

# Driving sales in changing times

A channel leader's guide





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**When we talk about evolving sales strategies in the channel, it's all too easy to present it as just another thing to add to the to-do list, one more job to get done. The reality is that change isn't a box that can be ticked; it's a constantly moving target that creates new things to think about and new challenges to address the more we strive to tackle it.**

**Change can be disruptive, and often threatening - but only if you let it. It can also be exciting, driving new opportunities, new ways to serve customers, and new directions in which to take your business.**

**In this e-book, we're focusing on the positive side of change. Over the next few pages, you'll find our thoughts on where the market is heading, what it means for sales and business leads, and how we can help partners respond in the most profitable way.**

# A directional change

The channel is constantly changing. By the very nature of the business we're in, there's always something new for distributors and resellers to account for; a new trend to navigate, or a new technological puzzle to solve. Sometimes, though, a change takes place that requires more than just smarter solutions or better products. Sometimes, change is so fundamental that we – as business leaders – need to change too.





## Driving sales in changing times

In the past year, we've seen change of a genuinely unprecedented kind. Very literally overnight, businesses around the world had to adapt to the realities of empowering and enabling their entire workforce from home. It was a watershed moment, one which redefined the nature of enterprise technology, quite probably forever.

And while it might not have happened in a way that anyone would have wanted, this enforced change has driven immense progress – progress that might ordinarily have taken years, if not decades, to achieve.

Behind that, though, something else is happening too. We're entering the era of everything-as-a-service; a new age in which the hardware and devices that we deploy are becoming less important than the way in which the applications they run are delivered. It's a directional change, an irreversible move to a world in which customers need very different things from partners.

As those needs change, we need to move with them. That may be challenging, but it also has the potential to be hugely rewarding. And at Ingram Micro, we believe there is only one way to do it: together.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.continuitycentral.com/index.php/news/technology/5992-pandemic-crisis-response-is-accelerating-to-the-move-to-everything-as-a-service-xaas-solutions>

# 88%

**of businesses say XaaS will be crucial as their organisation recovers from the pandemic<sup>1</sup>.**



# The power of curiosity



**By Gary Lomas**  
Sales Director  
UK & Ireland

Customers are great at asking questions. From how much something is going to cost to when it can be delivered, all the way through to the speed at which they'll see a return, customers want to know everything they possibly can about what we're going to do for them.

## The real question is: can we say the same?

Over the last year, enterprise technology has undergone the kind of transformation that comes along once in a generation. If there were any lingering doubts about delivering in-office levels of productivity at home, they must surely have been overcome by now. We've not only moved the entire world to home working, we've made it an incredible success of it as well.

Vitality, that transition has worked out well for partners, too. It's hard to look at the events of 2020 and try to describe them positively, but it would be disingenuous to ignore the significant contribution that the demand for remote working technology has had on the channel: **€83.3bn** doesn't materialise from nowhere<sup>2</sup>, after all.

While we've seen gigantic change over the last 12 months, I believe that this dramatic shift is just one moment on the road to something much bigger – a fundamental change that will have a much bigger impact on the channel over the longer-term.

For the longest time, the channel has followed a reliable, volume-based model around which we've been able to build stable and predictable revenue streams. And, for the avoidance of any doubt, I expect that model to be around for a long time yet. But what is becoming increasingly clear is that subscription-based, as-a-service offerings are starting to redefine not just what customers want, but how they perceive value too.

<sup>2</sup>European IT channel ends 2020 with record sales – Channel Pro, 19th January 2021

## Driving sales in changing times

As we move further down the path of as-a-service IT, customers are going to be increasingly drawn to partners that offer services related to those solutions. Rather than it being machines and devices that drive sales conversations, it will be value-added services; they're going to want offerings that layer over the top of existing solutions, extending value, not rebuilding it from the ground up.

Responding to that demand is going to require a different set of skills, and it is going to take many channel partners into areas they probably never expected. That might be API development or it may be services built on the Internet of Things. It may be something radically different and entirely new altogether. But it will undoubtedly mean developing new solutions, finding new partners, and nurturing a much bigger ecosystem that can help deliver on that demand.

This is, of course, easier said than done. We work in a numbers-driven field, for results-driven businesses – and I want to stress that these are positive things too; they keep us focused. The fact is, however, that the realities of the channel make it much harder to take a step back and drive the kind of change that is needed. There's no magic button that pivots us from one business model to another. That means we're faced with the dual challenge of both rethinking what we do and keeping business as usual up and running at the same time. It's no small task.



**Total IoT connections will reach 83 billion by 2024. Up from 35 billion in 2020<sup>3</sup>.**

<sup>3</sup><https://www.juniperresearch.com/document-library/white-papers/iot-the-internet-of-transformation-2020>







## So how do we keep moving forwards?

I think that a great way to start is by getting a lot better at asking questions, something that we – as an industry – don’t do enough of it. If we’re going to build future-based solutions, ones that help us stick to our customers and become integral to their business, we need to really understand them. Not just in terms of what they want to do, but why they want to do it, and where we can add value that goes far beyond just the initial delivery. We need to be hungry to learn, to be curious.

The more questions we ask, the more we get in return. Say a customer is buying 1,000 new switches: great, that’s a nice order. But what are they planning on doing with them? What can we wrap around that sale that might increase the value that they get from those switches? What is their end goal, and how can we help them get there more confidently?

We might not always have the answers to those questions, or the capabilities to solve them, but there’s value in that too. Because the other thing that I think we need to do more of as the channel continues to change, is accept that we’re stronger together than we are apart.

When I speak to customers now, the thing they want most from the channel is collaboration. Today’s CIOs don’t want to work piecemeal with partners, with everyone fighting for their own small corner; they want simple, cohesive, well-architected solutions.

That means being open to working with others to deliver the right results, even if we see some of those businesses as competitors.

It’s about building an ecosystem that can answer the questions that we can’t in isolation.

As I mentioned earlier, these changes aren’t happening overnight; the “traditional” channel business is going to be around for a long time yet. But these changes are coming, and I think that those who embrace them have an incredibly bright future ahead. It’s a challenging time, but also an incredibly exciting one.

There’s an opportunity to flourish here, to position ourselves as open, inquisitive partners who help our customers get the absolute best out of everything they do.

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**And the benefits of doing that will far, far outweigh any of the costs of change.**

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# The challenges of a fast-moving market

The monumental nature of the changes we're seeing isn't the only challenge facing the channel; the sheer pace of the market can also make it hard for partners to keep up as demands shift and grow. With the industry still focused on quarterly targets and annual results, carving out the breathing space needed to tackle the question of what customers might need next can feel like an uphill battle.

As we all know, the Covid-19 pandemic has only served as a further accelerant for change; it has forced businesses to take decisive action in areas that might previously have been ripe for procrastination. Suddenly, the minutiae of how things get done has become less important than getting them done.

**So how do partners respond to a world in which customer needs are changing faster than ever? Let's take a look.**

# Maximising the change opportunity

When it's managed in the right way, change can be a huge enabler – helping to diversify revenues, create new offerings, and build businesses that are better equipped for the future. The real challenge lies in delivering meaningful change without letting go of the fundamental qualities that define your business as it stands today.







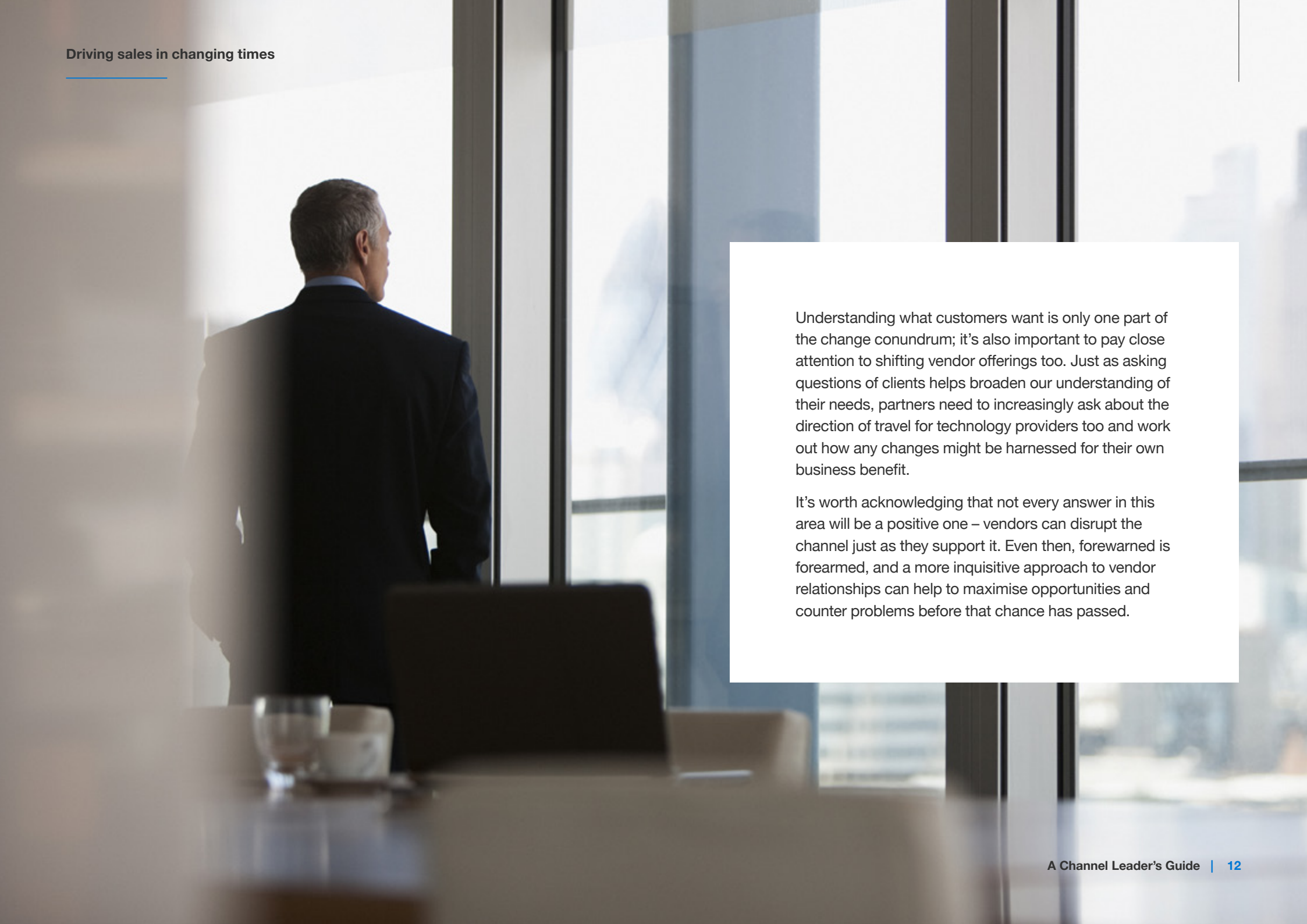
In many cases, this can actually mean separating a new solution, service, or offering from your core business – essentially incubating it behind the scenes until it’s truly ready to stand on its own. Not only does this limit exposure to risk within your existing business, it can also help to protect that nascent service from becoming overloaded too early. Equipping 50 sales people to take a new offering to market can quickly backfire if you’re unable to service the resultant demand, or if your customers aren’t ready for it, for instance.

A more detached and considered approach can also help in terms of market perception. Rushing to respond to new opportunities, many channel businesses have made bold – and ultimately unfortunate – proclamations that they’re moving away from the services they’re known for. These very public shifts may have garnered attention, but they have often served to alienate customers and vendors as well, resulting in widespread confusion and, quite often, failure. Clear, honest, and realistic messaging is key.

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## Getting closer to vendors holds the key to future planning

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A man in a dark suit is seen from behind, standing and looking out a large window. The window offers a view of a city skyline with several tall buildings. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime. In the foreground, a blurred table with a glass and a cup is visible.

Understanding what customers want is only one part of the change conundrum; it's also important to pay close attention to shifting vendor offerings too. Just as asking questions of clients helps broaden our understanding of their needs, partners need to increasingly ask about the direction of travel for technology providers too and work out how any changes might be harnessed for their own business benefit.

It's worth acknowledging that not every answer in this area will be a positive one – vendors can disrupt the channel just as they support it. Even then, forewarned is forearmed, and a more inquisitive approach to vendor relationships can help to maximise opportunities and counter problems before that chance has passed.





## Trust X: high-impact collaboration

“Individually we’re strong. Collectively we’re extraordinary.”

This simple belief was the starting point for the Trust X Alliance, Ingram Micro’s international collaboration programme. Trust X brings together almost 350 partners and provides support, assistance, and co-creation opportunities across everything from sales to project delivery.

Across the Trust X Alliance, partners have come together to share knowledge, offer their experience, and bridge the gaps in each other’s capabilities. With a vast array of talent and specialist skills, Trust X is helping partners around the world solve their customers’ biggest problems with help from likeminded members.

“Trust X is a great thing to look into if you want to explore new ways to meet a customer’s needs without investing in a specialism that sits outside of your core business,” says Gary. “It lets you expand your offering while remaining agile and nimble, or compromising on your main capabilities.”

**Find out more about the Trust X Alliance, including how to become a member.**

**Find out more**



## Helping you build a future-ready business.

For many years now, Ingram Micro has been investing in the services needed to help partners maximise success in a very different environment. As the channel continues to move towards as-a-service, recurring revenue models, we've been working hard to ensure that we can provide the support you need to capitalise on that change.



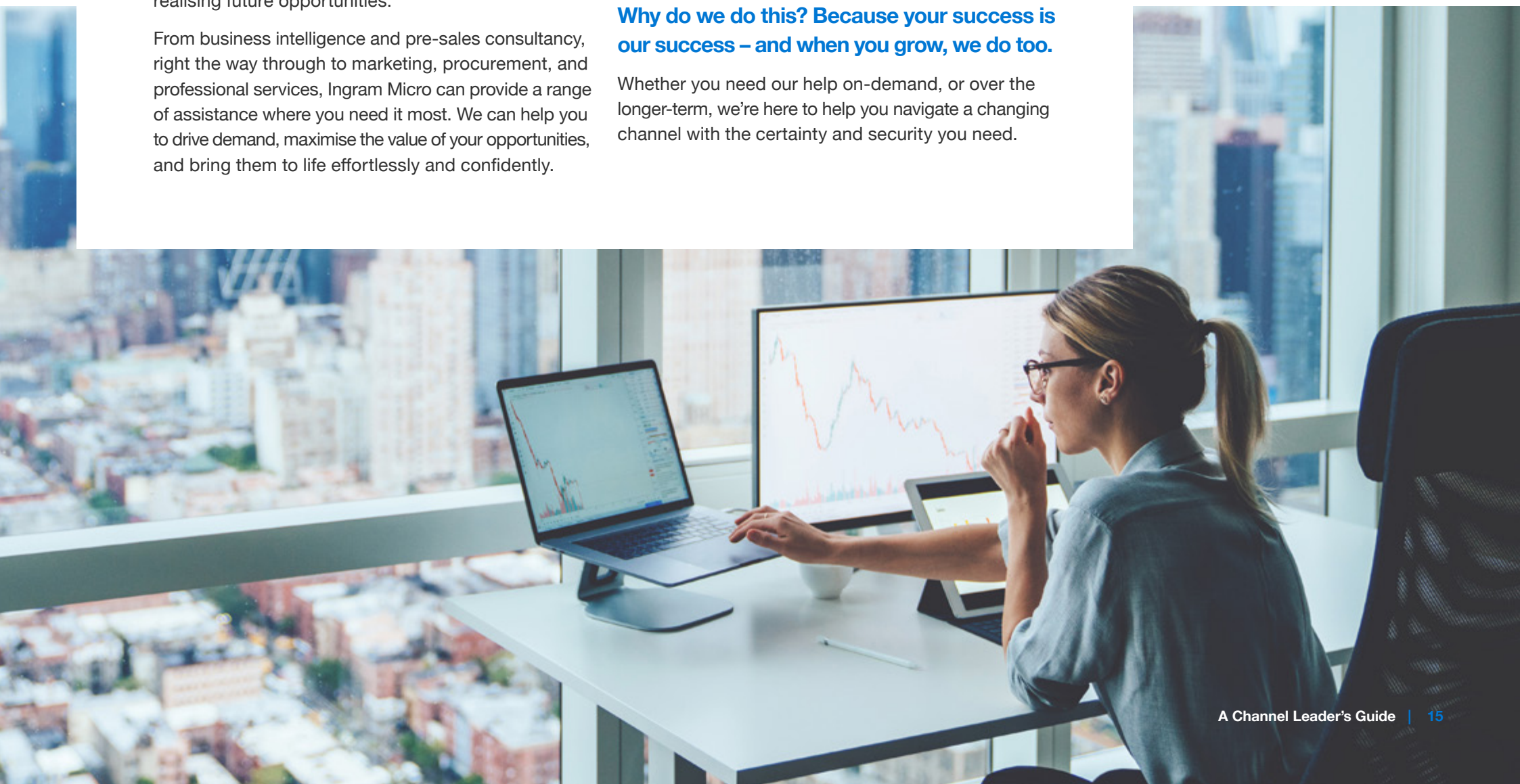
We know that speed and agility are important to partners, and those things don't always go hand-in-hand with layered operational infrastructure. That's why our support services are specifically designed to help cover the gaps that might prevent you from realising future opportunities.

From business intelligence and pre-sales consultancy, right the way through to marketing, procurement, and professional services, Ingram Micro can provide a range of assistance where you need it most. We can help you to drive demand, maximise the value of your opportunities, and bring them to life effortlessly and confidently.

The same thinking sits behind our finance options. Our industry-leading rates and structures are founded on global strength and access to a wide pool of capital, giving you the financial flexibility to take your business where you want it to go.

**Why do we do this? Because your success is our success – and when you grow, we do too.**

Whether you need our help on-demand, or over the longer-term, we're here to help you navigate a changing channel with the certainty and security you need.



# Meet the team

When we team-up no one can stop us



**Matt Sanderson**  
SVP & MD UK & Ireland

Matt has had a long and distinguished career at Ingram Micro since joining in 1994, holding senior leadership roles at a country and regional level in both EMEA and APAC since 2010. Having successfully managed some major turnaround projects over that period, Matt returned to lead the UK & Ireland operation in mid-2016 and joined the Ingram Micro Global Leadership team in 2019.



**Raj Pandya**  
Director, Speciality Solutions

Raj began his career at Ingram Micro in 2012 to establish and lead the PRO AV business unit, in 2014 he assumed the role of Head of Europe for PRO AV. Raj came back to the UK in 2016 to lead the volume commercial division. In 2017 was appointed Director of Specialty Solutions. Raj holds a BA in Business and Finance and has previously held various leadership positions within Sony UK.



**Mike Farrah**  
Director, Core Solutions

Mike joined Ingram Micro in 1998 as a Sales Manager. He moved to the Commercial function in 1999 and has held a number of roles of increasing responsibility across different disciplines including purchasing, product management, marketing and vendor management. Mike holds a BA and BPI in Town Planning from The University of Manchester.



**Gary Lomas**  
UK Sales Director

With 3 decades of experience in IT, Gary is an experienced Sales Professional who brings a wealth of knowledge and technical prowess to Ingram's partner community. Joining Ingram in 2020, he has a proven track record of developing trust-based, long standing relationships with customers, vendors and partners at all levels. Prior to joining Ingram Gary held leadership roles within Logicalis for the past 7 years.



# Meet the team

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**Julian Thompson**

Director, Advanced Solutions

Julian first joined Ingram Micro in 1995 as an Account Manager. Julian was instrumental in supporting the launch of Ingram Micro's Advanced Solutions division in 2013, assuming the role of Director of Advanced Solutions. Thompson holds a BSC in Psychology and Law.



**Scott Murphy**

Director Cloud UCC & Cyber Security

Scott joined Ingram in 2017, bringing 20 years of enterprise technology IT Channel expertise. He's responsible for the strategy and execution of high growth technologies. In this role he leads the teams to drive value to channel partners, through innovative initiatives and programmes.



**Bhavesh Patel**

IoT & AI Solutions and Services

Bhavesh is a multi-disciplined Global Executive, having held Senior Leadership roles across EMEA, APAC, LATAM and SA. His last major role was the implementation of a successful start-up in Manufacturing of Mobile Devices and Accessories for Carriers, Retailer and Enterprise markets. Having left Ingram Micro 2 years ago to pursue his passion for solution engineering in the IoT/AI space helping start-ups, Bhavesh has now returned to Ingram Micro to head up the newly created IoT and AI Solution and Services business unit.

For further information and to find out how we can help you grow your business call us now on **0371 973 3000**

Or visit **[uk-new.ingrammicro.com](http://uk-new.ingrammicro.com)**

You may also be interested in...

## **“Closing the deal with finance”**

The second paper in our Channel Leaders Guide series explores the issues and opportunities around financing your deals.

**[Click here](#)** to read it first.



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