwrix, Idaptive, Entrust and iBoss) and are set for a big finish.

What annoys you most about your commute? The air quality on the Northern Line is not great – especially at Kennington. It smells like something died.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The creation of the universe, because where we come from is life's biggest question.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is much more than a supply chain to deliver products from manufacture to customer...

that is only the "bones". The channel is made up of talented people, with many skills and capabilities, that help people and companies conduct business successfully.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I am not a fan of Dubai. Hawaii and Austria are pretty good.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Evolving fast enough to help companies in their digital transformation, driven by modern workers and hybrid cloud/on-premises networks. Also, in the adoption of a managed services business model, which has a very big future.



JOHN PEPPER

Chief executive & founder, Managed 24/7

What was your dream career as a child? As a child I would have said the third drummer in Adam & The Ants.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? 15 September 2019 marked the Managed24/7 10-year birthday. I am incredibly proud of that achievement and we had the biggest party to date.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Elon Musk. If only he stayed away from Twitter when hitting the bottle.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? If family and pets are safe then it would be my laptop and phone. I'm not very interesting but they're more important than my passport as our operations all run from the UK.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Automation is something I preached and invested in from as early as 2014. It's a buzzword that is yet to fully show its impact on our sector but is coming like a tsunami. There is and will continue to be a huge change of vendors in the sector where they evolve or disappear.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Killing Eve*. I am

sure I am not alone in that one!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? We set a strategy for 2019 to be laser focused on retaining and growing our customer base and less about public accolade. Our customer mix is incredible and as we build through organic growth, we are watching our competitors quickly being acquired or locked into pretty horrible PE-backed deals. That all clears a wonderful growth path for us, and we are really looking forward to our next 10 years free to innovate and invest as we please.

What annoys you most about your commute? I am very lucky to have a nice commute through countryside with very little traffic, so I am probably one of the few that can say they enjoy their commute. I even have a drive-thru Starbucks en-route. If Carling made commutes, it would be my one!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? 4 April 1975, Albuquerque, New Mexico – I'd go and meet Paul Allen and Bill Gates, and offer to put some money into their little start-up.

How do you explain the channel to people? The people that go and deliver the big thinking ideas that vendor marketing teams dream up.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My least favourite – Hawaii. Wearing a suit in an air-conditioned conference centre while looking out of the window and watching the happy surfers on the beach will be a moment I will never forget. What was I doing? My favourite – I enjoy most conferences where I learn something (and there isn't a view of a beach).

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The service sector will have an exciting ride post-Brexit with no doubt a few bumps along the way. I do not envy those having to navigate importing lots of boxes from around the globe.



ALEX PHILLIPS

Director of strategy, Northamber

What was your dream career as a child? I thought I wanted to be a

vet until I realised I hate needles and blood, and that the job wasn't just playing with dogs.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I got married in 2018, so 2019 has been about enjoying family time without discussions about wedding planning.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Who wouldn't want to slap Piers Morgan?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My BlackBerry and my Diet Coke.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted I wouldn't win the Lottery and I haven't.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* is a guilty pleasure.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Northamber continues to make good progress with our strategy of value-add distribution for a focused portfolio of development brands in key technologies (AV, infrastructure solutions and document management).

What annoys you most about your commute? Driving daily from London to our office in Surrey, it's London traffic – always London traffic.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? England winning the World Cup final in 1966.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is designed to allow companies to do what they are best at. Manufacturers develop the best technology they can, value-added distributors provide flexibility and scalability to support and drive partner growth and systems integrators leverage their key end-user relationships and technology knowledge to integrate. It's all parts of the same machine working in harmony, most of the time.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? A skills gap in the entry-level jobs and the difficulties around recruitment.



ROBERT POOLEY
Solutions director, Saepio

What was your dream career as a child? Car design. My father loves cars. My auntie loves art. I love both.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My five-year-old boy came home with a piece of finely mounted paper that had been proudly displayed on a classroom wall. The teacher's pristine writing read: "To stay safe on the computer I need to..." My son's scribbled response: "...dont pres on eenefing yor not shor of."

Which famous person deserves

a (gentle) slap? They're far from famous, but the creators and marketers of false reality shows such as *Love Island* for fuelling mental health challenges in modern society.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Fred and Wilma... our awesome cats!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Let's exclude Brexit! I predicted there would be a landmark GDPR fine... whether BA will pay it is another matter.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? It's an even contest. *Black Mirror* and *Chernobyl*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Great. Saepio is young and growing from strength to strength but there is certainly room to do more. We have ambitious plans.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing. Perfect duration for listening to a book on Blinkist (it's a great app if you don't know it).

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? My parents' wedding. I imagine it was a huge party but also cements the reason I'm here, doing what I do.

How do you explain the channel to people? Seriously, it's the supply chain for all organisations to acquire IT related knowledge, products and services. Less seriously, it's an incredibly fun community of like-minded, passionate, forward-thinking individuals that work hard and play hard. Shoes off at 3am, conference call at 9am!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? The best is Barcelona: great city, great venues, perfect for a conference. The worst is Barcelona: bloody phone thieves!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Again, ignoring Brexit, for me it's distraction and volume of customer choice. There's just so much out there. The security market especially needs consolidation,

not another new 'silver bullet.' Cyber risk reduction is made more complex by yet another new product with polished convincing marketing. A policy-first approach and trusted partner is important for customers to work through the noise.

R



PHIL RACE
Chief executive, AdePT
Technology Group

What was your dream career as a child? I was fascinated by the Space Shuttle, so I guess it's astronaut. Though I used to spend time working with my dad who was a gas fitter and plumber – I helped at weekends working as his 'mate' handing him tools while he was under various boilers and baths – so I always thought I'd be on the tools when I grew up!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Being appointed as chief executive of AdePT was pretty special. I am fortunate Ian Fishwick (now chairman) has handed over the keys at such an exciting time. Seeing my daughter Emma graduate at Warwick was very special, too.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron for the obvious reason – why on earth did

he hold a referendum without a clear understanding of the outcome? On that day the entire population, and the MPs, all had a different personal view of what Remain or Leave actually meant. Before the referendum I walked past David and Samantha on a clifftop walk in Cornwall. If only I'd known what he was thinking of doing, I could have literally given him a (gentle) slap, though I'd have been arrested by his security detail if I had.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My photos – they're irreplaceable as they're from the days before cloud storage, and a painting I bought from the artist Sergio Agostino while my (now) wife and I stayed at his gate-keepers cottage on holiday in Tuscany, Italy, many years ago.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I don't really do predictions.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I've been hooked on *Outlander*, a series about a Second World War nurse who time travels back to 1743 Scotland. It's a great period drama – Amazon Prime makes painful train journeys endurable.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been great. Our sales have held up in an interesting political environment and our acquisitions are performing well. We've set course to integrate the business, transition to the AdEPT brand and invest in systems – we're making progress on all fronts, though I'm impatient so it's never going to be fast enough. You're only as good as the team around you, so I'm delighted I've to be able to strengthen the team – with Alex Larcombe and an ex-colleague, Andy Lovett, joining as sales director and chief operating officer respectively.

What annoys you most about your commute? I'm very lucky, as I don't have to be in the same place every day. With an ever-growing AdEPT group, it's important that I'm not a stranger to the team, so I travel to our

different offices each week. I try and commute in a bubble, surrounded by work, music or iPlayer, but it annoys me immensely when people are rude – courtesy costs nothing!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? What a great question. I immediately thought of the first flight by the Wright Brothers, or the first trip on the rocket by Robert Louis Stephenson, or the first phone call by Alexander Graeme Bell. Amazing transformations for society. But I'll have to settle on the football World Cup in 1966. It's the year I was born, I'm a keen Liverpool fan and what a day!

How do you explain the channel to people? For me it's gluing together building blocks of technology from multiple providers to solve problems for clients. I grappled hard to refresh our company 'tag line' earlier this year and AdEPT's embodies it for me – uniting technology, inspiring people.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I was very lucky to have an international role in a previous life. We used to run customer and partner conferences. One in Key West, Florida, was special – sun, sea and great Key Lime pie – and another in Sun City in South Africa. Playing golf while watching out for crocodiles on the course was interesting! I don't really have a least favourite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I'm going to suggest two. First, the erosion of margin brought about by commoditisation. This isn't unique to 2020. The mega players – AWS, Microsoft and others – constantly bring new technologies under their ownership. They then erode the margin that we in the channel can secure from reselling this new technology. Second is the damage to trust (and the P&L) brought about by channel conflict and changing channel strategies by partners. We rely on each other so don't abuse that relationship – it's crucial!



RAFI RAZZAK
Chairman, Centerprise International

What was your dream career as a child? To be a pilot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? To see the success of Centerprise through proper implementation of our strategy.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Michael Dell. After telling us in a number of speeches how much he is enjoying managing Dell as a private company, he has decided to go public again.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My glasses and my pillow.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That I will not give up smoking.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It has been a great year.

What annoys you most about your commute? Other commuters.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Churchill in his finest hour.

How do you explain the channel to people? It is the tip of the UK IT industry iceberg.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? *CRN*, of course, is the favourite and the European forum is the least favourite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Implementing digital transformation and digital process as well as continuing the business analytics development.



SEAN REMNANT

CSO, Ignition Technology

What was your dream career as a child? Farmer – I always wanted to work outside with animals.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Cycling 100 miles in the London 100 for the charity Dreams Come True.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Corbyn for obvious reasons.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Assuming the dogs are safe also then a couple of family pictures that I can't get back from the cloud.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That the uncertainty around Brexit would certainly have an effect on UK business.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Fleabag* and *Brassic* – great low intellect base humour. Just what I need as an escape.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Everyone says great, right? Genuinely very good

growth but like everyone we always want more. We have certainly seen larger deals being delayed, going through more rigor in purchasing and organisations just waiting to see what will happen with Brexit. I hate using it as an excuse, but it's reality.

What annoys you most about your commute? I seem to attract sick/ill people. The lady or gentleman who insists on sitting next to me on the train pulling their handkerchief in and out of their pocket, sneezing and coughing even when there are seats available on the rest of the carriage.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? To observe the cracking of the Enigma code. The ultimate problem solving with a huge social and political impact.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is a chain of businesses that helps get the right services and solutions to the right customer base at scale through contacts and strong relationships.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite has to be the Don Carlos in Marbella. I've had many years of going there with great friends, partners and customers. My least favourite are hotel conference rooms with depressing tired décor. I could be anywhere in the world.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Staying relevant. Our industry and business in general is moving at such a fast rate that you can't assume the old approach to anything will remain the same. You have to stay agile, innovate and stay relevant.

MATTHEW RILEY

Chairman, Daisy

What was your dream career as a child? It absolutely has to be astronaut. The concept of space fascinated me from an early age and as a child the thought of exploring new worlds was captivating. Even today, space is regularly in my



dreams and fuels my ambition to push boundaries.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Although it has not yet happened, my personal highlight of 2019 is looking forward to the pending marriage of my daughter in December. The opportunity to gather the family together and celebrate the wedding at an already special time of year is an absolute joy.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? That would have to be David Cameron! The reason, for getting us into this Brexit mess. An ill-thought-out strategy and poorly executed plan has seen the country lurch from one embarrassing situation to another and leaves us in real danger of becoming second-class citizens among Europe's leading countries.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? One would definitely have to be my iPhone, without which I am literally lost! The reliance we place on mobile technology today and the information stored on our devices makes them simply indispensable. The second would be my backgammon board, a source of rest and mental relaxation away from the rigours of the business day.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? It is always easy to say 'I told you so', but when it comes to the turmoil that we are in as a result

of the Brexit mismanagement, I told you so! The writing was on the wall from the early days and I could see the political posturing culminating in confusion and indecision.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? That is easy –

Peaky Blinders! The blend of fiction based around actual historical events made this compelling viewing for me. There is so much American television on our screens that when a brilliantly made British drama is created it emphasises the talent within this country.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 has been a great one for Daisy with lots of change, evolution and new opportunity.

We performed an internal restructure earlier in the year to give greater autonomy to our individual business units and are already seeing the results of this in terms of increased pipeline, revenue growth and better customer engagement. Having absolute focus on individual parts of the business as opposed to attempting to combine disparate areas has certainly proven to be the right thing to have done.

What annoys you most about your commute? Losing mobile signal has to be the single most annoying thing about any commute. In this day and age with the technology and innovation available to us, not being able to conduct a continuous conversation when on the move is simply inexcusable.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? This would have to be the release from prison of Nelson Mandela on Sunday 11 February 1990. After having served 27 years in incarceration, he then rose to become the first black President of South Africa. Mandela dedicated his life to philanthropy and the fight against apartheid and acts as an inspiration to us all with his determination and single-mindedness.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is an amazingly diverse place to operate in. There are

so many different types of businesses occupying it, ranging from large organisations, the size of Daisy, to small owner-operated businesses that rely on us to keep them competitive and deliver our services to their customers. But regardless, the channel is a dynamic, vibrant place to be where the mission is to provide customers with the full suite of telco products, wrapped in an incomparable service model and to help manage their business through change and technology evolution.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

I am not really able to answer this, as with presiding over the changes to take Daisy to the next level I have simply not had the time to attend any! But over the years I have been to so many amazing venues – my favourites are always ones where I see Daisy represented and shining!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Back to Brexit, political uncertainty around the world and business confidence. While the majority of us focus our business efforts here in the UK, the knock-on effect from customers who trade and have their supply chain in Europe is undoubtedly impacting upon UK business confidence

as they await confirmation of contracts being renewed and purchase decisions being wide. Further afield, political and civil unrest can also create a challenge for channel partners with customers trading overseas.

PETER ROBBINS

Chief executive, Probrand

What was your dream career as a child? Bricklayer or builder.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My first grandson being born.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dogs and my antique clocking-in clock.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Channel transformation getting faster.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Luther*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Average.

What annoys you most about your commute? How early it is getting.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Nelson Mandela coming out of prison – an incredible event which sticks to mind.



How do you explain the channel to people? A linear supply chain.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Birmingham was my favourite; Barcelona my least favourite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Delivering on digital transformation objectives; creating IP; staying relevant.



ANDY ROBERTS

Chief executive, Sabio Group

What was your dream career as a child? Watching Ian Botham save the Ashes at Headingley in 1981 made me want to be a Test cricketer – sadly that never happened.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I've been proudest watching my daughters improve massively and succeed in their rugby and equestrian activities this year.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Memories are irreplaceable, so it would have to be photo albums and family paintings.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? At Sabio Group we predicted greater interest in digital and analytics solutions, and that's certainly worked well for us having broadened our portfolio. As ever, we've seen our market continue to rapidly evolve and expect this to continue in 2020.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I've not had

enough time to binge watch this year, but *The Last Kingdom* was good.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019

is proving to be a very good year, with strong organic growth, further opportunities in the M&A area as well as the introduction of exciting new propositions for Sabio Group.

What annoys you most about your commute? I can't complain – I travel a lot, so no two days are the same.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? 13 July 1985, Wembley Stadium, Queen's Live Aid performance – 17 legendary minutes!

How do you explain the channel to people? Our goal is to deploy

the best products available to the channel, complement those with our own IP expertise and technical skills, and combine these elements to create solutions that deliver real benefits and value for our customers.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My

favourite destination is Cape Town; my least favourite would be those destinations that you end up going to again and again – it's much better to be surprised!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The biggest challenge will be the continued pace of technological change, with the winners being those able to make the right interventions at the right time. Having great people in place is critical, particularly for those organisations looking for a specialist partner to advise and support them on this journey.

HAYLEY ROBERTS

Chief executive, Distology

What was your dream career as a child? When I was very young, I wanted to be an actress as I was totally in love with Shakespeare. Then as I got older, I wanted to become a barrister. So, that worked out well then...



What has been your personal highlight of 2019? There have

been a few highlights for me and more importantly the growing Distology team of who I am immensely proud.

Personally, it has to be moving house... finally. It took a gruelling 10 months and damn near killed me due to a very long chain, incompetent people and our ridiculous system in the UK. Rant over.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I will avoid mentioning any politicians at this time. I think most famous people need a preverbal slap now and again to keep their feet on the ground. Way too much ego in an uncertain world. However, I want to slap the Gallagher brothers and tell them that they need to bury the pettiness and get back together again. Who doesn't want to see an Oasis reunion? #properband
What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My dog and my car keys.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I try not to predict too many things as I am an eternal optimist. But the best predictions for my business have come true. I have an

amazing, strong team with bags of room for potential growth. The only thing that is predictable is the fact that I still seem to be one of the only women in a room at tech conferences. Boring.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Suits* and *Line of Duty*. I've just about finished *Stranger Things* and also *Power*. I love Netflix!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Business has been very good from a sales perspective and we are trebling growth easily quarter on quarter and year on year. We are also building out our tech team, not just pre-sales but also post-sales deployment and some in-house development work on bespoke integrations for end users and partners. By introducing additional revenue streams, I believe the business is more viable and also offers a far wider and deeper value add in what has been traditionally purely transactional. We are also now seeing excellent growth and reach in the Benelux with our office in Amsterdam and across the Nordics.

What annoys you most about your commute? My commute to the office is eight miles so not a long time. However, it constantly amazes me how many bad drivers I encounter en route making bad decisions or driving too fast with no real control over the car. It ultimately makes my commute longer having to navigate them. My weekly London commute is peppered with annoyances but mainly lack of connection to a phone signal!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Assuming this is a time machine trip and not a permanent placement, I would love to have been around when Queen Elizabeth I reigned. I am not a staunch feminist, but it must have been extraordinarily difficult for her to gain trust and power in a time when women were mostly homemakers and considered the weaker sex. It would have been quite good to witness the Battle of Hastings also – a bit gory but I often wonder what large-scale battles would have been like to be part of in that time.

How do you explain the channel to people? I explain it from a retail perspective. You still buy your Sony TV from John Lewis. You might have your guarantee with Sony, but your contract of purchase is with John Lewis. I have also likened it to estate agents in relation to a two-tier channel model but given my answer to question 2, it's probably not the best parallel.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? To be honest I don't often see the location itself, just a hotel conference room but my least favourite is Las Vegas – I am not a gambler and I have been enough to get the best of it. The best was probably Italy in the lakes – just beautiful.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Keeping the value in channel is an ongoing challenge, especially as procurement becomes a streamlined process and cloud is more accessible. Value should always come from going that extra mile and providing agility where you can. There are hundreds of new products coming to market, especially in cyber, every year and it's important to run proper due diligence on whether they are right for you as a partner and end user. Most of my time is spent looking at new tech and the market.

Another big challenge is the fact we have a dearth for talent. As we trailblaze, we must not forget that we need to bring a swell of next-gen talent with us and we are all equally responsible for this growth. Succession planning is crucial for our

industry success. If you love your job, get out there and talk to your local schools and colleges and evangelise.

GLENN ROBERTSON
Managing director,
Purechannels

What was your dream career as a child? Professional goalkeeper.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Winning CRN's 'Best Channel Marketing/PR Agency' – for the second time! Making Purechannels the only agency to have ever won this award twice.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Gazza – for being brilliant, but not quite as brilliant as he could have been.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wallet and my phone.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? MDF is a hugely untapped opportunity for partners. More M&A. Partner Programmes are changing. Vendors need to be more understanding of the needs of partners.

Facebook can work in the channel to drive sales. Partners are becoming more powerful. Liverpool win the Champions League.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Billions*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Very good. We have turned losses from recent years into a 19% net profit in FY2019. We have grown



the team at Purechannels and brought in some nice new clients. I have been at Purechannels now for seven years and since I acquired the agency outright in June 2018 from the previous owner and founder, we have stabilised, maintained revenue and become more profitable.

This sets the scene for the exciting expansion plans we have in place.

What annoys you most about your commute? Actually, it's not that bad as it's only 15 minutes. It could be a lot worse!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The 1966 World Cup win for England. A great game of football, our only ever World Cup win, at Wembley, in the 1960s – it would have been amazing!

How do you explain the channel to people? I normally just explain retail, using Nike as the example. Nike makes shoes, it sends them to distributors/wholesalers, who send them to retail stores and/or e-commerce websites and then the end user buys them. That is a channel model, we then apply it to IT/tech/telecoms in B2B where the end user is a business, not a consumer. Failing that, I just say I get paid to have ideas... that's a lot easier!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? That's not really appropriate for me. I enjoy all events, regardless of location.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

How long do you have?! For me at the moment, the priority has to be the need for vendors to wake up and catch up, because the coffee is starting to smell very much of power... partner power! Partners are becoming more powerful and vendors need to embrace and support this movement, rather than work/fight against it. The traditional, old-fashioned vendor-led, vertical, top-down channel model is changing. More types of partner are surfacing, and their needs and objectives are different. The 'shadow' channel is growing and it will continue,

welcoming new types of partner and offering new opportunity! The landscape is becoming less and less supportive of a vendor-dictatorship and the vendors that recognise and respond to that will win. We see it a lot, it's big and getting bigger. We see M&A in 'partner-land' is vibrant with new deals being done almost daily. Partner programmes will need to evolve, based on building a deeper understanding of the individual partner business, providing positive partner experience (PX), with a higher focus on quality rather than quantity. We are going to start seeing a partner-led approach and this is big news. It flips things around, in much the same way consumer-land is seeing the buying behaviour change, B2B channel will too. The buyers are changing, their behaviour is changing so reaching and servicing them has to change also. It's really not that complicated! But sadly we see a lot of unnecessary complication. Vendors need to simplify and focus. They also need to embrace, appreciate and drive channel focus at a board level. The channel needs Chief Channel Officers and Chief Partner Officers. Collaboration via a complete solution and service sell, creating partner eco-systems, marketplaces and communities are going to continue to emerge and vendors will be left at the disposal of these powerful environments if they are not careful. We have already seen partners creating their own programmes that vendors 'need' to join and this will continue. Now this is not to be too scathing towards vendors as many are responding well and in fact helping to drive this change... and these will be the future winners. There is huge opportunity in supporting, understanding and helping the new, different types of partners to drive success collectively through to end customers.

Oh, and being very specific, three things need serious attention and will help vendors to drive change in their channel activities – both related to the above:

1. Mentality and behaviour: It's got to switch... from vendor want, to partner

need. And this means having the right people supporting and driving change.

2. MDF: Management, allocation, process, structure, wastage, misuse and the results that come from something that should be so good but is too often so bad.

3. Partner experience (PX): There are so many parts to this, but the premise is simple – maximise PX and get more from your partners.



CHRIS ROCHE

Chief executive, Celerity

What was your dream career as a child?

My dream career would have been either as a professional rugby player or working in the legal profession.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

The revenue growth of Celerity, driven by the closure of the largest transaction the business has ever won was a personal highlight for me. Especially due to the teamwork and dedication of the Celerity team, working hand in glove with our partners and customers to ensure the desired outcome was achieved for all parties.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

Any reality TV 'personality' Why? Why not!

What two things (apart from

family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My phone and old family photo albums.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? The transition to 'services' in the IT market has continued to increase. However, the move to public cloud is starting to reach the second phase, whereby everything is hybrid cloud. These were both things that I have predicted for a number of years.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Brooklyn Nine Nine* has been a good bit of light relief.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? The market in 2019 remains incredibly challenging, with uncertainty around Brexit, the overall political climate and also the overall global economy causing decisions to take longer than normal and investment decisions being delayed. That being said, the data protection and security messaging that Celerity is currently taking to market is very much resonating with our customers, aligned to where the investment monies are being focussed.

What annoys you most about your commute? I live rurally and really enjoy my commute. I've grown to embrace stray cows/sheep/slow tractors and errant bales of hay which I thought I never would!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would have loved to witness the fall of the Berlin Wall first-hand. I watched it unfold on TV at the time, but I'm guessing that being in Berlin in that period would have been very special.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is now an ecosystem of organisations that work together in order to put forward technical solutions that deliver against the business needs of our customers. This includes VARs, MSPs, vendors, SIs and many other organisations, all of whom have a place in what is a very complex business model. We compete against, and partner with, the same organisations on a daily

basis, which remains a challenge.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Both my favourite and least favourite destination has to be Las Vegas. I love it and loathe it in equal measure.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? This biggest challenge for the channel in 2020 remains finding and retaining the necessary skills to set you apart from your competition. People in the channel make all the difference, and your business is only ever as good as the people in it; dealing with your customers on a day-to-day basis. In particular, good sales skills are becoming harder to find, as business models are changing.

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FRANK SALMON
Chief executive, CMS
Distribution

What was your dream career as a child? I dreamt of being a professional footballer for many years. I'm now a manager of an U12 youth team – that's as close as I'm going to get.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Acquiring a business in France (Avesta) has been very rewarding and a highlight.

Which famous person deserves

a (gentle) slap? It would have to be Boris Johnson, for being such a prat about Brexit.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wallet and my iPhone – that's all I need to operate.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Fingers crossed and the year isn't over yet, I don't believe Brexit will happen.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I'm not good with TV apart from watching sports, so no bingeing this year.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been very good despite all the concerns with the economy and Brexit.

What annoys you most about your commute? It's mostly good, however travelling on the tube at peak travel times can be challenging.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Landing on the moon. It would have been awesome to be there taking that first step.

How do you explain the channel to people? With great difficulty; the Dell sales evolution helps.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite conference must go to Iomega, held at the original Ice Hotel back in the 1990s. The least favourite has to be the Hilton at Paddington, London.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Growth, companies postponing buying decisions and I think there's a risk of us talking our way into a recession.

NEIL SAWYER
Channel director, HP

What was your dream career as a child? To become a long-haul pilot for BA.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing my eldest entering her first year at school and



hopefully moving to a new house by the time this is published.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I would avoid the slap but definitely would love to have a word with a few of our politicians right now!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Funnily enough, I had to think about this for real a few months back! My children's cuddly toys always buy some favour in a tricky situation.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Those partners who have continued to reinvent have continued to prosper.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Despite some macro-economic turbulence, another year of growth and development. Our MPS partners have delivered amazing results along with our end user compute channel. We have delivered on all our goals.

What annoys you most about your commute? Late trains.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Wright Brothers flying a plane for the first time in 1903.

How do you explain the channel to people? The best time

with the best group of friends you could possibly imagine.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Las Vegas is always good fun. But there must be other places in the world we should see!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Managing customer expectations through the choppy waters of Brexit.



DAN SCARFE

Founder, New Signature

What was your dream career as a child? I've always been a geek. I knew I'd end up somewhere in technology.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Collecting New Signature's award for the Microsoft 2019 UK Country Partner of the Year.

This is normally a once in a lifetime achievement, but I'm incredibly lucky to

have been able to do this twice. It's a very humbling experience.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Donald Trump.

You'd have thought being able to string a sentence together would be a prerequisite to becoming president of the US.

Apparently not.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My laptop and phone. With the cloud, that's all I need to be productive.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Microsoft would win the cloud wars. They are now the undisputed number one.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? My wife and I loved *What/If*. It's a thriller with more twists and turns than a country lane.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Our best year, ever, by several orders of magnitude. We hit a fraction under 70% growth, which given we are now a reasonable sized business was a fair clip.

What annoys you most about your commute? Train delays. I mean seriously how hard can it be to get a train to drive down the tracks. It's not like they can take a wrong turn!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Apollo 11 moon landing. Who knew you could fly to the moon with less computing power than you'd find in a basic watch 50 years later!

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is like an extended sales and marketing team for vendors. The channel takes products and propositions from vendors and tailors them to solve the specific challenges for a customer. We go from the theory to the practice.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My least favourite destination, by some way, is Las Vegas. It's just the most peculiar town in the world. It's big, hot and, well,

weird. My favourite destination was Toronto. It's like a cross between the UK and America.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

So everyone is going to say Brexit, obviously. For us it's not. Brexit will be jet fuel for us. I believe the biggest challenge for the channel is the defining of the relationship between vendors and partners. Increasingly vendors will work more closely with end customers, circumventing the channel. This is something we are seeing more and more. The channel's opportunity is to continue to demonstrate where they add value.



RICKIE SEHGAL
Chairman, Transputec

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be a fighter pilot or an aeronautical engineer. I never suspected I would end up as a software engineer/computer scientist.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I became a granddad of twins. While I was initially shocked, I am over the moon about the outcome.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron, because he gambled he would win the referendum which was ill conceived and poorly planned. The resulting Brexit has been terrible for the country and it will take 15 years to get past the resultant instability.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? I would grab my McLaren 650s from the garage and

my digital storage devices. All our memories are stored on these and would be irreplaceable.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

Brexit would effectively lead to political civil war. **What TV show have you binge watched this year?** *Peaky Blinders* has been my favourite and I love the coarse, violent and romantic storyline of the series.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

Fantastic. We started the transformation of our business three years ago and now we are truly a service business. The culture and motivation of the people is aligned to providing superior service and playing the infinity game.

What annoys you most about your commute? The traffic and the average speed cameras.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would love to be present at the time when India got its independence in 1947 because my roots are in India. I was a special occasion for both Britain and India.

How do you explain the channel to people? It is an ecosystem for communicating, product/services distribution and value creation in so many different ways, which are not possible without the channel.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

I prefer local conferences (London), but there are so many and they can be a bit 'samey'. My least favourite are the American ones because they are a giant circus providing very little value.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

I believe it will be human capital, both access to educated and relevant staff will be a challenge. Brexit will only impose more tax burden on business and simultaneously restrict fresh young talent from coming to Britain. Britain has put the "you are not welcome" sign out to the world's brightest people.



PAUL SHANNON
Chief executive, ANS Group

What was your dream career as a child? A music journalist. There is nothing I love more in the world than music (apart from friends and family, obviously). Mainly tech house, 90s hip-hop, outlaw country and soul music. I'm getting excited just typing about it.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Integrating development into our growing digital business at ANS.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap?

David Cameron for nonchalantly sending us into such a critically important decision for our country.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Nothing really.

I don't really own that much 'stuff'; everything that's important to me is related to people and all my music is now stored on music services. All the 'stuff' I do have can be easily replaced.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That ANS would sell our first IoT solutions and make IoT really, very real indeed.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Gomorra*. An incredible Italian mafia drama set in Naples. An absolute must see.

A-LIST 2020

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Amazing. We've got so many new people in ANS over the last couple of years, working on new and exciting technologies and solutions. ANS is even more vibrant than ever.

What annoys you most about your commute? The M62 is an absolute disgrace. Getting to Manchester at peak time can sometimes take me as long as it takes me to get to London on the train. Music makes any journey better though, so I try not to get too annoyed.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Easy. Woodstock 1969.



ALICIA SHEPHERD

Sales director, Terra Computer

What was your dream career as a child? To be an astronaut.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Running my first half marathon in 10 years and coming in with a PB of 1hr 52m.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Laura Kuenssberg – there really is no need to be quite that rude!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My Terra notebook and my Garmin watch.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted I would run 10 x 10K races in 2019; I

will have achieved 12 10K races and two half marathons.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Stranger Things*

– I was a little late to the party but binged all three series. I can't wait for series four.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 has been a phenomenal year – we are tracking 40% growth and not to mention the awards we have picked up, including PC Vendor of the Year.

What annoys you most about your commute? Middle lane hoppers followed closely by people that push in and never say thanks.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The moon landing – did Neil Armstrong really take one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind? I don't want to believe the conspiracy theorists but...

How do you explain the channel to people? Individuals drinking too much coffee, selling stuff.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Dubai with Samsung in 2004 was amazing and my least favourite was Acer's conference in Paris, which was a sugar, caffeine overload just to work through all the PPT presentations, not to mention the boat trip where everyone was seasick.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I see two challenges: talent – finding and keeping good people; and more and more vendors dealing directly with end users, cannibalising reseller margin and new business opportunities. By the way, Terra doesn't sell direct and will continue to be 100% channel focused.

SARAH SHIELDS

Vice president EMEA enterprise channel, Dell Technologies

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be a police officer! The idea came from watching *Juliette Bravo* as a kid in the 1970s...



What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I made Dell Technologies' Chairman's Club and got to go to Maui with Michael Dell. It was an incredible trip for my husband and me – not to mention our first holiday without the kids!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Kim Kardashian! The pressure her image puts on young girls is just unbelievable – plus that selfie pout is now out of control.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My iPhone to take pictures of the fire and post them on social media and my coat as I'd want to watch proceedings and not be cold.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I did lose three stone and did get back to a size 10... Oh, and I did predict that we'd continue to grow in channel with our partners! **What TV show have you binge watched this year?** *Horrible Histories* with my kids! And I hate to admit it... *Celebs Go Dating* while sitting

on planes – I’ve done two series and it’s utter banal drivel but the comedian voice over is hilarious.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? 2019 has been fun – it’s been tough and harder than the previous few years but I love that. This is when good sales people and great companies really show what they’re made of.

What annoys you most about your commute? People. Whether in cars, trains, airports or whatever, people who are in my way annoy me. If you’re at an airport, be prepared and know it’s the same security check *every time!* If you’re on the M25, stop cutting into the safe gap I leave in front of me! And if you’re on a train, your personal hygiene is important...

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I’ve spent the year watching *Horrible Histories* with my kids – there’s too many to choose from!

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is where all the fun people in IT work or end up.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My least favourite is Venice as it’s a pain to get anywhere and it’s so expensive. The best is Vegas. I hate Vegas itself but as a conference destination, there’s no comparison.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? It is going to be a tough year and the headwinds of 2019 will continue to increase and get stronger. The opportunity for the channel is to really add value and show the strength of true partnerships. When vendors and partners come together, the customer outcome should be extraordinarily better. The outcome should be based on application requirements, workloads and future potential – not a discussion on price. We need to join together to drive value and innovation and continue to attract amazing talent.



JANE SILK
Managing director, Sigma Software Distribution

What was your dream career as a child? I always wanted to be a professional tennis player and then the realisation hit that I probably wasn’t good enough so becoming a PE teacher was the fall-back plan.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Watching my middle daughter successfully ‘adult’, as she calls it, as she embarked on a new life in France.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Nigel Farage for constantly using highly emotive language, which distracts from the seriousness of the topic.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My wedding and a family photo album, which hold memories from before the digital age. Yes, I’m that old!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Sales targets will go up.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Sadly none, but I have a long list of TV crime dramas that I’ll hopefully get the chance to watch through the winter months.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Fascinating, frustrating but fruitful.

What annoys you most about your commute? Pretty much nothing – I live five minutes from the office now

after many years of long commuting.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The tearing down of the Berlin Wall because the significance of the wall was so wide ranging in terms of modern history and the impact on Europe.

How do you explain the channel to people? If I’m talking to people outside of the tech industry, I normally use an analogy like the food industry making comparisons between food manufacturers, wholesalers, supermarkets and restaurants explaining how the product gets to the end customer.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite would be Lake Garda – you know who you are! My least favourite would be airport hotels where I could be anywhere in the world.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Making sure that the channel remains an effective route of supply for both vendors and end customers; reinventing itself where necessary to build new profit streams and remain relevant to customers.



ROB SIMS
Group chief executive, Elite Group

What was your dream career as a child? That’s an easy one: I always wanted to be Action Man and joined the army at 16.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Working with the team at Elite and helping them and the business develop. There are some really

great people here and it's a pleasure to work with them.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Any major politician for all the delay, confusion and mess created about Brexit.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? It would have to be my phone and photo albums.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Unfortunately, the continued mess that Brexit is and the never-ending saga.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Game of Thrones*. I've resisted until this year then watched all the series back to back.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? A really positive year. We are evolving and developing as a business, we have new strengths through new colleagues that is allowing us to strengthen our propositions.

What annoys you most about your commute? I'm really lucky, I only live 10 miles from work and travel through beautiful countryside, so nothing. It's a dream compared with the two-hour each way journey I used to have.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Armistice for the First World War. The relief at the end of all that suffering must have been overwhelming to witness.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is like an extra layer of service, knowledge and expertise between the customer and the manufacturer/carrier. We provide the support and direction to allow our customers to benefit and make the best choice for their business.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I'm a fan of events in the UK where there is time and space to network. Conferences are a commitment both ways, so I don't understand why people don't make time for the delegates to get involved.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The continual need to adapt to new technologies and the opportunities that they bring. Recruiting, developing and retaining the right people as always is a major challenge.



HELEN SLINGER
Director, BT

What was your dream career as a child? I really wanted to be a vet or livestock auctioneer. I grew up on a farm so I spent a lot of time sat in auctions and with vets and was in awe and inspired by both.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Workwise it was watching Satya Nadal's keynote at Inspire 2019. He's a great speaker and very inspirational. Personally, I'm a director on the board of the Greater Manchester Academies Trust and this year one of our schools, Manchester Communications Academy, was given a 'good' rating by Ofsted. I'm incredibly proud of everything that we've achieved despite the tough social and economic challenges that the school faces. We were rated 'Outstanding' in areas relating to student development and welfare, which was the icing on the cake.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Clarkson – while I'm a huge advocate for people having an opinion and voicing it, I like this tempered with politeness and kindness, and he fails so often on this.

What two things (apart from

family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My first would be my pre-digital photo albums as they contain so many precious memories, which are obviously not backed up anywhere. Second would be my handbag as it's packed full of important and useful stuff. Let's just say I'm not a minimalist when it comes to handbag contents!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That summer wouldn't be as good as 2018 and that the B-word would continue to dominate so much of our time.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*. I love everything about it.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been largely as expected but the uncertainty surrounding Brexit has been apparent.

What annoys you most about your commute? Speed limits and this year, flooding.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The building of Stonehenge. I'd love to see how they did it.

How do you explain the channel to people? This feels a bit like trying to explain the offside rule. It's clear in my head, but not so easy to put down on paper. In a nutshell, it's a group of organisations that a manufacturer works with to sell and distribute their products to end users, rather than doing it directly.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite has got to be Microsoft Inspire. I was truly inspired by their vision and their tools for collaboration. If there's one thing I took away it's that it's not enough for companies to just find more ways to take advantage of technology; they need to broaden their thinking to include new ways to adopt and use technology. Satya Nadal gave a fantastic keynote – what a leader! I don't have a least favourite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Ensuring we have the right skills, systems

and processes in place to make the shift from being a channel that sells product to the selling-as-a-service model.



GRAHAME SMEETH

Managing director, 4SEC Group

What was your dream career as a child? To be a policeman, like my Dad.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Watching my son's first football match.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron – he started the madness.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My record collection and photos.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? We are still in the EU, and the patterns of business have been disrupted.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Succession*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Challenging and rewarding.

What annoys you most about your commute? The unpredictability of it all.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The fall of the Berlin Wall.

How do you explain the channel to people? We are the glue between products and real people.

What have been your favourite

and least favourite partner conference destinations? Nice as a favourite, Birmingham as the least.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? To adapt quickly to embrace the new ways of transacting and providing everything we supply.



MARK SMYTH

Chief operating officer, Apogee

What was your dream career as a child? Stockbroker. I loved the excitement you saw in movies and thought, that's a fun way to earn lots of money!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Joining Apogee as COO. I work with a great team and feel we are really making a difference. We are striving to continually improve our business and our accomplishments provide me with tremendous satisfaction.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Corbyn. He's an absolute...

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My favourite watch(es) – they're a passion – and my mobile phone.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted 2019 would be a year of continued consolidation in the channel and that trend has continued, especially among resellers. I also predicted the mess that

is Brexit would continue! We are fed up with the B-word and despite so many opportunities to conclude, it's still a mess and we won't really see the full impact until 2020.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Succession*. It's so amusing with great cast and characters. I watch episodes again just to hear some of the lines!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been a year of change, with major focus on delivering great service and value to our clients with a drive for operational efficiency to remain competitive. We've won some great new clients and specifically in the public sector.

What annoys you most about your commute? The M25! Oh, and drivers who sit in the middle lane.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The first man on the moon. It was such an incredible achievement, 50 years ago, yet we remain fascinated by this astronomical object.

How do you explain the channel to people? There are vendors: they make the product, hardware. Distributors: they distribute the product, hardware; and resellers provide their products and services to end users.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My all-time favourite partner conference destination is London; there is so much choice and always options of fun things to combine with the event! My least favourite is the West Midlands – the venues are often too large and soulless and it's hard to produce a great atmosphere.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Continued downward pressure on margins. Therefore, we must drive operational excellence and efficiency to maintain margins and look for new ways to drive efficiencies, specifically with service delivery.



DARREN SPENCE

Managing director, Boost Technology Group

What was your dream career as a child? Like the rest of the world I had eyes on being an astronaut – that and running my own company. One of those came true as when I was 20 I set up my first company – a mobile disco company while at university. “Dreams, the mobile disco for every occasion” was born. My biggest tip was from a deaf family.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Getting fit again! I sleepwalked into fatness during my early forties.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Where to start? Are all politicians classified as famous?

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Car keys and my contact lenses.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That’s easy: this time last year I said selling into the whitespace presented the biggest untapped opportunity for most VARs and MSPs – the same is true today. Most invest too much time and money chasing the next new logo instead of deep mining their existing ones.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Game of Thrones* and *Bake Off*. I like dragons and cake!

How has 2019 been from a

business perspective? A bit of a rollercoaster sandwich. The summer filling didn’t taste too good but the start and end are making up for it. The industry seemed to take the summer off and delay decisions until September so we are now in the “can we have it yesterday?” phase – with extra cheese.

What annoys you most about your commute? I can’t get a double-mocha whatsitsface coffee at my house. All my team work from home so when I am at home, which is rare, the commute is pretty awesome.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The first moon landing – that must have been pretty epic.

How do you explain the channel to people? Blatant plug warning: We have developed a video explaining that. It’s part of a training module we sell and deliver as part of our brand-new “Early Careers Programme” that has been designed specifically to help all new VAR, MSP and tech sales people understand about the IT industry so they are able to be more relevant and successful faster. In a nutshell, however, it’s the supply chain that connects the IT industry.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite by far was when Microsoft held Inspire (then WWPC) in New Orleans – that rocked. They even hired Duran Duran before they went back on tour. I can’t think of a least favourite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? How to generate a materially more margin-rich proposition and operating model. I see an ever-increasing number of JARs (Just Another Reseller) and they are struggling to make sustainable margins. The answers are all out there and include selling more things on a lease (or as-a-service), selling more annuity solutions (for example, air time), and selling more niche high-margin ISV solutions and so on – all of which we can help with! You’re welcome.



DAVE STEVENSON

Chief executive, QBS Software

What was your dream career as a child? When I was very small, I wanted to work as a combine harvester driver and by the time I was at secondary school I wanted to work as a stockbroker. Luckily neither ambition was realised.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Completing phase two and three of our expansion of QBS into complementary geographies. The acquisitions in France (February) and Lithuania (July) were most pleasing.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Steve Smith, the Australian batsman. Despite his technique being unconventional and his constant fidgeting, he is very successful and proved very difficult for England to get him out.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? In that scenario I would rescue our pet dog and take my iPhone to call the fire brigade.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Several. I did predict that the Brexit would have more twists and turns and would not be at all smooth, causing further embarrassment to our nation. I successfully predicted that there would be a weakening of sterling against the dollar and euro – at the time of writing that is correct.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I do not watch much TV at all but have watched *Ozark*, which was most enjoyable.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? So far, it has been a good year. We operate in a tightly defined niche with a laser focus on enterprise software through our reseller network. We judge success by our ability to deliver on our publisher's ambitions, coupled with the quality of service we can deliver to our resellers. We have executed well on our vision.

What annoys you most about your commute? I have a number of commutes depending on where I am staying and working. They all have their idiosyncrasies but on reflection the most frustrating element is the time taken on the commute.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Without a shadow of doubt, it would be the Trojan War (1250BC). Did it really happen, what actually happened and even if it didn't happen, it would just be simply fascinating to picture life in this ancient civilisation from more than 3,000 years ago.

How do you explain the channel to people? The most efficient and beneficial way to work with a partner network to deliver successful business outcomes for enterprises and consumers.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite destination was Monte Carlo, Monaco – a wonderful location, pleasant climate and comfortable hotels. My least favourite was Disneyland in Orlando, US. What a bizarre choice of location. One of our partners is having an event at a beach resort in Sicily this October, which sounds most appealing.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? 2020 will be broadly similar to 2019: the global economy is slowing down, political uncertainty pre-Brexit will be replaced by political uncertainty post-Brexit. The biggest challenge will be how we all work together and successfully execute in whatever environment that we face. I have no doubt that it will be another positive year.



PAUL STRINGFELLOW
Technical director, Gardner Systems

What was your dream career as a child? Footballer and bizarrely a bus driver... there's more chance of the bus driver gig, sadly!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Attending the Champions League final with my son and watching our team win. We went to Madrid as a family and the four of us had a great experience.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? The 'gentle' slap makes this difficult – there are a bunch of people who I'd liked to do more than that to, but appreciate you can't condone violence...

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Car keys and wallet – we'd need to go somewhere and pay to stay, I guess!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted I wouldn't make any predictions...

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *The Good Place* and *The Marvellous Mrs Maisel*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? The industry continues to be challenging, with many of our customers holding projects until

the mess of Brexit has some clarity. As a business we are continuing to evolve rapidly, which of course brings its own set of challenges; however, they are slowly being overcome, delivering some really smart projects, around data management, governance and cloud, giving us plenty to look forward to. **What annoys you most about your commute?** Nothing really – I don't mind it and it's great podcast time and a chance to keep up with the tech industry.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? It seems apt this year, but to have seen Apollo 11 take off from Cape Kennedy and witness man's first trip to the moon – that would be pretty cool.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is like a box of chocolates... but with a trusted chocolate partner who helps you understand the best chocs that manufacturers make and how they best fit your chocolate needs, then helps you to buy the best chocs you can... well something like that!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? It seems churlish to complain as often I'm at a conference as a guest and many times in places I haven't been, or may not have gone. If I've got to complain probably London, just because I can go anytime and getting there is a pain. I've been to Berlin a few times and really like that – it has fascinating recent history. New Orleans and San Francisco are cool, and I can understand why people get bored of Vegas.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? I don't think they are going to change, dealing with the continued moves to cloud and how those changes affect the traditional channel model. If the country does indeed shoot itself in both feet and "get's Brexit done", the impact that is likely to have on our economy could cause some real problems across all sectors, including the IT channel.



MARC SUMNER

Managing director, Robertson Summer

What was your dream career as a child? Sports agent, *Jerry Maguire* style!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Launching the channel chat podcast show – the response from the channel has been awesome.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Anthony Joshua for his loss in NYC against Andy Ruiz Jnr, but I wouldn't actually do it.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My mobile phone and back-up charger.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I predicted that the talent shortage would worsen in 2019, which it has, but I'm a recruiter so I would say that.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Billions*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Awesome. We're currently tracking at 30% growth YoY and I have the biggest and best team on board.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing, I live two minutes from the office.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Rumble

in the Jungle, Ali vs Foreman – the best boxing event ever.

How do you explain the channel to people? With difficulty!

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was Gitex Dubai. My least favourite was Infosec.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Channel firms adapting to selling service-based solutions rather than product.

PETER SWEETBAUM

Chief executive, IT Lab

What was your dream career as a child? Clearly a dream, but lead guitarist in a band (of course).

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? My personal highlight has been to watch my kids continue to do amazing things. Professionally, the acquisitions of Content and Code and Mirus.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Too many options – but Trump, inevitably.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Our two labradors, Alfie and Milo.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? In 2018 I predicted that in 2019, Dominic Raab

would leverage Brexit to further his career ambitions.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Breaking Bad* (late to the party).

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Really exciting. We're doing bigger and better things for our clients on the back of the amazing people we have in this organisation. We can really feel it.

What annoys you most about your commute? South Western Railway and Waterloo Station: "We are sorry to announce that trains are cancelled." It makes my heart sink.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? It sounds geeky but Potsdam in 1945, where three people literally divided up the western world – quite surreal.

How do you explain the channel to people? The route to market for technology solutions, products and services...

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was Gleneagles; my least favourite, anything in London – it's nice to get away.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The ability to respond to speed of change driven by the hyper cloud providers unless they have real scale.



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ALEX TATHAM

Managing director, Westcoast

What was your dream career as a child? Radio 1 DJ – I'm more Radio 4 these days!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? England winning the Cricket World Cup!

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Neville Chamberlain before the Munich summit in 1938.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? A portrait of my father and my top hat!

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Westcoast would grow by the largest amount in its history (still a prediction but a safe one!).

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Chernobyl* – amazing mini-series and scarily true.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Strong in so many areas of our business. Westcoast led on Brexit which, despite the uncertainty, has made no impact. Now with a new large warehouse due on stream by the end of this year, 2020 looks strong too.

What annoys you most about your commute? The four-year roadworks scheduled to turn the M4 into a smart motorway. When it finishes, Heathrow starts. I will have retired before the M4 runs properly again!

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Munich summit in 1938.

How do you explain the channel to people? The most dynamic way that IT is delivered to the widest range of end-users.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Venice answers both questions – it's a privilege just to be in such an amazing place but getting around is painful.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The unrelenting excellence of Westcoast – why buy anywhere else?



KEVIN TIMMS

Chief executive, EACS

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be an airline pilot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing EACS grow 50% in two years, and our team grow with it.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? UK politicians in general. While I voted remain, they have failed to deliver what the UK people told them democratically to do.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? As the photos are backed up to the cloud, I would take a bronze sculpture that was our wedding present and the keys to the E Type.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Brexit not happening (yet).

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Game of Thrones*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? So far, so good.

What annoys you most about your commute? A slow lorry overtaking another slow lorry for miles on a dual carriageway. I have to do 60 miles each way on the A14.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The Battle of Britain. It was a turning point in the Second World War and was actually visible without being one of the protagonists.

How do you explain the channel to people? Simply the way computer equipment and services are delivered to clients, through a mechanism of value add.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was Seville. I had not been before, and it is a great city in a warm sunny location. My least favourite was Venice. It is a fantastic city but not an easy place to get around different sites quickly.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The geo-political landscape is extremely difficult to forecast, and the channel supply chain is very global. This could well make the channel pretty volatile.

ROB TOMLIN

Vice president channels UK&I, Dell Technologies

What was your dream career as a child? It would have had to have been a footballer. However, as anyone who has seen me play will testify, it was never going to happen.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Passing my probation at Dell Technologies.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? There are far too many reality stars to name.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your



house was on fire? My iPhone and car keys.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Brexit would continue to be a mess.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Having a new baby, there have been a good few box sets. Top of the list has to be *Killing Eve*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been a great first year for me at Dell Technologies. Apart from the numbers, which have been great, I have constantly been learning, which I love!

What annoys you most about your commute? No two days are the same, so fortunately I don't have anything to get annoyed about.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The 1966 World Cup final. Imagine being there!

How do you explain the channel to people? A great industry to get into. Constantly growing as our need to consume everything IT explodes.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Vegas and Vegas. I remember going there when I was 21 for the first time and being amazed. Sadly, after so many trips there I have become Vegas Jaded.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

The race for talent. We all have a responsibility to recruit young talent into the industry, ensuring we avoid the inevitable skills shortage ahead of us.



PAUL TOMLINSON
Managing director, Mirus IT

What was your dream career as a child? My dad was a PLC programmer for a number of large companies and I had a natural ability when it came to using computers, so I guess I was always destined to be in IT. I'm not sure I ever had a dream career as such, I think the hope was just to make enough money to have a fun lifestyle.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Mirus becoming part of the IT Lab Group of companies. It marked a huge milestone in the 17-year history of Mirus and has started a new chapter for the team, our customers and for me.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Family photos from my childhood as I've still not got them all digitally stored and the kids' memory books – everything else could be replaced.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? None of them! I'm glad I didn't have any bets placed on my own predictions.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Game of Thrones*. I'd never watched it, I'm not sure why but when we started we were on two to three

episodes a night to watch all the series – it left a pretty big hole in our evenings at the end!

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been a great year for the business. We've had our strongest year in terms of turnover and profit and have some great foundations in place for a strong 2020.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing normally as I'm an early riser going to the gym and avoiding traffic, but if for some reason I leave the house later than normal, it's frustrating getting caught in rush hour traffic.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The beginning of the universe. My nine-year-old spent 30 minutes asking me about how it all began: "Why this? Why that?" So it'd be good to have the answers!

How do you explain the channel to people? I've never thought about it as most of my working career has been working within the channel, but I think I'd relate it back to that person's own life experience so there wouldn't be a stock explanation – although one thing I think I would make sure they understand is that it's an incredibly small world and it's good to be nice, as that will come back and reward you in the future.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I always love London, not least because it's close allowing me to get home in the evening but also because I get to see lots of other UK partners. I also really enjoy the ConnectWise events in Florida – the negative is the long flight back with a hangover!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The uncertainty around Brexit and whether it will impact our coming financial year with availability of product and also whether it will impact client spend. I feel optimistic for us as we've got a clear pipeline of projects and our marketing activity is generating a lot of recurring revenue business.



ROD TONNA-BARTHET

Chief executive, Kyocera Document Solutions (UK)

What was your dream career as a child?

Fast jet pilot but sadly my eyesight soon put paid to that!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019?

Our recent Partner Conference at the Grand Hotel in Brighton attended by more than 120 delegates, which allowed us to showcase and launch the thought leadership and changes which Kyocera and the whole team have been working on. The positive feedback was overwhelming and vindicated the ongoing evolution of our business and how we are standing out in the market.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I don't think our politicians (no matter what side of the house and of what Brexit persuasion) are covering themselves in glory currently so although I'd never advocate violence to our 'esteemed' leaders, I'd certainly put them on the list, for fundamentally failing to deliver on anything over the last few years and creating unnecessary and long-term turbulence across the entire economy.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Sorry to be boring, but my mobile phone and wallet.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? That Brexit wouldn't be delivered (so far, although I may be proven wrong in the next few weeks) and that Japan would have at least

one giant killing game during the Rugby World Cup!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? Sadly I haven't had time yet this year but *Killing Eve* is on my 'to watch' list, and I can feel the latest series of *Peaky Blinders* being added to it.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Rewarding, challenging and a time of ongoing change.

What annoys you most about your commute? The recent completely needless and politically motivated strike action of South Western Railway (among others) which has caused disruption, and put at risk, hundreds of thousands of commuters.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? A bit left of field, I think, but the building of the Pyramids at Giza. As one of the Seven Wonders of the World, it would be fascinating to see how this was achieved and the sheer scale of the task.

How do you explain the channel to people? Dynamic and highly entrepreneurial businesses who build deep-rooted relationships with their client base and suppliers, which allows them to provide IT and print services to help their customers solve real business issues.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Brighton (favourite – see above) and Las Vegas (least favourite).

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? The continued and accelerated digitisation of workflow process and rapidly increasing move from manual and paper-based processes to much faster end-to-end solutions. This change requires rapid and continual evolution of customer propositions by channel partners with a focus on being able to provide much wider IT service solutions to their customers. It's not an easy task for companies who have deep heritage in a particular discipline. However, while challenging, there is also significant

opportunity for channel partners who are able to adapt and broaden their business propositions and in doing so help their customers continue to evolve. It is here that I strongly believe that Kyocera is leading the print market and helping the channel adapt with the provision of a fully integrated IT services proposition, which our accredited channel partners are able to leverage and add to their own capabilities and in doing so, help their customers put knowledge to work.



MARGARET TOTTEN

Managing director, Akari

What was your dream career as a child?

Writer. I fell in love with books very early and spent most of my time lost in the worlds of Narnia and Middle Earth. I used to even read walking to school with my friends guiding me through traffic, so I wanted to be the one creating those worlds of magic for others.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Showcasing Akari at Microsoft Future Decoded. As a brand-new startup this year, we had set ourselves an ambitious challenge to showcase our products and services at one of the biggest technology events of the year. It went brilliantly.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Boris and maybe most of parliament for the nightmare we have found ourselves in with Brexit. Regardless of where you land on, in or out, the pantomime of the last 12 months has been more than a little aggravating.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your

house was on fire? My phone and an early edition of *Paradise Lost* my husband and son got me.

Which of your 2019 predictions

have come to pass? That Akari would grow quickly and become a major competitor in its space. That Brexit would become the car crash TV show we can't turn off and that accessibility would become a major consideration in everyone's agenda.

What TV show have you binge

watched this year? There have been a few as I tend to binge watch when travelling home and it's also something my husband and I do as we have similar taste in shows. My favourite has been *The Spanish Princess*, as I have a mild obsession of all things War of the Roses/Tudor period.

How has 2019 been from a

business perspective? Absolutely amazing. My co-founders and I took a big leap this year with the full belief that the market was ready for a technology company with such a strong focus on accessibility and assistive technologies, and it has been a great choice.

What annoys you most about

your commute? I like the commute as it gives me time to put my day in place inside my head, so have to admit nothing really. Maybe how rain in Scotland makes drivers so slow. It's Scotland – we should be used to the rain by now.

If you could witness one past

event, what would it be? Maybe the end of the Second World War. The 40s was a pivotal decade for the world and changed a lot of things, and when you look at the celebrations during VE Day so much of the world came together, I think that would have been amazing to witness.

How do you explain the channel

to people? An ability to work with the most recognised companies in the world. To share excellence with brand recognition and to reach customers in a way you couldn't alone.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Vegas

and Vegas. I've loved the Microsoft Inspire conference this year and last, and Vegas has many benefits – but as a Scot, the heat kills me.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Adapting to emerging technologies as quickly as the market demands it. I think customer needs are starting to outstrip capabilities at times, so we need to ensure we are upskilling staff and our own delivery capabilities to meet it.



ANDY TRISH
Chief executive, NCI Technologies

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to go to sea and see the world. I spent my 19th birthday at war in the Falkland Islands in the Royal Navy, with Sea Harriers and helicopters flying all around me. It's hard to get more of a buzz than that as a young lad in a career you loved.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? To see the smiles and courage of a friend's 14-year-old daughter just days after her 18th major neuro surgery. Young children who go through so much teach us how we all should be.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Oh, there are so many. Just about every UK and European MP for a start. Adults behaving like unruly children for their own gain.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My animals and car keys (I live in the middle of nowhere).

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass?

That Microsoft would continue on its path to go it alone and that everything going wrong in the world would be blamed on Brexit.

What TV show have you binge watched this year?

Stranger Things. My wife and I couldn't get enough.

How has 2019 been from a

business perspective? Very good.

Last year we bet on Brexit being delayed/cancelled for the whole of 2019 so focused our company in a way we could help our customers weather the storms. Not only has it helped them grow but us too.

What annoys you most about your commute?

It's only around 40 minutes each way for me to get to work but on narrow country roads with few if any diversions available. Any road closure or accident at least doubles that.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be?

The Second World War. I think we have turned in to a snowflake world and I would love to understand the grit and resolve shown by people in a true hour of need rather than those who cause a drama because they can't get on Facebook. I totally admire people who have lived and survived in conflict.

How do you explain the channel

to people? IT vendors, distributors, developers and resellers who, despite not knowing each other, work together to help each of our businesses and that of our customers grow and be profitable while still competing with each other.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Boston, Massachusetts. There was plenty to do and see in the city and beyond and the conference (Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference) was very valuable in their early days. Los Angeles, again with Microsoft, had events spread too far and wide with travel issues too.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Without a doubt it is the fighting

between vendors to be number one in everything. Some major vendors are diluting what they are good at to challenge in markets they don't own just to compete because they are scared they will be left behind. No longer are vendors leading in innovation, they seem to be scrambling with their own products and licensing to gain more revenue from existing sources. All of this leaves the resellers and distributors trying to understand where to focus their portfolios. Resellers sell better when they feel loved, they care not about the wars between vendors but do have to bear the brunt of it all. Distributors suffer from price increases, low margins and trying to keep resellers happy.



IAN TURNBULL

Managing director, Pentesec

What was your dream career as a child? Growing up I always wanted to be a teacher. I didn't get the grades, so I became an MD instead.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Three things stand out: Pentesec winning the Check Point Partner of the Year award for the second year running, being nominated for the CRN Security VAR of the Year and discovering a cracking curry house near my house. I think the curry edges it.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? I decline to comment as this may affect ongoing investigations.

What two things (apart from

family) would you grab if your house was on fire? As long as the family is safe, nothing else matters. Life is too short to worry about material things.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Late last year I spoke to CRN about how 2019 would see growing interest and adoption of SD WAN, the explosion of CrowdStrike worldwide and huge GDPR fines. I'm three for three and pretty happy with that.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? I can't get enough of *Mindhunter* – anything crime related is always a good shout. Watching the birth of criminal profiling and getting into the minds of villains to understand how they became bad is fascinating.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? So far, so good considering it has been a difficult period for much of the channel, at least according to my peers. We are tracking as we did last year and are just entering our busy period. With a bigger team, an increase in services and backed by last year's success, I am expecting big things.

What annoys you most about your commute? The lack of a buffet cart in my car! I must be bonkers as I quite enjoy the alone time. Many a good idea has occurred when I am left with my own thoughts.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? That drop goal from Jonny Wilkinson in the 2003 Rugby World Cup final. It was a special moment and it would have been amazing to see it in person.

How do you explain the channel to people? Separate focuses with a shared goal. Everybody plays the role they're passionate about. From the vendor creating a product, distribution getting it to market and the reseller delivering it to customers. Trying to do all of that yourself is very limiting but trusting passionate experts to do their bit allows you to play to your strengths. Our success creates a knock-on effect to a whole ecosystem; we're like a family that depends on each other.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I'm a big fan of anywhere warm. Some of these conferences can be a drag if badly engineered, so seeing a little bit of sunshine can be a welcome respite.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Ignoring the obvious situation regarding our position in Europe. Knowing what new technology to back. There are a wealth of solutions out there. Are customers ready for them? Do emerging vendors have the channel teams in place to enable their partners? Our team is working hard to gauge where our customers see the biggest pain points. There is always a common ground and we pride ourselves on learning who has the answers and which solution stands out above the rest. This is where the channel ecosystem comes into its own because we all want what's best, and every year we try to figure out how to achieve it together.

W



GRAEME WATT

Chief executive, Softcat

What was your dream career as a child? I wanted to be a vet – a modern-day James Herriot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Our eldest daughter, Alice, graduating in medicine and now embarking on her two years as a junior doctor.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Chris Froome – don't take your hands off your handlebars when riding at over 50km per hour. It's very dangerous.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? That's a tough one – our dog and my bicycle.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Brexit will have limited impact on our business, that a no-deal Brexit is the most likely scenario and Liverpool to win the Champions League.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Man in the High Castle*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? It's been phenomenal – I work with some great people in a fantastic company and environment at Softcat.

What annoys you most about your commute? The unpredictable home leg of my commute to Marlow from SW London.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Waterloo – I went there in 2015 on the 200-year anniversary of the battle and was fascinated about the way the battle ebbed and flowed, the etiquette of fighting at that time and how many people took credit for what took place.

How do you explain the channel to people? It's not easy, but we work with business consumers of infrastructure technology to deliver their needs and simplify the design, deployment and pricing as a minimum.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? I have really only been to Las Vegas this year for conferences, so there is your answer to both questions!

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? Finding new talent to expand, moving the needle on gender diversity and just keeping up with demand driven by further moves to the cloud and 5G.



DAVID WATTS

Managing director, Tech Data UK&I

What was your dream career as a child? Snooker player. I put a lot of time into playing snooker (sometimes instead of school) but was held back by a lack of aptitude and talent.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Our annual channel partner event, Tech Data Live. We completely changed the format to focus on solutions and customer journeys and this massively resonated with our customer.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? David Cameron – mostly Brexit but lack of any ideals, principals and humanity. He's better than Boris though.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Not the cat who has never liked me. A picture of Churchill and a picture of my much-loved Grandad, neither of which I have digitally.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? Not quite yet, and hopefully never, but that the untangle-able Brexit impasse would lead to civil unrest. All sides feel like they have been failed.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Mindhunter* on Netflix. An amazing true story of how the FBI discovered serial killers.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Really great.

We continue to earn the right to serve our customers through the value we bring, and the fast-changing market gives Tech Data more and more opportunities to support our customers and vendors.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing. I have learned to chill as long experience tells me that a raised heart rate does not reduce traffic.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? Still quite recent history: the Berlin Wall coming down. Imagine the atmosphere, the rumours, the excitement when people were actually crossing the border unimpeded.

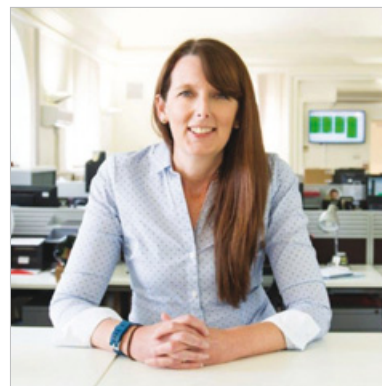
How do you explain the channel to people? We support and sell to the organisations that make IT work for you.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations?

Anywhere hot in winter is good. Las Vegas in July though = dripping mass of sweat – not good.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Political and economic uncertainty impacting buying decisions.



LORRIN WHITE

Managing director, Bamboo Technology Group

What was your dream career as a child? I followed the TV I loved as I was growing up so went from journalist (Lois Lane, *Superman*) to lawyer (*Moonlighting*) to fashion designer (*The Clothes Show*) to being in the army

(*Soldier, Soldier*). At Bamboo I do write, manage legal, design marketing and office layouts and conduct change that requires military style control and operations: tick, tick, tick, tick.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Seeing my youngest brother become a dad.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? *Love Island* celebrities. But that's just the start – the list is long!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? Warm shoes and a coat.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I didn't make any 2019 predictions – I'm saving them all for 2020!

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Different, interesting and challenging – all the things that drive me forwards.

What annoys you most about your commute? Nothing. I commute 1,000 miles twice a week and it's normally my most productive time.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? The fall of the Berlin Wall – the embodiment of war torn down to bring people and voices together.

How do you explain the channel to people? The channel is a group of businesses that work together to support market growth, recognising the opportunity is big enough to be shared if we utilise each other's skills and experience.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? You're probably better off asking my chairman that question.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Guessing the next big buzz word to hit the market, five years before any service or product is ready to address the need!



ANGELA WHITTY
Managing director, UK&I partner organisation, Cisco

What was your dream career as a child? As a child I always wanted to be a pathologist. For those old enough to remember there was a TV series called *Quincy* that I loved. Unfortunately, my pathological fear of the sight of blood curtailed that potential career path!

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? First and foremost, we've had a great year supported by our partner community.

The absolute highlight has been how we've come together in support of the homeless charity, Crisis UK. We've run a number of events alongside our partners that have raised funds and awareness for the plight of homeless people across the UK. The response has been amazing.

Most recently 100 people did a 25km Bridge Trek in London from which we hope to have raised over £30,000 – it was an amazing day and an amazing result. I would love to make this an annual event.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Famous probably isn't the word, but anyone who appears on *Love Island*. It's addictive TV, but their behaviour both during their stay and after leaves something to be desired!

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your

house was on fire? That's a tough one. Irrational, perhaps, but probably my phone (who can live without their phone nowadays?) and my purse as I have some little pictures and mementos of my children in it.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I'm not sure I made any predictions as such, but no one could have predicted the level of political turmoil we seem to be facing right now. I wish I had a crystal ball to see where it all ends.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Peaky Blinders*. I had tried to watch it once before but now I am officially hooked, even though the excessive smoking drives me mad.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? The political climate hasn't been ideal for any business in or working with the UK, but with the support of our partners and customers we finished very strongly.

What annoys you most about your commute? Paying for a seat on a train but never getting one is very annoying.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would say the flight of the first aircraft. Still to this day, no matter how many times the physics are explained to me, it amazes me that we're able to get a big hunk of metal like that in the air. Seeing it for the first time must have been awesome.

How do you explain the channel to people? I explained it to my cousin recently who has a nursing background. I talked about it in terms of the ecosystem around a buying event and who does what. She seemed to get it...

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is San Diego. We held our Partner Summit there a few years ago – lovely city and great event. Las Vegas is my least favourite. Having been there so many times it's become a bit overwhelming – same hotels, same bars and when we do our Sales Conference in August it's just too hot.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Two come to mind that are difficult to separate. Number one is the skills shortage faced across the IT industry. We need to identify and train people at a faster rate, but also look at talented people in other industries with different skills who we can teach the more technical stuff.

This challenge is exacerbated by the speed of change we are facing, not only in technology advancements, but commercial structures around how customers want to buy.



COLIN WILLIAMS
Business line CTO – networking and security, Computacenter

What was your dream career as a child? A mechanic for Porsche (I adore 911s) or Alfa Romeo. I actually was an Alfa Romeo mechanic for a while before getting into IT.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? Personal: my little girl scoring twice in the county U14s football final. Work: the launch into the real world of 5G and its potential to transform the world.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Nigel Farage. An

intelligent man with a number of valid views, but often delivered in a manner that dismantles the goodness.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? One storage array with over 30 years of photography images (my hobby). Another storage array with digitised music from a similar time span.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I chronicled through 2018 that ransomware was only sleeping and would be back with a vengeance (sadly it is). On the networking side, that automation would finally deliver value (now the benefits are properly conveyed).

What TV show have you binge watched this year? *Friends* (2018: *Friends*, 2017: *Friends*, 2016: *Friends*, 2015... I think you get the picture).

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? A rewarding year with customers challenging vendors, the channel and themselves to deliver measurable and beneficial value. This aligns with our approach to the market as an organisation maniacal about positive, value led customer engagement.

What annoys you most about your commute? The lack of Wi-Fi in between tunnels.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? To be at Cape Canaveral on the night of 20 July 1969 for the epic moon landing of Apollo 11.

How do you explain the channel to people? We understand the capability of products manufactured by vendors and use our advisory, consultancy and support services to implement solutions that deliver customer relevant value. We make 'IT' work.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite is Vegas (great hotels, energy of the town and the venues are superb). My least favourite is Vegas (the heat,

the flight unless upgraded, the feeling of sheer tiredness on the way home).

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Understanding how to maximise the value of 'as-a-service' and dynamic software and service procurement challenges. The channel must learn to engage and deliver differentiated value much earlier in the customer buying cycle to deliver influence and relevance.



ANDY WRIGHT
Commercial director, XMA

What was your dream career as a child? Fast jet pilot.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? I realised I have now attended more vendor partner conferences in the last 25 years than I will have to in the future. That gave me a very warm feeling.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Most of them. They really do need to get over themselves.

What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire? My framed ticket from the Champions League Final in Madrid – I'm a Liverpool fan. And my passport – it feels like some form of ID would be useful.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? I don't really do predictions.

What TV show have you binge

watched this year? *Peaky Blinders* – it's just the best.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective? Hard work, transformational and overall successful. **What annoys you most about your commute?** I drive down from the Midlands to St Albans at 5am on Monday morning for the week, so the 5am bit is the killer.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? A boring one, but the 1966 World Cup final. I don't think it's going to happen again – though we keep dreaming.

How do you explain the channel to people? I've never tried to, it's best left as a mystery.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? Vegas is always a winner in my book. Years ago, HP Print had a conference in Dudley next to the Merry Hill Shopping Centre. Now don't get me wrong, it was very handy for us Brummies, but if you know Dudley...

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020? We get asked this every year, and my answer is the same – diversity. We've got to leverage all the talent that is available to us.

Y

RICK YATES

Managing director, Zedsphere

What was your dream career as a child? My ambition was always to be a pilot. I was obsessed with planes. I used to be able to see a plane in the sky and tell my friends what make and model it was based on the shape of its wings and the contrail.

What has been your personal highlight of 2019? There has been a couple. Winning the CompTIA Innovate Distributor of the Year Award was a big deal for us as a distributor that is less than four years old.



Personally, the RV trip around the western US was amazing.

Which famous person deserves a (gentle) slap? Jeremy Corbyn, because I think he has needlessly alienated a huge demographic and been completely useless as an opposition leader in a time of huge political unrest. **What two things (apart from family) would you grab if your house was on fire?** I have first editions of all six of Winston Churchill's volumes on his experience of the Second World War. I feel that they have important historical significance. Apart from that, if I have my passport and my iPhone, I'm happy.

Which of your 2019 predictions have come to pass? More demand has been placed on elastic consumption style billing for software products. Vendors are increasingly approaching us to help them make the transition into the IT services market.

What TV show have you binge watched this year? We did *Game of Thrones* from season one, episode one for

the first time. It was enjoyable but I'm off box sets for the foreseeable future.

How has 2019 been from a business perspective?

Encouraging. We realigned our vendor relationships to ensure they were serving us and our partners in the right way. We introduced very specific criteria for vendor recruitment and we now have a waiting list for vendors who want to onboard with us. We have rejected more vendors than we have recruited.

What annoys you most about your commute? My commute is awesome. I live five miles from the office and drive through the countryside to get to work.

If you could witness one past event, what would it be? I would follow Winston Churchill around for the years of 1940/41. Our country was totally alone and under the threat of imminent invasion. The plans he implemented completely transformed the ability of our nation to fight back after years of appeasement. It would be a lesson in taking ultimate responsibility and the power of an optimistic attitude under times of extreme stress.

How do you explain the channel to people? Being in the channel is like being in the SAS. You don't talk about it to people on the outside. They don't really know what you do, but they know you mean business, and that's fine.

What have been your favourite and least favourite partner conference destinations? My favourite was the Fontainebleau Hotel in South Beach, Miami. I can honestly say I've never been to a disappointing partner conference location.

What is the biggest challenge facing the channel in 2020?

Vendors will continue to seek value from the channel and will strive to take services in-house and sell direct if they don't get it. The channel needs to ensure it can maintain healthy self-sustained lead creation and carry its own weight when it comes to cradle-to-grave sales delivery.

OUR 2020 EVENTS CALENDAR

CRN UK produce a number of industry leading channel events, hosting over 5,000 attendees a year and creating the perfect platform for reaching senior channel figures. Our flagship awards night, the Channel Awards has been running in the UK for over 26 years and is the largest gathering of senior channel executives in the world.

CRN
ON

March 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/crnon

CRN
FIGHT
NIGHT

21 May 2020
crnfightnight.com

CRN
CHANNEL
CONFERENCE
MSP NORTH

17 June 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/msp

CRN
SALES
AND
MARKETING
AWARDS 2020

2 July 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/sma

CRN
EUROPEAN
CHANNEL
LEADERSHIP
FORUM

2-3 September 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/europeanforum

CRN
CHANNEL
CONFERENCE
MSP

14 October 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/msp

CRN
WOMEN IN CHANNEL
AWARDS 2020

15 October 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/womeninchannel

CRN
ON

November 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/crnon



12 November 2020
events.channelweb.co.uk/awards

**For general enquiries,
please contact:**

Hope Alderman
T: +44 (0)20 7484 9824
E: hope.alderman@incisivemedia.com

**For sponsorship enquiries,
please contact:**

Matthew Dalton
T: 020 7484 9896
E: matthew.dalton@incisivemedia.com

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