(intel®)

Demonstrable benefits

SDG, IT resellers and their end customers gain from business solution centers standardized on Intel® processor technology

SDG
SPECIALIST TECHNOLOGY DISTRIBUTOR | BUSINESS SOLUTION CENTRE

CHALLENGES

▪ **More than sales.** The Specialist Distribution Group (SDG) was looking to add more value to its resellers and their end customers, offering advice and services as well as sales

SOLUTIONS

▪ **High-tech centers.** Created a unique network of business solution centers for the EMEA channel, bringing together multiple technologies from multiple vendors to demonstrate best practice virtualization and cloud services

▪ **Exclusively Intel.** Standardized demonstrations to run on the latest Intel® processor technology, currently the Intel® Xeon® processor E5 and E7 families

IMPACT

▪ **No vendor pressure.** Provides an independent, safe environment for IT resellers to demonstrate leading vendor technologies to customers and build the best platform to meet their needs

▪ **Better relationships.** Makes the sales cycle more interactive, enabling IT resellers to build closer relationships with their customers

▪ **Greater revenue.** SDG and its resellers benefit from larger deals and a shorter sales cycle

"Intel® processors offer much better performance per megahertz (MHz) than competitors' processors, allowing us to achieve a much higher consolidation ratio. Consequently, virtualized cloud platforms based on Intel processors are more cost effective, as they require less hardware and are more energy efficient."

Daniel Cartter,
EMEA Director for Cloud Solutions and Services,
SDG

Adding value

SDG distributes technology to Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). To remain competitive, SDG continuously seeks to find ways to add more value to its IT resellers and their end customers. As technology solutions become more complex, in some instances combining many different technologies from different vendors, businesses rely more on their IT channel partners for advice and services as well as sales. In turn, IT resellers are turning to SDG to provide this additional support.

Dan Cartter, EMEA director for cloud solutions and services at SDG, explains: "Building a technology solution today involves so many different technologies and vendors. It's akin to baking a cake with many different ingredients, often without a recipe. It's our job to help our IT resellers navigate their customers through this complex task, helping them find the right solution to meet their needs, so they can make a sale. Establishing a network of business solution centers is just one way in which we're helping customers towards this goal."

Demonstrating virtualization

SDG's pan-European network of business solution centers offers attractive high-tech environments where IT channel partners can demonstrate to their customers the very latest infrastructure hardware and software from leading technology vendors, including Intel. IT channel partners are then better able to pick from the hundreds of vendor technologies the right solutions to meet their customers' needs.

Traditionally, SDG provided servers, storage and networking to the EMEA channel and was one of the first EMEA distributors for virtualization technology from VMware and Citrix. Consequently, it remains a specialist in this area. Its business solution centers initially focused on virtualization and cloud demonstrations for the channel, although it has now expanded into client infrastructure demonstrations too.
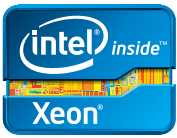
# Meeting end customers' needs free from vendor pressure

Centers are located in Birmingham, UK; Langley, UK; Bodegraven, Netherlands and Paris, France, with a new center opening soon in Warrington, UK. However, demonstrations are not limited to these locations. "We can also perform demonstrations over the Internet to anywhere in the world in English, French, Spanish and, shortly, Arabic," explains Cartter. "This also enables our partners to show their national and international customers that centralized cloud platforms perform well over long distances, across borders and in dispersed locations."

Standardizing on Intel

SDG's network of business solution centers runs exclusively on Intel® processor technology. Cartter explains: "Intel provides the best processor technology available today, from the server through to end-user devices. We have a long-standing relationship with Intel and it keeps our business solution centers up-to-date with its latest server processor technology, currently the Intel Xeon processor E5 and E7 families."

"Intel processors offer us much better performance per megahertz (MHz) than competitors' processors, allowing us to achieve a much higher consolidation ratio. Consequently, virtualized cloud platforms based on Intel processors are more cost effective as they require less hardware and are more energy efficient. Also, the consistency gained by standardizing on Intel simplifies management and support."

SDG is also impressed by many of the additional features of the Intel Xeon processor E5 and E7 families, in particular Intel® Advanced Encryption Standard New Instructions (Intel® AES-NI)[1]. Security is paramount in cloud environments, where business-critical information leaves the traditional IT environment.
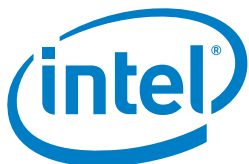
Encryption is widely regarded as the best way to secure this business-critical data, with AES being the most widely used standard. Composed of seven new instructions, Intel AES-NI delivers faster, more affordable data protection and greater security, making pervasive encryption possible in areas where it was previously unfeasible.

In addition to the Intel hardware, the technology stack consists of an APC InfrastruXure* cube made up of heterogeneous hardware from HP and IBM supported by Citrix, HP and Huawei Networking. The cube operates as a converged infrastructure and offers fully virtualized environments for Citrix, VMware, Symantec, Microsoft, and ecosystem vendor technologies.

Resounding success

SDG's network of business solution centers provides IT resellers with a safe environment where they can bring their customers to see many different technology solutions in action. They are better able to build the best solution to meet their end-customers' needs, free from vendor pressure. "There's nowhere else quite like it in Europe," says Cartter. "There's nowhere else that brings together as many different technologies from different vendors into one independent environment."

For SDG's channel partners, the business solution centers represent a pre-sales tool that is free. The demonstrations make the sales cycle more interactive, enabling IT resellers to build closer relationships with their customers. In turn, SDG can build even better relationships with its IT resellers and benefits from larger deals and a shorter sales cycle.

Since the multi-million pound, purpose-built center in Birmingham, UK, opened its doors in September 2010, it has had 543 bookings, given 394 solution demonstrations and 70 technology tours, and held 79 workshop sessions and training days. In total, 2,164 end customers have come through the door with their partners.

Benefitting IT resellers

The UK's fastest-growing IT reseller, Kelway, is a regular user of the business solution centers. Matt Warwick, IBM business manager at Kelway, explains: "The business solution centers are a really powerful tool for Kelway. We have access to new equipment and we don't have to invest heavily to be able to show our customers the latest vendor technology. As well as saving us money, we're also finding that the business solution centers are enabling us to close bigger deals."

Similarly, IT reseller PortP says the business solution centers have enabled it to engage with customers who were previously beyond its reach for solutions and services. They allow it to show customers different variations of hardware and demonstrate how it operates in the real world with virtualization technologies from the likes of VMware and Citrix. The business solution centers and SDG's specialist consultants are now critical to its sales cycle. At a more fundamental level, they have changed PortP's business model beyond just sales into services.

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[1] **Intel® Advanced Encryption Standard New Instructions (Intel® AES-NI)** Intel® AES-NI requires a computer system with an AES-NI enabled processor, as well as non-Intel software to execute the instructions in the correct sequence. AES-NI is available on select Intel® processors. For availability, consult your reseller or system manufacturer. For more information, see http://software.intel.com/en-us/articles/intel-advanced-encryption-standard-instructions-aes-ni/

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