

Bell inks eSoft deal

EUROPE

IN A further move away from its historic storage portfolio, Bell Microproducts has agreed to distribute eSoft's products on a pan-European basis. This includes InstaGate Integrated Security Gateways and ThreatWall Content Security Gateways, which are designed to provide protection from dynamic network threats such as worms, viruses, spyware, spam, trojans, phishing and intrusion attacks, as well as threats carried over Instant Messaging and peer-to-peer applications.

The solutions also provide deep packet firewall and virtual private networking support, resulting in an array of solutions for all aspects of perimeter network security. This follows success of the eSoft/Bell Microproducts relationship in the USA, says Security Divisional Manager at Bell Microproducts in the UK, Duncan Hume. 'We are confident we can significantly grow the eSoft market across Europe while introducing our customers to leading edge Security solutions.'

www.bellmicro.eu.com

ASBIS raises game with London listing

CYPRUS

PAN-EASTERN European components distributor ASBIS has listed on the UK's AIM exchange for 'alternative' investments in a bid to give it acquisitional power. The firm is already a major contender in wholesale across eastern Europe, and in 2005, it generated profits of \$9m (€7m) on revenues of \$930m (€727m).

Siarhei Kostevitch (*below right*), CEO at Cyprus-based ASBIS, tells *IT Europa* the aim of the listing was not to raise money immediately, but instead to 'provide access to capital for future acquisitions, to develop the business ... and to give incentives to employees by granting options.' He claims the choice of London as the place to list was to 'raise [the company's] profile'. He refuses to disclose at the moment which are ASBIS' acquisitional targets.

ASBIS is also planning to enlarge its PC assembly business, which comprises the Prestigio and Canyon brands as well as white boxes. Kostevitch explains: 'This area of our business, the newest, has already proved very successful.' For both PC assembly and distribution, the firm works with vendors such as Intel, Seagate and Hitachi, and it claims such partners support the move.

Since the late-October listing, the share price has been stable around the 125 pence (€1.85)

Archers offer Tech Data staff spiffs

EUROPE

TECH DATA has appointed an incentive specialist to boost its Cisco sales across Europe. Some 300 members of Tech Data's European staff will be offered a range of rewards and benefits in recognition of sales efforts. Natalie Gunson (*below*), director at incentives consultancy Archer Young, who created the scheme, believes it aims to: 'increase incremental sales, encourage switch sales and drive loyalty.'

She tells *IT Europa*: 'By offering a longer term solution that not only rewards and recognises but also acts as a communication portal to reseller vendors can create their own communication channel and driving brand loyalty. By introducing a short term tactical campaign the vendor is merely encouraging switch sales.'

All vendors have their own communications portals or channels such as dealer nets, SMB specific programmes and so on. As a rule vendors load this with information on products, fact sheets, FAQs etc and MDF info for the dealer principals or business owners. 'By introducing a platform that communicates with and rewards the salesperson

within the reseller we create a new channel that allows vendors to talk directly to the person selling to the customer and therefore has an impact,' Gunson says.

The key to whether this works or not is found in pre-incentive and post-incentive sales figures, but Gunson is quick to point out that companies can't usually attribute the incentive for the entire growth of sales. Above the line advertising, MDF and other factors play a key role.

She adds: 'We obviously provide ROI for all of our clients but also as a matter of course we carry out full research on participants and dealer principals plus hit rate analysis, reward feedback and e-marketing.'

While Gunson would not be drawn on how cost effective they are in terms of return, she did reveal that vendor studies show sales growth of the product pre- and post-incentive of 7pc month-on-month. She continues: 'Each programme is different for each country and audience. We operate in over 25 countries and each reward portfolio changes, however communication and product drives and incentives can remain the same. The other area to consider is tax law changes by country.'

Employee or reseller buy in 'is imperative,' she claims. Prior to launching any programme or creating a proposal Archer Young researches an audience sample, which may include tele-research, focus groups and face-to-face interviews to establish what will and won't work within the audience, type of communication, reward, recognition and so on.

Communication, whether through paper, web or both is vital. What works for one may not work for all so the key is to have a variety and choice. 'IT staff differ from, for example, FMCG industry employees in that as a rule they are quite used to incentives,' she says. www.archeryoung.co.uk



mark. Kostevitch retains a controlling stake in the company, estimated at 52pc, and aside from the directors, investment firms Alfo Administration, Black Sea Fund and Alpha Ventures are understood to have owned much of the rest of the company prior to the listing.

With ASBIS' prowess in eastern European distribution, and other wholesalers said to be watching it closely, the market is anticipating whether other distributors might invest in the company. Kostevitch refuses to speculate, saying only: 'This sounds like a question for them.'

www.asbis.com

▶ OUR ANALYSIS

With ASBIS' dominant position in eastern European

components sales, growth outside acquisition could be a challenge. Now, though, the firm is likely to try to scoop up one-country distributors and/or assemblers. Will it also try to look at fellow

components disti ELKO's books? It could make interesting reading for ASBIS. Stay tuned to find out what the company does next and who invests.

