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PG 16-17

Simwood have the Potato



IN THIS
ISSUE

20 AI and its
impact on
the Channel

26 Billing and
monetisation
solutions

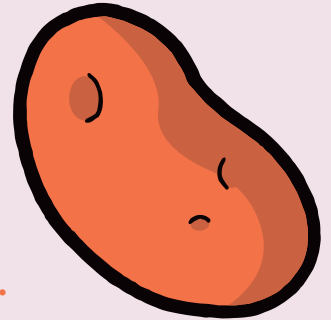
30 Tackling
the skills
shortage

Dinosaurs beware

Simwood have the Potato



BY SIMON WOODHEAD



Things are cooking on gas over at Simwood. Comms Business caught up with founder Simon Woodhead for an update.

On the UCaaS/CCaaS front, the Sipcentric platform offered through Simwood Partner has been augmented with support for 350 CRMs tightly tied into its new desktop app. Uniquely, all Simwood Partner apps are fully white-labelled with partners able to dynamically control their branding through their own branding interface and API.

That same power is extended to Simwood Residential which is without doubt the leading POTS replacement solution powering the largest AltNets with integrated voice. That hinges on deep API capability enabling porting, provisioning and hardware ordering to be completely automated. The platform also features secure provisioning for a truly zero-touch experience for the partner. Woodhead said,

"Others are playing in this space but frankly with platforms that either won't scale to millions of users, don't offer the economics to hit the price-point AltNets need, or cannot do both with the feature set required. We include encryption in that feature set which still seems to be a chargeable extra on most platforms. That was barely acceptable in 2004, let alone 2024. We scale horizontally, support features users deserve, at a scaled price point nobody else can touch."

None of this would be possible without the underpinnings of Simwood's Carrier Services, and wholly owned network, software stack and interconnects. This itself has seen massive progress and something of a pivot. Before going there, let's first look at who this platform is for. While this platform underpins hundreds of leading domestic UCaaS/CCaaS/CPaaS brands, including several owned by carrier competitors, it is increasingly attracting global platform operators. These are the large incumbent carriers in other countries, global UCaaS/

CPaaS operators and the like. They value the unique architecture, standard features such as encryption, OPUS and AMR codecs, and rich APIs all of which have been battle-tested and refined over nearly 30 years; oh, and the economics that come with a seat at the top-table combined with massive internal efficiencies. As Woodhead says:

"What you have to appreciate with Simwood is that our stack is integrated and active globally. Customers don't get paired with a single SBC in one physical location, then need an incident team to migrate trunks to use a feature, or a load of paperwork to add another site. Rather, a customer can hit the entire stack simultaneously wherever the network extends and suits them. Take on a customer in California - direct traffic to our PoP there, it'll work on your UK account seamlessly. We open a new PoP in Sao Paulo - direct your South American traffic there, it'll just work. Add a new data-centre of your own - one API call to enable it. This cuts both ways though as any feature on the network is available across the entire network - so when we add a feature, it isn't off the edge of a specific magic box that needs a migration to use but configurable with an API call on every single number on the network, including the millions we host for other operators".

Two new features added recently, to every number on the Simwood network, is Teams Operator Connect (following Direct Routing last year) and call recording. While the Sipcentric platform has had call-recording for years for UCaaS customers, what Simwood have done now is add this directly into the carrier network, as a capability for every number on the network at carrier-scale. Uniquely, call recordings are immediately and securely pushed to our customer's (or their customer's) storage, for example on AWS

or compatible, rather than retained on Simwood; this assures the highest possible levels of security and compliance. This is also the beginnings of what Simwood is (temporarily) referring to as the Simwood Potato, which Woodhead describes,

"Think of our core network as a potato; it might get bigger as we expand but it remains one integrated mass. Then think of skewers into that potato as transports; SIP might be one, PSTN might be another, Teams another. We offer any-to-any routing on the skewers so an obvious example would be a call into a PSTN number going out to Teams. Doesn't sound too unique right? Well it is global so it could be a Reading number delivering calls to a Teams instance hanging off one of Microsoft's Asian PoPs. It is also any-to-any so that number might be configured to deliver calls to Teams, failing-over to Zoom if unavailable, or UCaaS regardless if it is 3pm on a Sunday. We're adding more and more skewers, which I'll come back to, but now you understand the potato and the skewers, let's talk about tin foil! The potato is wrapped in several layers of foil, and every skewer goes through them all. These layers are services and available not only to every skewer, globally, but also simultaneously. So you want call recording on that call which comes in over the PSTN and goes out to Teams or Zoom or WebRTC - done. You want AI summarisation, real-time intercept, and AI sentiment analysis on that call going into your call-centre - that's more foil we're working on, but yes, you can record it simultaneously too because it is all just layers of foil around the potato."

The Simwood Potato is already causing a bit of a stir apparently because people get it. While it is available on every single number on the Simwood Network, it is about to get a massive shot in the arm as well that has ramifications far outside the UK. Whilst the platform supports SIP today, it is more SIP-to-PSTN or PSTN-to-SIP, or indeed SIP to any of the other supported "skewers" such as Teams. What is coming in Q2 is SIP-to-SIP, or put another way: BYOC. This enables Simwood to extend its feature stack into other carrier networks, or customers of other carriers to benefit from Simwood features whether or not the other carrier plays ball. As Woodhead puts it:

"So you're a regional incumbent or mobile operator who wants to give call recording to all your users without massive architectural change - easy. You use Simwood but want service overseas where we don't have coverage? Rather than risking

your fortune to someone claiming coverage in 170 countries, and losing it when regulators remind them they don't, you can forge deep local relationships with proper local operators and use Simwood to backhaul the traffic with a single pane of glass and integration. Have numbering estate with Simwood competitors who want to charge you for encryption or don't support modern codecs - no problem, have them deliver traffic to us and we'll backhaul it to you on the existing integration. As you can see the power of this is immense."

And what about AI - that acronym slipped in there earlier? Woodhead adds:

"We've been exploring the art of the possible with AI with a major constraint: we're not sending our customer data off to a cloud operator but need to keep it 100% on-net for security, privacy, and all those important things. We've had absolutely stunning results around transcription, summarisation, sentiment analysis as well as modern solutions to old problems. The Simwood Potato means as we bring some of these into production, they are just more layers of foil around the core, available on every number on the network or with BYOC: off the network. We've got some big hardware to buy but you'll see the first AI services this year and they'll be transformational for enterprise, call-centres and emergency services from what we've proved in the lab so far."

Simwood remains in a strong growth phase despite being 28 years old, with 2023 revenue +30% on 2022 but Woodhead has an eye to the future:

"When others celebrate 8% growth and market volumes are declining year on year, the UK scene is well past its peak, as predicted by share price performance. Yes, globally the market is growing at 15% which is why our eyes are further afield but, frankly, selling lines and minutes in 2024 UK is like running a photo developer shop in 1990. Spunking shareholder funds on acquisitions you can't integrate doesn't move the cliff edge either! Simwood is really a software business that happens to have a time-earned market position and unique infrastructure; we're leaning into that because the voice channel will live on, long after lines and minutes are extinct. Our largest shareholders are our staff and they deserve a return - doesn't everyone's?"



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Simwood