

Singh's social delivery

After a long spell selling telephone systems to the channel, cricket enthusiast Viv Singh is now delivering a true 'game changer' to channel players: Social Media Integration.

Singh loves nothing more than bemusing a batsman with a 'googly' or 'leg break' but these days his love for the gentleman's game has taken a back seat as he focuses on his latest challenge – persuading channel businesses to add social media to their unified communications portfolio. The former Aastra Channel Head has joined global Social Media and Content Management company Integritie as Channel Sales Director and is convinced many ICT companies have not yet woken up to the opportunities social media can provide and add real value to their overall UC proposition. "In this day and age, failing to acknowledge and action social media posts is equivalent to ignoring the ringing phone on your desk," says Singh. "It's vital now to integrate social media feeds, posts, and tweets into your UC proposition or multi media contact centre enabling one unified inbox queue for voice, SMS, web chat, email and social media.

"In turn this helps customer service managers drive real efficiencies in a contact centre by prioritising their inbound and outbound communications. There are now over one billion people using social media worldwide, so smart companies are using it to promote themselves via LinkedIn and Google Plus, market their products and services via Facebook and Twitter and make it easier for their customers to reach them in a way that has never been possible before. Twitter and Facebook are in the lead as a channel used by customers to submit queries and lodge complaints."

For many organisations, social media represents the most drastic change in communications since the advent of email and Singh's biggest challenge



Viv Singh

will be to convince channel partners that social media is an opportunity not a threat, particularly as more and more young people totally attuned to social media enter the industry. According to recent studies, the opportunity for companies is to build stronger brand loyalty by meeting customer's expectations via social media channels. One reason for hesitance by many companies is the fear of damage to a company's brand or reputation as social makes it incredibly easy for individuals to share confidential, sensitive and private information, accidentally or maliciously violating client trust, privacy or other laws. Companies fear the lack of control they have when

it comes to what is being said via social media in the form of criticism.

"The fact is a business will not be considered relevant in the current economy if it fails to communicate where stakeholders, clients, investors, business partners, media and industry peers are listening," stresses Singh. "People and businesses now have a much larger arena to communicate in. Voicing opinions and brand values in real-time must be part of this conversation. In addition, compliance legislation, which has become even stricter since the 2009 recession requires financial institutions across the board to be incredibly cautious with their communication with the outside world. Promotion and advertising, supervision, monitoring and record keeping have also all come under the spotlight and the FCA now requires detailed record keeping to prove inappropriate claims have not been made to a customer or prospect. The fear is that without archiving tools, the records of social interaction can be lost, leading to eDiscovery (electronic discovery in civil litigation), legal hold and evidence spoliation to name just a few compliance problems."

Integritie's flagship product is SMC4, a social media software solution that can work within a UC environment or as a standalone product. According to Singh: "When it comes to any social media channels, SMC4 enables companies to capture messages from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google Plus, controlling outgoing and incoming posts, tweets and feeds, communicate these to existing and potential customers and ensure what is being said complies with company ethics and regulatory bodies.

"SMC4 gives companies the opportunity to focus on what they're good at, while protecting

their reputation and brand from criticism, profanity, sexist and racist comments."

A number of firms have a burgeoning social presence on the likes of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, helping them to promote news stories and corporate messages. KPMG for example uses Twitter to connect with various audiences around the world, interact with employees, clients and prospects, showcase the work of member firms and senior leaders and drive conversations on emerging business issues and opportunities. Despite these early steps, when compared with other sectors, many organisations are still trailing as Singh explains. "Other factors contributing to hesitancy include the fact that social media opens up organisations to criticism, abuse and lack of resources. But the proliferation of smartphones and tablets means that today's digitally savvy consumers see social as an inherent skill and expect to be communicated to in such a fashion.

"Education is important but ultimately the reduction in social media risk boils down to the ability to capture, control and retain the information flowing in and out of an organisation's social channels. This sounds daunting on paper, but firms should not fear these stipulations, as we are now at the stage where technologies such as SMC4 are available to manage these processes. Social cannot be ignored and organisations that get to grips with it, in a compliant fashion, will reap the benefits. It gives companies the opportunity to successfully target, market, promote and advertise to over one billion people, while meeting the expectations of customers, business partners, media and industry peers, building deeper relationship and stronger brand loyalty," concludes Singh. ■