

CompTIA®



Spotlight on Success

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Paul Balkwell



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Creating MSP Superheroes with the Right Partnership and Support

For this month’s Spotlight on Success, we talk to Paul Balkwell, European sales director of Continuum, about what is needed to be a successful vendor, and how the importance of partnership and well-executed partner programs are crucial to making MSP superheroes.

CompTIA: Could you provide an overview of Continuum and your role with the organisation?

Paul: I have been working in the IT industry for over 23 years, and lucky enough to be involved with many different technologies and business. I have looked after SaaS, cloud and BDR, and even set up a managed services business that was later purchased by a leading UK telecoms provider.

With Continuum, I am responsible for looking after our European team and partners, as well as growing our European presence, which, although at times challenging, is really rewarding. As a company, Continuum provides an IT management platform allowing managed services provider partners to maintain both on-premises and cloud-based servers, desktops, mobile devices and other endpoints for their small- and medium-sized customers. We have achieved considerable growth and now employ over 1,300 people worldwide, support 5,800 partners and monitor over one million endpoints, quite a success story and one that I am pleased to be part of.

CompTIA: You have had great success in creating a strong partner channel. Why do you think this is?

Paul: It all starts with the quality of your product and services. You can have the best sales and technical team in the business, but unless your product delivers value in a tangible way, then your company life will be limited. We are lucky enough to have the right tools. It then comes down to people and the level of support you offer partners. We work closely with every partner to make sure they can get the most out of Continuum. We also offer our partners account management services providing regular meetings, training workshops and events to ensure they can stay ahead of their competitors.

CompTIA: What does partnership mean to Continuum?

Paul: It means a mutually beneficial relationship for all who are involved. That’s why Continuum is a channel-exclusive company. We only sell to the IT channel, never to an MSP’s clients. We’ve also built our portal to be completely white-labelled, which means our partners’ clients never know it’s us behind the scenes. They get to be the superhero to their clients ... not us.

Our products and services are also specifically built for partners and their unique business needs and we’re committed to doing everything in our power to help grow and scale their



managed IT services businesses. So, whether that's accomplished by building a new product, creating white-label marketing materials or just working with partners one-on-one to help them land a new client, we are fully committed to our partners because we are dependent on them.

CompTIA: How do you nurture and help your partners and do you feel that, across the channel, vendors could do more?

Paul: It's really easy to pump out marketing materials and sign up partners, but that's only a tiny part of what is needed. I am often surprised by some vendors that create partnerships, but then expect the partner to jump through burning hoops to get support. We value our partners and work with them to provide the necessary training, support and marketing assistance to use our services to effectively grow their business. It seems that some in the industry are failing to recognise that all partners need this same level of support, and tend to focus on the larger partners with the greatest turnover, leaving the others to fend for themselves.

CompTIA: What has been your biggest challenge in growing your EMEA business?

Paul: Although it was a nice problem to have, the biggest issue we faced was dealing with our rapid growth. We have had huge success across Europe and in the early days we struggled with the sheer volume of new partners. I am happy to report, however, that we have invested significantly in our European business and now have everything in shape.

CompTIA: Some MSPs view outsourcing as a risk and a loss of control. What would you say to overcome this?

Paul: I agree, some business owners can be reluctant to change how they conduct business, delegate tasks or manage leadership. I completely understand the outsourcing concern, but you have to focus on the positive outcomes of being able to scale, grow and free up time, whilst being able to generate revenue and improve client service delivery. With the right relationship and partner, there is no loss of control, no risk and everything to gain.

CompTIA: Do you see partnership and outsourcing as a fundamental strategy for the channel in the future?

Paul: Yes, I think we are seeing outsourcing and partnership [as] the way forward and not just in the IT channel, but across every industry and even into consumerisation. It makes sense for companies to focus on their strengths and then partner with someone else who is equally excellent to manage the job duties that are either a struggle or are not cost-effective to perform in-house. Partnership and outsourcing offers businesses the chance to become bigger, more flexible and react and adapt in ways they couldn't on their own.

CompTIA: What tips would you offer MSPs if thinking about outsourcing, whether with Continuum or other vendors?

Paul: Vendors need to understand the MSP value proposition, and ensure they provide uniqueness in their market to enable MSPs to differentiate themselves. Do your research and due diligence. Is the vendor reputable? Are they channel only? You don't want to be in competition with each other. And evaluate the partnership. Can you work together? Try





before you buy – don't get locked into long-term contracts.

CompTIA: Do you have a partnership success that stands out and what was it?

Paul: London-based IT solutions provider Pensar was searching for an intelligent RMM platform and a provider that could offer greater technical, business and marketing support than their existing RMM provider. They realized they especially needed a company that could provide live support 24x7. With Continuum's fully-integrated RMM and NOC platform, Pensar is able to offload day-to-day tasks and IT management, empowering in-house technicians to focus on client relationships and business development, all while delivering premium service.

CompTIA: In three words, describe the benefits of partnership.

Paul: Evolution, scalability, profitably.

