

# TalkSwitch targets SMEs

A new distribution deal between ICON and TalkSwitch™ promises to 'disrupt the status quo in the small business market' as the Canadian vendor seeks to rapidly grow its UK installed base, according to Mark Shane, Sales Manager at ICON.



Mark Shane

**Demand for VoIP is beginning to grow in the SME market**

ICON has been appointed as UK distributor and channel support partner for the TalkSwitch range of small business analogue/IP-PBX telephone systems with the sole aim of achieving rapid growth in the lower reaches of the UK comms market. Shane stated: TalkSwitch is a significant product for ICON and our channel partners. It has the potential to disrupt the status quo in the small business market, offering resellers a cost-competitive and versatile solution for their SME customers."

The market opportunity for TalkSwitch is firmly in the small business arena, he said. This is the largest market in the UK in terms of number of businesses and TalkSwitch can potentially meet the needs of up to 97 per cent of all UK businesses, claims the company. "The largest niche of this market is that of businesses with between one to ten employees. TalkSwitch addresses this niche explicitly. Each TalkSwitch supports up to 16 extensions can be expanded to up to 64 and networked to provide a multi-site solution," commented Shane.

ICON believes that the small business market will be less sensitive to the downturn in the economy than the large business market and

consequently TalkSwitch will be a good 'recession proof' product for resellers. Notably, in recent years the number of small businesses in the UK has been expanding in double digit figures. This has been happening across all regions of the UK and most business sectors, and TalkSwitch claims that its sole focus on the small business market gives it a competitive edge over aggressive rivals.

"TalkSwitch has the freedom to include all of the features needed by a small business without having to consider the conflicting requirements of the feature sets required for medium sized and enterprise product ranges," commented Shane. "The view of the company is that small business deserves a superior telephone system, but without the big business price tag."

The price point means that TalkSwitch can be positioned as price competitive against products from traditional suppliers to the small business market.

And according to Shane resellers can make an offer based on performance rather than price. This means they will be able to maintain their price in negotiations with the customer and thus achieve a healthy margin. "In price competitive bids the USP's and feature set of the TalkSwitch justify the reseller's price point in the customer's mind," said Shane. "A strong USP of TalkSwitch is that it comes out of the box with many features as standard. These include built-in voicemail; auto attendants; caller display; music on hold; support for IP extensions; multi-site capabilities; optional features such as attendant console and reporter."

The increasing tough business environment is likely to see the demand from the larger business market slow down. Falling demand in this market is expected to be offset by an increasing focus on the SME sector. "Demand for VoIP is now beginning to grow in the SME market and this is where we believe the next phase of growth will occur," added Shane.

"TalkSwitch is designed specifically for the small business market and with its flexibility to work with both analogue or IP phones, and either analogue or IP trunks, it provides a product which can address this developing demand." Taking on a new switch is a big commitment for a reseller. There can be hidden costs such as demo kits, sales training, technical training, and spares. The cost of entry is often a prohibitive factor for the reseller when considering churning vendors.

To help overcome this barrier and drive reseller recruitment ICON boasts a strong regional-based account management team which supports a reseller in the early adoption stages. Shane said that ICON is supporting TalkSwitch with subsidised technical training and a certified reseller programme.

"Our regional account managers provide Channel Partners with hands on sales support. All have been trained in the TalkSwitch and are available to support the channel sales teams and technical teams at customer presentations and sales meetings," said Shane. "In addition to the channel support ICON will be actively marketing the TalkSwitch product to the end user community in the various regions across the UK."

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