

A Daly digest in comms

Leicestershire-based Dalycom is a bastion of customer service. To be anything else is folly, according to Managing Director Amanda Daly, who also champions staff development initiatives that differentiate the company as an authoritative voice of the industry.

Much debate has surrounded the shift from a capex to an opex model. It reflects the decline of on-premise kit and the rise of the subscription economy, which is unavoidable. So much so that efforts to safeguard future profitability will stall unless a cloud strategy is embraced, believes Daly. It's a transition that Dalycom was quick to make, despite the immediate impact of big ticket sales being replaced by the drip feed of recurring revenues. Yet the future outlook is far more assured.

"Like many in our industry a major turning point for our business is the evolution of the cloud," said Daly. "We started selling hosted products around eight years ago and have built up a great base of cloud customers who take voice, exchange, anti-virus, storage and the network provision elements such as broadband and Ethernet services. It can be painful as some of the monthly contracts are in the hundreds rather than thousands. However, once the wheel is moving the revenue starts to build

and makes a difference, which brings more security in times of recession."

During the last four years Dalycom has grown steadily from £1.4 million to £2 million, mainly based on recurring revenues. So far the business has grown without any acquisitions and is developing a reputation in the midlands for its cloud-based services. "Within five years we want to see Dalycom reaching the £5 million mark and to have this growth on the back of recurrent revenue," commented Daly. "We tend to target the smaller SMEs, our sweetspot being the 20 user bracket. We can really help these clients with our expertise and consultancy approach. Many of our customers take our full range of services which helps to keep them sticky and contributes towards our high retention rate. The main driver for all of our team is customer service."

Competition now comes from all angles as a greater number of rivals from the mobile and IT markets target customer bases in the comms sector. What



Amanda Daly

experience, run our own networks and do a lot more public speaking. We look at a variety of ways to attract our prospects and make us stand out against the competition.

"Our biggest opportunity is how staff adapt to the new sales process. We are training our people to be marketeers with skills to develop their own communications channel and expertise on social media. It's very different to how we used to sell in the past. Again, we are moving towards expertise and the voice of authority in our market. Not many competitors have our 30 year trading background and knowledge."

Dalycom was formed in 1986 by Daly's father-in-Law Tony Daly. Following deregulation he saw an opportunity and grabbed it with both hands. Various family members have worked within the business, including the founder's son Matthew who is Chairman (formerly Managing Director) and has a 25 year stint under his belt. The company underwent a name change to Dalycom 10 years ago to reflect changes in the industry. The firm no longer sold just telecommunications products – IT, CCTV and mobile had been added to the portfolio. Dalycom has since established a strong reputation in the retail sector with major high street names on its customer roster. A number of them have been clients for over 25 years.

These loyal customers would have been on-boarded at a time when Daly began her own career with a PR firm that worked with companies such as GPT and Siemens Nixdorf. Writing **Continued on page 30**

Our industry needs a greater number of women in senior roles. It's time for change, time to see more women attending events, receiving press coverage and getting more involved

can be done? Erect a barrier based on impeccable service, believes Daly. "Our customer experience and retention rates are a high priority for us," she stated. "We are being targeted by mobile, IT and web providers with similar propositions, but the customer journey is always

an area Dalycom works on. Our differentiator has to be our service and testimonials. We are a lot more targeted in our approach to our audience and use social media and networks to help broadcast our message. A big change in our marketing is that we now lead as the voice of

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press releases and organising briefings proved educational, giving Daly background knowledge on the industry she would soon enter in a sales capacity. She was head hunted 20 years ago and became Managing Director in 2013, moving up from Sales Director. "Matthew and I now spend less time within the business due to the development of our senior management team," said Daly.

Leadership

"Our time is spent more on direction and working 'on' the business rather than being heavily involved in day-to-day matters. This was always our long-term plan. By 2020 we expect our involvement to become even less as our team grow through experience and develop leadership qualities. We advocate an employee ownership model and our intention is to look at this in the future. It would be great to see some of our staff running the business, reaping the rewards of their loyalty and hard work. I have also set up a separate consultancy called The Turnaround CEO where I help and coach business owners on growth and leadership."

In the time since Daly became Managing Director five years ago the business has grown by over 50 per cent. Her intention is to continue introducing product sets and exploring the potential of emerging markets. "Artificial Intelligence and the IoT will have an impact on our business and who knows where this will take us,"

she added. "Every single appliance will soon have some form of connectivity which will potentially need a level of support and access to a network. The mobile arena is also exciting. So a priority right now is innovation as we move towards IT support and provision over the cloud, and we are looking at areas that help service our clients and complement our portfolio. IT support is exhibiting strong growth and we always try to stay ahead of the IT curve. This is where Matthew's skills and knowledge in IT comes into play. The blend of Matthew and I works well. He finds the products and my team sells them."

Yet finding a happy balance in the context of a work-life blend has not been so forthcoming. "One of my biggest regrets is not spending enough time with my children," added Daly. "I allowed work to take over my life. However, without the hard times and difficulties I would not be where I am now, and with my experience and hindsight be in a position to help coach other business owners."

"Our industry needs a greater number of women in senior roles. When we look at our channel partners the majority of senior or board members are male. It's time for change, time to see more women attending events, receiving press coverage and getting more involved. This is a great industry with so much to offer, so I am puzzled why more women are not in ICT. At Dalycom we have a diverse team and that adds value to what we do." ■



Amanda Daly

Just a minute with Amanda Daly...

Role models: Female inspirational speakers

What talent do you wish you had? To be more artistic

What do you fear the most? Rats

Industry bugbear? We need greater loyalty from our suppliers. It is difficult to offer high service levels when our supplier is not providing them

Tell us something about yourself we don't know: I got GCSE grade E in IT

What's the best piece of advice you have ever been given? Anything is possible. First know what you want, visualise it and go for it

One example of something you have overcome: Sexism and prejudice

What's the biggest risk you have taken? Tight time frames forced us to furnish and decorate our first office before the mortgage had been agreed

In hindsight... I would have not taken everything so personally. As a leader you cannot please everyone and some of the decisions you make are hard ones, especially where people are involved

Three ideal dinner guests: Simon Sinek, he makes you focus on your 'Why'; Oprah Winfrey, she's inspirational; and Margaret Thatcher to learn what inspired her and how she overcame the hurdles

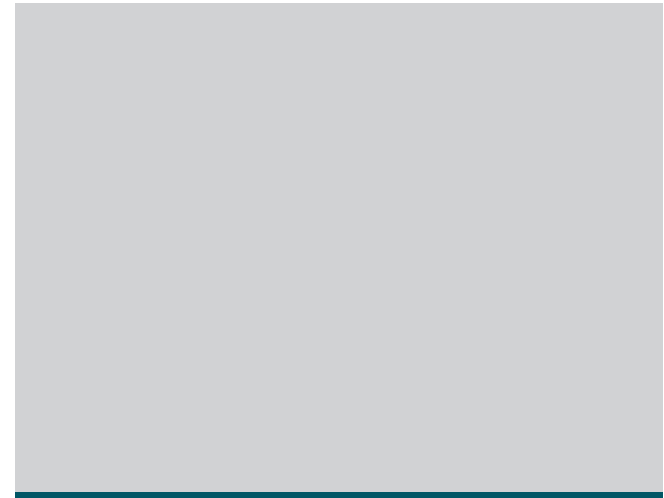
Your strengths and what could you work on? I can be very direct, which is both a strength and a weakness

Top tip for resellers: Don't talk too much. Listen and work on the information you are given, not what you want to hear

What can't you do without in your job? Pen and paper – I write lots of notes

How would you like to be remembered? Building up a legacy and helping others build theirs

Ten years for Forest



Bradley Worboys (left) and Andrew Louka

Buckhurst Hill-based Forest Communications is poised to mark its tenth anniversary year by breaking the £1 million revenue barrier. The company was founded on May 2nd 2008 by Managing Director Bradley Worboys who was later joined by his friend and Key Account Executive Andrew Louka. "I was looking for a new job and after a few interviews came to realise that I wanted to start my own telecoms company," said Worboys. "My friend Andrew had the same idea. We complement each other and over the years have learned to understand each of our own strengths and weaknesses."

Prior to Forest Worboys had already gained four years comms industry experience working for Cellclear which sold GSM gateways. "I came on board to manage a large sales project being rolled out to Unison over 35 sites. This deal was the largest that any reseller and T-Mobile direct had done that year. After we completed the project I sold GSM

gateways into the NHS." Forest Communications now employs five people and focuses more on driving sales in partnership with resellers while keeping service levels high. "We have 350 customers and turnover is circa £900k," added Worboys. "We grew £200k last year so should break the £1 million barrier this year."

Product diversity
Converting ISDN customers to hosted and winning new cloud, UC and mobile business has helped to drive growth. "Three years ago we started to offer business gas and electric rates and card payment solutions which delivered new revenue streams and made us more of a business services company with telecoms at the core," explained Worboys.

"While we are keeping a close eye on the IoT we are currently focused on a new industry specific payment solution with feature additions. Looking further ahead, we aim to build a bigger base of customers and offer more business services which are currently being set up." ■