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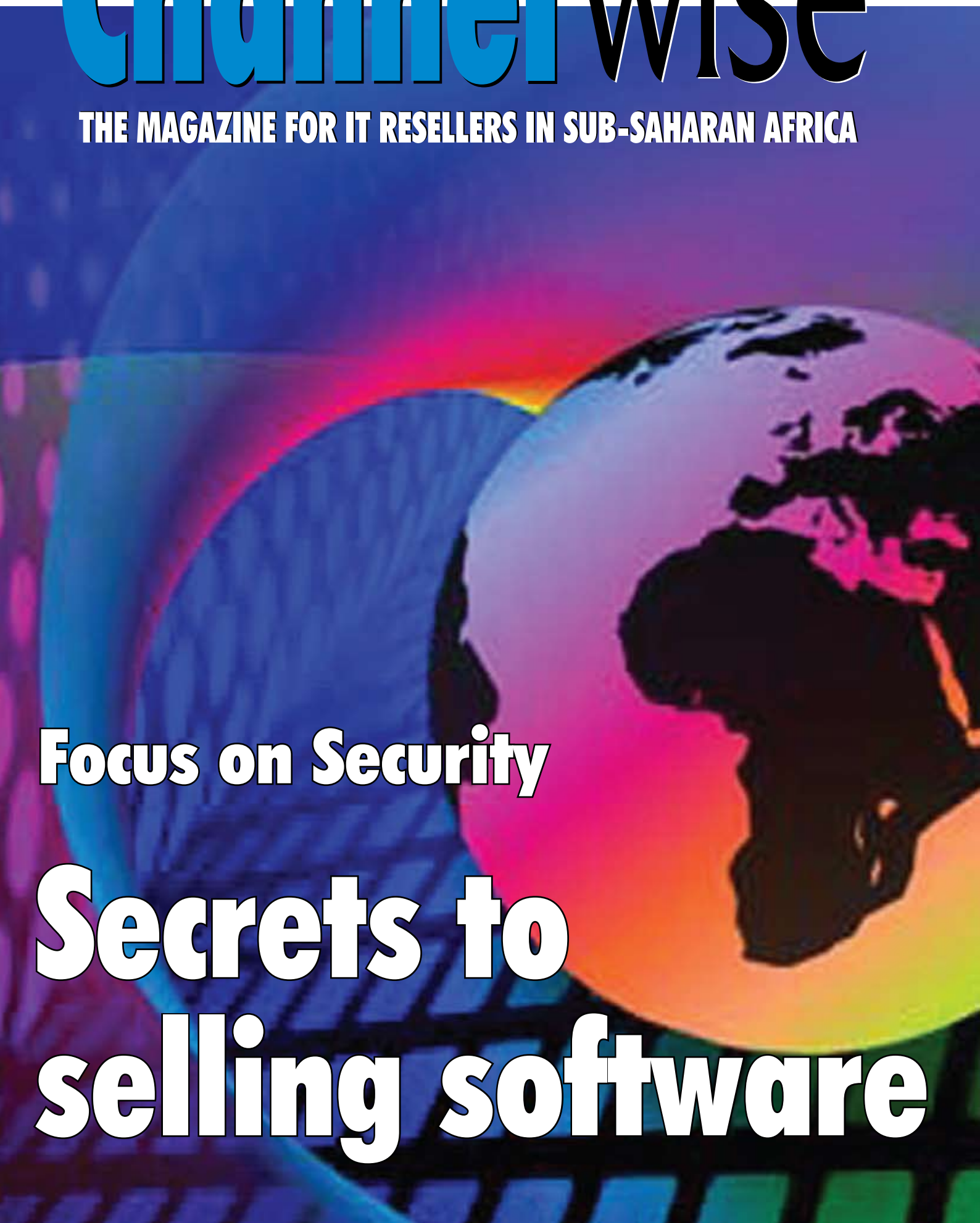
Channelwise

THE MAGAZINE FOR IT RESELLERS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



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The Apple of Ray-Ban's eye

By Mark Davison

My repeated furtive glances towards The Local's car park had obviously been noticed by, and suitably irritated Ray-Ban Ray. A flare of annoyance cut through his normally calm, suave and debonair demeanour as he angrily clucked on his tongue and swung around to glare in the direction of my regular peeking.

"What do you keep looking at?" he shot through clenched jaw as his neck muscles tautened in their Exorcist-like swivel. "If she's a belter and you didn't nudge me …"

"I'm watching my car," I cut him off – at the neck, so to speak, and at the pelvic region.

"What're you worried about? The car guards are there."

"Yeah, right, the Hopeless Helpless," I snorted. "That bunch couldn't catch cold … but it's not thieves I'm worried about … I'm parked in the same space where that woman took my bumper off the other month."

It was his turn to blow through his nostrils in derision. "You're such a wuss," he chuckled, making it sound like a compliment. "Why didn't you park somewhere else?"

"It was the only spot left," I replied. "Some thoughtless bast … deliveryman has taken my loading zone."

"Well go and move it if you're that worried – there's a couple of bays open now," as he brushed non-existent dust motes from the shoulder pad of his suede jacket. It looked like a few litters of Hush Puppies had been sacrificed for this one.

"I'm sure it'll be fine," with a final, longer stare.

"Well just stop peeping," as he continued preening the suede. "It makes me edgy … like there's a sniper taking a bead on me (a real possibility, G); and anxious … that I might be missing something (absolutely no chance, G)."

I huffed and took a long, slow swallow of my health shandy. Like the advice I got from my late Uncle Jim when faced with my first pint of Guinness, I have learnt to "block" my nostrils to make the shandies more palatable. Ray-Ban started finger-swishing on his iPhone.

"Hah! That's what I forgot to mention," like he had just remembered that it was his round. Or, equally important, had managed to secure tickets for the Springboks versus the All Blacks. "The new iPhone 5 has been launched!"

"I know … we carried it this morning … IT-Online."

"Yeah," he continued looking to reseal the bubble I'd burst. "But it's thinner, lighter …"

He called me a wuss, so I rubbed salt. "Eighteen percent thinner, 20% lighter than the 4S in front of you, and promises of longer battery life," amazing even myself that I remembered the stats. "Also … they've made the screen taller instead of wider so that you can still hold it in one of your dainty little hands."

"But that's brilliant!" he shrugged as he reached for his current model and stroked it, almost like Linus and his blanket. "I'm definitely going to get one."

"You know," I said, willing to kick a fanboi back down. "Almost every new iteration of a notebook from a major vendor is thinner, lighter, has longer battery life and a bigger screen. It's nothing new in the IT industry …"

"But this is Apple," he insisted.

"That's probably what makes it sadder," I said and, seeing the darkness descend in his eyes, tears about to well, decided to change the subject. "I think I'll go and move the Batmobile II. Just to be safe."

Walking through the car park, I made a vow to myself that I'd get Ray-Ban a really good bottle of whiskey for his upcoming birthday. At least he'd have the solace of that during the looong wait before South Africans get to see the first (official) iPhone 5 on these shores.

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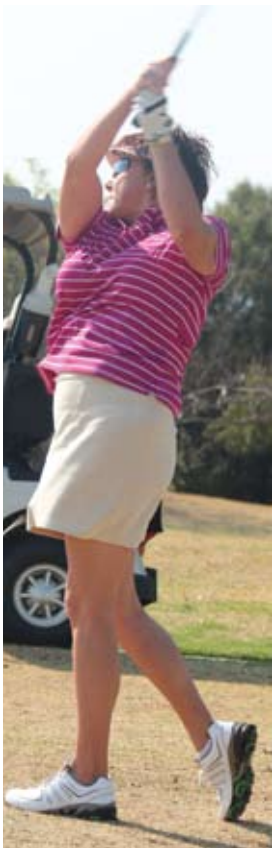

Software AG recentlyheld it annual Golf Day where R90 000 was raised for Batsogile School in Soweto

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SCENE AROUND

The Students' Health and Welfare Centres Organisation (SHAWCO) in collaboration with Dell, recently held a community fun day in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, for the children enrolled in SHAWCO's programme. This is an annual event hosted by SHAWCO, however, as SHAWCO is a beneficiary of the Dell Powering the Possible programme, Dell came on board to treat over 300 children to circus acts, delicious treats, jumping castles and sporting events. Each child received a lunch pack, a Dell branded peak cap and as much candy-floss as their stomachs could handle.

Telkom and the Telkom Foundation has launched its Connecting Schools Project, delivering more than 120 tablet computers with free Internet connectivity to the Mateza and Tyholorha Primary schools in George, in the Western Cape.
Each teacher was provided with a Motorola Zoom WiFi+3G, 32Gb tablet computer. Telkom also deployed four ADSL/3G routers in each school to provide 24 months of free Internet connectivity, a first for these schools.
Telkom explored innovative ways of connecting these schools using technology other than fixed-line services as they are in areas that currently have no terrestrial infrastructure.
Telkom Group CEO, Ms Nombulelo Moholi and Deputy Minister of Education, Mr Enver Surty were present to hand over the tablets to teachers at the school.

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DEEP THROAT

Taking the hint?

As we blatantly hinted at in last month's Deep Throat, Graham Braum has been officially unveiled as the new country manager for Lenovo Africa (see full story in News & Analysis). We have described it as one of the worst-kept secrets in the industry – and it was, though through no fault of Braum himself. Almost from the day he resigned from Acer after 15 years at the company (in our case, three days before) the rumour-mill churned with the gossip about his new Lenovo role. Unfortunately, the intricacies of modern-day restraint agreements often mean we have to abide by our strictly-enforced "off-the-record" policy. Call us old-fashioned, but the thrill of breaking a story is often superseded by the legal (and sometimes monetary) repercussions that could befall some of the players. And, in this case, we believe these could have been, in the words of one source: "Tsunami-like". Ironically, after six weeks of waiting, we still broke the story on sister e-newsletter IT-Online. Seems other IT news outlets didn't consider a changing of the guard at the country's second-biggest PC vendor newsworthy enough. 'Nuff said.

Thin-skinned

We also hinted last month about a re-entry of global distribution giant Ingram Micro into the South African market and, we have to admit, did derive a little pleasure at the reaction of some senior local executives to the news. Apparently, though, there is nothing sinister to be read into the situation. What has happened is that Ingram has bought a global organisation called BrightPoint for $840-million. BrightPoint, which specialises in mobility products, services and solutions, just happens to have a South African subsidiary based on the East Rand. We're glad to report that the abovementioned distribution suits can now enjoy their breakfast cornflakes without spluttering. Well, for the time being, anyway …

Tough as teak

We were genuinely gladdened by the news that two of our favourite members of the channel fraternity – Epson's Kelvin Reynolds and McAfee's Craig Hockley – are well on the mend after some recent health scares. Kelvin was quick to reassure everyone that his "old ticker" is fast returning to normal rates after a heart scare; and Craig, one of our reliable twitters tells us, is slowly but surely shaking off the effects of some mysterious virus he picked up on his many travels. Deep Throat looks forward to swallowing … loadsa beer … once they're both fully recovered and fit for selection again!

No PR Prick(le) … just a smile

While we do not have any shortage of material for our monthly Prick(le) (talk about thick-skinned!), we thought we'd show a bit of the compassionate understanding we believe PR practitioners just know we have here at Deep Throat. We couldn't help but nod and smile in empathy when we received the following missive from one of our favourite IT PRs:

"Breaking the primary rule in PR - I didn't get an August copy yet. Has it gone out or still to come?

If already out do you think you could send me a pdf of the article. Sorry to be a pest - but as you know I have to fill in the worst report for XXXXXX anyone in the universe has ever seen. If you don't believe me I will send it to you. It shouldn't be allowed! But obviously the Universe hates me."

While young interns may take careful note that this mail is vastly different from the incessantly-irritating "Did you get my release and when are you going to use it?" approach so favoured by some, we'd also like to point out that, with more decades than she'd care to admit to in the industry, said PR is not only one of the most experienced and trusted among us hacks, she also goes the extra mile to ensure top-notch coverage for her clients. Maybe some clients out there could also take note of this article next time they're berating their PRs for some or other misdemeanour?

Pic of the Month:

BraveTart strikes!

Motorists at the junction of Republic and Malibongwe could have been forgiven for jumping red lights recently at the sight of BraveTart approaching them. We couldn't resist using Esteemed Editor's middle son as this month's featured pic as his friends took advantage of his good nature during his Stag do. For the record, BraveTart may not have succeeded in securing the required bra on his list, but he did manage to fulfil all the other clauses – and raise R600 in his begging bowl. He thought the cash was going towards his honeymoon – we still haven't had the (brave)heart to tell him that it ended up behind the bar!

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Banned from Formula One

Lotus Formula One driver Romain Grosjean was handed a one race ban - and a 50 000 euro fine - by race officials after being found guilty of causing an avoidable crash at the start of the Belgian Grand Prix.

He squeezed Lewis Hamilton's McLaren on the run down to the first corner where a serious - and very scary - crash was triggered that saw Hamilton, Sauber's Sergio Perez and Ferrari driver Fernando Alonso all eliminated from the race.

Alonso, in particular, was fortunate to escape injury as Grosjean's airborne car narrowly missed his head.

Is the ban justified? Absolutely. Not only has Grosjean been guilty of numerous first-lap incidents this year, but he has shown a deliberate disregard for the safety of his fellow competitors.

This is not to say he is an untalented race driver. On the contrary, he is one of the "up-and-coming" men in the sport and joins a list of star drivers - many future world champions - who have suffered bans for various misdemeanours over the years.

The last driver to be banned from a race was Michael Schumacher, who was excluded from both the Italian and Portuguese Grands Prix in 1994 following a flagrant disregard for the regulations in that year's British GP.

Schumacher had broken the rules by overtaking pole-sitter Damon Hill on the formation lap. He was handed a stop-and-go penalty, which he failed to serve, and was then shown the black flag, indicating disqualification.

Only then did he appear in the pits to serve his penalty. Officials rejected his team's appeal that the original penalty had been handed down too late, and disqualified Schumacher from the race - and two future races.

In the same year, another future world champion, McLaren's Mika Häkkinen, fell foul of the law when officialdom judged him to be responsible for causing a 10-car pileup on the first lap at Hockenheim in Germany. He was banned from the next race in Hungary.

According to contemporary race reports, Häkkinen tangled with team mate David Coulthard going into the first corner before crashing into a retaining wall on the outside of the circuit. Mark Blundell, Eddie Irvine, Johnny Herbert, Martin Brundle, Rubens Barichello and Heinz-Harald Frentzen were all involved in the incident.

There were a spate of exclusions in '94. Eddie Irvine was banned from one race when he was blamed for a four-car crash in the Brazilian GP. When his Jordan team appealed the ban it was increased to three races.

Nigel Mansell, another future champion, was barred from racing in Spain in 1989 after colliding with Ayrton Senna in Portugal while the stewards were trying to black-flag him for a pit lane infraction. Like Schumacher five years later, Mansell roared past the black flag in a heated battle with rival Senna, with whom he eventually collided, taking them both out of the race.

In 1978, probably one of the most dangerous first lap crashes of all time was witnessed at Monza when seconds after the start, on the approach to the first chicane, Riccardo Patrese's Arrows appeared to touch James Hunt's McLaren, which spun into Ronnie Peterson's Lotus which then slammed into the barriers.

Unlike today's immensely strong cars, the Lotus' chassis was crushed, inflicting 27 factures to Peterson's legs and feet. Although not life-threatening in themselves, he died from an embolism the following day.

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

Officials were loathe to act, believing Patrese to be innocent. It was left to Patrese's peers, under the umbrella of the Grand Prix Driver's Association (GPDA), to instigate his ban at the following United States GP. Subsequent investigations cleared Patrese, and "kangaroo justice" has not been meted out in F1 since.

But what of the driver who caused the biggest first lap crash in the history of the sport, about whom former world champion Emerson Fittipaldi said: "This madman is a menace to himself and everybody else and does not belong in Formula One."

In 1973, at the British GP at Silverstone, South African rookie driver Jody Scheckter spun mid-pack and took 12 cars out of the race with him. Fortunately no one was seriously hurt in the carnage, although it did spell the end of the F1 racing career of the Italian, Andrea de Adamich, who sustained ankle injuries in the crash.

Once again, officialdom was slow to react and it was left to the GPDA to call for a ban on the newcomer. With his McLaren team agreeing to "rest" Scheckter for one race, no official sanction was ever applied to the future Ferrari F1 world champion.

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Transforming the business in a changing print environment

By Craig Green, Bytes Document Solutions national channel manager

Businesses of all sizes are looking at every part of their IT infrastructure in an effort to find additional cost savings. Believe it or not, the print infrastructure is still one place most haven't looked – and it's a huge opportunity for resellers.

For the reseller, it represents a new source of recurring revenue and an investment in sustainable, profitable growth. And it's not a new technology to get the CFO to buy into – the business is already spending money on print. The opportunity for a reseller is to help businesses reduce their costs by buying print services in a different way.

Making the case for MPS

Managed print services (MPS) is a proven approach for reducing costs and improving productivity. As the MPS market matures, customers will be choosing from a wider and more diverse range of MPS suppliers.

It will be increasingly important to stand out in the crowd by concentrating on understanding the customers' needs, providing more managed services to them, and delivering a managed print solution that is well developed and easy to implement.

Successful MPS providers are the ones who build long-term relationships with their customers and continuously add value through constant collaboration. The most effective MPS providers position themselves as catalysts for business growth, often taking the following advice into account:

* First manage what users have - the first step is to help customers manage their existing fleet of printing devices. Take time to get control and reduce costs with what's already in place. This needs to include printing devices from all manufacturers.
* Optimise the fleet - show the customer how consolidating and simplifying their print infrastructure can help the business work more efficiently and continue to save money in the long run.
* Leverage the trends - multi-function printers (MFP), hard drive security and green printing initiatives are just examples of how to get the conversation started. Show customers how MPS can help meet their goals through product consolidation, sustainable supplies, and hard drive set up and maintenance.
* Think beyond page volumes and clicks - pre-sale conversations can make or break the transaction, so ask the right questions. What are the goals? What applications are being used? What are the expectations? What efficiencies would users like to accomplish?
* Show what's possible - consider all cost factors when completing the on-site analysis including hardware costs, paper usage, power consumption, IT management needs and footprint of the ideal print solution.
* Waste is about more than cost - the ROI of MPS is not only reflected in rands and cents. Make sure to highlight the other efficiencies that will be realised, including employee productivity, environmental benefits and space savings.

BenQ sets

International technology giant BenQ is establishing a direct presence in South Africa, as part of the corporation's overall strategy to better serve the rapidly increasing demand from the local market.

BenQ is an acronym for 'Bringing Enjoyment 'N' Quality to Life', and the company is recognised as a global leader in the manufacture and supply of digital networked devices including digital projectors, LCD monitors, digital cameras and TVs.

BenQ was established in Taiwan in December 2001, and is currently recognised as the number one DLP projector brand worldwide, and the second largest brand in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) projector market.

BenQ MEA MD Manish Bakshi points out that the company made the decision to expand its presence in South Africa due to the country's reputation as the economic and technological "superpower" of the continent.

"The South African economy is the largest in Africa and accounted for 24% of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011, at $422-billion. South Africa is also ranked as an upper-middle income economy by the World Bank – making it a market that provides BenQ with significant potential for measurable growth," he explains.

"South Africa also forms part of BRICS, which is an association of leading emerging economies. This makes South Africa a very lucrative market for BenQ. What's more,

"South Africa is recognised as the gateway to Africa, and establishing a strong presence locally will serve as a strong platform for expansion across the continent in the long term future."

Bakshi highlights the fact that South Africa

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has been identified as the third largest market for BenQ MEA, constituting a total of 20% of regional sales.

"Our current share in the South African market is widespread and we already have a well established reputation as a reliable manufacturer and distributor of monitors, projectors, cameras and TVs. In this highly lucrative market, it is important for BenQ to be proactive in its marketing and public relations campaigns in order to ensure that the company remains competitive."

According to Bakshi, South Africa is also one of the most technologically-resourced countries in Africa, with more than 60% of all the continent's Internet traffic generated locally.

"The Internet is continuously expanding in South Africa, and our main objective is to increase our existing market share and build a stronger product positioning by improving our online marketing and branding activities in order to reach all major target regions in the country," he says.

Looking to the future, Bakshi notes that BenQ's main objectives locally for 2012 and 2013 is to establish itself as the preferred brand in the region and the number one projector brand worldwide by ensuring that its services are easily accessible for end users through its improved local presence.

"Last Mile Marketing methods such as roadshows, in-store promotions and in-store POS materials are BenQ's focus and that has considerably helped us in achieving our current status.

"Our strategy is to select distributors who conduct sales in volumes, in addition to selecting value partners who will assist us in niche segments.

"This will help do justice to the full range of products carried by BenQ," he adds.

"BenQ is currently ranked as the second largest projector brand in South Africa with a total market share of 15% in Q2 2012. We plan to consolidate on that success through the continuous introduction of innovative and industry leading technologies to this sector.

"What's more, we plan to further expand our local product range by introducing new models of digital cameras, LED and LCD TVs to the consumer market, in addition to launching interactive flat panels and large format displays to the corporate market," Bakshi says.

Browser exploits continue to increase

IBM has released the results of its X-Force 2012 Mid-Year Trend and Risk Report, which shows a sharp increase in browser-related exploits, renewed concerns around social media password security, and continued disparity in mobile devices and corporate "bring your own device" (BYOD) programs.

Since the last X-Force Trend and Risk Report, IBM's X-Force has seen an increase in malware and malicious web activities:

* A continuing trend for attackers is to target individuals by directing them to a trusted URL or site which has been injected with malicious code. Through browser vulnerabilities, the attackers are able to install malware on the target system. The websites of many well-established and trustworthy organisations are still susceptible to these types of threats.
* The growth of SQL injection, a technique used by attackers to access a database through a website, is keeping pace with the increased usage of cross-site scripting and directory traversal commands.
* As the user base of the Mac operating system continues to grow worldwide, it is increasingly becoming a target of Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs) and exploits, rivaling those usually seen on Windows platforms.

"We've seen an increase in the number of sophisticated and targeted attacks, specifically on Macs and exposed social network passwords," says Clinton McFadden, senior operations manager for IBM X-Force research and development. "As long as these targets remain lucrative, the attacks will keep coming and in response, organisations should take proactive approaches to better protect their enterprises and data."

While there are reports of exotic mobile malware, most smartphone users are still most at risk of premium SMS (short message service, or texting) scams. These scams work by sending SMS messages to premium phone numbers in a variety of different countries automatically from installed applications. There are multiple scam infection approaches for this:

* An application that looks legitimate in an app store but only has malicious intent
* An application that is a clone of a real application with a different name and some malicious code
* A real application that has been wrapped by malicious code and typically presented in an alternative app store.

One game-changing transformation is the pervasiveness of BYOD programs. Many companies are still in their infancy in adapting policies for allowing employees to connect their personal laptops or smartphones to the company network. To make BYOD work within a company, a thorough and clear policy should be in place before the first employee-owned device is added to the company's infrastructure

The connection between websites, cloud-based services, and webmail provides a seamless experience from device to device, but users should be cautious about how these accounts are connected, the security of their password, and what private data has been provided for password recovery or account resetting.

Graham Braum, country manager of Lenovo Africa.

Braum is Lenovo Africa's new leader

Lenovo has confirmed one of the worst-kept secrets in the local industry when it officially announced its new country manager for Africa.

When Graham Braum resigned as country manager: Africa & Levant at Acer more than six weeks ago, it was widely speculated that he was leaving to join a multitude of other ex-Acer EMEA executives – including European supremo Gianfranco Lucca – who have taken up residence at Lenovo.

This month, Lenovo formally confirmed that Braum would succeed David Drummond as country manager of Lenovo Africa.

Braum says that after 15 years at Acer, he is relishing the challenge in helping Lenovo secure the Number One slot as the continent's leading PC vendor. He says that Lenovo's future roadmap, and specifically its PC+ strategy, was a contributing factor in his decision to take up his new position.

"Looking at the success Lenovo has had over the past few years, coupled with the diverse range of products, modern corporate culture and a commitment to tailor efforts to each local market, I'm sure Lenovo will become an invaluable technology provider in Africa," Braum says. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be part of Lenovo's successful journey in Africa today, and lead it for tomorrow."

"With the tech-savvy, computer-literate consumer on the rise, and the market's undeniable need for more innovative and reliable technology for work and home , this is an exciting time for Africa," he adds.

According to International Data Corporation's (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly PC Tracker, Lenovo achieved a noteworthy increase in market share in Africa rising by 1.5 points, proving that the company is making strides towards becoming the Number One PC company.

Corporate vice-president for Middle East & Africa Lenovo, Jack Lee, says Africa is an important market in Lenovo's overall emerging market strategy.

"We did have to play catch-up; however, in the last quarter we witnessed significant market growth and are committed to grow our presence and expand our consumer and enterprise outreach," Lee says. "We look forward to Braum's new task and have confidence his experience will prove invaluable to Lenovo."

New MD for Toshiba in SA

Toshiba Gulf FZE has announced the appointment of Yoshio Abe as MD for the company's southern African operations, following a regional restructuring to improve logistics and business efficiencies.

"When Toshiba opened its doors in South Africa six years ago, the business reported to our German company, Toshiba TEG," says Yoshio. "This division took care of the European, Russian and Middle Eastern business operations, in addition to overseeing the local South African business.

"As the company has grown in response to the popularity of Toshiba products on the African continent and the Middle East, we have now repositioned the local business to be a part of the Toshiba Gulf business, based in Dubai. This will improve logistical efficiencies significantly, enabling us to bring a wider range of Toshiba products to the market at more competitive prices."

Yoshio adds that the company will be investing in human resource capacity to further position the local company to maximise the potential that exists in the sub-Saharan market.

"Many large territories, such as the United States and Europe are shrinking and the production capacity in these areas is much higher than demand, particularly in the personal computing environment. The Chinese market is enormous, but it is dominated by its own local brands.

"Toshiba recognises significant opportunities for growth in the sub-Saharan Africa market, particularly in the personal computing space, and our expanded teams will be working hard to increase visibility of our award-winning products and value-added business channels in countries like Kenya, Angola and Nigeria, ahead of expansion into the rest of the region from our strong foundations in South Africa.

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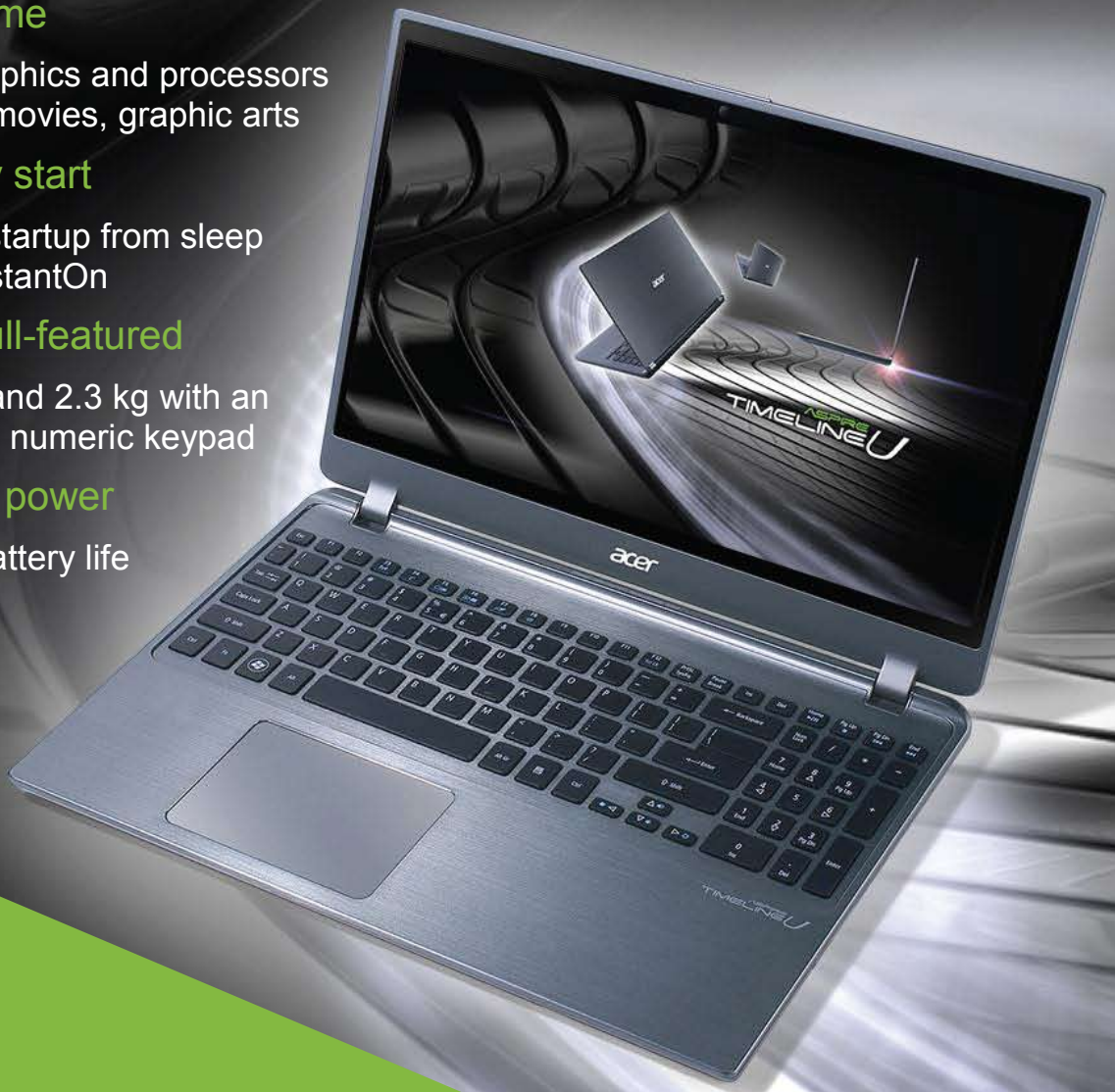

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Mustek, m2fx sign exclusive deal

Mustek has signed an exclusive distribution deal with UK-based fibre optice manufacturer m2fx, to provide the South African cabling industry with the full Miniflex range.
With the rapid arrival of a number of undersea cables on east coast (EASSy and Seacom) and west coast (WACS & SAex) of Africa, a new era has arrived in the communications market for the continent, with many new broadband options.
"Considering the massive drive to install broadband technology and supply fibre solutions into homes and businesses, we believe this will change the whole FTTx market approach within southern Africa and eventually Africa," says Hein Engelbrecht, MD of Mustek.
"Mustek has recognised this as a great opportunity for our market. We are thrilled to bring this solution to local cabling companies, offering time and cost saving from both a labour and installation perspective."
Broadband fibre optical network expansion is driven predominantly by the major cellular network companies. The need to implement new high-speed communication technologies such as 4G is fuelling the fire for faster and higher capacity networks.
The explosion of optical fibre networks, provides the infrastructure and platform for the next two major shifts in broadband supply.
The first shift is in the fibre to business/building (FTTB) market, which has already begun. Businesses are taking full advantage of cheaper available broadband or optical fibre networks connecting their businesses directly to their ISPs.
The second shift, still to take off in Africa, will be fibre to the home (FTTH), already common in first world countries. This sees the reception of voice, data and possibly IP TV packaged in one bundle over one fibre optic cable.

SAP signs biggest African tech deal

SAP has signed a multi-million Euro deal with Dangote Group, one of the largest and most diversified business conglomerates in Africa. This marks one of the most significant SAP deals in Africa and it is expected to be phased in over a three-year period.

Dangote Group, a multi-billion Naira manufacturing facility that operates across Africa and headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria turned to SAP to increase transparency and efficiency within the group. Dangote's core business focus is to build manufacturing capacity to generate employment and provide goods for the African continent.

Dangote Group officially went live with the SAP Business Suite as of 1 August 2012, implemented by SAP partner KPMG. It is the first Nigerian company to have an agreement in Nigeria that covers countries outside of the West African country.

The agreement was specifically made with Dangote Industries which is the holding company for the entire group. The strategic importance of this deal means that Dangote will now have the SAP platform across all of its businesses.

SAP Business Suite will enable Dangote to move from a manual-based system to one that is more integrated, automated and provides transparency into its finances. In addition, SAP Business Suite has also provided Dangote with key management insight across the group.

Dangote now has a single integrated system that provides a view of all business systems across the various industries the group operates in. SAP has enabled the Dangote Group to manage its costs better and boost its bottom line by driving standardisation, as well as lower total cost of ownership and increased efficiency.

Mike Okwechime, account executive for large enterprises in SAP West Africa, comments: "The top manufacturing companies in Nigeria like Nestle, Heineken, Unilever, Cadbury, UAC and Guinness all run SAP. Dangote has now become the first company in Nigeria to have an agreement that spans across other African countries like South Africa, Senegal, and Ghana.

"With the continued investment that SAP is making in Nigeria, we are elated to witness the fruits of that investment, which has now been tangibly demonstrated by the very first Nigerian company that is expanding into the rest of the world - and they are doing that with the SAP platform."

Nashua Communications formed from merger

Nashua Communications and Nashua ECN, two key business units in the Reunert group, have merged to form Nashua Communications.

The new company will be headed up by the current Nashua ECN MD, Andy Openshaw.

Dave Rawlinson, CEO of Reunert, comments: "This announcement is the culmination of months of thought and discussion and has the full support of both of the company's management teams."

Nashua Communications currently operates predominantly in the local area networking (LAN) space offering on premise Communication and networking solutions. Nashua ECN has a national IP-based network with points of presence and data centres in all the major metropolitan areas and currently operates in the voice, data and wide area networking (WAN) space.

The new Nashua Communications will be in a position to offer a host of voice, data and hosted solutions bundled together for on-premise, purely cloud or hybrid scenarios.

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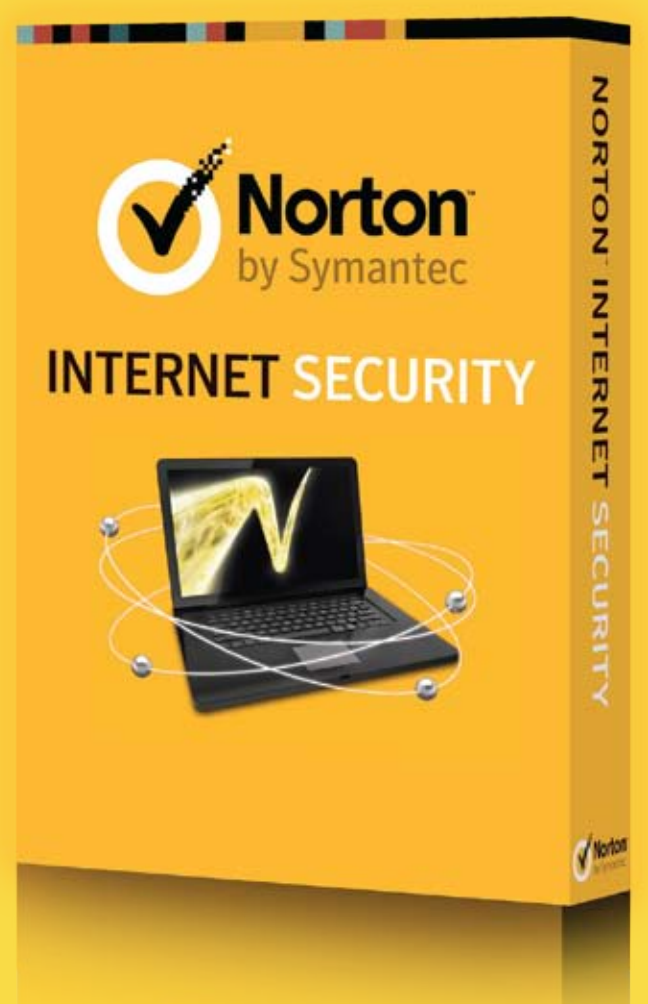

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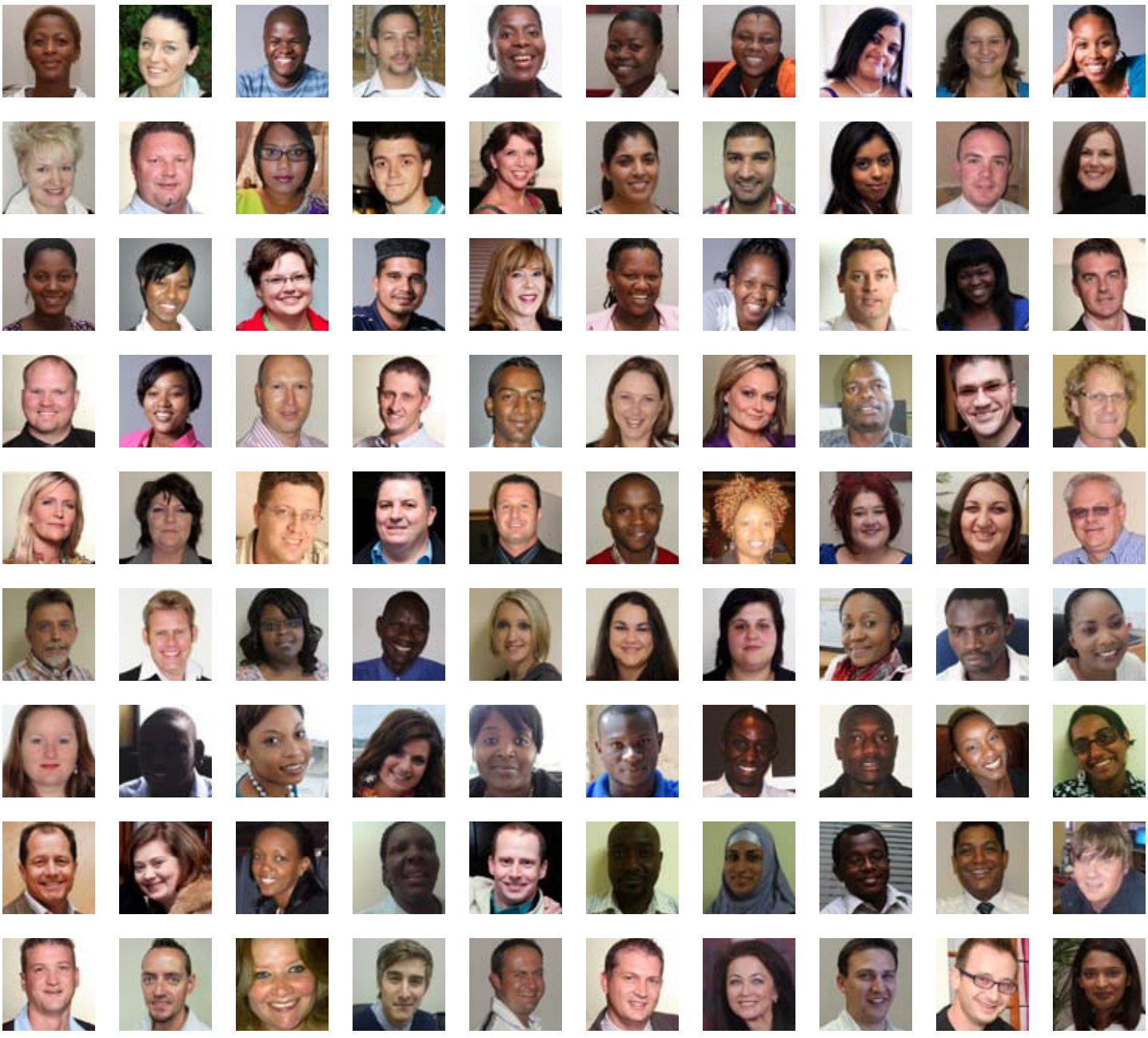

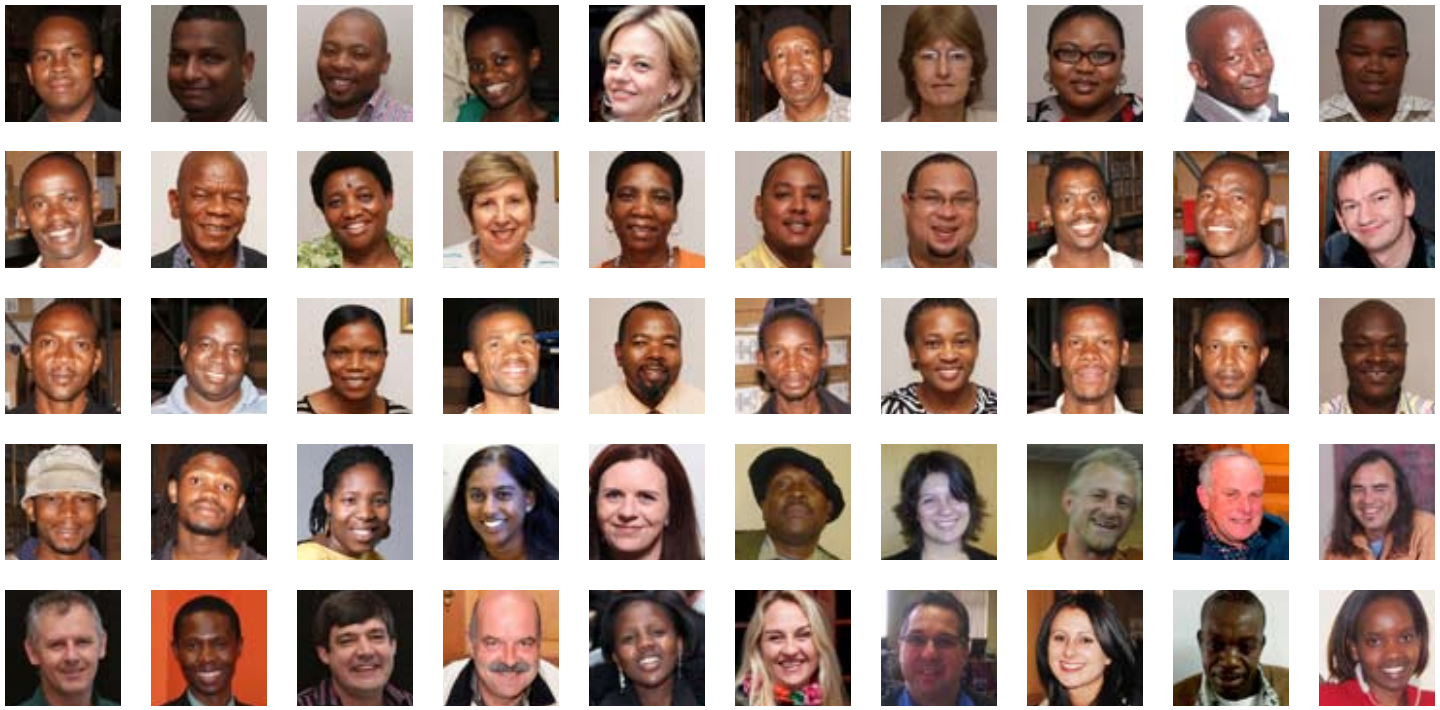

26 AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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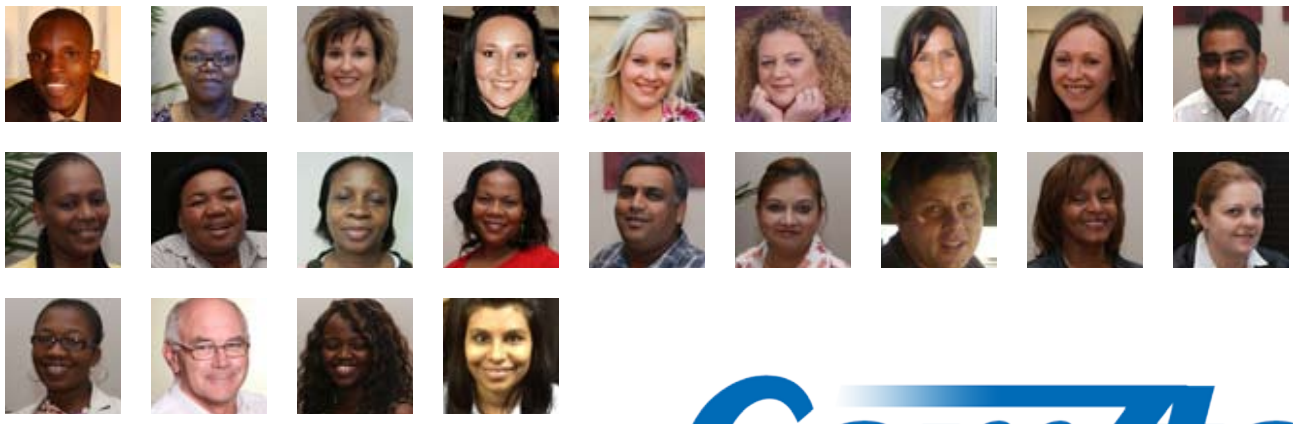

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The hype that many multinational vendors have built up over cloud computing seems finally to be dissipating as users around the world quite literally download hundreds of thousands of apps from this platform on a daily basis. And, as major new releases of software come to market, more and more of them are offering various applications and features 'in the cloud'. The secrecy shrouding the upcoming and much-anticipated launch of Microsoft's Windows 8 has muddied the waters a little in terms of which features will be cloud-based and which won't, but with its recent announcement of Office 365 as a prime example, there can be little doubt that the cloud will play a major role in the Redmond-based company's biggest launch since Windows 95.

So, with cloud computing starting to become a reality, are the days of the traditional software reseller numbered? Some would argue that it has to be, but there are still those who are adamant that, while the actual model may change, resellers should be embracing the cloud and either making it a part of their software offerings, or using it to enhance their business. After all, there can be little doubt that the days of boxed software – now more often than not a simple CD in a case – are numbered as users jump on the cloud, download and pay for the app they want (or for the time they use it) and simply hop off the cloud when they have completed the task at hand. And what does a situation like this mean for the future of software licensing and renewals, a literal cash-cow in the traditional software channel?

The bottom line is: Is there still space for the software reseller in a market driven by 'instant gratification' and which is increasingly turning to the cloud to satisfy this need? Many feel there definitely still is – it is just a case of resellers, as always, adopting new practices. And hoping that vendors will 'play the game' when it comes to this new breed of software reselling.

A match made in heaven ... or not?

The days of boxed software may be numbered due to the increased adoption and influence of cloud computing, but the genre could still be around for quite some time, especially in regions where bandwidth speeds and costs are still a major issue, such as South Africa and many of its counterparts on the continent.

But this doesn't mean that traditional software resellers in the country should be wringing their hands in anguish. Bruce Skjolde, channel manager for Mindjet MEA & Emerging Markets, says that instead of ignoring the cloud in the vain hope that it will go away, resellers should be looking at ways to embrace it and use it in their existing business.

"Boxed software has always provided many benefits to customers," Skjolde says. "It gives users the satisfaction of having a physical version of the software and overcomes the problem that cloud solutions can present of slow download speeds.

"However, times are changing – as are the ways that people work today," he adds. "When looking at cloud solutions we shouldn't see them as an alternative or threat to software – instead we should identify the customer benefit that is provided through using a solution that combines both. This provides customers with a choice of application that can be used across their device of choice - whether it be the Web, desktop, a mobile app or so on - and is something that we as a company are embracing through our move to a single subscription solution.

"This anytime, anywhere access that is made possible by the cloud allows people to work more flexibly, faster and more efficiently, increasing their productivity – something that is of increasing importance in today's workplace," he says.

Skjolde says that the adoption of cloud computing has to have an effect on the licensing process in the software environment and is one of the key areas where companies are focusing in order to cut costs and squeeze as much as they can out of continuously shrinking IT budgets.

"The move to the cloud is bound to disrupt traditional software pricing," he says. "It will affect the way that customers will purchase software and will ultimately change the way that vendors operate.

"With more and more companies moving to the cloud as a way of doing business, we will start to see SaaS becoming more common. According to Forrester, it currently accounts for 32% of all software sales and this is expected to increase to 50% by 2018.

"This particular approach enables users to acquire very specifically what is needed, and only for as long as the requirement prevails," he says. "As this model becomes more common it will affect the maintenance and licence renewals which will force vendors to find new revenue streams to fill that gap.

"From a customer perspective, the licence renewals provide companies with flexibility and the opportunity to improve their planning and budgeting for software for upcoming years."

Skjolde says that the doomsday predictions for resellers in the software space couldn't be further off the mark.

"There is certainly still room for resellers in the market, but they need to see the cloud as an opportunity rather than a threat," he says. "They will need to play a more important role between customers and vendor going forward. They will need to become the hub for a one-stop-shop and provide customers a better customer experience.

"The reseller has a golden opportunity to hold their customer's hand through the transition to the cloud, to advise them on the best technology for their businesses, to allay any concerns they may have around management or security of their applications, and oversee the integration with on-premise applications and existing infrastructure," Skjolde says. "Resellers should become aggregators of cloud services for their customers, essentially the customer needs a single point of contact to assist in the design and the delivery of this solution.

"They have the opportunity to provide knowledge, experience and a roadmap for this new environment," he adds.

JJ Milner, MD and chief cloud architect at Global Micro, agrees with Skjolde that, while the cloud may herald major change in the software industry, the scenario is not all doom and gloom.

"The impact of cloud services is radically changing the way that software developers, the channel and resellers engage with their customers," Milner says. "Traditionally, upfront payments of software licences kept resellers in business by providing a reliable revenue stream for that period.

"Cloud services, on the other hand, offer just-in-time activations, requiring no long-term licence agreements, and business can choose to use only the modules or services they need," he says. "The concept is very appealing to companies wanting to spend less up front while retaining the flexibility to move to a competitor at any time. Although resellers may feel that their business model is slipping out of their hands, there is an upside to this progression towards SaaS (Software as a Service).

Milner reiterates that it is time for resellers to start re-engineering their business models.

"Resellers simply need to rethink their revenue model," he says. "One solution is working with a distributor who can buffer the rebate structure for monthly service payments. This way, the business does not need to restructure the remuneration method they employ to pay their sales staff.

"Moreover, software always used to follow hardware but, today, software follows the service," he adds. "What this means for business is that they need to offer services with the hardware they sell, rather than

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bundling software alongside it.

"The service levels that the channel delivers to its customers are absolutely paramount here," Milner stresses.

"Competitive upgrades are now also a thing of the past," he says. "Software distributors will find that discounts on the upfront fee - to lure potential clients - no longer have the same impact when the customer pays a monthly fee for a more flexible service.

"Although the long-term business model for the reseller is stronger with cloud services in the picture, companies who do not add any value in the chain will certainly become disintermediated," Milner finally cautions.

Graeme O'Driscoll, innovation and technology manager for cloud services at Internet Solutions (IS) says that software licensing as the world has known it is a thing of the past.

"The licensing vendor is dead," O'Driscoll says. "Even the world's biggest software vendor, Microsoft, has realised that traditional licensing models need to change.

"Office365 and Windows 2012 are both available through completely changed licensing models – reflecting consumers' growing insistence for pay-as-you-use," he says.

In fact, says O'Driscoll, the cloud hype has effected a fundamental change in the attitude of end users to the extent that where vendors have been slow to migrate to a more flexible user-centric options, resellers have had to take on the risk and offer licensing to clients themselves.

"A local case in point has been Britehouse's innovative licensing of SAP to local clients – where the company bought end user licences in bulk in order to offer clients SaaS-style scalability and payment options, even though SAP had not incorporated a new licensing scheme," he says.

O'Driscoll, similarly, points to the uptake of Salesforce.com, which, he says, has decimated the CRM market.

"Huge, multinational organisations have moved away from Siebel to Salesforce.com – and interestingly, not because the product is superior, but simply because the licensing model is superior – it is more convenient, and offers a more reasonable spend structure."

Quite simply, says O'Driscoll, the space inhabited by the traditional software reseller is getting tighter and tighter.

"If they do not adapt very quickly to end user demands, they will become redundant," he warns.

JJ Milner, MD and chief cloud architect at Global Micro.

Cloud market to reach $109bn

The public cloud services market is forecast to grow 19,6% in 2012 to total $109-billion worldwide, according to Gartner.

Business process services (also known as business process as a service, or BPaaS) represent the largest segment, accounting for about 77% of the total market, while infrastructure as a service (IaaS) is the fastest-growing segment of the public cloud services market and is expected to grow 45,4% in 2012.

"The cloud services market is clearly a high-growth sector within the overall IT marketplace," says Ed Anderson, research director at Gartner. "The key to taking advantage of this growth will be understanding the nuances of the opportunity within service segments and geographic regions, and then prioritizing investments in line with the opportunities."

BPaaS is the largest segment primarily because of the inclusion of cloud advertising as a subsegment. BPaaS is forecast to grow to $84,2-billion in 2012, up from $72-billion in 2011. In 2011, cloud advertising represented about 47% of the total public cloud services market, making it the biggest identifiable subsegment in the forecast. Through 2016, cloud advertising will continue to account for about 47% of total public cloud services spending.

Software as a service (SaaS) is the next-largest segment and is forecast to grow to $14,4-billion in 2012, while IaaS is forecast to grow from $4,3-billion in 2011 to $6,2-billion in 2012. In 2010, the IaaS market was less than one-third the size of the SaaS market. By 2016, the IaaS market will grow to almost equal the size of the SaaS market.

Growth in application infrastructure services (also known as platform as a service, or PaaS) will also be high, although it is a smaller market relative to the other segments. PaaS is strategic and considered to be a critical growth driver for other segments, including BPaaS and SaaS. The PaaS segment is forecast to grow to $1,2-billion in 2012.

Cloud management and security services constitute a new forecast segment comprising cloud security services, IT operations management (ITOM) and storage management (including backup and recovery services). The cloud management and security services segment is forecast to grow to $3,3-billion in 2012.

Although North America is the largest region and is expected to

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>>> produce the largest absolute increase in market size, Gartner expects the highest regional growth rates in emerging Asia/Pacific (including India and Indonesia), greater China, Eurasia (including Russia) and Latin America (including Argentina, Mexico and Brazil).

Western Europe is forecast to grow the slowest during the forecast period, largely due to ongoing eurozone economic issues, while growth will also be lower in mature Asia/Pacific markets due to ongoing economic challenges in the Japanese market.

North America will account for the greatest percentage of absolute growth in the cloud services market, with 61% of all growth from 2010 through 2016. Western Europe will follow, with 17% of absolute cloud services growth over the same period.

This highlights the dominance of North America and Western Europe in the development, availability and adoption of cloud services.

High growth rates will occur in emerging markets, including the top three growth countries of India, Indonesia and China. However, 79% of spending increases will come from North America and Western Europe. For cloud services providers, this will require a strategic approach when considering both high-volume and high-growth markets. Both will be important in the development of sustained, global strategies.

“The total public cloud services market size in 2011 was $91,4-billion, and it will grow to $206,6-billion in 2016. As the market grows, IaaS will become a larger part of the overall market, while the market share of cloud management and security services will grow as well,” says Anderson.

“When targeting specific markets within the cloud services marketplace, we recommend evaluating both potential market size and growth rates. These will vary by segment, subsegment, region and country.”

Open Source Software is not free software

Open source software (OSS) is becoming increasingly relevant in the commercial world and many companies are under the impression it has no costs associated with it due to coined terms of it being “free” and “open”.

However, this is not the case and users are warned they could open themselves to copyright infringement and other expenses.

It is estimated that 85% of companies now use OSS, although they are often unaware of it. Despite many users having access to OSS, and being entitled to use this software, many are subject to paying a fee for using it. “Even if there isn’t a fee payable, it’s worth bearing in mind that there are always costs involved in the maintenance of software, as well as in monitoring developments in OSS projects, and conducting internal audits of OSS,” says Elaine de Beer, patent attorney at ENS (Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs).

According to de Beer, users will have to pay to use OSS because the owner has legal rights to it, making it possible for users to transgress copyright or patent laws.

“Making software available as open source in no way detracts from these legal rights. It would be a mistake to think that OSS cannot be detected – it can, and indications are that OSS owners are more assertive than ever in enforcing their rights.”

De Beer says copyright law gives automatic protection for computer software without the need for registration, and the owner has the right to control the copying, modification and distribution of the software.

“In addition, the owner may be able to get a patent for the software, something which is still controversial in South Africa, but gives them the absolute right to control the making or using of the software,

Elaine de Beer, patent attorney at ENS.

irrespective of whether or not there has been copying.”

However, de Beer says rights to software are invariably granted in the form of a licence rather than an outright sale. Plus, an OSS licence gives the user greater rights than a conventional licence, which gives the user the right to run that software on a specified number of machines.

De Beer explains: “Open Source Definition (OSD) includes the right to redistribute the software; to access source code and make modifications and derived works. It also gives the user rights to run the program for any purpose, to access the source code and study how it works, to make improvements, and to redistribute copies.”

According to de Beer, a disclaimer of liability may be included in the case of any damage being suffered, and may require the user to include the copyright notice and the liability disclaimer when redistributing the software. She says it may even contain a restriction of redistribution in the case of modifications, a concept that is known as “copy left”.

Because this field is becoming increasingly important and increasingly complex, particularly around the issue of patent laws, companies who use OSS are urged to keep up to date with industry trends and developments, says De Beer.

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Antivirus software is not dead yet

By Fred Mitchell, Symantec business unit manager at Drive Control Corporation

In the wake of the discovery of Flame, the most complex and sophisticated known cyber-crime attack to date, which went undetected for approximately two years, an article published by Technology Review boldly proclaimed that the antivirus era is over.

The truth, however, is that for the vast majority of the Internet-going population, Flame is irrelevant, highly unlikely to affect their lives, and does not in fact herald the death of antivirus.

Unless users are running very specific software at a nuclear facility, Flame is not their problem. It is, however, indicative of a trend in cyber-crime that all Internet users would do well to pay attention to.

Threats are becoming increasingly targeted and increasingly persistent, and users need to protect themselves against ever more sophisticated attacks. This by no means indicates that the old threats have simply disappeared. Antivirus and other anti-malware software still have a very distinct role to play in protecting Internet users.

The reason for the evolution of cyber-crime is simple: it makes sense. At its heart, cyber-crime is a business, and like successful businesses, the perpetrators target people who are likely to be susceptible. Random attacks are not only easier to block, but also easier to spot. Most savvy Internet users can identify common scams, which makes them less successful.

The more targeted an attack is, such as a spear phishing attack, and the more detail and specific information cyber-criminals use, the more likely people are to fall for the scams. This means the criminals have a higher success rate and are therefore more profitable as a result.

While Flame was a very specific attack that was only aimed at a niche of the population, everyone who is connected to the Internet on any one of a variety of today's connected devices is at risk of falling victim to cyber-crime, through a wide variety of methods that are becoming increasingly targeted and sophisticated.

Flame was such a specialised attack that it was almost impossible to detect - and was in place for more than two years before it was detected, which made it all the more effective.

This increased sophistication is in retaliation to the increasing sophistication of antivirus and protection tools, as cyber-criminals strive to find new ways of getting the information they need.

As an example, spam used to be effective, until anti-spam tools were invented, so spammers got more creative and more specific in their targets, in an effort to thwart security. This vicious cycle goes on, with criminals and protection companies locked in a continual battle to come out on top.

What the Flame attack has highlighted is the fact that it is the unknown that causes the biggest damage, and the efficiency of highly targeted attacks in achieving their goal.

One of the biggest questions this attack also raised was, if antivirus did not detect Flame, what is the point of having an antivirus?

For the average consumer, however, Flame is a non-issue, and it is the thousands of common viruses and other attacks that users need to protect against. There are a whole host of threats that are current and can easily be prevented by using a sophisticated security suite.

Coupled with education on the ways cyber-criminals try to catch users out, and a bit of common sense (if it sounds too good to be true, it is), the majority of Internet consumers will remain protected against the threats of cyber-crime.

The bottom line? Don't ditch antivirus software just yet. Users still need it. Cyber-criminals will try any attack which is likely to yield results, and if users all stop protecting themselves from what is thought to be an outdated form of attack, they can be sure that someone will try that method again.

Malware

Tips for securing mobile assets

Kingston Technology recommended best practices for improving USB security

* Build an encrypted USB plan: protect and comply - incorporate secure USB flash drives and policies into the organisation's overall security strategy.
* Identify the most suitable USB flash drives for the organisation - determine the reliability and integrity of USBs by confirming compliance with leading security standards and ensuring that there is no malicious code on them.
* Train and educate - establish a training programme that educates employees and the channel on acceptable and unacceptable use of USB flash drives. Walk users through actual breach incidents and other negative consequences that occur when using non-secure USBs.
* Establish and enforce policies - if the right policies are not in place for all to follow, USB drives can potentially be the downfall of a data security strategy. Underscoring the need to establish and enforce USB policies is pivotal; the Ponemon study results revealed that nearly 50% of organisations admitted to having lost drives containing sensitive or confidential information in the past 24 months.
* Provide company-approved USBs - proven hardware-based encryption using Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) 256 security provides portability and superior encryption, over host-based software encryption.
* Manage authorised USBs and block unapproved devices - if this is not done, sensitive data can be copied on to these devices and shared with outsiders.
* Encrypt confidential data - data needs to be encrypted before it is saved in order to protect valuable information from hackers, as these hackers can bypass antivirus, firewall and other controls.
* Certify that antivirus protection is present at every entry point - ensure endpoint-host computer systems are equipped with up-to-date antivirus software.

McAfee has released the McAfee Threats Report: Second Quarter 2012, which found the biggest increase in malware samples detected in the last four years. McAfee Labs detected a 1,5-million sample increase in malware since Q1 2012 and identified new threats such as mobile "drive-by downloads", the use of Twitter for control of mobile botnets, and the appearance of mobile "ransomware".

Through proprietary research and investigation, McAfee Labs has been witness to rapid growth in its database or "zoo" of malware samples. With the malware sample discovery rate accelerating to nearly 100 000 per day, McAfee has identified key malware variants affecting a range of users globally.

"Over the last quarter we have seen prime examples of malware that impacted consumers, businesses, and critical infrastructure facilities," says Vincent Weafer, senior VP of McAfee Labs.

"Attacks that we've traditionally seen PCs are now making their way to other devices. For example, in Q2 we saw Flashback, which targeted Macintosh devices and techniques such as ransomware and drive-by downloads targeting mobile. This report highlights the need for protection on all devices that may be used to access the Internet."

Malware on the rise

As PC malware writers master their craft, they continue to transfer their skills to other popular consumer and business platforms, such as Google's Android OS. After the mobile malware explosion in Q1 2012, Android malware shows no signs of slowing down, putting users on high alert.

Virtually all new mobile malware detected in Q2 2012 was directed at the Android platform, and was comprised of SMS-sending malware, mobile botnets, spyware and destructive Trojans.

Mobile ransomware and botnets

Ransomware, steadily increasing quarter over quarter, has become a popular avenue for cyber-criminals. Damage can range from loss of photos and personal files for home users to data encryption and demands for money for large enterprises.

Ransomware is especially problematic as it can hold computers and

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data hostage, instantly damaging machines.

Botnets, a network of compromised computers infected with malicious software and used to generate spam, send viruses or cause Web servers to fail, have also taken centre stage again this quarter with infections reaching a 12-month high.

With the US as the global hub of botnet control servers, new methods for control have also been uncovered, including the use of Twitter for mobile botnet command and control. As such, the attacker can tweet commands with relative anonymity and all infected devices will follow them.

Thumb drive corrupters, password stealers and Web threats

Thumb drive and password-stealing malware showed significant growth in Q2. At nearly 1,2-million new samples, the Auto Runworm spreads from thumb drives by executing code embedded in Auto Run files, repeating the process on any and all drives discovered.

Password-stealing malware, at nearly 1,6-million new samples, collects account names and passwords, so an attacker can pose as the victim.

Websites with malicious reputations are influenced by the hosting of malware, potentially unwanted programs, or phishing sites. This quarter McAfee Labs recorded an average of 2,7-million new bad URLs per month.

In June, these new URLs were related to about 300 000 bad domains, which is equivalent to 10 000 new malicious domains every day. Of the new bad-reputation URLs, 94,2% host malware, exploits or code that have been specifically designed to hijack computers.

Each quarter, the McAfee Labs team of 500 multi-disciplinary researchers in 30 countries follows the complete range of threats in realtime, identifying application vulnerabilities, analysing and correlating risks, and enabling instant remediation to protect enterprises and the public.

BYOD: now it's personal

Allowing employees to use personal mobile devices (bring your own device, or BYOD) for work purposes is fast, and rather haphazardly, becoming the norm for companies keen to empower worker mobility and increase their productivity on-the-go.

What most companies don't realise is that this comes with a host of implications, not only for network access control and data security, but also employees' privacy.

"When employees are allowed to use their own mobile devices for work purposes, it is essential that a few ground rules are established. This is to ensure that the company's security requirements are being met, while at the same time acknowledging employees' right to privacy," says Dries Morris, operations director at Securicom, a local IT security management and consulting company which offers end-to-end managed IT security solutions, including MDM.

"Companies must also be cognisant that if they monitor personal mobile devices used by employees to access company resources and conduct business, it raises privacy concerns and they could be subject to legal liability.

"To ensure that everyone is on the same page, it is becoming increasingly important for companies to implement a well-constructed security policy around the use of personal devices for business-related purposes and enforce it with a mobile device management (MDM) solution.

"At the moment, the vast majority of South African companies that have allowed employees to bring their own devices to work do not have a sound mobile strategy and have not implemented security policies around the use of personal devices. They are putting their data and networks at risk, and are being opened up to the risk of liability as well."

Securicom's MDM solution uses Zenprise, which is one of the most comprehensive and robust MDM offerings available on the market. Securicom offers the technology as a cloud-based solution in terms of a partnership with Blue Turtle Technologies, which has the rights to distribute Zenprise in South Africa.

Michael Hutchinson, infrastructure product manager at Blue Turtle Technologies, which offers Zenprise as on-premise solution to companies, says companies must formally define the parameters around the usage of personal devices.

"Companies must enforce access and security policies which clearly define the parameters relating to the use of personal devices for work purposes. The policy should detail the security requirements for each type of personal device that is used in the workplace and connected to the corporate network.

"This could include the way that passwords are configured, prohibit specific types of applications being installed on the device, and the encryption of data stored on devices.

"Enforcing a security policy also enables companies to limit the activities that employees are allowed to perform on devices at work and enforce periodic IT

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>>> audits to ensure devices meet minimum security requirements.

"Due to the personal nature of the devices, employees must be clearly informed of company confidentiality rules, and the security and incident response implications of using their own devices for work purposes.

The policy should also consider the impact on employees' privacy when they use personal devices for work.

"As such, the complex legal implications of BYOD must be carefully considered using a multi-disciplinary approach that would included security, IT, legal, privacy, and risk management amongst others," he says.

Hutchinson advises companies to introduce policies in terms of data and network access in a transparent and "public" manner that clearly and concisely protects the company and mobile users.

Policies should be a signed agreement that forms part of employees' standard terms and conditions of employment.

He also recommends that employers make employees aware that as part of the policy, the network administrator has permission to monitor their use of personal devices on the company network. Evaluation of a company's security requirements and assessment of risks should be done on a continuous basis, as new risks and challenges are constantly emerging.

Facial analytics and other innovations to counter crime

One of the key aspects of identity management and access is that of facial recognition, which has many advantages over other biometrics solutions. It enables faces to be recorded and archived at a distance, act as a crime deterrent, and help identify a person immediately or at a later date.

More importantly, the contact-free and non-obtrusive procedure makes for a more acceptable and more easily integrated identification solution using existing cameras.

Peter Bouwer, GM, Special Projects of Mustek, believes in the importance of an integrated approach to security. He claims that in the past, companies have relied on what he calls the "bakkie brigade", which are small independent operators, specialising in one aspect, like access control or CCTV.

Mustek Security Technologies (MST) believes that today there is more to it than just talking about integrating various solutions. An approach to security that starts with an overall evaluation of the vulnerabilities, and then the design of a total approach is what the market needs more of. There are many products and systems in the market at present, the main problem is that they do not all inter-operate.

The prevention of realtime crimes and tracking persons of interest is difficult to do, due to a lack of accuracy by human eyes, and the cost of manpower to monitor surveillance systems connected to numerous cameras.

There are solutions available that can incorporate embedded face recognition and 3G technologies to integrate with existing CCTV cameras, to offer flexibility and mobility for installation in remote and challenging areas.

MST is currently testing and evaluating a new system that analyses the face of a person entering a building or facility, and matches it against a database of people authorised to enter the building.

There are countless opportunities of where this technology could be used, an example being at airports, where security can identify wanted criminals entering the country, or at entrances and exits to companies, or high security areas, such as sports events.

The technology uses algorithms to analyse a person's face, using high resolution surveillance camera footage, and then matches the visual of the person in question against a database of saved images, within seconds. MST is evaluating various systems all the time.

Peter Bouwer, GM, Special Projects of Mustek

The local market is truly at an exciting time for these identity management and access control solutions. MST predicts that users will see quite a shift in how companies and the channel adopt these solutions, and how law enforcement agencies use them.

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SA companies on the back foot with mobile security

With mobility the order of the day, all the security holes and compliance issues that companies have spent the last decade fixing have been re-opened, making mobile device security one of the biggest challenges facing South African companies.

“Nowadays, it is hard to find a mobile phone that isn’t Internet and e-mail enabled,” says Elna du Plessis, MDM channel manager at Securicom, a specialist IT security company which partnered with Blue Turtle technologies earlier this year to deliver the world-leading mobile device management (MDM) solution from Zenprise to companies in Africa.

“Workers at all levels of enterprise are using mobile devices and phones to conduct their work. This opens up company networks to security threats, as they have no control over the devices which employees are using to access company resources, store business-related information or transact with customers.

“In fact, we are seeing a very similar problem to the one which the advent of USB data storage devices brought about. Users are able to move intellectual property from the company-owned infrastructure and onto their own devices.

“Organisations are on the back foot because the data that they invest in securing is no longer where it has always been, secure in a data centre. Instead, it is in the ether on mobile devices that in many cases aren’t even the property of the organisation.

“Companies are becoming more aware of these risks and aligned to this, more and more businesses are seeking to implement proper mobile device strategies, as well as solutions for managing the vast array of devices at play in the typical organisation.”

Zenprise’s MobileManager Platform is the only end-to-end, enterprise-grade mobile device management solution currently available. It boasts advanced security features and comprehensive tools for managing mobile devices across an enterprise, supporting every major smart mobile device platform including iOS, Android, Blackberry, Symbian and Windows Mobile.

It can be delivered on-premise, in the public cloud, or in hybrid cloud deployments in both bring your own device (BYOD) and company-issued-device scenarios.

Through their partnership, Securicom and Blue Turtle can offer it as an on-premise solution; or deliver it as a cloud-based IT security service/ fully-managed, locally-hosted service. The demand for the service is such that Securiom and Blue Turtle have launched a partner programme to establish a channel for the solution and empower credible partners to help address the demand quickly.

According to Du Plessis, Securicom uses Zenprise’s Mobile Maturity Model to classify companies according to their level of adoption of mobile devices and associated security and management technologies. They also use the model as a tool to educate customers on utilising the technology to effectively and securely enable mobility in the businesses depending on where they stand in the model.

Companies are categorised as:

* Unmanaged, where employees are allowed to use their own personal devices for work and there is no active mobile device management;
* Managed, where employees are using their own devices for work but the company has implemented basic MDM functionality such as device lock, wipe clean and lifecycle management;
* Advanced, where there is MDM solution in place to secure devices and manage applications, network access, data, policies and processes; and
* Optimised, where MDM has been enabled for enterprise-grade performance and security.

Core MDM, or basic maturity, relates to the management of a mobile device. As companies mature, they start focusing more on the data and security of the device (advanced) with the Utopia being to get to mobile business optimisation (optimised) where mobile devices can create revenue for the organisation.

Du Plessis says most SA companies are stuck at the unmanaged level of the model as they have a mobile blind-spot and don’t understand what their vulnerabilities are or what threats they face.

“Many companies are doing the basics and some are dabbling in the optimised space with application development, but they are neglecting security. Companies that have solid IT governance practices in place for the rest of the IT ecosystem are normally more mature on mobility.

“Companies can’t neglect mobile security as it is the key to effectively and securely empowering mobility. Companies need

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>>> to be in the same position with mobile devices as they are with workstations and laptops. That is at the advanced stage of the model. Few South African companies are there and that's why we are seeing such a dramatic move towards more effective MDM," she says.

A cloud-based MDM solution is the easiest and fastest way for companies to gain visibility and control of a plethora of mobile devices in the enterprise, whether company-owned or employees' personal phones. It's also easier to manage costs while enjoying access to qualified support.

"Given the status quo, companies in South Africa still have a lot to learn about MDM. So we expect that there will continue to be a shift towards cloud-based MDM solutions that are quick to deploy, flexible, scalable and easy to use," she concludes.

Video surveillance presents network design challenges

With security becoming one of the key concerns within most organisations, many are complementing data protection systems with physical security in the form of new generation video surveillance solutions.

Andy Robb, chief technology officer at Duxbury Networking, says video surveillance technology has come a long way from the early analogue tube cameras connected to video cassette recorders.

"An increasing number now use network-linked IP (Internet protocol) cameras and employ servers for image recording in hybrid or fully digitised systems as the demand for the integration of these systems into larger security 'ecosystems' increases," he says.

"This market is also being driven by users' needs to serve larger geographic areas and monitor more locations. There is also a demand for clearer images and the automatic analysis of large amounts of data," he notes.

According to Robb, vendors are thus moving away from simple, legacy solutions showing only indistinct camera images, towards the provision of higher resolution cameras with higher frame rates supported by platforms facilitating the "plug-in" of many other complementary technologies, such as storage, analytics and two-way audio.

"Today, new high definition IP camera options, software, a variety of wireless communication, control and management systems as well as leading edge storage, distribution and analytics solutions capable of recognising potential security breaches without human involvement are available," he says.

"The challenge currently facing IT managers and network designers is to incorporate these new systems into existing business networks and integrate them with information management systems in order to give better visibility of the processes associated with surveillance in the broadest sense."

According to Robb, organisations have traditionally built separate surveillance networks alongside their regular corporate networks.

"This practice remains prevalent as surveillance systems integrators struggle to incorporate their systems into the corporate network and, similarly, network specialists grapple with the requirement to establish a service model based on an integrated IT-based network - be it wired, wireless or wide area.

"The goal of an end-to-end, integrated, fully-functioning corporate network incorporating video surveillance often seems out of reach for many companies who remain tied to their 'compartmentalised' approach to procurement."

He says network specialists called in to establish an integrated network may confirm that the infrastructure is operational

Andy Robb, chief technology officer at Duxbury Networking

and, in the same way, the video camera technicians may give "their equipment" the thumbs up.

"But problems often rear their heads when the systems are fully activated or perhaps when cameras are added to the network. Then the image quality may suddenly fall below specification, or network performance may become compromised.

"This lack of understanding is largely due to the momentum of change and a lack of readiness among some 'dyed-in-the-wool' video surveillance players to accept the realities of the digital revolution."

Robb adds that installers must come to terms with the fact that the video surveillance industry is now moving forward at the same pace as the IT industry, and that the transition from analogue to digital represents a fundamental change in marketplace topology which requires new skills sets for sales, installation and management.

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IS solves the cloud security anxiety

Internet Solutions (IS), in response to industry's growing demand for secure, ubiquitous cloud solutions, has announced the launch of IS Cloud Web Security (CWS). The solution, says IS, not only addresses the full gamut of cloud security concerns, but being a cloud-based solution itself, offers clients the benefit of reduced administration and zero capex spend on hardware and software.

"Many organisations are hesitant to embark on the journey to cloud, as securing the cloud computing environment adequately has not, until now, been possible to guarantee," says Graeme O'Driscoll, innovation and technology manager for cloud at IS.

"As a result, organisations are losing the undisputed business benefits of cloud solutions. IS can now offer its clients holistic cloud security using Zscaler's secure cloud gateway to deliver the solution. Additionally, a 100% uptime service level agreement guarantees IS CWS is always available."

The IS CWS proxy has the lowest throughput latency on the market and is billed per user, per month, regardless of the number of end-devices associated with that user, or that user's bandwidth consumption.

By adopting IS CWS, organisations not only future-proof security needs, but will save about 60% of Web security spend. Organisations can avoid inevitable appliance fatigue and refresh cycles.

For a traditional multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) client to get similar benefits to IS CWS, it would need to invest in numerous machines, including a proxy server, reporting server, a Web 2.0 gateway and a URL filtering gateway. Costs accumulate – hardware, administration, and software – which need to be doubled if organisations are concerned with redundancy, O'Driscoll says.

"IS CWS reduces all these costs, from rack space, to carbon footprint, to salaries and capex spend on hardware and software."

CWS offers organisations comprehensive end-device and mobile device protection – including data-leak prevention, antivirus, anti-malware and anti-spyware, and auditing of browsing, uploads and downloads, all in realtime.

Policies are granular, and can be applied to application, user, location, time and volume. Additionally, policies integrate with Active Directory, allowing for rules to be defined based on users and/or groups.

"IS CWS offers decentralised Internet access, with centralised control. Conservatively, CWS can free-up bandwidth usage by up to 10 times through these rules and policies – allowing for a far more productive, beneficial cloud experience.

"Through CWS clients now have access to a multi-tenant solution, meaning a user is not tied to a specific data centre, which negatively impacts response times. Rather, related policies will be enforced from the closest of one of 47 nodes world-wide."

The result is ultra-low latency and high reliability.

"Gartner has recognised the solution," says O'Driscoll, placing IS as an "innovator" in its Magic Quadrant.

"It is rare that a single solution is so comprehensive. With CWS, we have addressed cost in terms of time and money savings, offer the best policies and security available, realtime reporting and forensic auditing, ease of deployment for data loss prevention, and near-zero latency."

Strategies

By Sean Wainer, country manager, Citrix South Africa

Whether embracing, ignoring or fearing BYOD and cloud computing, one thing is for sure: the notion of security has been irreversibly changed.

This force of change in security has been necessitated by a transfer of power, as BYOD, cloud and consumerisation have taken significant control of the computing environment away from IT.

In previous decades, IT had the luxury of end-to-end control of endpoints, networks, servers, applications and data. Not so much anymore - but security architectures haven't been updated to reflect this reality.

The practice of "secure everything equally and hope for the best" just doesn't cut it when dealing with BYOD and the cloud. Clinging to the comforts of security's past leads to fear for security's future.

Users are well aware that something needs to be done to return IT to a position where information governance can be assured. And they need to foster the productivity and innovation associated with BYOD and cloud computing.

So, with this in mind, let's explore the recommendations for mastering the new wave of computing architecture:

Design for users' fears

Instead of fearing BYOD and the cloud, find a way to embrace today's computing realities.

By designing for user fears, BYOD and cloud computing achieve the synergistic goal of optimising productivity and security, empowering both workers and IT. And one of the first fears to get over is consumerisation.

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Embrace consumerisation

Embrace and extend consumerisation in the enterprise by first learning how people across every generation are leveraging consumer technologies. Consumerisation at work often begins with a BYOD programme that makes the computing experience personal.

Make IT personal

IT must first support productivity - enabling personalisation, BYOD and the personal cloud. The computing experience for the cloud era is custom tailored to the individual and is not one-size-fits all. By making IT personal, the use of devices, applications, data and even the security experience can be fit-to-purpose and therefore more relevant to work.

Focus on networking

With services moving to the cloud and people connecting to applications and data, networking is more important than ever. Cloud computing and virtualisation requirements also demand that networks are portable.

With increased mobility, users are more dependent on the network than ever. Challenge the decades-old outdated assumptions of networking and access to optimise and advance.

Re-factor access

Challenging the assumptions of access doesn't mean anything goes. Just because BYOD and the cloud have appeared, it doesn't mean that users destroy security to accommodate them. In fact, the opposite is true – security can be made much more specific and relevant, with BYOD and cloud providing the impetus.

Define relationships

Relationships are the new networking. Cloud era networks are social, federated and service-enabled. Granular access is integrated. BYOD is a given. Single sign on, security optimisation, branch services and follow-me-data are essential for optimal productivity.

Virtualise to secure

Virtualisation is a tailoring of computing to business needs, opportunities and innovations. This evolution is driving slow incremental changes to existing applications and processes while enabling wild innovation for those who start anew - especially for those who transform security through virtualisation.

Effective virtualisation security protects mobility, collaboration and social computing through isolation of sensitive resources. BYOD cannot be effectively secured without virtualisation.

Presume multi-tenancy

Multi-tenant is an ownership, management and security model. From cloud to BYOD, multi-tenant is a new reality.

A proven multi-tenant design is essential to proving compliance and privacy in clouds and other shared-ownership models.

Design for multi-tenancy to protect administrative, tenant and external services from each other. Good fences make for good neighbours.

Ownership

Own what users manage and manage what they own. Own data. Own encryption. Ask if users really need to own devices, or just the sessions and data that will be utilised by multiple devices.

Enterprise, cloud and BYOD management models must be distinct to maintain a clear boundary of ownership. Be explicit in defining and managing ownership models to avoid the "grey areas" surrounding:

Sean Wainer, country manager of Citrix South Africa.

* Shared devices, responsibility and accountability;
* Data co-mingling – especially for sensitive data (and e-mail on devices);
* Privacy, legal and HR concerns; and
* Forensic challenges.

IT organisations must prepare for these realities by automating the security experience for BYOD and the cloud in ways that build and enforce end-to-end trust.

Trust the cloud

How can users trust in the cloud the way they trust in other critical infrastructure with inherent risks? For cloud services to be relied upon, proven assurance must be transparently visible and multiple fail-safes must protect against catastrophe.

More than the simple measures of security, the ultimate goal of the cloud is trust. Cloud trust is built on the principles of security, privacy, transparency and accountability.

Benefits of managed security services for the reseller

By Fred Mitchell, Security business unit manager at Drive Control Corporation

Technology is evolving at a rapid pace, and resellers are expected to keep up-to-date with all the latest trends and developments, stocking and supporting the newest technologies. However, with the influx of technology and the pace of its evolution, resellers may not necessarily have the skills and expertise to offer maintenance on the products they sell.

Managed services offered by distributors can help to overcome this challenge by harnessing the skill and experience of staff at the distributor to assist with management and maintenance of tools, bridging this gap and enabling resellers to add more value for their customers.

When it comes to software, there are certain skill sets that are necessary in order to install, maintain, update and upgrade solutions. IT security, backup and protection are mission-critical in today's world, and if they are installed incorrectly or are not maintained adequately, this can cause long-term negative effects for business, compromising critical network assets and organisational data.

Security is also constantly evolving to meet increasingly sophisticated threats, and enterprises are exposed to new threats on an almost daily basis. This means that it is increasingly difficult to defend against ever-changing security threats.

Even if a reseller has the skills to do this, it is a resource-intensive operation that can be time consuming and unprofitable, requiring constant updating and upgrading in order to protect against an ever changing threat landscape.

Outsourcing this as a managed service to the distributor either enables access to the necessary skills if they are not available in house, or frees up skilled resources to focus on more strategic efforts.

This model has several benefits for the reseller, including the ability to fill gaps in onboard skills, broadening their product and services offering without having to invest in additional skills. It also opens up additional revenue streams, since the reseller can in fact resell the managed services.

The resources from the distributor will wear the hat of the reseller at clients, so that a seamless experience is created for the customer. This enables the reseller to then deliver more cost effective services to customers, leveraging economies of scale at the distributor.

These services are also delivered under strict service-level agreements (SLAs), and ensure resellers can provide their customers with continuous expertise and value through a combination of onsite activities, on-call assistance, and remote monitoring.

By leveraging managed services, resellers are empowered to offer their customers a host of benefits, including improved cost control and easier management of security budgets, reduced complexity and enhanced security, monitoring and management to deliver critical support, and up-to-date protection to safeguard from multiple and evolving security threats.

Security is a key concern in today's connected environment, and providing effective security for the enterprise requires powerful technology, accurate threat intelligence, proven processes, and experienced professionals to bring it all together. However, this can be challenging given increasingly complex network environments and limited resources as well as the ever present skills gap.

This means that it is difficult for resellers to keep up, and it can be difficult and costly to maintain the necessary skills in house. Leveraging managed services supplied by a value-added distributor allows resellers to not only broaden their offering, but also to improve customer security and deliver comprehensive solutions that meet the needs of the modern business world.

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Rectron has been given the exclusive rights to sell the new Acer Aspire S5 Ultrabook in South Africa. The Aspire S5 is world's thinnest ultrabook, measuring only 11mm at its narrowest point, and weighing just 1,2kg.

The Aspire S5's magnesium-aluminium alloy cover and palm rest provide a slim and sturdy design, while metallic brushed detail provides subtle elegance.

At the touch of a button, the S5's innovative MagicFlip I/O Port pops out to reveal hidden ports, such as USB 3.0, HDMI and Thunderbolt.

It is the first ultrabook to feature Thunderbolt, the fastest way to transfer data between a PC and high-performance peripherals and high-definition displays, all over a single cable. It also provides AcerCloud – allowing remote access to the digital data on the ultrabook via Android devices.

The S5 is powered by a third generation Intel Core i7 processor and features a 256Gb solid state drive. The 13,3-inch widescreen LED-backlit display (1366 x 768) delivers vivid HD images, making surfing the Web, streaming shows and engaging in social networks a pleasure.

The new Acer Aspire S5 is available from Rectron at a recommended retail price of R14 999.00.

Fixed dome camera from Axis

xis Communication has launched the Axis M3006-V for retail stores, hotels, schools and offices.

The Axis M3006-V is a three megapixel, vandal- and dust-resistant fixed mini dome camera with a wide-angle view and HDTV 1080p. The camera has been designed to meet the video surveillance needs of price-sensitive market segments. It is supported by Axis Camera Station and third-party applications through Axis' Application Development Partner programme. The camera supports hosted video and ONVIF for easy camera system integration. The came provides a viewing angle of 134°; other viewing angles can be achieved through optional lenses.
The camera also supports Axis' Corridor Format, enabling vertically oriented video streams that optimise coverage of areas such as corridors, hallways or store aisles. The camera has a 2m network cable attached and supports Power over Ethernet (IEEE 802.3af), which eliminates the need for power cables and reduces installation costs. To enable the camera to better blend in with the environment, optional skins are available

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Omega Africa, A4tech launch Wireless HD Headset

The A4tech RH-200 Wireless HD Headset is now available from Omega Africa. The headset provides users with amazing HD sound quality, a noise cancellation microphone and eight hours of battery backup. Features of the headset include:

* Multi-link receiver connects up to four headsets;
* Hidden mic with noise cancellation;
* Auto-channel hopping;
* Function buttons for volume and power; and
* Effective range of up to 10m.

Performance, security in new WLAN infrastructure

Duxbury Networking has released an integrated, flexible wireless LAN (WLAN) infrastructure designed to deploy Voice over WLAN (VoWLAN), HD video and other high-performance solutions, with enhanced security safeguards.

The Enterasys Networks' architecture is a cloud-ready solution featuring intelligent WLAN access points, designed to support both centralised and distributed networks while forwarding traffic in accordance with performance and reliability benchmarks determined by network applications.

According to Armand Steffens, business development manager at Duxbury Networking, the multimedia-ready access points address complex, time-sensitive functions such as quality of service, encryption, policy enforcement, rate limiting and dynamic channel selection.

They can also operate as network sensors with threat classification, rogue access point detection and other intrusion prevention capabilities, reducing the amount of equipment needed to deploy a secure WLAN.

"The architecture's integrated security function - operational across wired or wireless networks - addresses a critical enterprise challenge by enabling quick diagnosis and resolution of threats with the support of realtime positioning capabilities that detect rogue users and shut down hot spots by exact location," explains Steffens.

"The Enterasys architecture is able to work with any existing network without the need for reconfiguration, thus eliminating unnecessary switch and infrastructure replacement costs when upgrading indoor and outdoor WLANs. Specialised mounting hardware leverages existing brackets to streamline installation and automated access point discovery, configuration and optimisation features reduce installation and start-up time."

Fast-paced router from Huawei

Huawei AR G3 series enterprise routers (AR G3s) are next-generation routing and gateway devices, designed for the multi-service era to provide routing, switching, wireless, voice and security functions.

The third generation AR's multi-core CPU improves the speed of concurrent processing of data and voice services, which makes it possible to deploy a large number of services.

Independent protocol management, service processing, and data switching, ensure high performance and improved service reliability.

Its integrated routing and switching functions improves the data switching efficiency between interface cards and simplifies device configurations and maintenance, and hot swappable interface cards and redundant components such as fan modules and power modules ensure service reliability and stability.

Huawei AR G3 series enterprise routers use a Dual-Mode Network which supports flexible 3G access and service customisation.

Additionally, Huawei AR G3s are able to interconnect with the third-party IT systems by using the Open Service Platform (OSP) to provide a unified communication solution for enterprise users.

At the same time, they provide a complete security protection mechanism including user access control, packet detection, and active attack defense.

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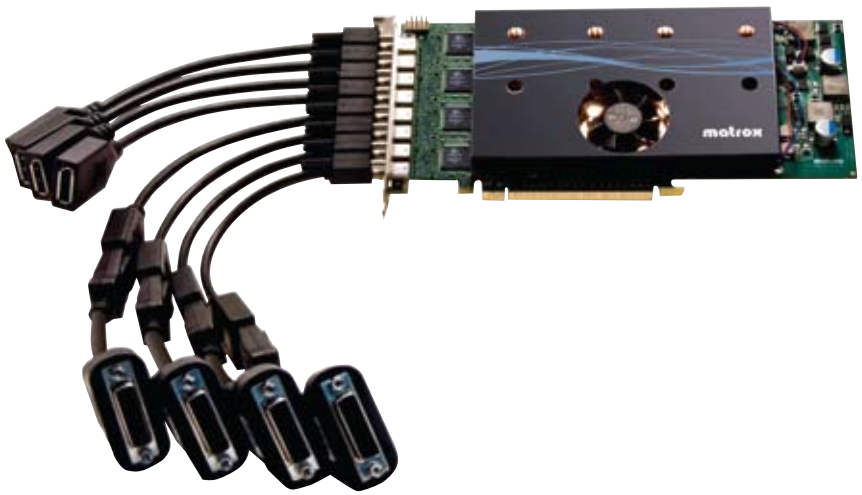

MatroxM-Series from AxizWorkgroup

The MatroxM-Series multi-display graphics cards support up to eight high-resolution monitors from a single board, and deliver advanced desktop management features to drive productivity, collaboration and stability across business, industrial and government applications.

Its flagship product, the M9188 PCIe x16 multi-display Octal graphics card, is the world's first single-slot PCIe x16 Octal card that can support both DisplayPort and DVI Single-Link outputs to ensure wide compatibility with today's monitors.

With 2Gb of memory and advanced desktop management features, such as independent or stretched desktop modes, the M9188 drives energy, transportation, process control, financial trading and other mission-critical environments with extraordinary performance.

Features and specifications of the series include:

* Single-slot card - save valuable slot space and benefit from the ability to add multiple Matrox boards to support up to 16 displays;
* Multiple operating system support - display drivers for Microsoft Windows 7, Vista, XP, Server 2003/2008, Server 2008 R2 and Linux;
* Native PCI Express x16 bus interface;
* Graphics memory - 2048Mb;
* Card form factor (PCB/bracket) - ATX;
* Card dimensions - 9-inch x 4,4-inch;
* Eight Mini DisplayPort outputs per card;
* Support for DisplayPort and DVI Single-Link outputs;
* Max DisplayPort Resolution per output - 2 560 x 1 600;
* Max DVI Resolution per output - 1 920 x 1 200;
* Support for OpenGL 2.0;
* RoHS and WEEE compliant;
* Class B EMC certification; and
* Three-year warranty.

Omega Africa launches Tenda HSDPA Pocket Modem Router

Omega Africa has launched the new Tenda HSDPA Pocket Modem Router.

Highlights of the router include:

* Tri-band 900/1 800/2 100MHz;
* Supports IEEE 802.11n, IEEE 802.11g and IEEE 802.11b;
* Supports WCDMA, with downlink of 7,2Mbps and uplink of 5,76Mbps;
* Delivers wireless speeds of up to 150Mbps;
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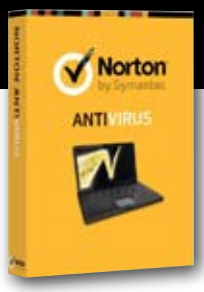

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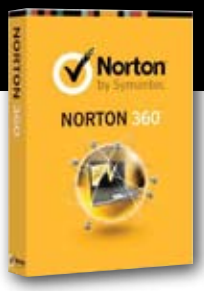

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Video surveillance cameras for indoor applications

With over two million serious crimes reported in South Africa each year, the video surveillance industry is challenged to maintain its emphasis on technology to keep pace with demands from business and public-sector customers, says Armand Steffens, business development manager at Duxbury Networking.

In line with this, the value-added distributor has introduced two new small-format network video cameras targeted at indoor surveillance applications.

The Axis M1013 and M1014 are fixed-lens cameras with adjustable focus. Both are configurable to accommodate video streaming conforming to the latest H.264 video codec standard offering major improvements in image quality.

Key features of the cameras include compatibility with the motion JPEG (M-JPEG) video format, in which each video frame or interlaced field of a digital video sequence is separately compressed as a JPEG image, significantly increasing picture detail and contrast.

“Together with their inherent high resolution imaging, the cameras are compatible with technologies such as motion detection, behaviour detection and thermal/infrared imaging as well as video content analytics, which are becoming increasingly accepted and integrated into today’s intelligent, IP-based video systems,” says Steffens.

The Axis M1013 features a resolution of max SVGA 800 x 600 pixels at 30 frames per second (fps), while the M1014 is rated at max HDTV one megapixel resolution at 30fps. The cameras connect over wired Ethernet and include a MicroSD/SDHC memory card slot for on-board, network-edge image storage. A stand and clamp for easy mounting and power supply are standard.

New Pioneer Internal Writer

Omega Africa has launched the Pioneer BDR-207EBK Internal BD/DVD/CD Writer for Windows, the first PC optical drive that supports 12x speed writing on Blu-ray discs and 6x speed writing on BDXL discs.

This drive allows users to read/write all BDXL discs, as well as regular Blu-ray discs. The Pioneer BDR-207EBK is quiet, has an anti-dust mechanism and offers good quality writing.

Constantly having to plug a notebook’s power adapter in when travelling between home and the office is inconvenient. Make life easier with Trust’s compact 90W Notebook power adaptor, which can be used as a secondary or a replacement charger. It is available from ACT.

Omega Africa debuts Gainward GTX 660 Ti Phantom 2Gb

Gainward’s GTX 660 Ti Phantom 2Gb, based on the GK104 GPU, comes strapped with Phantom cooling and a factory overclock that includes both the GPU and the memory.

Gainward clocked the GTX 660 Ti Phantom to GTX 670 Phantom clocks of 1 006MHz base and 1 084MHz boost.

Like the GTX 670, the Phantom GTX 660 Ti has 1 344 CUDA cores. Unlike the 256-bit interface on the GTX 670, this card features a 192-bit memory interface.

The GTX 660 Ti offers 144Gbps bandwidth and 2Gb of memory.

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Sony announces three new projectors

Sony has announced three new additions to its ultra short-throw projector family: the VPL-SW535C; VPL-SW525C; and VPL-SW525. Upgrades to its game-changing range include interactive writing capabilities for the VPL-SW535C and VPL-SW525C, which enable the use of pen devices with driver and drawing software to work in conjunction with the projectors.

The new projectors highlight Sony's commitment to the education sector by providing a fully interactive audience experience, while simultaneously saving energy.

The pen, a common feature on the VPL-SW535C and VPL-SW525C, is compatible with third party software and has an ergonomic design to fit comfortably in the user's hand.

Each new projector is also equipped with Sony's unique BrightEra 3LCD Inorganic Panel technology, which delivers higher picture quality, substantially brighter images, higher efficiency and better contrast. In addition, the projectors provide consistent colour stability and longer durability and usability.

"Adding interactivity to a number of our projectors makes them even more appealing to users wishing to engage with their audiences," says Robert Meakin, senior EMEA marketing manager at Sony.

"We designed the projectors with the user and environment in mind; they all include three brightness modes, instant on/off (which reduces lamp brightness and power consumption while the projector is not in use), auto dimming (that reduces brightness by 10% without detections and 70% brightness reduction if no input is received by a set period of time) and the dual pen interactivity.

"Finally, the V/H shift, throw ratio, keystone and bracket adjustment all help to make the installation fully flexible and simple for installers."

The projectors offer a 0.27:1 to 0.29:1 throw ratio. This produces a 2,03 metre (80-inch) diagonal screen size image from only half a metre away from the centre of the projection window to the screen, creating a shadow-less image.

Other top features include stunning contrast ratios, HDMI digital input, WXGA resolution, video inputs and RJ45 or RS232C connectors for control.

The projectors also feature three different brightness modes to suit the users' needs, which are selectable with one button on the remote control or projector panel.

Ruckus introduces the ZoneFlex 7300 series

Distributed by Comztek, the Ruckus ZoneFlex 7300 series delivers high-performance and reliable 802.11n wireless networking at the industry's most affordable price point.

ZoneFlex 7300 combines patented adaptive antenna technology and automatic interference mitigation to deliver consistent, predictable performance at extended ranges with up to an additional 4dB of BeamFlex gain on top of the 6dBi physical antenna gain and 10dB of interference mitigation.

Models in the series include:

* 901-7343-XX00 - ZoneFlex single-band (2,4GHz) entry-level 802.11n wireless access point, eight-element smart antenna, three ports (1GE + 2FE), PoE support. This model does not include power adapter.
* 901-7341-XX00 - ZoneFlex single-band (2,4GHz) entry-Level 802.11n wireless access point, eight-element smart antenna, one GE port, PoE support. No power adapter is included in the US and WW versions.
* 901-7321-xx00 - ZoneFlex 7321 dual-band (5GHz or 2,4GHz selectable) 802.11n wireless access point, two 2:2 streams, single 10/100/1000 port, 802.3af PoE, DC input. This model does not include a power adapter or PoE injector. It includes a limited lifetime warranty.
* 901-7363-XX00 - ZoneFlex dual-band (5GHz and 2,4GHz concurrent) mid-range 802.11n wireless access point, 14-element smart antenna, three ports (1GE + 2FE), PoE support. This model does not include a power adapter.

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Thrustmaster T500 Rs Gt Racing Wheel available from ACT

The new Thrustmaster T500 Rs Gt Racing Wheel offers a realistic simulation and official GRAN TURISMO 5 and PlayStation licences.

Features of the wheel include:

* Realistic wheel - authentic wheel measuring 30cm in diameter, with brushed metal central spokes. It is detachable (allowing for future upgrades) and has authentic sequential gearshift levers crafted of brushed metal, attached to the base (so they don't move with the wheel). The wheel is 17cm in height.
* Realistic pedal set - unique design with a choice of two positions: floor-mounted position (F1-style); and suspended position (GT-style). There are three 100% adjustable metal pedals, for optimal stability and resistance. The brake pedal has reinforced and adjustable resistance. There is a "realistic brake" mode. The metal footrest has a non-slip grate texture.
* Force feedback - super-powerful, quick responding force feedback mechanism with a rigid motorised stopper, no matter what angle of rotation is selected.
* Realistic angle of rotation - mechanism with large dual belts (fluid and smooth action), and an angle of rotation adjustable up to three full turns (1080°).
* Compatible with PS3 and PC.

Proxim 4G 'ultra-broadband' Ethernet bridge

A wireless "backhaul" solution, capable of connecting multiple smartphone, laptop and tablet users to the corporate network backbone at "ultra-broadband" 4G speeds, is available from Duxbury Networking.

The Proxim Tsunami QB-8100 series of Ethernet bridges is a near-line-of-sight, point-to-point solution designed for deployments in networks of all sizes, says Armand Steffens, business development manager at Duxbury Networking.

"With more channel capacity and flexibility, enhanced spectrum efficiency and an evolved prioritisation platform, the QB-8100 series is able to address voice, video and data applications while reaching an up-to-300Mbps data rate target at distances of more than eight kilometres," he says.

The unit leverages the advantages of orthogonal frequency-division multiplexing (OFDM) - a method of encoding digital data on multiple carrier frequencies – and multiple-input and multiple-output (MIMO) smart antenna technology for enhanced bridging, routing and gateway functionality.

"Together with its near-line-of-sight advantages, the unit is able to penetrate through obstructions while supporting the 4,9 - 6GHz and 2,3 - 2,5GHz channel frequencies," says Steffens.

Other features of the Proxim Tsunami QB-8100 series include dual Gigabit Ethernet ports with Power over Ethernet (PoE) geared to power devices such as surveillance cameras and additional radios. The unit also implements tiered security layers for outdoor wireless communications in the unlicensed frequency spectrum boosted by Proxim's wireless outdoor routing protocol (WORP).

Software: the professional reseller is as relevant as ever

Selling software (this month's cover story) is probably best covered by a Chunder column that was published just over a year ago when my esteemed editor first questioned the relevance of the traditional channel in this sector of the IT industry.

In looking back, it seems appropriate to reflect on what may have changed since then against the background of rapid transformation of the IT industry based on "cloud" computing and developments such as "software as a service" and "pay-as-you-use" rented applications.

The answer is that nothing much has changed in the past year to convince the Chunderer that resellers who specialise in software should panic. Perhaps this view is best justified by taking at look back at the previous column.

Software has been a critical component of the IT industry since the inception of computing. After all, without software there would be no need for hardware and absolutely no justification whatsoever for the legions of "techno-geeks" that earn a living by providing technical service and support to keep IT infrastructure running.

However, a major problem with software - which is reflected in the extremely high levels of piracy that pervades almost every market in the world - is that it is often perceived as having very little tangible value. After all, how important can an operating system, application or utility be if it can be distributed and sold on a CD worth little more than a couple of Rand, installed via a "paper licence", downloaded over the Internet, or used online via the so-called "cloud".

Hardware, of course, is an entirely different matter. It comes in all shapes and sizes. It can be touched, weighed, measured and assessed against many obvious manufacturing processes. Hardware is invariably ergonomically crafted from materials that have a tangible and very real value as dictated on every commodity market in the world, such as plastics extruded from the by-products of oil at well over US$100 a barrel, the cost of steel, aluminium, graphite, silicon and a whole host of other materials. And that's before you take into account the cost of transport and delivery to the customer.

In the early days of personal computing and the distribution of packaged software, vendors created at a least a modicum of perceived value that could be attached to their products.

The software came in a very attractive box that served as a delivery mechanism for a couple of really impressive and expensive looking manuals. The software itself was contained on a number of "stiffy" disks that had to be meticulously inserted in a specific sequence in order to successfully load the application.

This packaging then gave way to a scaled down box that very often contained only a single CD to replace up to a dozen "stiffies" and a "getting-started" pamphlet that replaced manuals of encyclopaedic proportions. The installation process was taken care of by the software itself through what is now known as a "wizard" and the manual (who ever read them anyway?) was contained in an "intuitive interface" within the product itself.

Since then the sale and distribution of software has progressed even further to the point where even the industry itself is beginning to ask why the channel (distributors and resellers) should be involved at all (this month's cover story).

After all, who needs a distributor when the stock is held in nothing more than a virtual warehouse? And, how much value does a "box-dropping" reseller really add to the supply chain when software can be supplied and managed remotely over the Internet, via the "cloud" or provided on demand as a service?

The answer is really fairly simple. The whole point of the channel is to provide market coverage on behalf of a vendor in terms of pre-sales support, selling, the management of debt and looking after relationships that help to guarantee customer loyalty in terms of post-sales technical support – critical issues that the vendors themselves refuse to handle or can't handle because it would be too costly.

Inevitably, the question of after-sales technical support and service becomes the single, most viable option for most software resellers in the channel. This translates into what is best described by two of the most cliché-ridden value propositions in the world – the ability to enable the end user to realise a "return on investment" on IT infrastructure and to "reduce total cost of ownership".

The promise of being able to deliver on these clichés by software support specialists encompasses skills that are in short supply. These skills are not only highly valued in the software field but are also a critical factor in the resolution of issues that affect hardware, including systems and peripherals.

It is these skills that need to be embraced by resellers if the channel is to remain relevant and viable in the new era of "virtual distribution" of software.

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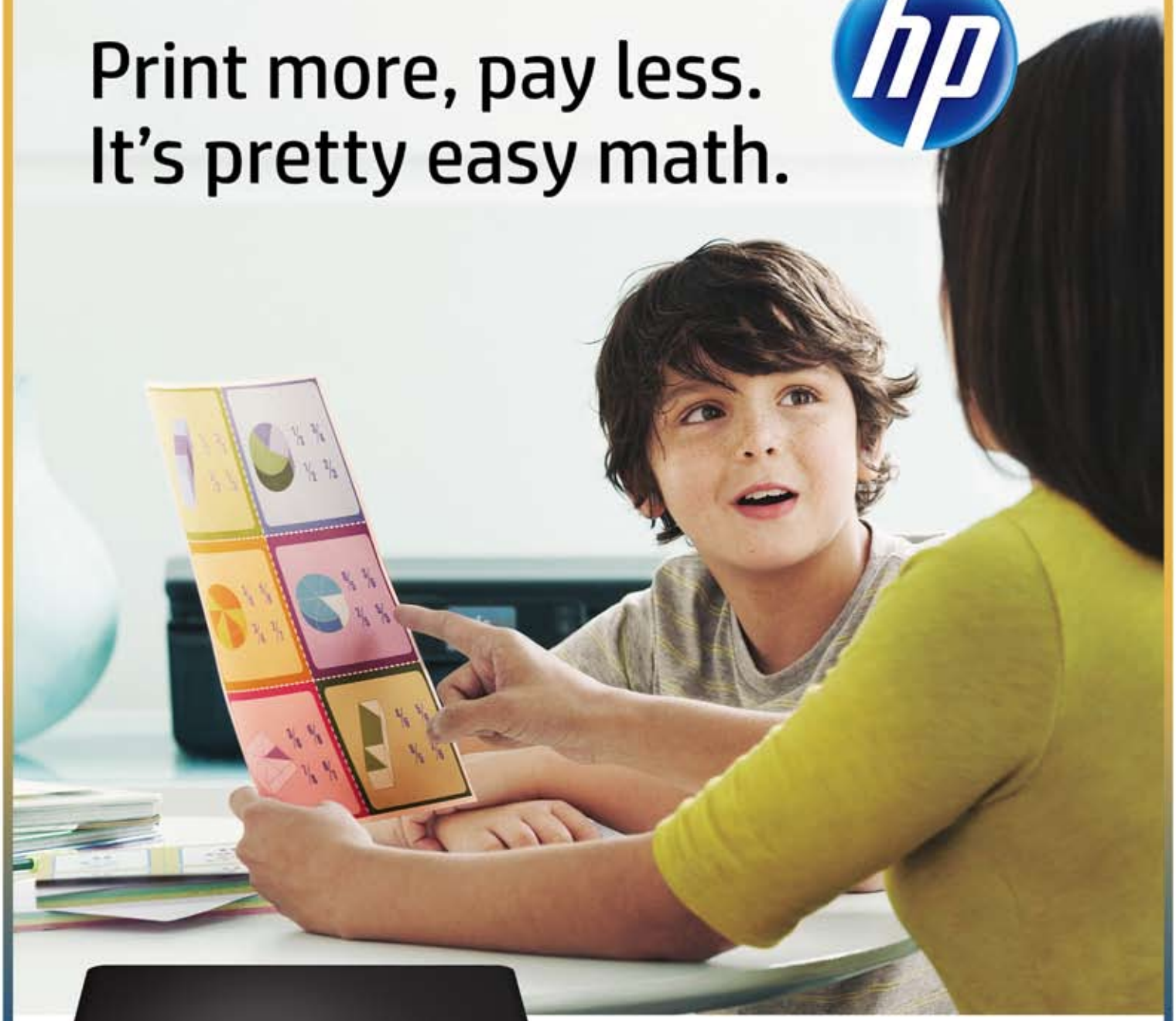

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