

Call *recording*



Phillip Reynolds of Oak Telecom

Comms Business Magazine talks to key players in the call recording market to see where the challenges and opportunities are for resellers.

The call recording market is still booming and there are now many affordable SME solutions for the channel. Whilst the Enterprise market still seems dominated by the big vendors - and the perception here is that direct sales predominates their activities, products and applications for the SME have grown in number over the last year.

According to Phil Reynolds, Joint CEO of Oak Telecom, the demand for call recording in 2009 has grown steadily throughout the year as business owners have come to realise that all businesses can benefit from it, not just those that must use it for regulatory compliance.

“As with call logging, call recording should be sold to every business especially as it’s so affordable and easy to use. Of course with the integration of call logging and call recording every reseller should sell both as a complete solution as the benefits of both working together are greater than the sum of the individual parts.

“Of course Oak has taken this to the next level with its Comms Suite solution by introducing a third level of integration with the customer’s own business or contact management systems; recordings can have customer ids directly from their own systems associated with them and thus make searching for calls for a particular contact even easier.

“Oak has had a very successful year with its Record 09 product especially as it covers both the traditional TDM recording opportunities as well as VoIP recording in one solution. The demand for 30 to 90 channel solutions has grown which means that the channel really are finding what used to be considered ‘Enterprise’ opportunities and winning business at this level against direct sale competitors.

“Record 10, due out early in the New Year, takes things to the next level with the

additional of a powerful SDK available to third parties for integration with Record, a new enhanced version of our Agent/Call Evaluation module, and even more support for VoIP across a large range of switches.

“On a technical level, recording VoIP type traffic can be very complex especially where ‘so called standards’ are not adhered to; we have for example three separate variants for SIP to cater for the various carrier implementations. Also, unlike TDM, there can be more work required at installation time to ensure that the VoIP traffic is available to be recorded.

“During 2009 we’ve developed a range of end-user brochures specifically for dealers to use to generate more sales from their existing customers. We even do the branding work for each of our accredited partners so they’re ready to go.

“I can’t think of a better must-have product to generate additional and often high value sales for the channel; I think 2010 will be the best ever year for call recording sales as end-users and the channel embrace call recording as a de facto purchase for any business.”

Not Expensive

Kay Tobin, Commercial Director at Tri-Line, agrees with our synopsis that it’s not so long ago since call recording was an expensive, nice to have feature that was usually purchased to fulfill a specific back-office function.

“Access was limited to a few select users and very often the retrieval of calls was a bit of a needle in a haystack operation with unfriendly and unintuitive interfaces.

“Cheaper systems were often plagued with low call matching, no way to easily tag additional call legs and complex access. Systems with marginally easier interfaces were often far too expensive for the average SME to justify.

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report



record



connect



display

selling solutions... not software

...call logging, call recording, wallboard display and CTI



“When we entered the market our intention was always to use the simple user interfaces already available on our call loggers as the entry point for retrieval of the recordings. This meant that if a user was allowed access, they could retrieve a call from their desktop using a standard web browser and the multitude of search options already included. The recording would simply be another property of the call! For the end-user this simple user interface is vital.

“Our second goal was to allow users to use the open interfaces already built in to allow the end-user to integrate the solutions with their own back-end systems. For example, if a business is selling insurance they would want to search for calls based on quote or policy number not telephone number or extension number.

“The bottom line is that the recording solution must integrate seamlessly into the day-to-day business operations or it will always be difficult to justify in terms of either cost or functionality.

“e.g. If the call recorder is to be used for training then users will need to be able to easily access calls, listen, rewind, add notes etc.

“It’s a lot easier for a reseller to justify why a customer is spending a little bit more for a great system than to get involved in a discount sale where feature sets are limited.”

Hot Issues!

Kay Tobin sees two really hot issues in terms of call recording that they are encountering at present:

PCI compliance - In summary, customers should not record the 3-digit CVV number when taking credit card details. Lots of people are ignoring or stating incorrect facts e.g. “it’s OK if the call is encrypted.” If resellers want an easy way to add value and move away from discount solutions, PCI compliance is definitely one of the easiest routes.

Multi-site recording – When a customer has more than one site, their issue is to be able to record all sites and get access to all the recording from anywhere without any huge implications on their inter-site network infrastructure.

“Tri-Line was never interested in being just another call recording provider. We entered the recording arena far too late for ‘me too’ solutions. By providing a very different, completely integrated solution, we like to think that we’ve provided our resellers with a unique solution. Certainly the conversion rate on demos would indicate that this is definitely the case.”



Kay Tobin of Tri-Line

SME Benefits

Lee Jones, Director of Red Box Recorders says that in recent months he has seen a sharp increase in the number of enquiries from SMEs which means he says that the message is finally reaching them that there are first-rate solutions in the market that are affordable, simple to use and maintain, and yet deliver all the benefits that were previously only available to large-scale operations.

“This means that SMEs can now get true value from being able to monitor and record audio communications to enable them to train staff and manage performance and quality. They are able to identify and improve upon inefficiencies in performance and cost resulting in a direct increase in revenue as good employees are retained, providing better customer service and an improved ‘time to market’ for their products.

“The Red Box solution utilises a unique technology offering with a single software-based system that can be implemented modularly, meaning excellent budgetary control. It is completely web-based for ease of use and fast roll-out and its simplicity means that it can be managed by operational personnel rather than the IT specialists. SMEs can use their own hardware to minimise costs to maximise buying power if they prefer, or opt for a full turnkey solution for simplicity of procurement and support.”

Simon Whatley, Sales Director at Tollring agrees that the value of call recording as a business tool is now far more widely understood by all types of organisations, especially within the SME marketplace.

“For some time now, Tollring has been working to lower the entry-level cost of call recording without compromising on features - and our new Tollring Call Recorder achieves

just that. At £1,500 including 12 months support, our reseller channel now has the ability to gain access to fully-featured call recording which suits all sizes of business.

The Tollring Call Recorder is not only extremely competitively priced, it also offers all of the features that customers expect and need. It’s an entirely standalone solution that can record up to 30 ISDN channels, with no PBX integration required whatsoever. Call recordings are fully encrypted, making them legally admissible in court, and users also have the ability to start/stop recording from the handset, to comply with regulations surrounding the recording of credit card numbers and so on.”

VoIP Challenges

Chris Berry, Sales Director, Liquid Voice believes the market landscape has changed dramatically over the past five years with call recording and the associated products increasingly becoming commonplace within business and de facto within a number of key industries.

“Now, throw Voice over IP (VoIP) in to the mix and you have a requirement for your voice recording partner to be completely re-skilled from the traditional hardware-orientated solutions most have built their experience on.

“The proprietary nature and diversity of IP protocols can cause a host of complications for anyone without extensive experience of it but it does offer a great ability to create smarter, more redundant solutions with ever more advanced features, and providing better value.

“In summary, for the reseller who partners with the right, carefully chosen vendor, VoIP call recording should be seen as nothing other than a fantastic opportunity.”

Andy Hollingworth, Opal’s Director of Wholesale, says that evolving working practices, combined with the continued impact of the recession, are fuelling demand for a raft of innovative new call recording technologies and applications.

“With cost retention now firmly at the top of the agenda, businesses large and small are seeking to reduce overheads wherever possible and cloud call recording solutions are enabling companies to do just that.

“Opal Replay, our own network-based call recording solution, was launched in 2002. Uniquely, it is a pay-as-you-go web-based call