

Channelwise

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THE MAGAZINE FOR IT RESELLERS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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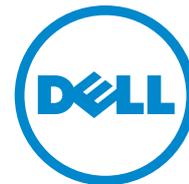
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Making the right choice for your firewall

Many IT departments may be unaware that their current firewalls are incapable of scanning application-layer traffic; even firewalls just two or three years old are typically unable to scan and defend against the full range of threats that exist today.

The Dell SonicWALL family of firewalls tightly integrates intrusion prevention, malware protection, and Application Intelligence and Control with real-time visualisation — helping organisations to maintain security without sacrificing productivity or performance.

“Did you know that approximately 12 million legacy firewalls in the marketplace today can no longer provide adequate protection,” states Dominique Honnay, director Emerging Markets and EMEA Distributors at Dell SonicWALL EMEA.

But what are the major concerns of security professionals when it comes to their security? According to Honnay the three major concerns include: bandwidth, security, budget and management concerns — all of which keep CIOs and security professionals awake at night.

Issues around bandwidth include whether or not your network security solution can prioritise mission critical applications over distracting, unproductive, or bandwidth-hogging applications; how organisations are addressing the use of social media by employees; how to better ensure high levels of employee productivity and QoS; and finally whether or not your network performance requirements have scaled beyond the capabilities of your current security appliances.

“When it comes to security, businesses need to ensure that they are protecting content from being leaked over outbound web mail transmissions or social media sites, and they need to restrict objectionable content or usage,” states Andrew Potgieter, business unit manager at Westcon Security.

“That is then coupled with a need to prevent viruses and other malware from ‘dirty’ devices getting on the network and the ability to filter/scan all traffic without compromising bandwidth, in other words — at wire speed.”

On the bandwidth front companies need to ensure their network security systems are integrated, gauge if it makes sense to consolidate the number of appliances, simplify management and lower administration costs, prepare for potential future network growth and additional bandwidth capacity that may be needed.

Honnay says that Dell SonicWALL is in a unique position to help customers with these requirements. Since the acquisition by Dell of SonicWALL the company has invested significantly in growing the business: adding resources in its R&D facilities and significantly increasing the global post sales teams..

“As Dell SonicWALL we are now able to better help our customers with the sheer number of people we have on the street. To this end we have seen a 50% increase in both presales and sales people in EMEA and we have added a further four heads in emerging markets with another four to follow shortly,” adds Honnay. “From a partner point of view we have concluded a number of training sessions and webinars to make sure everybody is well informed on the future opportunities Dell SonicWALL will deliver.”

“There is no doubt that Dell SonicWALL is a leader in network security and its activities in the market, understanding of the business of security as well as its ability to grasp the needs of its customers puts it well ahead of its competitors,” adds Potgieter.

Adding impetus to this the company has, in 2012, managed to achieve: the 2012 NSS Labs Security Value Map for Next-Gen Firewalls; Network World’s 2012 Clear Choice Test; ICSA Labs Certification & Evaluation; 2012 NSS Labs Security Value Map for Intrusion Prevention Systems; and the 2012 CRN Channel Champions Award.

“Over the years, Dell SonicWALL has continuously demonstrated our strong commitment to our channel partners and an expanded organisation under the Dell umbrella will deliver greater level of support to you and to your customers,” ends Honnay.

Cloud's silver lining

The rain pounded on the canvas cocooning the smokers at The Local like a pissed-off Keith Moon on a combination of cocaine, kat and cycling steroids as the latest in the now daily afternoon thunderstorms blew through Joburg. Thunderous late-day showers are traditional on the Highveld, I thought, but every day ... week after week?

I shrugged at Ray-Ban Ray across the table and raised my hands in resignation. It was pointless trying to have a conversation while Moon the Loon vented his heavenly rage, interspersed with the booming backup of thunder and the occasional blinding flash. Keith would be beaming at his special effects roadies up there, I'm sure. With nothing else to do until the cacophony died down, I glugged at my beer and puffed on my annoying cancer stick with its propensity for going out thanks to something called Reduced Ignition Propensity which – just like the Joburg tolls – is being forced down our throats. Quite literally.

I surveyed the scene around me: Clive the Secure and Con the Non-Conman were doing likewise from their regular corner table – we smiled in sympathy with each other; Cynical Cynthia and The Waiter Formerly Known As Prince, now the symbol P, huddled for protection under the entrance to the bricks and mortar non-smoking section; said section was unusually full, I noted, as patrons licked at their lattes and cupped their cappuccinos, obviously amused at the misfortune of the smokers; and Ray-Ban was, totally nonplussed, busy with his two thumbs on his iPhone. Simple mind, I immediately mused.

As quick as it started, the incessant drumming petered out to a faint drumroll and then to a surreal silence. Obviously disturbed by this, Ray-Ban suddenly glanced up from his phone.

"So what was I saying?" as he unconsciously moved his chair away from a drip.

"You were talking about cloud computing," I threw at him. He recoiled as if I really had launched my beer glass at him.

"No I wasn't!" he half-shouted. "I said: Look at that black cloud ... just as it erupted!"

"Well, seeing we're on the subject ..." I ventured, but he cut me off quicker than a taxi coming off the pavement in Rivonia.

"Don't even start," he spat. "You know all that stuff is way beyond me."

"But it won't be for very much longer," I teased. "As a small businessman, you should be interested in it, investigating it and finding out how it can help you in your business."

"It's all bullshit baffles brains, just like the old days of mainframes and bureaux," he defended. "You told me that yourself!"

"I know I did ... guilty as charged ..." I held my hands up in surrender. "But that was in the days when every vendor and their dogs jumped on the hype bandwagon, obviously looking to spin a quick buck. Every one of them had a different 'solution', the miracle for every CIO under budget pressure. Now it's changed. It looks like the hype cycle is over and some vendors are actually coming up with tangible offerings – mainly in the private cloud, I'll admit, but

with some hybrid and public options also looking feasible. I know there are still some big problems such as privacy and governance regulations that have to be sorted out, but I think next year could be the year that cloud computing finally arrives.

"Over the past couple of weeks I've heard some very good things from vendors, a lot more clarity on cloud strategies," I said. "But I've heard even better things from large corporates who are actually using the cloud. Admittedly, these have mainly been US companies, but it can't be long before some of the locals – even government – start to see the benefits they could gain. Talk about service delivery? There's so much that could be improved here – and quickly – if only they'd open their eyes and their wallets a little." Ray-Ban's eyes had themselves started to cloud over. I knew I had lost him.

"Okay, I'm off the soapbox," I apologised. "What did you think of Faf down under?"

"No! Wait!" he jolted. "Tell me more about cloud and the benefits for small businessmen like myself."

"That, Ray-Ban, is a story that can wait for another rainy day," I said cruelly, draining my glass. "It's your round."

Crestfallen, he looked towards the non-smoking entrance for service, but P was already closing in with replenished glasses on his tray.

"Perfect example," I almost gloated. "It's only taken a couple of months to teach P about CRM. Just imagine how quickly he'll take to the cloud."

Ray-Ban wasn't amused. I laughed down his glare, but magnanimously made a mental note to buy him an extra Irish before he went home.



By Mark Davison

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SCENE AROUND



Cotlands distributed more than 2 500 paint sets and books to its Toy Libraries around the country, thanks to a donation by Adobe South Africa in association with Nikon in South Africa and its community of creative professionals, through which it will be driving creativity through play at its libraries and centres. The donation is the result of Adobe's Paint the Future Campaign through which it called on its customers, partners and wider community to contribute to the initiative in order to help build a culture of creativity among South African children and to assist in nurturing a creative future for South Africa. This call was answered by Nikon in South Africa and many others.



Left: Huawei's Sophia Lui tried her hand at mountain boarding - and managed to stay on long enough for a picture to be taken ...

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Bytes Document Solutions (BDS) has handed over a cheque for R72 000 to the Randburg SPCA. This early Christmas present will ensure that more of our cuddly friends get the care and homes they need.

The contribution from BDS was a result of a fundraising project embarked on during its annual sales conference where it was decided to incorporate a CSI element into the theme. BDS has always had a strong social conscience and has a history of community involvement through which it aims to provide support to worthwhile projects and organisations in order to make a real difference to socio-economic challenges.

Truly embracing the spirit of Christmas, staff at Dell South Africa have done their bit to ensure the children of the Christiana, Mahikeng and Vryburg, Child Welfare South Africa (CWSA) are not forgotten by Father Christmas this festive season. Approximately 100 children aged from just a few months old up to 18 years old will have gifts under the tree come 25 December.



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Duxbury Networking will again back the all-South African Toyota Imperial SA Team in its efforts to win the world's longest and toughest off-road challenge, the Dakar Rally in South America, starting 1 January 2013.

Last year, the team earned universal praise for securing third and 10th place finishing positions at its first attempt. Giniel de Villiers partnered by co-driver Dirk von Zitzewitz, and Duncan Vos and Rob Howie will again crew the two locally-designed and built Toyota Hilux entries.



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SA in top 10 for security breaches

South Africa has been placed among the 10 countries with the highest percentage of infected PCs.

This is according to PandaLabs' Third Quarter (Q3) Report, which also reveals an increase in the number of hacking attacks on major companies across the globe.

Security breaches, aimed at accessing confidential and personal information, included a massive intrusion experienced by Dropbox file-sharing service, resulting in the theft of user names and passwords from thousands of users. American video game developer, Blizzard, confirmed that it, too, had suffered a breach whereby hackers obtained users' e-mail addresses and encrypted passwords. In September, Adobe also fell victim – with attackers accessing one of Adobe's internal servers in order to sign their malware with a valid digital certificate from the company.

Trojans continued to account for the majority of new threats created this quarter, constituting 72,58% of all new malware, with viruses constituting 14,47% and worms 10,53%.

"It's obvious that malware writers have standardised their infection techniques, because what we've seen in Q3 is a continuation of the trends we saw over the first half of the year," says Luis Corrons, technical director of PandaLabs. "Once again, Trojans have accounted for almost 80% of infections and continue to be the preferred category for cyber-criminals to carry out information theft – confirming that their primary objective is to make money from their creations."

According to PandLabs, the average number of infected PCs across the globe stands at 30,68%, with China once again exhibiting the most infections per country (53,17% of infected PCs), followed by South Korea (52,77%). The top 10 list of most infected countries include countries from Asia, Europe, South America, and Africa. South Africa has a clear presence among them.

Eight of the 10 least infected countries are in Europe, while the country with the fewest infections is Ireland (20% of infected PCs), followed by Norway (20,16%), and Sweden (22,46%).

"This report clearly demonstrates that businesses operating in those countries exhibiting the least infections are willing to adopt the necessary security interventions to protect their organisations from cybercriminals," says Jeremy Matthews, country manager for Panda Security.

"It's imperative that organisations familiarise themselves with the latest types of malware attacks and employ the latest technology if they wish to reduce the threat landscape and protect their confidential information," he adds.

Pinnacle buys into JAG Engineering

Pinnacle Holdings has acquired 90% of JAG Engineering SA, a designer and manufacturer of server racking, wall boxes and IP Enclosures.

JAG Engineering will form part of Pinnacle Africa's Datanet division, reporting to CEO Louis Fourie.

"There is huge synergy in this acquisition. Datanet and JAG Engineering will ramp up their go-to-market strategy of providing infrastructure to existing and future customers. This entrenches our position as market leader in this critical sector of ICT," comments Nico Steyn, MD of Datanet.

"Datanet can ensure a high level of design customisation for our customers' specific requirements and we will be able to ensure the highest quality by producing the product under our supervision in our own factories in South Africa using our highly experienced South African staff," adds Steyn.

"This acquisition is strategically driven to create the capacity to provide a data centre solution which is increasingly relevant with the proliferation of the cloud and the move to data consolidation."

Airtel rolls out IP across Africa

Alcatel-Lucent will help Bharti Airtel meet rapidly growing demand for mobile broadband services in its African operations by supplying advanced new IP (Internet Protocol) networking technology to support the delivery of new mobile broadband data and video services.

Rising smartphone ownership in Africa is driving demand for high-bandwidth mobile data services such as video calling and online gaming. To satisfy this demand and meet continued expansion, Alcatel-Lucent will evolve Airtel Africa's data transport and mobile backhaul networks using its IP/MPLS (IP/Multiprotocol Label Switching) technology.

This new backbone network will support all mobile broadband services to Airtel's 17 affiliates across Africa – serving 60-million customers – as well as a much more robust interconnection to global networks including the UK. The single international network will offer a more simple structure to improve performance, reliability, capacity convergence and interoperable mechanisms for faster service recovery.

The Airtel investment includes a common platform for Layer 2 and Layer 3 service provisioning to reduce the time of delivering the variety of service types. The result being faster Internet speeds for mobile and Airtel business solutions, toll quality voice and extension of services from Airtel, ultimately leading to better customer experience and reduction in the cost of operations.

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Tenda

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Never say die ...

The ability to strive for victory, despite the odds favouring failure, is a trait common to most dedicated racing drivers. But when the challenge is too daunting, the outlook impossibly bleak and the prospects seemingly too discouraging, even the top competitors can be forgiven for letting their shoulders drop and their resolve crumble.

For double world champion Fernando Alonso, this has never been an option. His career has been characterised by a fierce determination to beat the odds and a single-minded focus on success, no matter how difficult the challenge. In 2012 his fortitude was tested to breaking point. His iconic Italian team, Scuderia Ferrari, appeared to be uncompetitive at the first Formula One race of the season in Australia. This was a bitter disappointment to the millions of Ferrari fans – the tifosi - who were expecting better.

However, while Alonso's twelfth place grid position was discouraging, his performance in the race was electrifying. He drove forcefully to finish a fighting fifth. In Malaysia, at the second round, the pattern repeated itself. A lowly ninth place on the grid was quickly translated into a front running position, thanks to the wet conditions which placed more emphasis on Fernando's undoubted skills and less on the chassis shortcomings of his Ferrari. While his win was unexpected, it was greeted with euphoria by scores of his supporters. It was the performance of a true racer.

His third place finish in Monaco, on the ultimate driver's circuit, put him into the lead of the 2012 World Drivers' Championship. It was a position he continued to hold after another win at the Valencia street circuit in Spain where he again showcased his superb talent behind the wheel of a lesser car.

Are Fernando's abilities in the same league as another famous Ferrari driver from a bygone era? At the 1979 French Grand Prix, Gilles Villeneuve ably demonstrated his "never give up" approach to racing. His battle with Rene Arnoux has passed into legend.

With tyres well past their best, Villeneuve refused to give up, pushing harder each lap and banging wheels with his rival many times. It was a wild ride. On many occasions his Ferrari appeared to be out of control, but the Canadian ace brought it back every time.

In the end, while he won his dramatic dogfight with Arnoux, he finished second to Jean-Pierre Jabouille's Renault in the race. The Frenchman had won on French soil for the French constructor for the first time since 1906, but it was Gilles who stole the day and the plaudits from the partisan spectators, thanks to his sheer bravado.

After supporting teammate Jody Scheckter's title bid and acting as wingman when the South African took his World Championship title by winning the Italian GP in 1979, Villeneuve found himself on course to win a world championship of his own in 1982.

But he was cheated out of a comfortable win at the San Marino GP at Imola when teammate Didier Peroni defied team orders to cruise to the finish and passed to win within sight of the chequered flag.

Gilles vowed never to speak to his disloyal rival again. At the next race, the Belgian GP at Zolder, Peroni was fastest in the dying minutes of qualifying. Villeneuve's Ferrari roared out of the pits, its driver determined to beat Didier's lap time and not give up on a possible pole position. It never returned. Gilles crashed to his death on that fateful lap when he put everything on the line for success, including his life.

While 1982 ended in tragedy for Villeneuve, 2012 ended on a sad note for Alonso. Trailing by only 13 points going into the final race of the season in Brazil, he did all he could to come from another lowly grid position to second place in a challenging wet-dry race. However, he lost the championship to Sebastian Vettel by the slimmest of margins. There were just three points between them after a year-long battle. He could do no more ...

What gives world-class sportsmen like Alonso and Villeneuve their "never-give-up" mindset? While winning was everything to Gilles, who was phenomenally brave, Fernando's character is possibly more complex. Although his bravery is not in doubt, he is a "thinking driver", capable of making the best of a bad situation; extracting the maximum from a recalcitrant car, for example.

According to Alonso, determination is characterised by one of his tattoos. It's of an ancient Japanese samurai warrior and it alludes to physical strength, intelligence and force of will. It's inspired by the Hagaware, the spiritual guide written by Yamamoto Tsunetomo in the 18th century.

Tsunetomo believed that becoming one with death in one's thoughts, even in life, is the highest attainment of purity and focus. Perhaps that's the secret ...



Graham Duxbury is the MD of Duxbury Networking, Formula 1 commentator, South African champion and Daytona Speedway USA Hall of Fame inductee.

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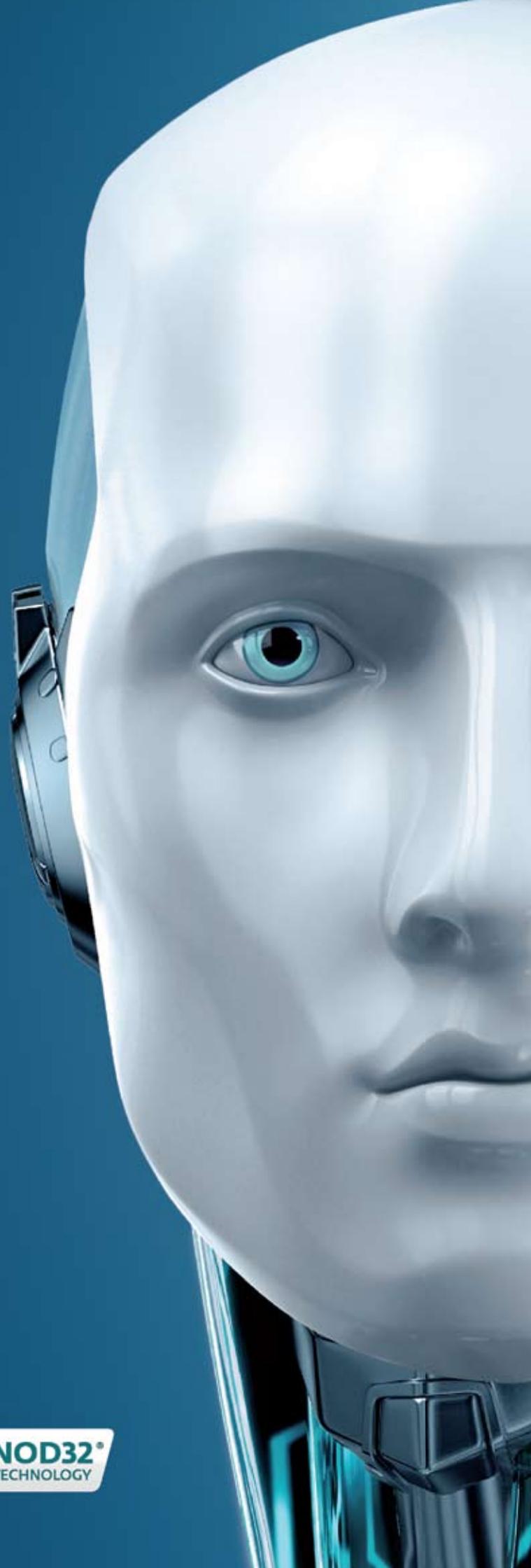
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Low-power 64-bit chip from Intel

Intel has debuted the Intel Atom S1200 product family, delivering the first low-power, 64-bit server-class system-on-chip (SoC) for high-density microservers, as well as a new class of energy-efficient storage and networking systems.

The energy-sipping, industrial-strength microprocessor features essential capabilities to achieve server-class reliability, manageability and cost effectiveness.

“The data centre continues to evolve into unique segments and Intel continues to be a leader in these transitions,” says Vince Resente, enterprise technology specialist at Intel South Africa. “We recognised several years ago the need for a new breed of high-density, energy-efficient servers and other data centre equipment. Today, we are delivering the industry’s only 6-watt¹ SoC that has key data centre features, continuing our commitment to help lead these segments.”

As public clouds continue to grow, the opportunity to transform companies providing dedicated hosting, content delivery or front-end Web servers are also growing. High density servers based on low-power processors are able to deliver the desired performance while at the same time significantly reduce the energy consumption – one of the biggest cost drivers in the data centre. However, before deploying new equipment in data centres, companies look for several critical features.

The Intel Atom processor S1200 product family is the first low-power SoC delivering required data center features that ensure server-class levels of reliability and manageability while also enabling significant savings in overall costs. The SoC includes

two physical cores and a total of four threads enabled with Intel Hyper-Threading Technology² (Intel HT). The SoC also includes 64-bit support, a memory controller supporting up to 8GB of DDR3 memory, Intel Virtualisation Technologies (Intel VT), eight lanes of PCI Express 2.0, Error-Correcting Code (ECC) support for higher reliability, and other I/O interfaces integrated from Intel chipsets. The new product family will consist of three processors with frequency ranging from 1.6GHz to 2.0GHz.

The Intel Atom S1200 product family is also compatible with the x86 software that is commonly used in data centres today. This enables easy integration of the new low-powered equipment and avoids additional investments in porting and maintaining new software stacks.

Intel continues to drive power consumption down in its products, enabling systems to be as energy efficient as possible. Each year since the 2006 introduction of low-power Intel Xeon processors, Intel has delivered a new generation of low-power processors that have decreased the thermal design power (TDP) from 40 watts in 2006 to 17 watts this year due to Intel’s advanced 22-nanometer (nm) process technology. The Intel Atom processor S1200 product family is the first low-power SoC with server-class features offering as low as 6 watts¹ of TDP.

More than 20 low-power designs including microservers, storage and networking systems use the Intel Atom processor S1200 processor family from companies including Accusys, CETC, Dell, HP, Huawei, Inspur, Microsan, Qsan, Quant, Supermicro and Wiyynn.

Surprising decline for networking market

The worldwide Ethernet switch market (Layer 2/3) reached \$5,36-billion in the third quarter of 2012 (3Q12), representing a 4,4% year-over-year decline compared to the very strong 3Q11. Meanwhile, the worldwide router market declined 0,2% year over year in 3Q12, according to the International Data Corporation (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly Ethernet Switch and Router Tracker.

The 3Q12 results also show that the Ethernet switch market increased in the mid to high single digit range, year over year, in Latin America, Japan, Central & Eastern Europe, and Middle East & Africa (MEA).

On the other hand, Asia/Pacific (excluding Japan) was down overall with the market declining 3,5% year over year, whereas the US declined 6,4% and Western Europe decreased more significantly just over 10% year over year in 3Q12.

“The surprising decline in the Ethernet switch market after several quarters of positive growth is a result of several factors, but the highlight was that the slower growth in the 10GbE core segment of the market could not completely offset the decline in the network edge/access segment,” says Rohit Mehra, vice-president: network infrastructure at IDC. “10GbE along with

the emerging 40GbE Ethernet switch segments are the ones to watch as growth in virtualised applications and converged infrastructure drive the need for advanced networks in data centre buildouts.”

10GbE switch (Layer 2/3) revenue increased 10,7% year over year while 10GbE port shipments grew a remarkable 61,4% year over year to just under 3,5-million ports in 3Q12, and continue to be the main driver of the overall Ethernet switch market.

The Layer 4-7 switching market worldwide grew at 6,9% year over year to reach \$414,9-million in 3Q12.

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IBM chip sheds light on big data

IBM is using light instead of electrical signals to transmit information for future computing. The breakthrough technology – called “silicon nanophotonics” – allows the integration of different optical components side-by-side with electrical circuits on a single silicon chip using, for the first time, sub-100nm semiconductor technology.

Silicon nanophotonics takes advantage of pulses of light for communication and provides a super highway for large volumes of data to move at rapid speeds between chips in servers, large datacenters, and supercomputers, alleviating the limitations of congested data traffic and high-cost traditional interconnects.

“This technology breakthrough is a result of more than a decade of pioneering research at IBM,” says Dr John Kelly, senior vice-president and director of IBM Research. “This allows us to move silicon nanophotonics technology into a real-world manufacturing environment that will have impact across a range of applications.”

The amount of data being created and transmitted over enterprise networks continues to grow due to an explosion of new applications and services. Silicon nanophotonics, now primed for commercial development, can enable the industry to keep pace with increasing demands in chip performance and computing power.

IBM’s CMOS nanophotonics technology demonstrates transceivers to exceed the data rate of 25Gbps per channel. In addition, the technology is capable of feeding a number of parallel optical data streams into a single fibre by utilising compact on-chip wavelength-division multiplexing devices. The ability to multiplex large data streams at high data rates will allow future scaling of optical communications capable of delivering terabytes of data between distant parts of computer systems.

Broadband use in SA has doubled

Broadband access in South Africa has more than doubled in the last two years as mobile operators slashed the cost of data and network roll-out accelerated.

This is revealed in new data contained in the final version of the Internet Access in South Africa 2012 study conducted by World Wide Worx and backed by the howzit MSN online portal.

The broadband data, which is analysed in detail in the report, shows that the number of broadband subscriptions grew from 3,6-million at the end of 2010 to an expected 8,2-million by the end of 2012 – 128% growth.

Many users have multiple forms of broadband access – such as an ADSL account as well as 3G – while many hop between operators to take advantage of promotional offers. As a result, the number of individual broadband users is substantially lower, but also more than doubling in the past two years. The number has grown from 2,8-million to 6,7-million – 140% growth in just two years.

“The migration from fixed line to mobile represents a profound shift in the way South Africans consume content,” says Justin Zehmke, executive producer of howzit MSN. “The 9-5 internet peak, along with the traditional desktop publishing and advertising model that has become the South African standard, will become increasingly irrelevant. Coupled with the availability of cheaper mobile devices, this presents an opportunity for smaller publishing and tech companies to enter a market traditionally dominated by a few major players.”

Zehmke’s view is backed up by World Wide Worx’s finding that the total number of fixed line broadband subscriptions is now outnumbered 8 to 1 by mobile broadband subscriptions. Telkom’s ADSL service now holds just 10,6% of the broadband subscriber market in South Africa.

Measured by subscriptions, South Africa now has an apparent 15,8% broadband penetration of the population. However, due to extensive multiple-use of broadband subscriptions, especially thanks to the falling cost of data and the proliferation of promotional offers, the number of individuals using broadband subscriptions represents only 11% penetration of the population.

“This may seem small, but it is still light years ahead of where we were five years ago,” says Arthur Goldstuck, MD of World Wide Worx. “It suggests that, five years from now, mobile broadband and smartphones will be the conventional means of access, rather than fixed line, which will increasingly be confined to small business.”

Zehme adds: “High speeds, lower rates and ease of access also means that the demographic of the SA user base is shifting significantly, once again creating space for new content and business models. The trends presented in this survey suggest that we will see a major shift in the type of content supplied and consumed, with mobile apps and services at the top of the industry’s priority list.”

The impact, he believes, will be highly positive for the content industry: “The search for viable digital business models will lay the foundation for a culture of innovation in technology and publishing, creating choice and variety for the consumer. As the audience matures and continues to grow, we are set for a reinvention of the South African digital industry.”



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HP ups the ante in enterprise solutions

At HP Discover 2012 in Frankfurt in December, the company made some significant announcements around its enterprise offerings, particularly in the storage, information optimisation and cloud arenas. Mark Davison reports.

HP used its annual Discover conference and exhibition in Frankfurt this year to make some of the most significant announcements in its storage portfolio in more than 10 years and, in the process, introduced a new lexicon to IT – “polymorphic simplicity”.

Dave Donatelli, executive vice-president of HP’s Enterprise Group, says that the three new solutions announced at Discover - for HP 3Par StoreServ, StoreAll and StoreOnce Backup - are among the biggest innovations the company has made to its storage range in a decade.

“With today’s announcements we are looking to transform the storage industry,” Donatelli says. “Why is there a need for change? Just as the server and networking arenas are too complex, the same can be said of storage – it faces the same challenges.

“All the major storage architectures sold today were developed 15 to 25 years ago,” he adds. “And over that period – with the Internet, with the explosion of information – there has been tremendous change. Simply, all storage architectures were great in their day, but they can’t deliver the performance and value that is required today.”

Donatelli says that since the company introduced Converged Storage in 2011, the storage unit had experienced 38% growth. “3Par StoreServ has had growth of over 75%, StoreOnce Backup is up more than 45% and more than 150 000 units of StoreVirtualisation have been sold,” he says.

Donatelli adds that HP is looking to continue on this path with today’s enhancements to the product range and as customers look to reap ROI3 (return on investment cubed): return on information; return on infrastructure; and return on individuals.

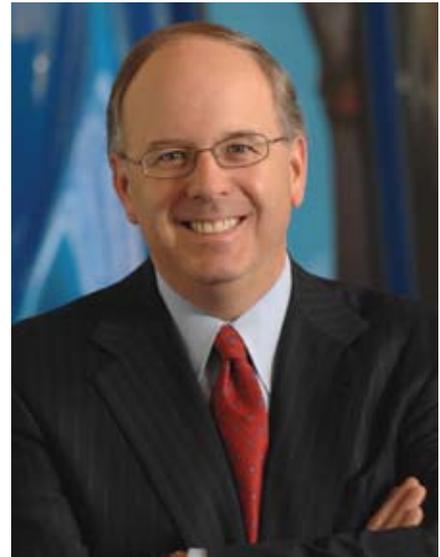
“This is our most important announcement in a decade,” says Donatelli. “It is all under one common brand and we’re extremely excited about it.”

David Scott, senior vice-president and GM of HP Storage, introduced the phrase “polymorphic simplicity” in describing what the company’s vision was for converged storage.

“With new trends and challenges facing 15 to 25-year-old architectures; in a world where there are a tremendous number of different architectures, different tiers and silos of storage; where complex manageability makes them fundamentally inefficient and increases costs; and where there are tremendous levels of fragmentation, our vision for converged storage is one of polymorphic simplicity,” Scott says.

“Polymorphic is a word that is seldom heard, but if you break it down, poly means many and morphic means shapes and forms,” Scott explains. “So we are looking to introduce storage simplicity in many shapes and forms.

“A single architecture for primary storage, information retention and protection,” he says. “An architecture that scales from mid-range to high-end; a common approach to block, object and file applications; an



Dave Donatelli, HP’s Enterprise Group.

architecture for both HDD and SSD/flash.

“That is our vision of polymorphic simplicity,” Scott says.

The three key announcements made by HP Storage include:

* HP 3PAR StoreServ 7000 Storage – the industry’s only midrange quad-controller platform offering Tier 1 storage availability and quality-of-service features at an easy entry price point for organisations at less than Euro 30 000. Supporting both block and file data services, the system is available with HDD and SSD or as an all-SSD configuration capable of performing more than 320 000 input/output operations per second—2.4 times that of a similarly priced competitive array.

* HP StoreAll Storage – a highly scalable platform for object and file data access, provides a simplified environment for big data retention and cloud storage that reduces the need for additional administrators or hardware. HP StoreAll Express Query was created by HP Labs, the company’s central research arm, and is a metadata database that allows clients to conduct search queries 100 000 times faster than previous file system search methods, facilitating informed business

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>>> decisions based on the most current data. Integration with HP Autonomy Intelligent Data Operating Layer (IDOL) offloads processing tasks to HP StoreAll so that analytics can be rapidly performed with more current data and using less compute hardware. Additional integration with HP StoreAll and HP Autonomy Consolidated Archive, as well as certification of other independent software vendor applications, provides safe, long-term retention of digital assets.

* HP StoreOnce 2000 and 4000 Backup – with support for HP StoreOnce Catalyst software, provides efficient data movement and high-performance deduplication to reduce data protection costs in remote sites and data centers. The new models perform backup operations up to three times faster at a 35% lower cost than the closest competitive system.

Hot on the heels of its storage announcements, HP also revealed a slew of new products aimed at information optimization. Along with cloud and security, information optimisation is one of the three pillars that HP is building its future vision of converged infrastructure on.

The company says the various new solutions will help enterprises manage, understand and act upon the variety, velocity and volume of organisational data to drive maximum "Return on Information".

Return on Information, HP says, is the value that organisations generate from their investments in information solutions, services and resources by gaining insight from their data to make better and quicker decisions. Big data is composed of structured data, from traditional databases; unstructured data consisting of images, videos, e-mails, texts and more; and semi-structured data collected from sensors and machines—and are all factors in the challenge that organisations are facing today.

The volume of the world's "digital universe" is expected to reach 8 zettabytes by 2015,

making storage and management of data a massive challenge. And, according to new research conducted on behalf of HP, nearly 60% of business executives report that their organisations are not equipped with the right solutions to gain insight from Big Data, and only 10% of executives said their organisations currently incorporate unstructured data into their enterprise insights, processes and strategy.

With new solutions from Autonomy and HP Vertica, coupled with new HP Converged Infrastructure solutions and deep services expertise, HP says it enables businesses and governments to extract value from 100% of their structured, semi-structured and unstructured information.

"Over the next several years, Return on Information will become the single most important measure of success for organisations," says George Kadifa, executive vice-president, Software at HP. "HP will continue to invest in and develop solutions and services that harness the volume, diversity and unpredictability of information to deliver real value to our clients."

Announcements within information optimisation include:

* To address the need for configuring and deploying Big Data systems, HP has expanded its HP AppSystems portfolio to offer improved customer choice and expanded capabilities of HP Converged Infrastructure with Apache Hadoop, HP Vertica Analytics Platform and Autonomy eDiscovery environments.

* The Autonomy Legal and Compliance Performance Suite is an end-to-end solution that uniquely enables organisations to detect and act on new signals of risk; understand, protect, govern and collaborate on information; and maintain compliance with local, federal and international regulations.

* HP Proactive Care for SAP optimises an infrastructure running SAP solutions, enabling faster analysis of large amounts

of data including application trend analysis, capacity planning and measurement of system resource utilisation.

* HP Vertica Analytics Platform 6.1 is a next-generation analytics platform, purpose-built to optimise Big Data. It enables enterprises to optimise and monetise Big Data with analytics packs, performance enhancements, enhanced integration with Hadoop and simplified Amazon EC2 cloud deployments—all at hyperspeed and massive scale.

* New HP Telco Big Data and Analytics solutions enable communication service providers (CSPs) to transform data from a variety of sources, including subscribers' experience and preferences, into actionable intelligence. Leveraging HP's Big Data analytics software, as well as HP's consulting, research, information management and business intelligence experience, HP Telco Big Data and Analytics enable CSPs to manage, analyse and use business-relevant structured and unstructured data.

* The Autonomy Marketing Performance Suite enables marketers to understand, attract, engage and convert customers in realtime, resulting in increased market share and revenue. The suite consists of market-leading offerings for Customer Experience Management, Marketing Optimisation and Multichannel Analytics.

And then it was into the cloud, a trend that HP is convinced will soon force "fundamental change" on IT as we know it. The company used Discover to unveil a host of new cloud solutions spanning private, managed and public cloud environments.

The new solutions are an extension of HP's Converged Cloud portfolio to help customers succeed in a hybrid world, providing the essential foundation of solutions to drive agility, speed innovation and lower costs.

In his keynote at Discover 2012, Bill Veghte, chief operating officer at HP, says >>>

Dell recommends Windows 8.



The power to do more

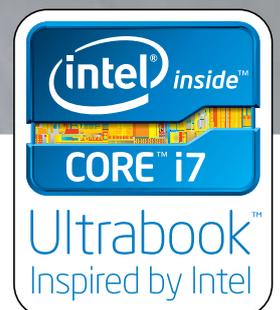


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NEWS and ANALYSIS

>>> that research conducted on behalf of the company supports the need for solutions that span traditional, private, managed and public cloud environments.

Respondents indicated that 75% of business and IT executives plan to pursue a hybrid delivery model. At the same time, 65% are concerned with vendor lock-in, and 72% say that portability of workloads between cloud models is important to their cloud implementations.

“Cloud is going to change IT fundamentally, but it is not going to happen overnight,” Veghte says. “There is a shift in architecture and a shift in how Web services are developed.”

Veghte says that HP has three mantras in the journey into cloud: choice, confidence and consistency. “You have to have choice in the [cloud] delivery model, choice in the platform, and choice in your partner,” he says. “You have to have confidence in terms of security, manageability and scalability – and to do this, you have to have a consistent architecture, consistent portability and consistent consumption.

“What we are rolling out today is public cloud, but with enterprise SLAs and public cloud prices,” Veghte says. “We have a strategy, we have an architecture and we’re pedal down in driving this,” Veghte adds.

The new cloud solutions include:

- * HP CloudSystem and HP Cloud Service Automation (CSA) 3.1, which provide the foundation and management platform for fast deployment of cloud services.
- * HP Continuous Delivery Automation (CDA) 1.1, which automates the application release process for cloud applications.
- * New and enhanced HP Cloud Services, which offer public cloud services in the areas of compute, storage and application platform as a service.
- * Two new industry offerings for communication service providers (CSPs) and manufacturers.

“HP is committed to delivering cloud capabilities that enterprises can rely on,” says Veghte. “Today’s announcements enable customers to more affordably and easily take advantage of the agility of the cloud without jeopardizing their enterprise service level agreements.”

To ensure that clouds are affordable and easy to deploy, HP has further enhanced the functionality of HP CloudSystem enabling clients to:

- * Manage cloud requirements for cost, security and availability with an open, extensible architecture for heterogeneous IT environments that now include support for Kernel-based Virtual Machines (KVMs) and virtualisation technologies from HP, Microsoft and VMware, as well as physical provisioning for server blades.

- * Gain instant access to additional capacity and manage uneven service demands on an as-needed, pay-as-you go basis through new HP CloudSystem bursting capabilities.

- * Reduce administration time and accelerate development of service offerings with an expanded HP Cloud Maps portfolio that includes 50 new prepackaged application templates. The portfolio now consists of more than 200 templates that allow clients to create customized catalogs of application services ready for push-button deployment.

HP also introduced a new version of HP CSA, which is available as part of HP CloudSystem or standalone. HP CSA 3.1 provides clients with a comprehensive, unified cloud management platform for brokering and managing enterprise-grade applications and infrastructures specifically for cloud services. This new version ensures business continuity with a highly available architecture that continues to operate even in the event of a failure. In addition, it offers greater protection against security threats with HP TippingPoint security solutions. HP CSA speeds time to market of application services for public, private and hybrid cloud environments.

Competitive pressure is driving enterprises to deploy high-quality applications in less time. The new HP CDA 1.1 fully automates the application release process, enabling clients to deliver high-quality applications by eliminating delays traditionally caused by manual hand-offs between teams during the application life cycle.

HP also introduced HP Cloud Solutions for CSPs, which enable CSPs to build and operate public cloud environments for enterprise and small and mid-sized business (SMB) customers. By transforming into cloud service brokers, CSPs can profitably build, operate and monetize a cloud infrastructure to accelerate the delivery of new services to their business customers while achieving higher retention rates among subscribers.

HP has introduced new functionality to HP Cloud Services, the company’s public cloud. These new offerings enable organisations of all sizes to confidently move enterprise-grade production workloads to the cloud. New services and solutions include:

- * The general availability of HP Cloud Compute, a pay-as-you-go model that allows users to deploy and customise compute instances on demand.
- * The advancement of HP Cloud Block Storage, a storage solution that enables users to easily move data from one compute instance to another, to public beta.
- * HP Cloud Application Platform as a Service (PaaS), which enables enterprises, developers and independent software vendors to focus on application development and deployment. Based on the Cloud Foundry Open PaaS project, it supports a multi-application infrastructure along with instant provisioning and deployment through a single click.
- * HP Cloud Workload Migration Services, delivered in conjunction with HP’s partner ecosystem, helps users assess, plan and migrate existing production workloads to HP’s public cloud without user disruption.

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DEEP THROAT

Doing a Hannibal ... Smith

Just like the fictional leader of the A-Team, we just "love it when a plan comes together". The Westcon buyout of Comztek, which we've been alluding to for more than two months, finally happened. In the last instalment of Deep Throat we admitted that we didn't know what price was involved in the deal, but in the official announcement, it turns out to be R88-million. We think, perhaps, that there could be some awkward questions posed around the Mustek boardroom table. At the same time, there's probably a lot of back-slapping going on among the Datatec board members. After all, the initial offer for Comztek way back when was R96-million – a figure that a certain Doug Woolley chirped he'd pay for Xbox alone – and, after reluctance from 41% shareholder Mustek, this was reportedly raised to R102-million. Just goes to show that the dynamics of the IT industry are not always on an upward trend.

PR Prick(le) of the Month: 'Tis the season ...

No, not the season to be jolly, but the time of the year most Editors worth their salt detest with a vengeance – when every PR + dog badgers you for a feature schedule for the next 12 issues. Now, we understand that PRs need a heads-up in order to prep their clients and produce relevant copy for future features but, unfortunately, the number of agencies that actually send through copy for these features has dwindled dramatically. How, for example, do you justify a feature list – bolstered by a more in-depth brief weeks before publication – when you run a printer feature and the PR for the world's largest printer company doesn't submit one word ... not comment, not on trends, not even on new product? As Esteemed Editor was wont to note many moons ago: "The only reason for an annual feature list is for certain PRs to curry favour with opposition publications, so they can see what you've got planned and try to pre-empt your scheduled features." Much as Deep Throat hates to admit it, he may just have a point ...

Pic of the Month:

Every Editor's nightmare ...

SUMMER OF CRICKET

Australia on verge of Test summit, with victory all but certain in Adelaide



Couldn't resist publishing this screenshot from a prominent Aussie website leading into the final day of the second test match at Adelaide. As most South Africans will gleefully know, the Proteas went on to defy all the odds and bat all day to draw the test, setting

up a thriller in Perth that they won, ensuring a series victory in the process. As fellow hacks, we can only feel sorry (and embarrassed) for the writer, sub-editors and editors that took the chance on scooping their opposition. Then again ...



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A portrait of Paul Conradie, a middle-aged man with white hair and a mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue striped shirt. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression.

Look ahead to the tech drivers of 2013

By Paul Conradie, Managing Director of Comztek

There is no doubt that the speed at which technology progresses is daunting, but instead of fighting it, IT professionals the world over need to embrace it and move along with the flow.

2013 promises to be no different and we expect to see a lot more happening in the world of tech. This will include the maturity of the cloud, the aggressive drive of mobile, the embracing by enterprise companies of aspects such as the enterprise application store and more.

We take a look at what we feel will be ten top trends in 2013, technologies that will continue to shape the way in which we interact from a day-to-day aspect in both our business and personal environments.

Paul Conradie, Managing Director of Comztek

Mobile device wars

The war of the mobile devices will continue to hot up as the smartphone and tablet market becomes increasingly competitive. Software will be the main driver in this field as users will start to look beyond the device and focus more on the capabilities of the software on the device. Windows 8 will start to make waves in this environment and we will see traditional players begin to layer new tech onto their existing offerings in a bid to stay ahead of the curve and to in fact try and beat the curve.

This will be particularly relevant in Africa where mobile devices will continue to replace the necessity of desktops and where Internet connectivity will be demanded from all devices no matter the platform.

Mobile application development

An area where we say extensive growth in 2012, mobile application development will continue on its winning streak into and through 2013. Here we will start to see more development in the productivity tool space, especially on the back of vendors such as Microsoft's aggressive move into the arena. Development will however become more community relevant and we will see bespoke applications coming out for vertical industries, as well as communities such as farming as an example, as well as company specific applications as businesses continue to grapple with the notion of BYOD and try to make it work for their businesses.

Personal Cloud

The home of the consumer the personal cloud represents an exciting time for the tech savvy user as it will enable them to transact across devices, into the cloud. Here we will start to see a lot more movement as people begin to trust the cloud and start to trust applications that reside in the cloud. There will be a fair amount of movement between the personal cloud and the enterprise cloud with some overlap in applications and usage. It will be the 2013 onus of the IT manager to understand both in order to better manage it.

Greater Internet proliferation in Africa

The African market will continue to demand more from the Internet. With ongoing growth

in adoption of mobile devices African Internet and Telecommunications providers will need to ensure that their services will be able to handle the impending traffic coming as a result. African users are also starting to mature in their use of the Internet and while many state they are still about five years behind in their use of it, 2013 will be a watershed year where they will start to demand more, transact more and engage more with the Internet. Bandwidth issues will also peter into obscurity over this time.

Hybrid cloud

The cloud will mature in 2013 and while its adoption will still be slow in some areas, particularly in South Africa, we will see a growth in Hybrid Cloud computing offerings. Here IT departments will need to look at how the cloud services can be used with onsite services and how the two can actively engage to form a technology framework for the business. Hybrid cloud solutions will include moving day-to-day applications into the cloud where there is not a need for large data transfers, coupled with these being able to feed into the existing onsite applications of organisations. This may present a headache for IT – but should rather be viewed as an opportunity.

Big data and storage

With the digital landscape evolving data is growing and the more data there is the more storage is needed to house it. The one thing the world of Cloud computing, social media, the Internet and enterprise IT drives is data, big hungry data that needs a safe secure place to be housed. While we saw the rise of big data in 2011 and 2012 there will be a big boom for data in 2013 as a result of the maturity of the cloud as well as the fact that more devices will continue to form part of the ICT landscape.

Useable analytics

The time for analytics to step up is now. In 2013 we are going to see analytics come to the fore as customer experience managers demand to know what their data is telling them about their customers. But we will see a turn from analytics for analytics sake and we will see a push towards more user-friendly tools that are inherent in software solutions we already use. This will coincide with the growth in big data and will form a quintessential component of large data stores.

Software and service integration

The device generation is here and users are already starting to demand the combination of software and services on a single device. Virtual appliances will form a part of this as will the need to ship software on the box. Organisations will turn to vendors who are able to provide both solutions as a single offering, negating the need to engage with a myriad of enterprises in order to deliver a single solution set. This will also form part of an effort to beat the global skills shortage and help curb unnecessary spend on multiple solutions and unnecessary services.

Enterprise cloud

The big bang for 2013 will be the move to the enterprise cloud. We will start seeing more local companies comfortably taking the leap from virtualised environments into the cloud. This will see the rise of enterprise application stores, BYOD services within business, and will assist in bolstering the prevalence of the aforementioned hybrid cloud. Businesses will stop dipping their toes in the cloud and will look to actively engage service providers to make the cloud happen for them as a result of a need to bring down the costs of large scale IT footprints.

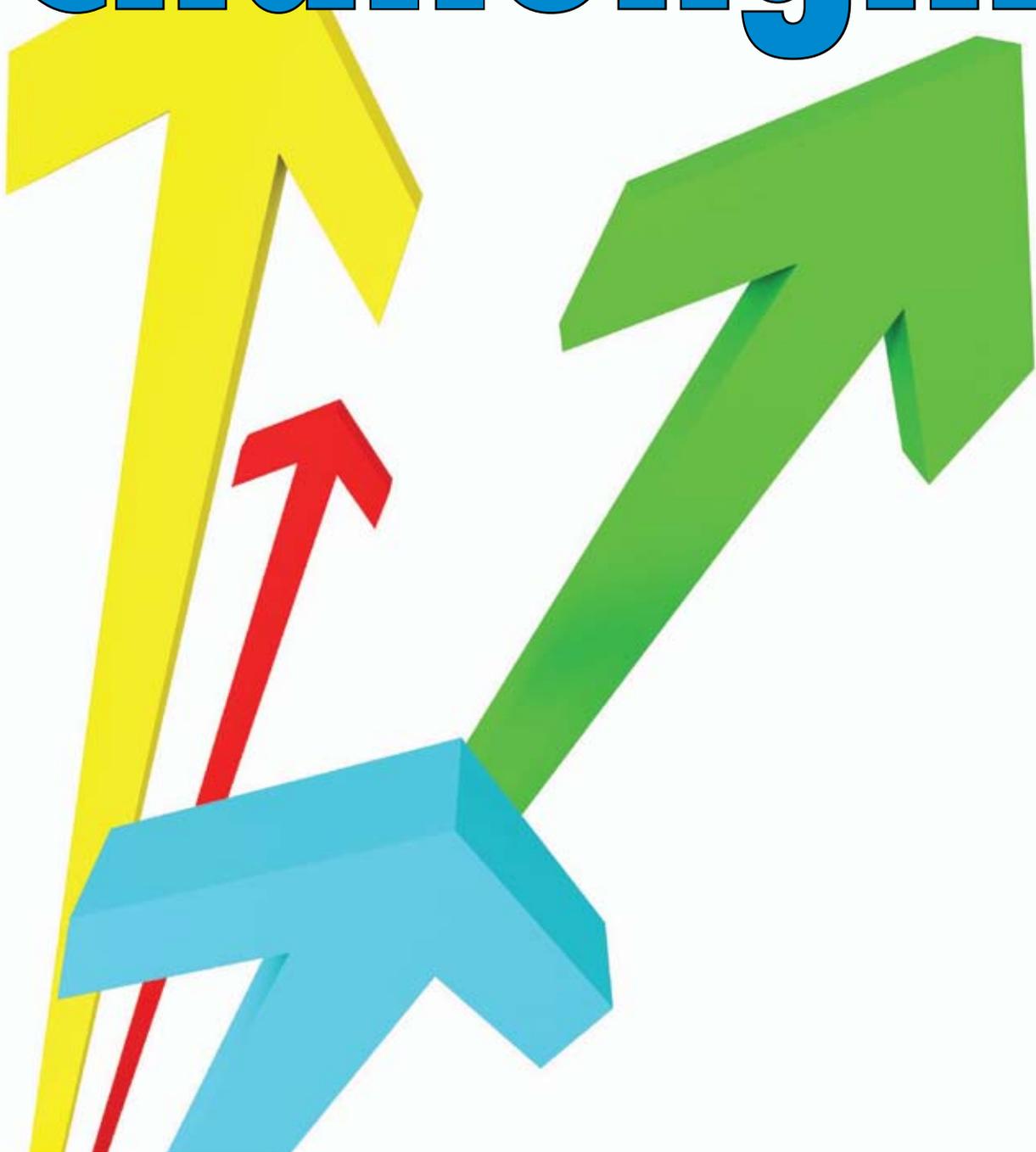
Consolidation in distribution

Finally, an environment close to Comstek, we will see the distribution market shrink and consolidate. More global players will step into the fray, which will mean more stringent SLAs and a greater adoption of value added distribution services. The face of the distributor will change in light of the adoption of cloud computing and it will start to play a far more valuable role to partners and systems integrators in the areas of skills, training, support and product management. The shift will be a positive one for the industry that will be able to derive more value from their distributor.

In short 2013 is going to be a cracker year for the technology industry. While economic challenges will remain they will continue to urge the industry to innovate and consolidate. Service excellence will be at the forefront of the business requirement and technology will have to shape itself around the business need – at a time when industry is maturing in their understanding of what they want from their IT investment.

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year ahead

The year ahead, given that the Mayans are proved incorrect in their predictions, could prove to be one of the most tumultuous ever witnessed by the IT industry and, more specifically the channel as we know it.

From a technology perspective, the lead that Apple carved out for itself with the iPhone and iPad has not only diminished, but is under the very real threat of being overturned as other major vendors start bringing their own cheaper and, in many cases, superior, competing products to market.

The commoditisation of hardware is in full swing and will show no sign of relenting in 2013. In fact, almost all analysts agree that the sales of devices such as tablets and smartphones will outstrip those of traditional PCs, notebooks and the lamentably slow-off-the-blocks ultrabooks. The fact that many of the latest products from major vendors feature some kind of 'hybrid' – a tablet that slides or clips out of a keyboard for use as a tablet – only adds weight to the way that device technology is evolving.

This move will also see a sea-change in not only the purchasing habits of users, but in the very way that they purchase their machines. Cyberstores have been slow to take root in South Africa, mainly due to secure payment methods, but all that is about to change in 2013. A recent survey stated that nearly 70% of users aged 18 to 30 in SA would do their Christmas shopping online. It is not a huge leap from buying presents to buying almost everything online – including computer hardware. And the number of Internet shops sprouting in the local market could prove to be a very real threat to the more established shopping mall retailers.

Many of the more traditional within the channel – retailers, resellers and distributors alike – will probably snort at the above assertion, pointing to their key market of the enterprise as the saving grace of the channel. But they

may be counting their chickens before they hatch. Cloud computing is on the radar of most local corporates and next year could see them purposefully dipping more than their toes into the cloud as they look to further cut costs and operate within even more frugal budgets. Any major move to cloud computing by corporates will, by its very nature, see a decline in their traditional server and storage spend.

Ah, they'd likely reply, but what about Windows 8? The sad answer: What about Windows 8?

Despite what Microsoft may say, its much-vaunted new operating system is not proving to be a hit with enterprises. Redmond claims more than 40-million sales since launch, but these have been mainly to individual end users. The corporate market is wary of new software at the best of times and, given the nightmarish experiences many of them had with Vista, they are not expected to be keen buyers of Windows 8 until at least the first or second quarter of 2014. That is, if they can ever get over the hump of BYOD (bring your own device).

The above scenario may seem as gloomy as Mayan doomsayers, but all it really means is that those in the local channel have to change their current way of thinking and their outdated, old-fashioned business models.

There is always going to be a need for the channel – specifically in remote and far-removed countries such as South Africa – but it has to become more flexible, look to new go-to-market strategies and be able to adapt rapidly to changing market conditions.

Issues that many in the channel are no strangers to ... and traits that have made it one of the most resilient IT channels in the world.

COVER STORY

If ever there was a year that could prove to be a watershed for the local IT industry, it is 2013.

Since the start of the global economic crisis in 2008, South Africa has remained relatively unscathed, buffered by numerous factors ranging from the timeous introduction of the Credit Act to the conservative caution of our local banks.

But there are some trends that just cannot be ignored. And although they may take a bit of time to filter down to the southernmost tip of Africa, many of the trends that have rocked global IT over the past year are about to engulf us.

Unlike the Western world where Internet access is considered more of a right than a privilege, this has not always been the case in South Africa. But that is starting to change – rapidly. As the high costs associated with the Internet slowly and inevitably erode, more South Africans than ever before are gaining access. And they're using it – not only for entertainment and education, but also in making specific purchases.

Pierre Spies, CEO of Tarsus, says there are a number of critical factors facing the local channel in the coming year, but that one of the most crucial will be around the Internet.

"The biggest thing that the channel should be aware of in the next 12 months is online trading," Spies says.

"It has been around for quite some time, but not many people have taken note of it. It is now going through exponential growth and I think it is going to have some significant impact on the market and the channel in the coming months."

The general business climate is another aspect to consider, says Spies.

"In all my years in the channel I cannot remember the vendors being under such intense pressure," he says. "Many of us have said for years that this market is vastly over-traded and I think that in 2013 we are

all going to bear the brunt of this.

"In terms of the corporate market," he adds, "I don't think we're going to see any dramatic spend coming out of this segment. I think it will be at least another year before many of them upgrade to Windows 8, mainly because a lot of them burnt their fingers when Vista was launched.

"We have seen some Windows 8 uptake and I think that will continue," he says. "It may even filter through to the SMB space, but Windows 8 has not been as big as we thought it would be."

New technologies – and some older ones – could help to bolster the channel, he adds.

"With a number of other established vendors now releasing tablets, I think the market will become a lot more competitive and open to the channel," Spies says.

"The problem with Apple's stranglehold on the tablet sector was that the margins are so slim that it hardly makes sense for the channel to get involved. Now, with tablets coming to market that are on a par with Apple's – and in some cases, with better features – and more reasonably priced, the channel has a better chance making some margin.

"We're also seeing a big swing where the virtual desktop is starting to become the norm, rather than the virtual datacentre, so more and more people are moving to thin clients," he says. "This is definitely a market that bodes well for the channel in the future.

"Add to this new developments in storage, and the fact that storage is set to continue with its boom period as vast amounts of data continue to be generated, and there are still plenty of areas where the channel can prove to be lucrative," he says.

Spies says that the local channel has not been sitting idly by while change looms upon it. Many in the channel have started adopting new business models in order to meet the challenges that they know lie ahead.

"There have definitely been changes in



Pierre Spies, Tarsus.

some of the business models within the channel," he says. "We're seeing this happen all the time as the pace of change is going at quite some rate. I think all of us in the channel realise that we have to change a lot faster to keep up with some of the trends that are emerging."

So will this change lead to more consolidation within the local channel? Spies says there will be, but that there is consolidation in other areas too.

"What we're currently seeing is a lot of poaching of skills from counterparts within the reseller community," he explains. "So there is more of a consolidation of skills sets among the top resellers – the bigger and stronger resellers are getting stronger.

"I don't see much more consolidation taking place on the distribution front," he adds. "We've just had the merger between Westcon and Comztek and I think that might be that for the time being. What I do see in the coming months is a lot of group company's merging – consolidation within the various distribution groups.

"We have just broken ground on new premises, for example, where we will

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COVER STORY

>>> consolidate all the group companies within MB Technologies under one roof in December next year."

Nick Christodoulou, regional partner manager at EMC, says that although there are threats of upheaval in the channel in 2013, the basics of what makes a successful relationship between vendors and resellers will remain constant.

"Effective partnerships will be built on the foundations of profitability, predictability and simplicity," Christodoulou says.

"I also believe that 2013 will mark the beginning of a transformation that could see the channel completely change from its current form by the end of the decade," he adds.

"Already the roles and responsibilities of the different channel entities are blurring. Service Integrators are becoming resellers, resellers are becoming service providers, and even end users are becoming service providers."

Christodoulou says this readjustment of the channel is taking place quicker in the telecoms sector than in most others, a change forced on operators by prevailing market conditions.

"In just two to three years, telecoms operators will no longer be able to rely on voice for revenue, a state of affairs that is forcing them to look into the development of service portfolios," he says. "A major part of this will be the provision of Infrastructure-as-a-Service as well as IT-as-a-Service."

Christodoulou also predicts that, while there is no way of knowing how much longer SIs, VARs and VADs will last in their current forms, one thing is clear: the distribution channel will go from strength to strength in 2013.

"Regardless of what happens to the wider channel, the value-add benefits that distributors offer today will continue to be in demand," he says. We will also see the trend for market consolidation continue as those resellers and SIs that

have not been able to keep pace with the changes engendered by cloud computing and professional services-driven business models find themselves the target of acquisitions."

On emerging technologies to watch next year, Christodoulou says that although he expects Big Data to have an impact on the channel in 2013, he believes it will mostly be centred on the provision of scalable storage and data management technologies.

"Greater changes will occur over the next few years; however, the main focus for 2013 will be on helping businesses to manage their data from an infrastructure point of view and extracting valuable insights from it," he says.

Bruce Skjolde, emerging markets channel manager at Mindjet, agrees that the channel has to change its business models.

"Traditional channel partners have to evolve due to shrinking margins and increased competition within the marketplace," Skjolde says. "Additionally, customers are becoming more demanding with regards to transparency around pricing and margins, which is forcing the channel to find new revenue streams in order to compensate for the reduced margins."

He adds that resellers also need to differentiate themselves by providing value-added services and integrated products that can be measured through an ROI model.

"Resellers and partners need to provide added value that address each stage in the product lifecycle - this allows customers to focus on their core business," he says.

In terms of other trends and game-changers that the market can expect to see in the next year, Skjolde believes that with the cloud, SaaS and mobile really continuing to gain momentum, next year is going to be about how the channel aligns itself to these areas.

"Resellers must identify new areas where their knowledge and skills can differentiate

them from commoditised technologies," he says. "IDC predicted this past July that the SaaS delivery model would wipe \$7-billion off the software licensing market this year alone, with a proportional market price decline continuing in subsequent years.

"Like it or not, the channel needs to find resellers who will support cloud and get on board with cloud as a distribution model," he says. "Those that fight the change will, in my opinion, pay the price in both lost sales and customers, as others take a more pragmatic approach."

2013 has been touted by many as the year that the hype around cloud computing finally dissipates and its real uptake by customers finally begins. The channel has always viewed the cloud with suspicion, but it shouldn't, according to Alain Schram, COO at Kathea.

"A depressed economic climate, coupled with the ever-present challenges of shrinking IT budgets, reduced spend and lower margins are issues which have plagued the channel for many years," Schram says.

"More recently the traditional channel has come under threat from the growth of cloud computing, which enables users to gain access to services from service providers rather than purchasing product from resellers.

"However, the cloud does not necessarily spell the end for the channel," Schram adds. "A slight adjustment to the business model can see channel partners take advantage of the opportunities offered by the cloud, accessing new markets and enabling more businesses of all sizes to gain access to advanced enterprise-grade technology."

Schram says that as bandwidth has become increasingly available, stable and affordable in South Africa, cloud computing has become more of a viable option, leading more and more technologies to be offered as services.

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particularly the burgeoning Small Medium Enterprise (SME) market in South Africa, by enabling them to access technologies they could not before due to the cost of infrastructure required," he explains. "However, the growth of cloud services is seen as infringing upon the traditional channel of vendor-distributor-reseller, as many service providers now act as a middleman and cut the reseller out of the chain. In order to keep the channel alive, business models need to adapt and both distributors and resellers need to change their offerings slightly, catering for demand for services while maintaining traditional distribution channels."

The key to the survival of the channel is a change of mind-set, he says.

"Currently, vendors take their products to market through the channel. The distributor distributes products, which are then resold by the reseller.

"As products become services, this does not mean that the channel needs to collapse, because effectively the model remains the same. Distributors are still buying products from vendors, but instead of moving boxes, the cloud model means that the distributor then takes these products and builds solutions, which can still be resold to the end customer.

"In this model, it does not pay the distributor to take services directly to the market, as this will require a sales force and greater focus on customer service. Nor does it pay for the reseller to attempt to buy products and resell services straight from the vendor, as this will require the building of substantial infrastructure at a high cost.

"With the expected growth of cloud and hosted services, the channel needs to change to more of a service model if it is to remain competitive, which opens up multiple opportunities and allows for access to a far broader market than previously," Schram continues. "Many technologies, including video conferencing and video collaboration, have typically been the

domain of the large enterprise exclusively. The channel however, has a large market base that falls outside of the large enterprise space. By offering technology such as video as a service, distributors can effectively create a new market for resellers, enabling them to offer enterprise-grade services to SMEs and small corporates."

Schram says that the shift in the channel is not just about new markets and selling services instead of products.

"In the new channel, resellers will focus on offering on-site customer services focused on optimising the functions and capabilities of the solutions offered, user training and adoption services, as well as the traditional repair services for on-site equipment, rather than physical product sales.

"The emphasis on system integration will fall away in favour of end user and customer support," he says. "Integration will happen at vendor level, however, as much as end users are able to purchase products directly from vendors in many instances, customer service and after-sales support remains an issue. When things go wrong, the end user wants to be able to talk to a person for support, not a faceless website.

"This means that the role of the channel will become more people- and support-oriented, focusing on configuration and user support, among other roles," he says.

"The year 2013 is set to be the year of services as the cloud gains popularity and more service providers deliver their offerings into the market," Schram says.

"Moving towards a hosted model can create opportunities for the channel bringing in a new portfolio of services for them to resell. The key to keeping the channel alive is for distributors and vendors to work with channel partners rather than undermining them or cutting them out.

"If this can be successfully achieved the cloud will not erode the channel's business, but rather change the business model, offering opportunities and new markets to be explored," Schram says.

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Global first: China moves

Partnering with leading local distributor Kolok, Pantum's Mono Laser P2000 Series brings a lifespan of 100 000 prints at the 'best cost per page' in the industry - and a first from a country set to make its mark in the printing arena

In the overall scheme of high-tech developments, the printer – even as a vital part of the computing function – rarely makes headline news, says Robert Liang, sales director of Pantum, the brand that is making waves as the first Chinese designed and manufactured printer to market.

"Pantum began development in 2006 and has spent some US\$200 million on research and development to date, launching the P2000 series in October 2011 in Europe, Canada, the USA, India, Russia, Australia and Israel," says Liang, adding that the company is aiming to achieve 5% of the global market by 2015, having already achieved that in the Chinese laser market.

Allan Thompson, managing director of Bidvest-owned Kolok, says that he is excited about the partnership with Pantum and that testing on the robust new printer has impressed: "The cost saving per page exceeds anything we have seen in this market sector and while the range comes in a variety of stylish colours, it's a tough, compact printer that Kolok is happy to stake its reputation on."

"Before we take on products for distribution to resellers, we have to be sure we want to put our name to the partnership with the OEM" says Thompson. Liang adds that Pantum's own testing shows a 0.3% failure rate in the 200 000 P2000s currently in operation in China. "This is exceptional, We are also happy to note that a paper jam is something that may occur only once in every 30 000 pages."

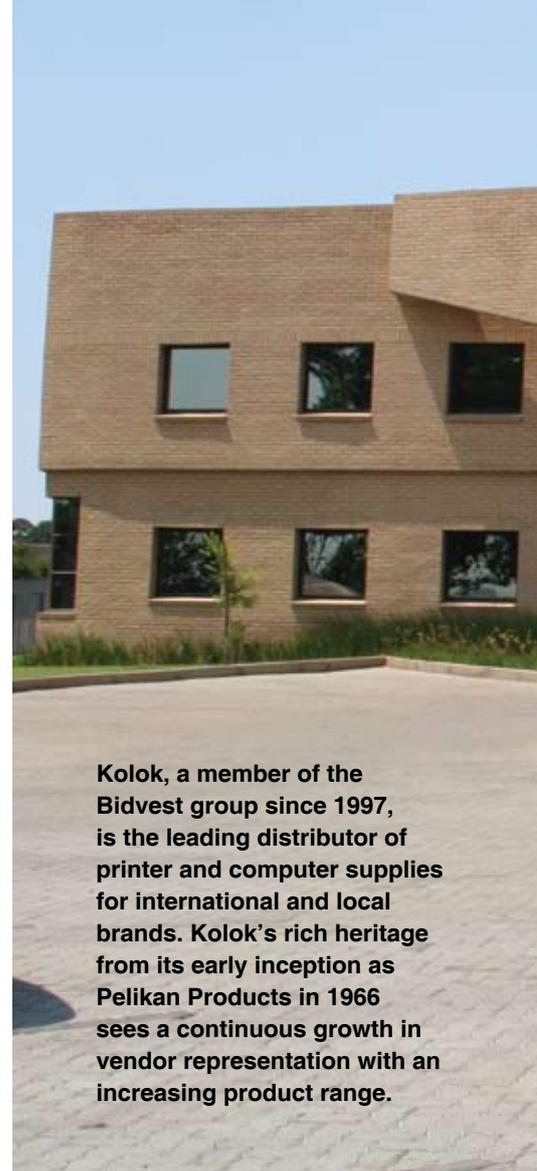
With a high capacity cartridge and low cost of ownership, the range is also ideal for larger companies that would ordinarily spend huge amounts on hiring or paying off printers. "These machines are so competitively priced," says Thompson, "that large companies can afford to install several Pantums and enjoy cost efficiency across all departments."

Run from the Windows platform with 8MB of memory, the printer sets itself apart from others in its class with its sturdy metal interior and a solid steel roller bar instead of the more commonly used plastic bar and hard rubber rollers. "The past connotations that 'Made in China' used to bring has changed, particularly over the past five years," says Liang. "Pantum has put a lot of money into research and development and is aiming to ensure the global market sees the quality and competitive pricing that can come from a concerted effort to focus on product sturdiness, meeting customer requirements and service excellence from distributors."

Liang says that China has developed a "good and growing relationship with the South African market", with some \$25-billion in trade between the two countries. "China has stepped up its game and is focused on producing world class products, particularly in the computer and peripherals sector."

Says Thompson: "At this stage, we are offering the monochrome range which delivers 20 pages per minute (ppm). By January 2013 Pantum will have a 30ppm range and the 5000 Series will arrive by July giving users the scan, copy and print options in one."

Resellers and end users can also look forward to the 4-in-one – which includes fax capabilities – in 2013, along with colour printers by the end of that year. "The key to Pantum's success in our market will be the combination of quality and cost," says Thompson. "Pantum is very aware that the growing business market here is looking at both sustainability and products that make sense in a changing economy. In developing a range of printers built to ensure business efficiency and strength over the long haul, the company has come up with a combination of muscle and cost competency designed to give business owners peace of mind."



Kolok, a member of the Bidvest group since 1997, is the leading distributor of printer and computer supplies for international and local brands. Kolok's rich heritage from its early inception as Pelikan Products in 1966 sees a continuous growth in vendor representation with an increasing product range.

Pantum is a young and vigorous printer brand aiming to provide global printer users with reliable, affordable and environmental friendly printing solutions and services. Pantum's product line is focused on providing printing solutions for both consumer market and business market with single function laser printers, MFPs and colour laser printers. Pantum's new product development will follow market trends and customer needs to become the one-stop printing solution provider.

into printer market



Specifications:

Printing

Technology	Monochrome Laser
Print speed (ppm)	20ppm (A4) / 21 ppm (Letter)
First print out time	Less than 10 seconds
Resolution (dpi)	600×600dpi (can be increased to 1200×600 dpi)
Printer language	GDI
Duplex Mode	Manual

Paper

Automatic paper tray:	
Media type	Plain, Pre-printed
Media size	Letter, A4, A5, A6, JISB5, ISOB5, B6, Executive, Statement, Folio, Oficio, Legal,
Big 16k, 32k, 16k, Big 32k, Custom	(105mm ×148mm to 216mm×356mm, 4.1''×5.8'' to 8.6''×14.2'')
Media weight	60-105g/m ² (16lb bond~28lb bond)
Paper input	150pages(standard paper 80g/m ² (20lb bond))
Paper output	100pages(standard paper 80g/m ² (20lb bond))

Manual feed slot:

Media type	Plain, Pre-printed, Recycled, Transparency, Card stock, Label, Envelope, Kraft
paper	
Media size	75mm×148mm to 216mm×356mm (3''×5.8'' to 8.6''×14.2'')
Media weight	60-163g/m ² (16lb bond~43lb bond)
Paper input	1Page

General

Dimensions (w*d*h)	380 mm × 260 mm × 236 mm
Display screen	No
Weight (with cartridge)	6.1 kg (13.4lbs)
Weight (w/o cartridges)	5.3 kg (11.7lbs)
Power Consumption:	
Printing:	Average 350W
Sleep Mode:	Less than 6 W
Operating system compatibility	Windows2000/XP(32bit/64bit); Vista (32bit/64bit); 7(32bit/64bit); Server 2003 (32bit/64bit); Server 2008(32bit/64bit)
Connectivity	USB2.0 Full-Speed
Processor	64MHz
Memory	8MB

Consumables*

Starter:	700pages
Standard capacity:	1500pages
High capacity:	2300pages

What's in the box?

- Printer
- Toner Cartridge
- USB Interface Cable
- Power Cord
- CD-ROM
- Quick Setup Guide

*Average yield per toner cartridge in accordance with ISO/IEC 19752

NOTE: Product specifications listed here are for reference only and are subject to change without prior notice.

World first a bold move for China

Liang says that as the only Chinese company to create a printer, Pantum looked closely at the IT industry and at printers in particular. "The three key areas we looked at in IT were laptops, tablets and printers. While the first two are burgeoning, the third is a market that has been relatively quiet for 30 or 40 years. Certainly there have been additions to the printer and combinations that make business sense, but there has not been the change and excitement one sees in the rest of the industry. Pantum aims to change that."

He adds that choosing Kolok as its Southern Africa distributor was a strategic move on Pantum's part. "Because we have put so much time and capital into the creation of the first Chinese printer, we also needed to create partnerships with distributors around the globe who reflect the quality of our products. We chose Kolok in South Africa based on its experience in the field their exemplary track record."

Thompson says the partnership will see Kolok's national network of seven operational facilities able to deal with any Pantum queries and issues immediately. "As with any brand we take on, Kolok has to have 100% faith in the product in order to back it up 100%."

"While some OEMs have allowed the printer to be seen as a 'throw away' item due to pricing structures of the machines and cartridges, the Pantum series is refreshing in the way it has ensured a machine that offers longevity with cartridges that fit SMMEs' budgets. We are more than happy to put the Kolok name to the partnership and give our resellers the assurance our reputation carries."

"This is not a 'quick buck' market," says Liang. "Pantum products will adhere to the highest standards in printing and continue to answer a call from the market for machines that are built to last. With their low carbon footprint, less waste toner residue and low ozone emissions, Pantum printers are also designed with environmental protection in mind."

Available in a range of four colours, the machines give resellers a new and exciting avenue in printing options for end users. "Ultimately," says Thompson, "the end user is who we want to impress, with efficiency and cost. Kolok believes the Pantum will do that in both the short and the long term."



PANTUM

www.pantum.com www.koloksa.co.za
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KOLOK

Channelwise Awards:

AxizWorkgroup is disti of the year

AxizWorkgroup has been voted by resellers as South Africa's best distributor for 2012 in the most closely-contested Channelwise Awards yet.

This is the second time AxizWorkgroup has scooped the coveted title, having topped the rankings in the inaugural awards in 2010.

The Channelwise Awards poll resellers on who their favourite vendors and distributors are across eight categories. Respondents not only name their best vendors and distributors, they also rate them according to various criteria such as pricing, service, stockholding and more.

The survey was carried out among both SME/consumer resellers and large/enterprise resellers.

Tarsus Technology ran a very close second to AxizWorkgroup for the overall 2012 Distributor of the Year Award, followed by the other finalists Esquire, Sahara and Rectron.

AxizWorkgroup was also named as the top resellers in the Software category, ahead of Comztek, Esquire, Rectron and Softline.

The server and storage distributor of the year is Tarsus Technology, followed by AxizWorkgroup, Rectron, Esquire and Sahara.

Tarsus also scooped the award for mobile computing distributor of the year, with AxizWorkgroup again running second, then Rectron, Esquire and Pinnacle Africa.

A similar result was seen in the personal computing category, with Tarsus, AxizWorkgroup, Esquire and Rectron being named a resellers' favourites.

Esquire was voted as the peripherals distributor of the year, followed by Pinnacle Africa, Rectron and AxizWorkgroup.

Resellers decided that the best printers and consumables distributor this year was Drive Control, then Esquire, Tarsus, Sahara and ACT.

Duxbury again scooped the networking and infrastructure distributor award, ahead of Comztek, Esquire, AxizWorkgroup and Tarsus.

The components distributor of the year is Sahara, which beat Esquire, Rectron, Pinnacle Africa, AxizWorkgroup and Mustek to the award.



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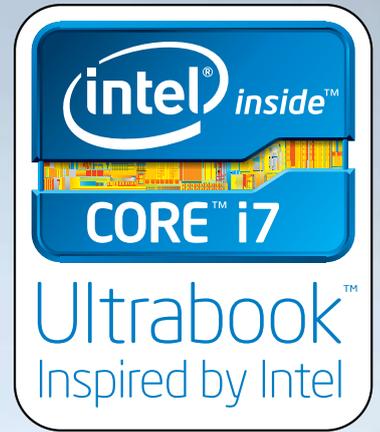
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4178-705572-A00 Nov 2012

Omega Africa launches Noontec Android



With the Noontec A9 Smart TV box, users can get whatever they want: over 500 000 apps can be downloaded and installed freely from Google market and other third party markets, including 100 000 apps for gaming; 80 000 apps for entertainment; and 30 000 application tools.

By installing instant message apps, the A9 supports many popular platforms like Skype, QQ, MSN, ICQ, Google Talk and Yahoo.

Thanks to the Noontec's dedicated camera, users can sit on sofa and enjoy clear video communication with family and friends. Other social networking Web sites are supported.

The device offers powerful 1080p HD video decoding, supporting formats such as XVID, DivX, WMV, MKV, AVI, MP4 and MOV.

The A9 also supports external storage in the form of SD cards, USB flash drives and USB hard disks.

Kingston Technology ships SSDNow V300

Kingston Technology, the independent world leader in memory products has announced that it is shipping the next generation of its most cost-effective SSDNow V Series solid-state drive (SSD). The Kingston SSDNow V300 is an upgrade solution for cost-conscious consumers looking to upgrade their existing desktop or notebook PC.

The new SSDNow V300 is 10 times faster than a 7 200rpm hard-disk drive. It is powered by an LSI SandForce Flash storage processor (FSP) solution, customised for Kingston, and optimised for industry-leading 19nm NAND Flash memory to deliver sequential read and write speeds of up to 450Mbps.

Using best-in-class components, the SSDNow V300 combines quality, performance and affordability for first-time SSD users or anyone looking to upgrade an existing system.

"LSI worked together with Kingston to deliver a customised high-performing solid-state drive solution for their cost-effective SSDNow V Series," says Kent Smith, senior director of product marketing, Flash Components Division, LSI.

"Our award-winning SF-2281 Client FSPs provide Kingston's customers with enterprise-class features and an enhanced everyday computing user experience, especially for first time SSD users."

"Kingston is committed to delivering SSDs at the best price to performance ratio as possible. We achieve this again with our next-generation SSDNow V300," says Grant Rau, business development manager, Kingston South Africa.

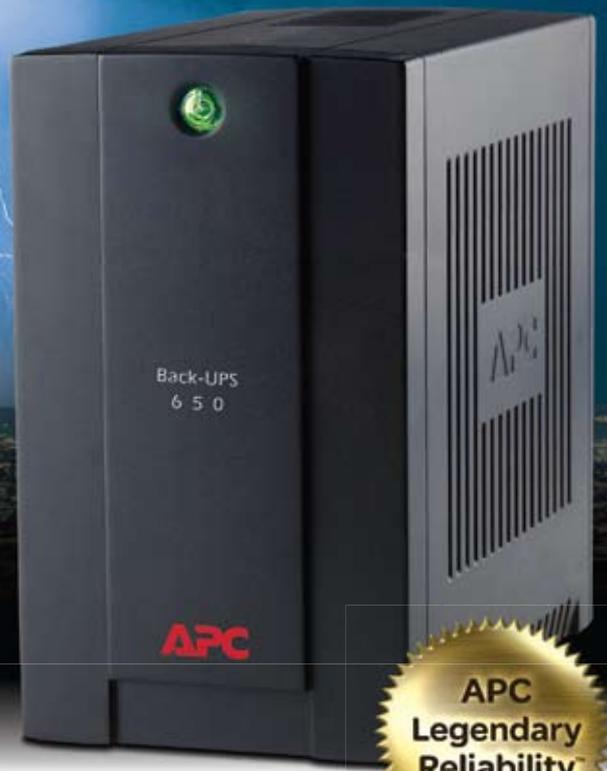
"The SSDNow V300 is the best cost-efficient upgrade for users who want their existing systems to perform faster. They will experience faster boot up and shutdown times, and will also see much better system performance when multiple applications are open."

The SSDNow V300 is available as a stand-alone drive or as an upgrade kit containing cloning software and other accessories for a desktop and notebook system. The SSDNow V300 is backed by a three-year warranty, free technical support and proven Kingston reliability.



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Back-UPS 650

Line Interactive Back-UPS 650 features "double boost" and "single trim" Automatic Voltage Regulation (AVR) with wide input voltage range 140-300V. That instantly corrects voltage fluctuations, so you can work indefinitely during brownouts and overvoltages, without draining the battery. It also provides a combination Power/LED Status Indicator and Audible Alarms, a push button circuit breaker and automatic diagnostic testing.

BX650CI-ZA

This unit features PowerChute™ Software that lets you use your computer to access additional power protection and management features.

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'PBX in a Box' from Duxbury Networking



A compact voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) private branch exchange (PBX) telephony system for small to medium-sized businesses has been released by Duxbury Networking.

Dubbed PBX in a Box, the system is based on the pint-sized, Snom One Mini solid-state, PBX device and comprises six Snom 300 Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) based IP wireless phone units and one Snom 320 master desktop phone.

In addition to voice traffic, the system supports video conferencing, streaming multimedia distribution, instant messaging, presence information, file transfer and online gaming applications.

A Patton SmartNode 4120 gateway supporting basic rate interface (BRI) ports facilitates links to Telkom and other public services, while a Netgear ProSafe 16-port 10/100 Ethernet switch with power over Ethernet (PoE) features is used to power the phones.

In addition to providing a turnkey solution, the PBX in a Box offering is designed to deliver flexibility and scalability, allowing for easy internal telephone network expansion and the non-interruptive addition of new extensions.

"There is a range of features designed to ease installation, including automatic device set-up and emulated shared line appearance functions," says Duxbury Networking CEO Graham Duxbury.

"What's more, the PBX in a Box is able to enhance voice quality over South Africa's typically low bandwidth lines by supporting up to five, G.729 compressed trunk lines. G.729 is an audio data compression algorithm for voice traffic targeted at applications in which bandwidth must be conserved, such as conference calls," he explains.

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Omega Africa launches the Gainward GTX 650 Ti

The Gainward GeForce GTX 650 Ti graphics card packs 768 Cuda cores within its GK106 chip. The 2Gb memory provides better frame rates at a higher resolution. Clocks are maintained at 928MHz for core and 5 400MHz for memory.

Display outputs consist of Dual Link DVI and an HDMI port, while the card is powered by a single six-pin connector. Cooling is provided by a dual slot cooler, which has a single fan on its shroud that pushes air towards the aluminum heatsink block underneath it.

The Nvidia GeForce GTX 650 is a welcome edition to a fast, efficient and powerful generation of graphics cards.



Schneider Electric releases Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect

Global specialist in energy management, Schneider Electric, has released Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect. The application gives users the information needed to understand energy consumption by bringing power and process data together within their Vijeo Citect SCADA system.

According to Quintin McCutcheon, Marketing and Operations GM at Schneider Electric South Africa, having energy consumption information directly alongside process metrics allows for comprehensive analysis and a detailed understanding of energy usage.

“The more you know about your energy consumption, the less energy you will use and the more money you can save,” he says.

He adds that the application gives users the ability to connect power meters to their Vijeo Citect SCADA systems, including IEC 61850 protocol meters. Additional benefits can also be experienced if they are employing Schneider Electric power meters, as pre-defined equipment templates facilitate simple and rapid configuration to deliver a quicker return on investment.

McCutcheon explains that Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect delivers rich data directly from power meters with millisecond resolution, including information on voltage, current, power factor, harmonic distortion and sliding window demand.

“It can also access on-board power meter alarms to detect rapid changes in energy variables, allowing a detailed impact analysis of process changes. For example, with detailed time-stamped data, highly effective analysis can determine the causes of peak demand.

“Additionally, this data can contribute to eliminating energy waste.

During periods of zero production, devices that are still consuming energy can be identified and strategies to remove this cost can be developed,” says McCutcheon.

At the operator level, Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect delivers important benefits. Increased operator visibility of energy production data can help them play a more active role in reducing costs.

For instance, this information can alert operators when energy consumption exceeds or falls below predefined consumption levels. Operators are then in a better position to respond to this situation and adjust the process accordingly, resulting in better energy management.

Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect also allows operators to monitor the efficiency of processes that provide a fixed output, such as compressors. Where a process is not achieving optimal energy efficiency, appropriate action can be taken, such as where Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect highlights a spike in the energy usage of a compressor, an operator may be alerted to schedule appropriate maintenance.

“The application can also deliver overall business benefits by providing information needed to analyse and improve the efficiency of current production processes. This information can be used to implement best practices and ensure that production is running at an optimised energy consumption level. It can also assist in complying with energy regulations, standards and energy reduction targets.

“Vijeo Citect +PowerConnect’s potent combination of power and process information gives you the ability to optimise your processes for optimal energy consumption,” says McCutcheon.



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The year ahead? Here's to guesswork and a lot of luck

Previewing the year ahead for the IT channel in South Africa at this time, in this column, every year has become somewhat of a theoretical exercise.

In common with virtually any preview ever written on any subject – whether for a major sporting event or a political party's elective conference – the only facts that can be used as a basis for trying to predict the future are those that reflect what has happened historically.

The IT channel is no different. Facts that form the foundation on which to base predictions for the coming year can be gleaned from looking back at the past year, the years before that or even decades before that.

The facts referred to when dealing with the IT channel will take into account, among many others, macro issues such as the global economy, the local economy, the political climate, technological developments and the track records of major players in the industry, including vendors, distributors and resellers.

Using these facts, a concerted effort needs to be made to build discernible trends in order to create plausible scenarios that can then be tested before committing to a "most likely outcome".

The global economy over the past year has been teetering on the edge of a "double dip" recession. Dominated by sovereign debt in Europe, the "fiscal cliff" in the United States, and China's slowing economic performance, there is little to indicate that 2013 will be any different.

The local economy provides even less incentive for optimism. The Reserve Bank appears to be in a state of paralysis – caught between the need to reduce rates in order to stimulate flagging GNP and a possible increase to address the threat of "imported" inflation due to underlying weakness of the Rand.

While the JSE touched new record highs during the year, wild fluctuations across all sectors of the private economy provided little to indicate sustainable growth or consistent performance over the next 12 months.

Government's fiscal performance was even less inspiring. Despite promises and policy statements to create jobs, address the

needs of the poor, and stimulate the economy based on massive infrastructure spend, the country continued to flounder under the weight of poor management and lack of service delivery. The only sector in the public economy that achieved astronomical growth was in the levels of corruption and gross incompetence.

Caught between the pressures of economic uncertainty and political in-fighting, the country's labour unions contributed to even more turmoil with unprecedented levels of violence marked by the tragic and unnecessary loss of life in both the mining and transport industries - hardly facts on which to base any confidence on prospects for the future.

The political climate inspired even less confidence. With the ruling party totally pre-occupied throughout the year by the play for power leading up to its elective conference, the country was left guessing about the nationalisation of mines, the state of education and health, how the tolling of Gauteng roads will ever pay off SANRAL's debt, or how parastatal enterprises such as Telkom, Eksom, SAA and the SABC will survive without massive handouts from the taxpayer.

As if all the economic and political factors were not enough to confuse what has to be taken into account when planning future scenarios, the IT industry continued along its own, unique path of trotting out acronyms and technical jargon to baffle even the most astute of analysts and commentators.

Words, phrases and acronyms such as "cloud computing", "business analytics", "social media", "SaaS", "IaaS", and "virtualisation" begin to describe a technological landscape that is becoming increasingly difficult to quantify. Far removed from the age-old definitions of "hardware" and "software" that described traditional market sectors where the IT distribution channel remains relevant, even the basics have changed to things such as "BYOD", "tablets" and "smart phones".

So what does the year ahead have in store for the IT channel in SA?

Probably more of the same – some rationalisation or consolidation, opportunity based on differentiated service and support, and a whole lot of luck.

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