



CHANNEL ENERGY

VICTOR CHIANG, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFORTREND EUROPE, DISCUSSES THE COMPANY'S SIGNIFICANT PLANS FOR THE UK MARKET WITH STORAGE MAGAZINE'S DAVID TYLER

David Tyler: It can't be an easy decision on a personal level to uproot yourself and your family and move literally half way around the world to head up Infortrend's growing European operations. How did you come to be here?

Victor Chiang: In 2004 I was one of the first employees of Synology and in 2008 opened their European Operations; I lived in Europe for 4 years. Then I went back to Taiwan and worked for Infortrend and for an All Flash start up but was soon tempted back to head the European operations for Infortrend. I have been here with my family now since May 2018.

It has been an interesting challenge for me as an individual to relocate myself and my family here to run this operation in the UK - and I believe it also reflects well on the company, which is showing a serious commitment to the UK market by encouraging me to make this major move. In the past Infortrend has been perhaps a little 'shy' in how it interacted

with its channel partners. But now as the market evolves, we are having to change our approach. A lot of new vendors have entered the storage market over the last decade, offering different solutions and options to tackle users' specific needs.

Infortrend itself has gone from being a controller manufacturer, to a storage array manufacturer, and now we are evolving into the application side of storage. We are still very much focused on being a storage array vendor with a hardware solution, but at the same time we are growing our offerings. We are always developing our solutions and adding features, for example Cloud Tiering, and our new GSi product which brings AI-enabled storage appliances within the reach of small-to-medium businesses.

DT: Obviously the focus is primarily on the UK, but are you also targetting growth across other EMEA countries?

VC: At the same time as building the UK

business, we are definitely expanding in the wider EMEA region. While the UK remains our EMEA base, we are opening a German office in early 2019 and considering an office in France later 2019, then Czech Republic or Poland. The largest markets right now remain the UK, Germany and France, but we are also seeing growth in the other territories, so our precise geographic growth plans will depend on the growth we see in each country over time - and we can afford to be flexible.

DT: How do you see Infortrend differentiating its offerings in what you've already described as a rapidly changing and growing market? What makes you stand out?

VC: In the past most of our business came from selling storage arrays, SAN-type products, but we are now seeing a strong trend of transitioning to our unified storage products - the GS product range - which offers SAN and NAS solutions in one storage box. We have enterprise level

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In addition, as I already mentioned, connection to a cloud, i.e. our Cloud Tiering solution is our fastest growing product. A lot of our customers are interested in an on-premise storage solution, but also want the option to back up to a secondary location. This scenario is the basis of our cloud solution, which can support backup to Amazon, Azure, Google or Alibaba cloud platforms, or to an OpenStack private cloud destination. We offer Cloud Cache, Cloud Tiering and Cloud Backup within the same license, and users can opt for the function that suits their needs and reflects their policies.

DT: You also touched on your relationship with the channel - is that a

large part of your focus, individually as well as a business?

VC: Our channel partners are an essential part of our business, we are working very closely with them to build up our presence and to target specific markets together. Part of my remit since coming in to manage the EMEA operation has been to figure out how we can adapt better to what the market requires and what our channel partners require.

Part of that comes down to how we target end users and generate leads, along with a new channel programme, and developing ways to wrap all those aspects up together effectively. We are combining an end-user 'pull' aspect with the channel 'push' into a package that works well for us and our partners. It is an important message to get out to our reseller community that if you are enrolled in our reseller programme, that will give you access to our lead generation programmes.

We appreciate how huge the storage market is: we see ourselves as a very credible alternative right now to the Tier 1 vendors. The European operation for Infortrend manages sales, finance, local stock management, pre & post technical support, EU marketing, the RMA support stock and customer services. We have a number of staff located strategically around Europe, but the EU HQ is in the UK, we have been here since 2003 and have around 30 staff throughout the EU. Our solutions can be supported in every country for on-site installations and on-site maintenance.

As well as the channel, we also work closely with other vendors; these Alliance vendors are both software & hardware companies and include Seagate, Toshiba, Quantum, Spectra Logic, VMware, Veeam, DataCore, Nakivo and Milestone at the moment. Accreditation and support from these leading industry vendors is key to our future.

More info: www.infortrend.com