✎ INTERVIEW Toby Sturridge - SD-WAN Solutions

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Starting at the top

In this interview **Toby Sturridge**, CTO of **SDWAN Solutions**, talks about the latest challenges in the SD-WAN market and how his new product ASSIST will empower resellers to become experts and sell into the space

Comms Business Magazine (CBM): Why is there so much confusion still around the SDWAN market?
Toby Sturridge (TS): Too many conflicting messages in the press and online – everyone shouting that their version of SD-WAN is the best - vendors making statements that are not accurate to promote their own interests. We (all of us at SDWAN Solutions) live and breathe SD-WAN 24 hours a day. A lot of that time is dedicated to research – and research includes reading things like Reddit & Quora posts, LinkedIn posts, expert panel discussion transcripts etc. It's scary to read some of these posts and views, some down to genuine naivety, but others to intentionally misinform their customers for their own benefit. This approach is short-sighted and will be detrimental (to their business and to their customers) in the long term.

CBM: What kind of challenges are partners still facing selling this technology?
TS: Lack of in-depth understanding of SD-WAN technology, solution design and true benefits. Insufficient technical and sales training, limited knowledge across a variety of SD-WAN vendor platforms. A mindset of applying MPLS type network design to

solutions and if I am brutally honest, a desire to promote what the resellers and agents are comfortable with and what brings perhaps the most revenue/ profit, at the customer's expense.

CBM: Tell us about ASSIST and how it addresses the above?
TS: ASSIST is an automated solution scoping and intelligent sales tool that delivers a complete SD-WAN solution (everything you need from the white-labelled solution design document, technical assistance, all connectivity, installation and solution management) tailored to the specific needs of every customer - without requiring any SD-WAN knowledge, experience, training or investment (Yes it's FREE OF CHARGE). ASSIST empowers any re-seller, agent and consultancy, regardless of their size, to almost instantly be able to compete in the SD-WAN market, without changing their current business model. We have ASSIST base models for Master agents, agents, re-sellers and MSPs – and each model is further customisable to suit your business model.
   A true SD-WAN sale is a highly consultative and time-consuming process, sometimes taking months to get to a Proof of Concept stage. ASSIST cuts the timescales down to a couple

of days, without cutting any corners. ASSIST also bridges the gap between traditional re-sell only (box shifter) and consultative business models. The Channel is able to focus on customers that are seriously progressing SD-WAN and spend less time on the "tyre kickers" – smarter ways of working.

CBM: How does the product impact current connectivity sales?
TS: SD-WAN requires a minimum of two connections at every location, and usually includes different technologies (MPLS, leased line, Internet, FTTC, 4G) It is not unusual for say a small 10 site solution to include 25-30 connections! With ASSIST you have the option of including the connectivity options that you supply. ASSIST provides exact details of the requirements at every site. You supply the services that you can, and we provide those that aren't in your product portfolio, effectively boosting your product range.

CBM: Is your typical reseller sales team redundant in your model? Is it just too technical?
TS: Not at all – ASSIST is there to simply assist your sales teams, filling in the gaps and simplifying processes. The Channel has the relationships with their customers and ASSIST gives everything else you need to sell SD-WAN. Your sales team get access to all of our sales and technical departments, white labelled documentation, proposals etc

CBM: How does the product empower resellers?
TS: Our ASSIST programme lets you enter the SD-WAN race at the very top. You are able to offer tailored true SD-WAN solutions based on best of breed technologies while gaining valuable knowledge and experience, backed and supported by the trusted experts in all things SD-WAN. Where do you see your business in 5 years time – re-selling retro technologies, entering the SD-WAN market or already a reputable SD-WAN provider, with 5 years solution experience? ⬦

READER OFFER
Comms Business Magazine readers are eligible for a half day SD-WAN sales training session to make sure that their team is comfortable to have an opening discussion about SD-WAN before passing to ASSIST - the SD-WAN basics, benefits, problem solving, scoping questions and buying signal etc.