

GET PLUGGED IN

• to the latest Nine Wholesale news and expert views

•• **Connect with a world of opportunity**

• Find out how your business can benefit from Nine's specialist engineering service

•• **Regulation and Compliance**

• A (very) necessary evil

Train>Guide>Win

Hello again

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Purple News. Summer seems to have been and gone, the kids are back at school and the world of work is settling back into its usual routine.

At Nine Wholesale, we decided to embrace the 'new term vibe' and look at how we can energise staff, sharpen productivity and achieve some great things in the final quarter of 2015. If you're thinking along the same lines then we can help in a number of ways. Did you know that we offer a superb white-labelled engineering and maintenance service which means you need never turn down another job due to size, location or issues with accreditation? Hear first hand from one of our resellers who benefits from this value-adding service.

If you haven't already joined the Purple Partner Programme, now would be a great time to sign up. As well as incredible money-saving deals and numerous business benefits we are also launching a new VIP workshop where we share our own tried and tested, innovative sales methods with Purple Partners.

Purple Partners also have the ear of our experienced industry experts who can offer advice and support to resellers on an individual basis. Featured in this month's Purple News are three of these experienced specialists sharing thought-provoking insights from the Marketing, Industry and Operations arenas.

I hope you find our newsletter interesting, informative and entertaining. As always, we'd love to hear any feedback. Get in touch by emailing hello@ninewholesale.co.uk



Nick Webster

Managing Director

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Nick

Regulation and Compliance - a (very) necessary EVIL!

Become a Purple Partner and save hundreds of pounds ensuring your business's safety

**PURPLE®
PARTNER**

Staying on top of regulation and compliance is a necessary evil in the telecoms industry, but it can leave you feeling like you're jumping through hoops.

FCS membership is vital for keeping ahead of regulatory changes. Purple Partners benefit from an exclusive Purple Partner Programme membership price which is a minimum of 50% discount, as well as free membership to an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme worth £100 a year.

You may be aware of the requirement under the General Conditions of Entitlement for providers of communication services to have a

consumer code of practice. FCS codes of practice cost non-members £950, for FCS members the cost is £295 and for Nine Purple Partners who are also members of FCS, the cost is only £100!

On top of this Purple Partners and your staff have free access to FCS Regulatory and Compliance workshops that take place in various locations around the UK throughout the year.

Take a leap of faith and contact us today to find out more about the amazing savings that you'll make by becoming a Purple Partner. Email purplepartner@ninewholesale.co.uk or speak to your CDM.





INDUSTRY NOTEBOOK

Marcus Dacombe - Group Commercial Product Director

You've seen this before... Fast, Cheap, Good; pick 2, you can't have all three at the same time.

If you want a great product quickly, it's going to cost you, if you want a cheap, but excellent product, then it's going to take some time, and if you want something cheap and quickly it's going to be inferior.

However, a product that is unmatched in value, longevity and reliability is on everyone's wish list, obtained quickly and at the lowest possible cost. All three, like a perpetually winding Escher staircase.

The tension that exists between these two ideas is where competition thrives, and where we find our unique space apart from the competition. Successful companies rest on a foundation of process development and automated systems that enable repetitive tasks to be done efficiently and without error whilst exceptions are managed by passionate, dedicated people that excel at answering these three questions:

Is this
useful?

Is this
credible?

Is this
relevant?

Why? Because at the end of any decision making process that results in a sale, the above three questions are being asked by the purchaser.

Amazon are the kings of processes and answer the three questions above with a degree of understanding that few other companies can match. They are at their heart a logistics company that have fine-tuned their processes to near perfection. But they are also half a step ahead of their competitors in terms of innovation; Kindle, Prime, Music and customer services. The latter, ably demonstrated by this abbreviated, but genuine exchange which took place on Amazon.com customer services instant messaging app. The customer services agent, who is genuinely called Thor, has answered a message from someone whose book hasn't been delivered.

Amazon Customer Services (AMC): Warmest Greetings [customer] my name is Thor

Customer: Greetings, can I be Odin? Agony rains upon my life.

AMC: This is outrageous! Who dares defy the All Father Odin! What has occurred to cause this agony?

Customer: I am afraid the book I ordered to defeat our enemies has been misplaced.

(After more role playing banter, very much in character about Loki and Valhalla)

AMC: Alas, the treasure has been returned to you. You now need to reinstate the book to your archive...

Customer: OK, so all role play aside I have my money back and I reorder the book?

[Customer also receives free one day delivery]

Customer: I've heard Amazon had great customer service, and this just proves it! Thanks man.

You should really have a look at the entire conversation, it is well worth a few minutes of your time.

<http://i.imgur.com/IDFkz82.png>

So what can we mere mortals do? Well we can represent quality customer services, but we do need to be aware that this is an entry level requirement for our customers - everyone is doing it. We can create systems and processes that deliver perfectly, but will need to be conscious of our recovery strategies when things inevitably go wrong. Ultimately we need to deliver useful, credible and relevant solutions to our customers, because that's what they want. We'll just have to make sure that we do it quickly, cheaply and well.





Group Marketing Director, Mark Saunders, takes a fresh look at the meaning of marketing in a telecoms business.

Still the heartbeat of the business?

Back in December 2013, this column examined why marketing should be at the heart of your business and refuted the suggestion that we were all about branding and colouring in. Later the following year, we embraced the jibes and ran our first workshop for Purple Partner Programme members, entitled, “Isn’t Marketing Just Colouring In?” Over the last eighteen months the workshops have provided an opportunity for me to meet and chat with many resellers to discuss what marketing is really all about. Contact your Channel Development Manager or talk to me directly via mark.saunders@ninegroup.co.uk if you want to join in the fun.

During the workshop, we cover a number of topics, including a light hearted look at both the meaning and the history of marketing, including some notable problems with cigarette advertising in the 1950s and 60s.



The key areas we move on to talk about include the importance of understanding your customer through data collection and making sure that every single touch point you have with them is a consistent and relevant communication. Telling your story is what marketing is all about, so we spend some time looking at how to do this well. Our own marketing model is based on permission led, relationship marketing and highlights the ever increasing need for personalised contact rather than broadcast, one size fits all, messaging. Delegates leave the workshop armed with a number of ideas and some suggestions for how to make them work inside their own business, but of equal benefit is the discussion around the room and the sharing of experience and insight into what works and what has to be put down to experience.

Lead generation is a frequent topic at our marketing workshops, presumably because it is still a significant hurdle for most resellers looking to grow their business. Where should you invest your money – buying data, telemarketing, acquisition, social media, website SEO, advertising of many kinds, sales recruitment, incentives, promotions – the options are many, but regrettably there is no magic formula for success. We are more than happy to share our own perspective though and encourage a lively debate. My own view leans heavily towards maximising the value from your existing customers, by investing in retention and running a modern marketing operation that communicates with them in an anticipated, personal and relevant manner.

One exercise that I use to encourage an understanding of how marketing can really make a difference is to ask delegates to think about the examples of marketing they have responded to – either positively, or negatively. Do you react well to Amazon knowing your wishes better than your partner? How do feel about the deluge of email solicitations you no doubt receive and what do you do with them? What kind of communication or approach has encouraged you to buy products and services in both your professional and personal life? What post sale activity has endeared you to a product, brand or service and made you recommend and even defend it? It is fair to say that this activity produces a wide spectrum of views and feedback – the trick is to drill down into what is actually provoking a positive reaction from you and then switch your thinking from being a customer back to being a supplier, so you can apply it to your own marketing.

Marketing done well can achieve amazing things. I look forward to meeting you at one of our workshops soon and sharing the magic.



Howling at the moon

Ever had to say no to a maintenance opportunity because you didn't have the right training, or the right people in the right place at the right time?

OPEN UP YOUR BUSINESS TO A NEW WORLD WITH THE NINE ENGINEERING SERVICE

We help to support our partners with white label, dedicated, end-to-end management for on-premise telephone systems. Our specialists work closely with our partners and their customers, offering advice and support throughout the process – from solution specification and site surveys, to connectivity, installation and maintenance.

As a major business communications provider, we work with some of the leading names in the telecoms industry, including Mitel, NEC, Panasonic, Avaya and Unify. We're fully accredited and licensed to sell, install and maintain solutions, and provide comprehensive support and servicing that's tailored to your business.

With 16 engineers, nationwide coverage, extensive experience and access to the full suite of on-premise PBX products, you'll receive everything you need to offer your customers the best solutions for their needs.

Cliff Smith of Comms Solve relies on his Nine engineering partners to oversee customer installations, enjoying a strong working relationship based on trust.



CASE STUDY

"Everyone says their service is the best - not so in some cases. We've all seen customers that have been let down and the damage this causes for future business. Excuses such as, "The engineer's car has broken down.", "He's phoned in sick.", or "Sorry, we didn't get your email." It comes down to whether you genuinely have capacity to deal with additional engineering, or not.

Nine have 16 trained engineers spread nationally across the UK. That, in itself, says something, but proof is always in the pudding. We were so impressed after the first time we used them that we have never gone anywhere else.

I've been in the business for over 30 years, with the last few years spent re-establishing and re-launching Comms Solve. We currently have less than five staff; the reason for this is that we outsource everything.

Our business model is built around working with exceptional partnerships. We only like to work with Best of Breed Partnerships as this ensures that we can offer the best of everything. Trust is very important; we have to rely on our partners to deliver exactly what is promised to the customer and this is why the Nine engineering service fits in with our business model.

The focus of Comms Solve is, first and foremost, customer service. We believe in going the extra mile and Nine help this to be possible. Introducing our partners to our customers increases our turnover and profitability

without the need to increase the cost base; basically if our customers are happy with the service our partners provide then cross selling becomes easier. It leaves us free to concentrate on what we are good at and for our partners to do the same.

Having an installation, technical support and maintenance team is costly, which is why partnering with Nine suits us completely. They do all of this for us, from setting up installations to placing maintenance calls which our desk can't handle; it's a very neat arrangement that makes life easier.

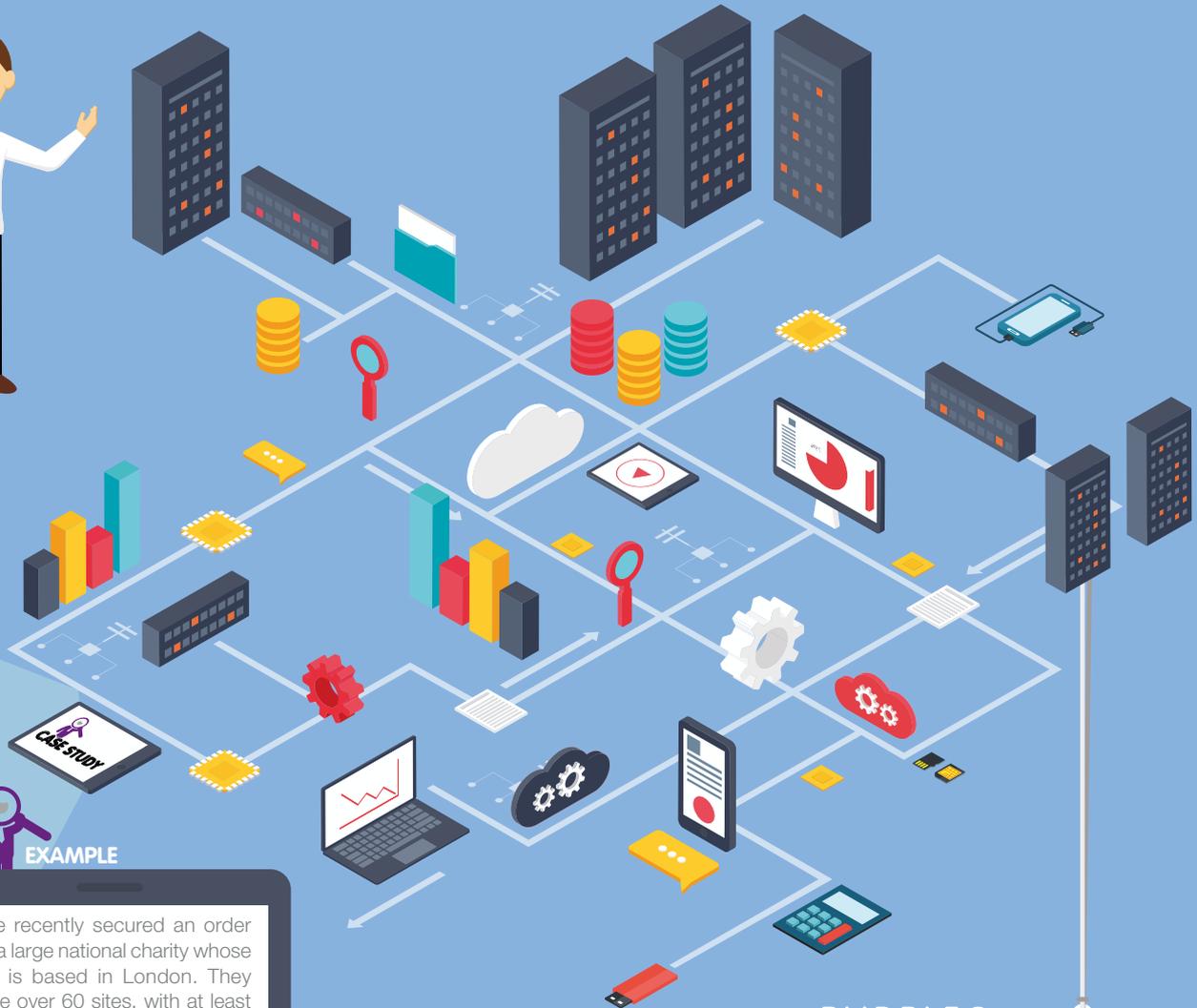
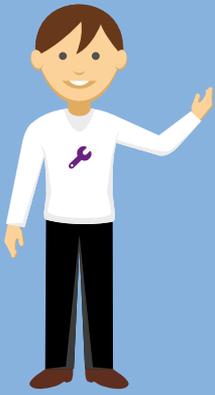
The staff at Nine are well trained in the product portfolio we sell and give our requests for any aspect the priority it requires and deserves. Customer response times are within the SLAs we give to our clients, so it is vital that we are confident our client's expectations are always met. Over the last year we have built a strong working relationship with Paul O'Neill (Channel Engineering Manager) and his team and we have never been let down. If you have this level of service in place and the confidence of delivery then the business of selling becomes easier.

Great Comms companies are judged on the ability to take user requirements and turn them into reliable workable solutions that give them the edge on competitors. With Nine's engineering and maintenance solution onside we are fully equipped to provide these solutions and continue to succeed and grow."

Cliff Smith of Comms Solve



WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES WITH



EXAMPLE

"We recently secured an order for a large national charity whose HQ is based in London. They have over 60 sites, with at least 30 requiring new Voice systems within the next 6 months.

Clearly this is a huge job that requires large amounts of resource, but due to our partnership with Nine, we are well underway with the installations of these sites.

I have also managed to introduce our MFD partner, our data partner, our call management partner and our Calls and Lines partner into this account and through us they have received several orders thus far."



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Are you a **Purple Partner?** You can benefit from an **EXCLUSIVE** engineering offer!

*T&Cs Apply

Purple Partner Engineering Offer

3 YEAR MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE
FIRST YEAR FREE*

NOTES FROM THE ENGINE ROOM



Barnes Clutterbuck
Group Operations Director



I recently received a well-written piece of marketing from my car manufacturer extolling the benefits of the winter service and winter tyres. My initial reaction was, 'surely this is too early - the summer isn't over yet!' Turns out that I'm wrong and, as sure as you're reading these words, summer is indeed over and Sainsburys are selling wrapping paper and baubles already.

Engine room management is all about risk management, understanding what's on the horizon or could be on the horizon and planning for it. At this time of year this means call volumes increasing, sickness on the rise and increased fraud as the holidays approach. Throw in a couple of snow days and it's a pretty healthy set of challenges to manage.

Taking those in isolation we can see what we can do to manage the risks.

It's a fact that adverse weather and faults follow remarkably similar journeys on a graph. It's no surprise really: rain falls and exchanges flood, damaged joint boxes are compromised, cold weather exacerbates these issues as the water freezes and brings its own set of logistical challenges to engineers. Now we know, faults are set to rise imminently and suppliers are going to be slower to respond than in summer months because sickness is also on the rise in their teams... bleak, bleak, bleak. All this whilst the network hide behind 'Matters beyond our reasonable control'; will your customers swallow this?

Actually, not necessarily. It turns out the risks are best managed/mitigated by increased sales by our wholesale partners; win/win.

Customers are demanding and rightly so. We have committed to provide a key service, a service crucial to running their businesses; when things go wrong they need solutions. The best thing to do is prepare for this, talk to customers and remind them of the challenges ahead and how you have a kitbag full of simple ways to help them prepare for winter.

Site assurance

ISDN30 customers are often our most critical customers and often underprepared for outages. Offer them site assurance and have them tooled up to self manage a site outage be it through power outage, snow closeout or fault.

Enhance care

Often customers take what's on offer not knowing what is available, indeed demanding higher levels of care when a fault occurs. If their lines are critical to them they'll take the enhanced care option.

Exceptional Call Reporting

The mince pies hit the shops much later than PBX hacking gangs started grooming our customers. We may not always be in control of a customer's PBX security and when we are, we're truly confident there are no chinks in our armour. Why not get them protected?

PBX security checks

If you are a PBX maintainer why not offer security checks? It's a fact that PBX hacks spike phenomenally over the festive period; now is the time to explain this and get your engineers on site to tighten things up.

3G/4G dongles and routers

Isn't email and internet connectivity just as important in today's world? Why not keep a stock of these or install these solutions in key customer sites?

These services will help your engine rooms. Customers with enhanced care will be easy to manage, helping apply site assurance is a far happier conversation than telling your customer the divert will be applied in 24 hours. Explaining that you have caught a fraud earlier is far better for a relationship than a customer with 'Bill Shock'.

The delicious piece of news here is that whilst all this helps your customers, strengthens relationships and protects your engine rooms from unmanageable spikes, it also increases revenue and margin.

It doesn't stop here, talk to your CDM for help in identifying these opportunities now, using the above services as well as inbound solutions, Nine's outsourced PBX services and the myriad of other business continuity services on offer and do it quickly because you'll soon be seeing Easter Eggs for sale.

Inside Nine

HACKATHON

From 9am on the morning of Thursday 10th through until 9am on Friday 11th September, a group of our finest (and most crazy!) programmers, developers and product enthusiasts worked for a solid 24 hours for our first ever Hackathon!

Armed with a whole pod of computers, blank sheets of paper, piles of Post-It notes and a fridge crammed with Red Bull, the team powered through the day and night in a collaboration of expertise and genius to meet a brief set to them that morning.

“The Hackathon was a brilliant effort from the team”, Technical Director Marcus Hunt reflected. “We met the brief, picked up some “bonus” items, ran a successful live demo, met our internal goals, learnt a huge amount and had a great time. Huge commitment from everyone involved!”



FIVE-A-SIDE

On Thursday 24th September, two teams from Nine Wholesale took to the pitch against new and old rivals alike in the Comms Dealer 5-a-Side Football Tournament. Held annually, the 5-a-side is sponsored by Nine meaning that all money raised through team entry and the ever-popular raffle can be donated straight to children's charity Sparks.

Nine's B team were unfortunately knocked out in the group stages, but battled bravely during their time on the pitch. The A team fared better, managing to get through to the semi-finals but were knocked out by long-standing rivals, 2 Circles. The overall winners were Elite Tele.

A special mention goes to our Product Marketing Executive Linda Matiiri, who made 5-a-side history by being the first and only woman from Nine to ever compete in the tournament!

Engineer some answers and WIN a Kindle Fire!

Can you find these 9 engineering-related words hidden in the word search? For your chance to WIN take a snap of your completed word search and email it to hello@ninewholesale.co.uk

ENGINEER SOFTWARE UPGRADE MAINTENANCE
 WHITELABEL RESELLER HOSTED PANASONIC MITEL

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Guest column



Colin James
 Managing Director



What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

Building long term relationships with our customers based on trust. Our aim is to become a trusted adviser for the businesses that we work with and when we achieve this it gives me a huge amount of satisfaction. The communications industry is constantly changing and evolving which presents both challenges and opportunities but it certainly makes it interesting.

What parts of your job do you find most challenging?

With both mobile and fixed line products there are some things that are ultimately beyond our control; whether it's Openreach or one of the mobile networks it can be very frustrating when things go wrong. As the networks are not customer facing it often feels like they are unable to understand the need for accurate and timely information. Communication is so important when things go wrong, people are generally very understanding if they know what the fault is, why it is affecting them and what is being done to fix it.

How do you keep your team motivated?

We are still a small team but we work hard to establish and maintain lines of communication. Everyone is encouraged to contribute with ideas and everything we do is a team effort. We provide ongoing training for everyone in the business and promote from within. A few drinks to celebrate our successes also certainly helps.

What is the biggest change you have seen in our industry over the last five years?

It would have to be connectivity, every business large or small is so reliant on being connected to their business systems wherever they are. In the mobile world the arrival of 4G services in 2012 has really improved the user experience.

What is the most valuable piece of advice that you would give to a start-up reseller?

Choose who you partner with very carefully. We have been in the industry for 17 years and have seen many businesses come and go. If you are planning to build a long term profitable business based on service, make sure that those businesses that you partner with have the same goals. Work hard on building relationships with your customers and never become complacent as there will be a queue of people waiting to take them from you.

Would you like to appear in our guest column and offer some advice?
 Simply email hello@ninewholesale.co.uk