Let's boost collaboration among ISODA members

Dear Members,

I'm happy to see us growing in mutually benefiting ways as an association and this newsletter is an important milestone in our long jubilant journey. In this digital age, media coverage definitely has its perks. With ISODA *InterConnect*, you can be rest assured that your PR is at least half done. Thanks to the media houses that have agreed to carry excerpts of our newsletter in their magazines. I would personally like to thank L Ashok, President, ISODA, who has spearheaded this initiative.

As exciting as this newsletter is, I have to mention that the best is yet to come. There are a lot more interesting ideas in the pipeline. While we are at it, I would like each of our partner members to make the most of this platform.

KAVITA SINGHAL
Chairperson, ISODA

ISODA is a great platform for the members to collaborate and grow. For instance, being an ISODA member, our company has won business with support of other members, for the product lines where we didn't have any expertise. We are also collaborating with a few of our ISODA friends to bag IT facility management projects. Benefits are tremendous; we just need to uncover them.

In order to further boost collaboration between our members, we have launched the ISODA 2.0 portal. Partner members can create more business opportunities by updating their business profiles, specializations and competencies on the portal. Collaboration and businesses are already happening amongst ISODA members, let us formalize and know each other's competencies, core business areas and figure out the areas for collaboration to expand our businesses through ISODA 2.0.

More interaction, connectivity and collaboration are the mantras for success and getting maximum benefits out of ISODA.

Let's partner to progress! ◼

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Vadodara-based ITCG Solutions helps Navrachana University establish robust IT infrastructure and achieve significant capital savings with Microsoft Cloud Campus

interconnect

ISODA partners with Global IoT Conclave

ISODA has partnered with BE Summits as an Association Partner for the Global IoT Conclave to be held on June 2, 2016 at The Leela, Bengaluru.

The partnership allows ISODA members to get a 30 percent discount on delegate fees, while providing strong branding opportunities.

"IoT is the next big technology pervading every sector including manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, utilities and public infrastructure. The event provides a good platform to our member partners to get insights about IoT and helps them identify solutions and services opportunities for

> "The event provides a good platform to our member partners to get insights and identify opportunities emerging from IoT"
>
> **L ASHOK,** President, ISODA

future growth," said L Ashok, President, ISODA.

The event is expected to see participation from buyers, sellers and qualified decision-makers, and will provide a platform to learn, grow and explore business opportunities around IoT.

"IoT is redefining the way we live and work. The Indian government's

smart city program is an example of this evolution. Through this conclave, our aim is to equip participants with the knowledge to make informed decisions for deploying the right IoT solutions for their businesses, while contributing to the nation's development," said Alma Francis, Production Manager, BE Summits. ◼

Umbrella is Citrix Specialist for mobility management solution

Umbrella Infocare has achieved the coveted Citrix Specialist Partner authorization for mobility management solutions—the first such by any partner in India.

"Our customers are faced with increasingly complex IT challenges every day, which means our services need to be of high quality to effectively satisfy their needs. This recognition from Citrix propels our ability to be a leader in providing professional services to

enterprises, that allow them to be productive from any device or location," said Sanjay Agarwal, Director, Umbrella Infocare.

Citrix specializations require partners to demonstrate high-level of technical competency, end-to-end sales capability, and service delivery. To achieve the Citrix Specialist status, Umbrella Infocare was required to complete a series of e-learning courses and the most-advanced technical certifications,

provide customer testimonials, and demonstrate design and implementation competencies.

"In today's fast-changing and increasingly specialized technology space, businesses want to work with partners with in-depth technical expertise, and who are leaders in their respective fields. By achieving Citrix Specialist status, Umbrella Infocare has assured its customers that they can expect an outstanding experience," said Eklavya Bhave, Head, Partner Strategy and Sales, India and Saarc, Citrix.

With offices in Delhi and Mumbai, Umbrella Infocare also provides cloud infrastructure solutions in partnership with AWS and BI solutions in partnership with Qlik Tech. ◼

> "The specialization provides us the competency and ability to address our customers' complex IT challenges and help them to be productive from any device or location"
>
> **SANJAY AGARWAL,** Director, Umbrella Infocare

Xpress wins award for its cloud services

Mumbai-based Xpress Computer has won the Best VAR FY2015-16 award recently. The annual awards instituted by leading channel media, VAR India, recognize channel partners who have excelled in their solutions and services business.

Xpress won the award on the basis of the strong growth recorded for its cloud business. The company saw its online backup services Xpress Cloud grow exponentially last year. The company boasts of more than 800 customers for its Xpress Cloud, of which 70 percent were signed in the last fiscal.

"Receiving the VAR India award is a testament to our belief that cloud services is the way forward. It validates that we are on the right

"In past couple of years, we have undertaken a major transformation to move from being a system integrator to a cloud service provider. The award validates that we are on the right path"

CHETAN SHAH, Managing Director, Xpress Computer

path. In the past couple of years, we have undertaken a major transformation at our company to move from being a system integrator to a cloud service provider. This required changing our organizational culture, systems and processes. Success of Xpress Cloud has given us the confidence of launching more such branded cloud services," said Chetan Shah, Managing Director, Xpress Computer.

Founded in 1998, Xpress has always been focused on providing its own brand of solutions and services. It is one of the most prominent Intel Platinum Partner and continues to build its own label of PCs and servers. The company was among the first few partners to start remote managed services, and also among the few to launch their own brand of cloud storage services. ∎

ACPL wins awards from CyberArk and Forcepoint

Security solutions specialist, ACPL Systems is on a roll, winning two Best Partner awards recently from CyberArk and Forcepoint.

Both the awards were given based on the revenue contribution and the projects delivered by ACPL for CyberArk and Forcepoint.

The company executed several

large projects where it deployed Data Loss Prevention (DLP) solution from Forcepoint. For CyberArk, the company deployed Privileged Identity Management (PIM) solution in many of its customer accounts.

"Awards are always welcome. They are a great motivating force

for the organization and help us boost our credentials with customers by validating our competencies and expertise in a certain solution field," said Vishal Bindra, CEO, ACPL.

Incepted in 1990, and with offices in Gurgaon and Bengaluru, ACPL is regarded as a leading security solution provider with expertise in network security, information security and data availability solutions.

The company also provides an array of managed security services. ACPL caters to 250+ customers with a team of 75+ qualified employees. ∎

"Awards are a great motivating force for our organization and help us boost our credentials with customers by validating our competencies and expertise in a certain solution field"

VISHAL BINDRA, CEO, ACPL

Are vendors selling more direct?

Jiten Mehta, Director, Magnamious Systems, and Tushar Parekh, Managing Director, Silicon Netsecure, share views about whether vendors are bypassing partners to sell direct to customers

Vendors respect partners who have strong customer relations

JITEN MEHTA
Director,
Magnamious Systems

Most vendors realize the strength of the channel and are increasingly focused on doing more business with partners. Take the example of Dell, which from being a direct company till 4-5 years back, has now become channel-driven and today nearly 65 percent of its global and India business is contributed by partners.

Having said that, I would like to highlight the fact that vendors continue to engage (not sell) directly with customers and this has a negative impact on partner's business.

> **"If a partner has strong relationship with a customer then it's tough for anyone to bypass the partner as the customer will always prefer to work with the partner"**

When a vendor account manager engages directly with customers, they tend to bargain harder. While, eventually the project is executed by the partner, their margins are compromised.

This issue needs to be addressed. Vendor account managers must first discuss the deal with the partner and arrive at a mutually agreed pricing strategy before making the pitch to the customer.

Overall, in my view, it is important for partners to have strong relationships with their customers. If you don't, your customers may prefer to deal directly with the OEMs, as they believe they will get better pricing from them.

If a partner has strong relationship with a customer then it's tough for anyone to bypass the partner. The customer will always prefer to work with the partner, even if he/she is tempted by competing partners or distributors or vendors with lower pricing. In fact, vendors respect such partners and offer full support to them.■

Leading security vendor indulging in unfair practices

TUSHAR PAREKH
Managing Director,
Silicon Netsecure

Lately, we've had a few unfortunate experiences with a leading security vendor — with whom we have shared 10 years of strategic partnership—which resulted in us losing sizeable deals.

The first instance occurred six months back, when a large BFSI customer was up for license renewal for this vendor's products. Despite being well-aware about our long-term relationship with this customer, the vendor supported another partner for the deal.

We overlooked the first time but then in March 2016, the vendor did it again by diverting another large deal—which we had been working on for months—to a large partner in Delhi. This happened, despite informing the vendor's regional manager about the deal.

When confronted, the regional manager refused to acknowledge our deal registration. Escalation to the country manager also didn't help — neither did he investigate the matter nor revert to our complaint.

> **"Following the unfair practices of a well-known security vendor, we were forced to convert a number of opportunities to competing platforms"**

We later learnt that the second deal was diverted to a Delhi partner in order to help him liquidate the inventory that the vendor had prodded him to stock.

Eventually, we took the decision to shun the vendor by converting a number of opportunities to competing platforms.

It is imperative for partners to expose such unfair practices at various forums and in media and stand up for what's right.

What is expected from vendors is transparency and fairness in deal registration. Escalations need to be taken seriously to ensure that wrong practices are corrected in time and not repeated in future.■

Best practices for retaining talent

Manish Goenka, Director, Icons Infocom, and Mehul Shah, Head-Sales, ITCG Solutions, highlight the best practices they have deployed in their companies to retain talent

"Self-assessment has inculcated ownership among employees"

High attrition is a nightmare for partners, but we have addressed it in a strategic manner. Over the last two years, our attrition rate has reduced from 20 percent to 5 percent.

To improve employee retention we introduced a slew of measures. We created email groups to enable entry-level staff to share their concerns, ideas and suggestions with the company management. This created a sense of belongingness among employees, especially the entry-level.

We empowered employees by letting them implement and own their business ideas.

We introduced the practice of self-assessment by employees

"We provide support of up to Rs 20,000 per annum for the education of the girl child of our entry-level and mid-level employees"

MANISH GOENKA, Director, Icons Infocom

which inculcated ownership and accountability among them. Every employee fills a weekly performance sheet with details of sales, opportunities, customer meetings, etc. This enables everyone to realize their strengths and weaknesses and work on self-improvement; seniors need not raise issues.

Moreover, while hiring any employee we explain their growth path in the organization and discuss their short-term goals every year. We help them achieve most of their short-term targets including foreign trips, cars and other gifts.

In addition, we offer support of up to Rs 20,000 per annum for the education of the girl child of our entry-level and mid-level employees.

The above measures have enabled us to retain most of the employees for at least 6-7 years. Employees who do leave us do so to fulfil their entrepreneurial dreams.■

"We offer team incentives to non-sales employees"

Besides other measures like employee empowerment, open environment and flexible attendance, we have found success in containing the employee attrition through offering incentives for all departments.

For the technical and pre-sales personnel we introduced special incentive where they get 10 percent to 30 percent incentives based on

the bottomline generated on the project they help execute. For back-office and accounts team, we introduced team incentives. The objective behind the program is to increase collaboration among teams.

This program has led to a remarkable improvement in the collaboration and communication between sales and non-sales employees on project completion,

target achievements, payment collections, and post-sales support. Thus not only are the salespersons rewarded for their performance but also everyone else who supported them are incentivized.

Further, to retain our senior employees we offer them long-term roadmap with profit sharing. This has resulted in greater ownership towards company's overall performance.

With the above measures, we have been able to reduce the employee attrition rate from 20 percent to less than 10 percent in the last two years. Our focus has been primarily to reduce attrition at mid- and senior-level employees, where the attrition has dropped down to almost 2-3 percent. ■

"We introduced team incentives to include technical, back-office and accounts team. This has increased communication between sales and non-sales teams for project execution, target achievement, and payment collections"

MEHUL SHAH, Head, Sales, ITCG Solutions

ITCG implements Microsoft Cloud Campus at Navrachana University

Vadodara-based IT solutions provider ITCG Solutions has helped Navrachana University establish robust IT infrastructure and significant capital savings through Microsoft Cloud Campus

Navrachana University was established through the Gujarat Private Universities Act, 2009 with the intent to offer superior education. Situated in Vadodara, the university has four schools – School of Liberal Arts and Education, School of Environmental Design and Architecture, School of Science and Engineering, and School of Business and Law – offering under-graduate and post-graduate courses.

The challenge

The university wanted to offer comprehensive learning and develop students with T-shaped skills with breadth of knowledge though general and inter-disciplinary education, and a depth of knowledge through focused disciplinary education.

For this purpose, Navrachana University required a robust IT infrastructure and seamless collaboration. The university needed solutions around mailing services, collaboration among faculty and students, enhanced security, data storage and backup. It was also looking for centralized update and patch management, hardware and software inventory management, and regularized Microsoft licensing procurement and management.

The solution

Post studying the pain points and requirements, Vadodara-based ITCG Solutions pitched Microsoft Cloud Campus.

ITCG streamlined the Microsoft licensing procurement with the Microsoft Cloud Campus license. It migrated 2200 users from Gmail to Office365 and created various mail groups. It also created Directory Sync server for continuous synchronization of Active Directory Server with Office365.

In addition, ITCG created site-to-site VPN connectivity between local network and Microsoft Azure platform. It created virtual machine on Microsoft Azure platform which is synchronized with on premise Active Directory server to ensure 100 percent uptime.

For effective communications among faculty and students, ITCG implemented Microsoft Skype for Business for chat and video conferencing. Further, students and faculty got free Office365 Pro licenses and 1TB storage space on Microsoft OneDrive.

ITCG also implemented Microsoft Intune across the campus to deploy latest software updates, patch management and get hardware and software inventory through centralized console.

Benefits

The Microsoft Cloud Campus license enabled Navrachana University to significantly reduce capital investments on IT infrastructure. "The university saved over Rs 15 lakh with yearly subscription cost of Rs 5 lakh against the estimated capital expenditure of over Rs 20 lakh. This enabled them to efficiently plan their IT budget and to easily add or release licenses on-the-go. Moreover, Microsoft certifications are available at discounted rates for students. The university also saved

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> **MEHUL SHAH,**
> Head, Sales, ITCG

considerably with 1TB of free cloud storage for each faculty and students," highlighted Mehul Shah, Head, Sales, ITCG.

The cloud solution made IT administration an easy task with the ability to push software updates and generate software and hardware inventory reports, centrally.

Further, the university receives Microsoft Azure grant of $250 per month for faculty and $100 per month for students for creating virtual servers, data back-up and many such services. In addition, it receives the grant under Microsoft DreamSpark activation for 3 years to use bundle of Microsoft products required for academic purposes in laboratories. ∎