Earn Double-Digit Cloud Revenue the Unconventional Way

By honing in on its cloud niche and taking an unconventional approach to sales, this Ingram Micro Cloud service provider is achieving 45% year-over-year revenue growth with 30%-plus profit margins.

Cloud Success Story

Becoming the United Kingdom's (UK) number one Office 365 reseller to SMBs is a title proudly held by cloud service provider (CSP) Perspicuity. Ben Gower, CEO of Perspicuity says his company had to undergo a couple of big changes before it was able to capitalize on selling cloud services. What makes this CSP's success story so compelling, however, has as much to do with what it's not doing as what it is doing.

The First Two Prerequisites of Cloud Sales Success: Become a Good Listener and an Educator

One of the keys to Perspicuity's success has been adopting a new sales approach. "The traditional sales philosophy focuses on getting prospects to say 'yes,' and avoiding anything that might result in a 'no,' or a negative response," he says. "With the cloud, we found you need to take the opposite approach and actually look for the 'no.'"

Fact is, nearly every small business owner gets the basic premise of the cloud in that it promises a less expensive and more reliable alternative to owning and managing IT equipment on premise. But, beneath the surface, many end users have serious concerns about where their data is being stored, how secure is the service, and what happens if their Internet service goes down.

"Getting to the 'no' is where you uncover those fears and can alleviate them through an education process," says Gower. Unlike a typical sales process that attempts to coerce a prospect into changing its opinion, taking a consultative and educational approach helps prospects self-discover the truth about business cloud services like Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint.

Not every salesperson is wired to sell in a consultative manner. After recognizing this fact, Perspicuity took two more bold actions. First, it expanded its hiring criteria to include high school upperclassman, college students, and new graduates — another practice that goes against the grain of conventional thinking. "We currently have 10 salespeople on our staff that fall into one of those categories and we'll likely recruit 6 more this summer," he says.

The second key to the CSP's sales success is found in its training program. Within the past couple of years, Perspicuity hired [Sandler Training](#) to evaluate and revamp its sales processes. "In addition to helping us hone in on better prospects that have a higher interest in cloud services, Sandler provides weekly personalized training to our staff, engaging them about what they learned during the previous week and talking about what's working and what's not," shared Gower. "To date, we've invested over $7,000 per employee into training, but the results we've seen show that it's well worth every penny."

Provide a High-Attention-To-Detail Onboarding Process

When it comes to selling cloud services like Microsoft Office 365, what customers need most is a smooth migration process, he says. "We use the SkyKick Migration Suite, available through the Ingram Micro

AT-A-GLANCE

EMPLOYEES
32

2014 REVENUE GROWTH
45%

DISTRIBUTOR PARTNER
Ingram Micro Cloud

VENDOR PARTNERS
Microsoft, SkyKick

VERTICALS
SMB

SPECIALIZATIONS
Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint consulting and migration services

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miss any key steps. SkyKick automates the preplanning steps and helps us get important questions answered upfront. Some examples include:

1. How will the transition occur – all at once or in batches? If the answer is the latter, which person or group will go first and who will follow afterwards?

2. Is everyone currently on a Windows platform or do some employees have Macs? If there is a mixed OS environment, we need to ensure we explain the differences in how the migration will work for each group.

3. When does the changeover need to be completed by?

After all the parameters are entered into SkyKick, it generates an action plan. "It would take a team of highly skilled engineers several hours to create the detailed plan that SkyKick generates in just a few minutes," says Gower. "Having this process automated allows us to focus on the more important matter at hand, which is ensuring our customers have a positive experience throughout the implementation process."

While some IT solution providers think achieving success with the cloud requires selling a highly customized and complex offering, Perspicuity believes the opposite.

"In the cloud era customers are more demanding than ever about certainty, especially after just coming out of the recession," he says. "Give them something clear, understandable, and low risk and you will win against complex, scary and risky — every time."

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