

# Selling *security*

Alex Teh, Commercial Director of Vigil Software looks at the critical role of the distributor in selling complex security solutions



Alex Teh

There is no doubt that times are tough, but it is heartening to see that the recession is clearly not hitting the security market as hard as other sectors, and it seems that many organisations are continuing to flourish. This is supported by recent research from analyst firm Frost & Sullivan stating that organisations able to offer comprehensive security solutions backed up by value-added services will make strong gains throughout the economic downturn. However, for new vendors entering an already overcrowded

market, the introduction of innovative products can prove problematic, particularly with the channel already being inundated with products from more established players.

Therefore, now more than ever, distributors need to demonstrate full commitment to both their resellers and vendors with measures that really do add value by providing support at all levels that not only drives new business opportunities but also ensures that existing business is profitable. For example, if a new overseas vendor is entering the UK market with a niche technology that provides something entirely different from the competition, it may be beneficial for the vendor and the channel partner to draw on the distributor's prior knowledge and expertise in the UK market on a number of levels. This includes help in initially selecting the right channel partners, training their sales and technical staff to sell and support the products, as well as ongoing assistance with sales and marketing to help build the market. Without this support, the time and cost involved in establishing that presence can be prohibitively expensive for the vendor and even the best technologies can fail, given the competitive nature of the UK market.

The good news is that distributors can play a vital role in the supply chain by providing a base of technical skills that can be used to support vendors by working directly with the end-user to roll out security solutions. As a case in point, we ourselves recently worked closely with the local reseller and Caerphilly County Borough Council on the design and implementation plan of an end-point security solution to ensure that their staff and the public were protected from loss of confidential information and to address the threats posed by removable media

such as USB devices. Such local cooperation and transfer of skills and knowledge to broaden the base of the channel knowledge and secure important reference sites for the vendor would be impossible, without the close cooperation of vendor, distributor and reseller.

For the channel, the value that distributors bring to the table includes the technical support resellers and integrators need to sell complex, niche products without making commercially unsustainable investments before making any sales. When required, channel partners can also tap into the offer of additional training and marketing support. All this is great; however, it is critical that resellers, distributors and the vendors all cooperate and add value to the process of selling and supporting the end-user. Another worrying trend, particularly in hard economic times like these, is the temptation for vendors to be more willing to bypass the channel for a one-off deal, in a bid to increase their own short-term margins. Therefore, distributors and resellers need to stand firm in opposing this and rejecting any vendors who demonstrate this tendency.

In summary, there is clearly a huge opportunity for resellers and vendors to tap into the distributor's support and expertise, not just in selling the product but in supporting end-users in deploying the solution. The willingness of the distributor to actively support the channel and the vendor to maintain a profitable business model, is critical to the future long-term prosperity and growth of the security market. After all, distributors as well as the resellers and vendors are under increasing pressure to work harder than ever to maintain sales momentum and creating an effective sales, marketing and support ecosystem requires close collaboration between all parties.

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