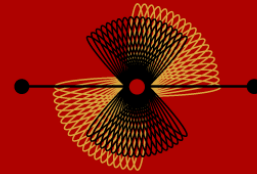




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AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL WEBER OF INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE, ON CHANNEL PARTNER RECRUITMENT

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This is Russell Bennett of UC Insights. This 'In the Spotlight' interview features Paul Weber, who is the Vice President of North American Sales for Interactive Intelligence Group, and today we are going to talk about Partner Recruitment.

Russell: Hi Paul. Give us the 'elevator pitch' on Interactive Intelligence.

Paul: Sure. Interactive Intelligence has been around since 1994 and is based in Indianapolis. The company was founded to provide software-based communications technology to the contact center market. Today we have over 4,500 customers worldwide and we sell a premised-based IP communications solution into the enterprise as well as a contact center business process automation solution. However, our recent success has been with a 'Cloud-based' or CaaS, "Communications as a Service", solution for the contact center. Our financial performance has been very satisfying, with significant year over year growth, particularly in the Cloud.

Russell: That's great, thanks Paul. I certainly remember Interactive Intelligence from the early days of SIP and what we now call 'UC'. I particularly recall from my time at Avaya actually losing a major deal to you guys that I very much wanted to win; so it makes me feel better to know that you have done so well.

Paul: We have always done very well against the major PBX players in our sweet spot of an 'all in one', standards-based IP communications software suite.

Russell: Expand on the 'all in one' aspect a little – how do you sell into a company that already has other communications systems, say a traditional PBX or a UC system from a major vendor such as Microsoft or IBM.

Paul: That's a great question. Interactive Intelligence can provide the end-to-end communications or contact center solution or we can integrate with existing platforms such as Salesforce.com or Microsoft Lync. We also integrate well with traditional PBX platforms such as Avaya, Cisco, Siemens, etc. and these integrations have been validated by the respective vendors.

Russell: So today's conversation is mainly about the Partner Recruitment process. I guess that means channel partners and not technology partners. Tell me about your Partner Program.

Paul: Our Partner Program is already 300 strong, but we are focused on recruiting more great partners for our 3 groups: Elite, Premier and Reseller Agent. The Elite program provides opportunities for partners to provide complete service and support for Interactive Intelligence products. The Premier program allows partners to focus on sales and marketing support. The Referral Agent program provides compensation to partners who provide qualified sales leads that result in a closed deal.

Russell: It sounds like you have something for everyone. Let me start with a tough question: why should a channel vendor choose to join the Interactive Intelligence partner program? The enterprise communications space is made up of companies with a great deal of brand equity: here I am thinking of the incumbent telephony vendors like Avaya and NEC, as well as the relative newcomers like Cisco and Microsoft. So what does Interactive Intelligence offer that they don't?

Paul: Actually, that is an easy question to answer. First of all, Interactive Intelligence has been in the communications space a lot longer than the new UC players. We have an established presence in the communications channel, while they are just building that channel or converting existing VARs to being able to sell into the communications market. Secondly, we have been in the next generation communications space a lot longer than the incumbents, so we have a solid, proven software platform, whereas they are just building, or buying and integrating, theirs. Thirdly, Interactive Intelligence is an established company; we are a publicly listed communications specialist that has double-digit growth: not many competitors can claim that; it is often quite the reverse.

Russell: OK – great answer. So now let's talk about the value that partners can bring to Interactive Intelligence. What, in particular, makes a given communications channel vendor more attractive to Interactive Intelligence as a partner in your program?

Paul: Well, we are trying to hold ground in the traditional communications space, whereas the UC space is a bit of a 'land grab'. So we are looking for a new type of partner with expertise and a credible customer base in traditional communications, but also those who have resolved to make UC a focus going forward. We need those partners to help us reset the customers' requirements and expectations around a next-generation call center experience based on Interactive Intelligence technology.

Russell: So the ideal partner is one that has a foot in the 20th century as well as one in the 21st. How about the traditional telephony resellers: is there any opportunity for them?

Paul: There is always room for a traditional channel partner who sees an opportunity to reinvent themselves: that is the power of our 3 tier program. The traditional vendors channel partners who see UC opportunities in their existing customer base can start off as a Referral Agent and move up the food chain with Interactive Intelligence to the Elite status. We conduct online training on a weekly basis and provide a lot of marketing support to empower those partners.

Russell: How about non-traditional partners?

Paul: Definitely. We are seeing more and more good partnerships emerge with Systems Integrators as well as certified partners from the software industry: a great example would be a Microsoft Lync certified systems integrator. These companies have a lot of skills that we don't see in the traditional telephony sector, particularly around custom software integration.

Russell: Are there any other attributes that you are looking for in a partner?

Paul: We are always trying to fill out our program around the dimensions of geography and market sector coverage. So partners that can plug a particular gap in those dimensions will always be even more welcome. Those requirements are fairly variable, so that would be a conversation between Interactive Intelligence and the partner once we became engaged. Our core vertical markets are insurance, banking, credit unions, accounts receivable, government and outsourcers; however we think we have a good solution for pretty much any industry.

Russell: I know that channel partners have a high degree of anxiety about where they fit in the 'cloud-based' solution, since many of the attributes of the cloud model seem to erode a lot of the value that resellers have traditionally provided. Tell me more about how Reseller Partners can be successful in selling cloud-based solutions.

Paul: If there is one thing that you can say about the Cloud, it is that it is a very simple platform that is much easier to sell than premise-based solutions; the Cost of Sale is therefore much lower. Also, there is recurring revenue, compared with the very spiky revenue that you get with perpetual license on-premises sales. We prefer to do a 3 to 5 year contract, and we offer volume discounts over the longer contract periods and based on the overall volume of business. So the partner has a great opportunity to benefit from the mutual success.

Russell: OK – so now we are left with the “call to action”. What would you like a partner to do to engage with Interactive Intelligence?

Paul: Any partner that is interested in finding out more about Interactive Intelligence should go to our web site, www.inin.com. There is a tab on the web site that is for the partner program and there is a simple application form under that tab that can be filled in to start the process of engagement.

Russell: As easy as that. Anything else you want to add?

Paul: As we said at the beginning, our business is growing by leaps and bounds, based on the early vision and execution of our founders. This technology is going mainstream; so now, more than ever, is the time to engage with the Interactive Intelligence Partner Program.

Russell: And if prospective partners want to meet Interactive Intelligence, they can do so at the UC Summit in La Jolla in May, right?

Paul: Definitely – that is a great opportunity to hear our story in more detail and to engage in person.

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