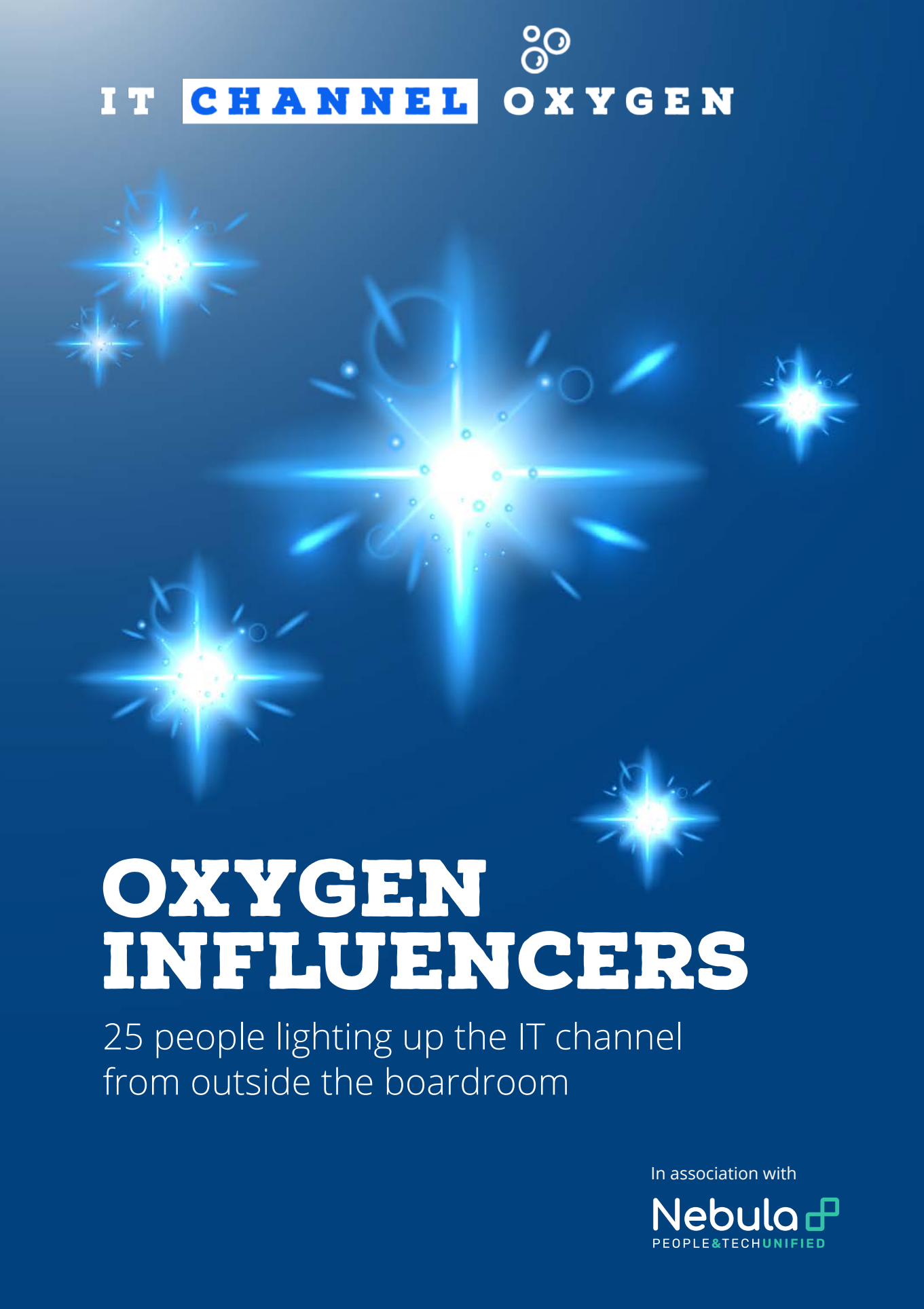


IT

CHANNEL


OXYGEN



OXYGEN INFLUENCERS

25 people lighting up the IT channel
from outside the boardroom

In association with

Nebula 
PEOPLE & TECH UNIFIED

Nebula is proud supporter of the Oxygen Influencers



We would like to congratulate this talented cohort of passionate people who are delivering positive change, to ensure the future success of our technology channel community.



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WELCOME TO OXYGEN INFLUENCERS 2024

DOUG WOODBURN,
EDITOR, IT CHANNEL OXYGEN

IF YOU WERE TO draw up a list of role models capable of inspiring the next generation of industry talent, it probably wouldn't feature many CEOs.

Let's face it, the IT channel (like many other industries) is still desperately trying to cast off a reputation for being too elitist, too white, too male and too wedded to outmoded working practices.

This inaugural Oxygen Influencers project, which was devised in partnership with Nebula Global Services, could be viewed as a prospectus for those considering a career in the channel.

We searched far and wide to find people whose stories will resonate with those weighing up whether or not to join this dynamic industry, and who are bringing positive change to their respective organisations and wider market.

You will notice that CEOs are conspicuous by their absence.

Instead, Oxygen Influencers features 25 women and men who are making waves in the industry, but from outside the boardroom.

From the former PE teacher who is now closing £1m-plus deals, to the young analyst using warmth and humour to disarm senior executives on ESG and D&I, each has an inspiring story to share.

WHO ARE THE OXYGEN INFLUENCERS?

We sounded out a wide array of industry leaders, asking them who among their colleagues, partners or peers they felt is making positive change in the industry.

Their nominations ranged from seasoned professionals to disruptors that have been in the channel for less than 18 months.

They included those representing non-profits and community interest companies such as TC4RE, The Channel Community and Tech Channel Ambassadors, D&I and ESG pros, young parents juggling raising a family with pursuing an ambitious career path, and fledgling channel pros who have made a big splash in double-quick time.

It even included the channel's first reality TV star.



WOING NEXT-GEN TALENT

IT Channel Oxygen has interviewed countless UK partner CEOs since we launched last year. Holding as they do the keys to over £25bn in end-user IT spend, they wield tremendous power and influence, and what they say and think matters.

But as these CEO would be first to concede, they are far from the channel's ideal poster children as it looks to sell itself to a fresh generation of talent holding a new set of ideals.

We asked our 25 Influencers how they think the IT channel can woo Gen Z (see p32).

As one noted, companies looking to get ahead on the skills shortage must start thinking differently.

"It's clear job descriptions, flat hierarchies, part-time options, return to work schemes for new parents – all the things that also really move the needle on diversity, equity and inclusion," she said.

We also asked them what their message would be to education leavers, or those outside the industry, contemplating a career in the IT channel.

One of the best answers came from a former carpenter who only joined the industry 18 months ago.

"The industry values fresh perspectives, creativity and a willingness to learn. My biggest regret? Not doing it sooner," he said.

Who are these 25 role models that are inspiring positive change in the industry? Read on to find out.

THE ERA OF 'INFLUENCERS WITH PURPOSE'

RICHARD EGLON,
CMO, NEBULA GLOBAL SERVICES

FIRSTLY, I WOULD LIKE to congratulate all those talented and passionate individuals who made the inaugural list of Oxygen Influencers. To be recognised, you had to be nominated by several of your respected industry peers for the positive impact you continue to make to your business and the wider channel community.

The Oxygen Influencers initiative is a collaboration between *IT Channel Oxygen* and Nebula. Both businesses share similar values, especially when it comes to supporting those individuals who continue to provide a meaningful contribution to the future success of our industry.

We also recognise that times are changing. For that reason, Nebula and *IT Channel Oxygen* strongly believe our industry needs a helping hand, by providing a suitable stage to showcase the rising stars and influential leaders outside of the Board room who are influencing positive change across the tech industry. As a result, The Oxygen Influencers was born.

According to research conducted by 'the social shepherd' [69% of consumers trust influencers' recommendations](#), a statistic that highlights the important role played by influencers within the overall sales cycle. When implemented correctly, authentic, purpose-driven content delivered through trusted influencers can have a profound impact on a business and its connected communities.

The technology channel has always prided itself on being an industry of people who look to embrace change, focusing on the customer experience through the technology-led business outcomes they deliver. However, in recent times, commerce has become more challenging for many. With geo-political and macro-economic activity effecting the global economy, the

traditional rules of engagement have changed. We now experience disrupted supply chains, volatile price increases to product sales and a shortage of available and relevant talent.

However, regardless of the above, our Oxygen Influencers continue to shine in their respective fields. Across this cohort of talent we are seeing entrepreneurs, DE&I activists, ESG advocates, community charity ambassadors and sales trailblazers, all of which are collectively making a progressive impact to their associated channel communities.

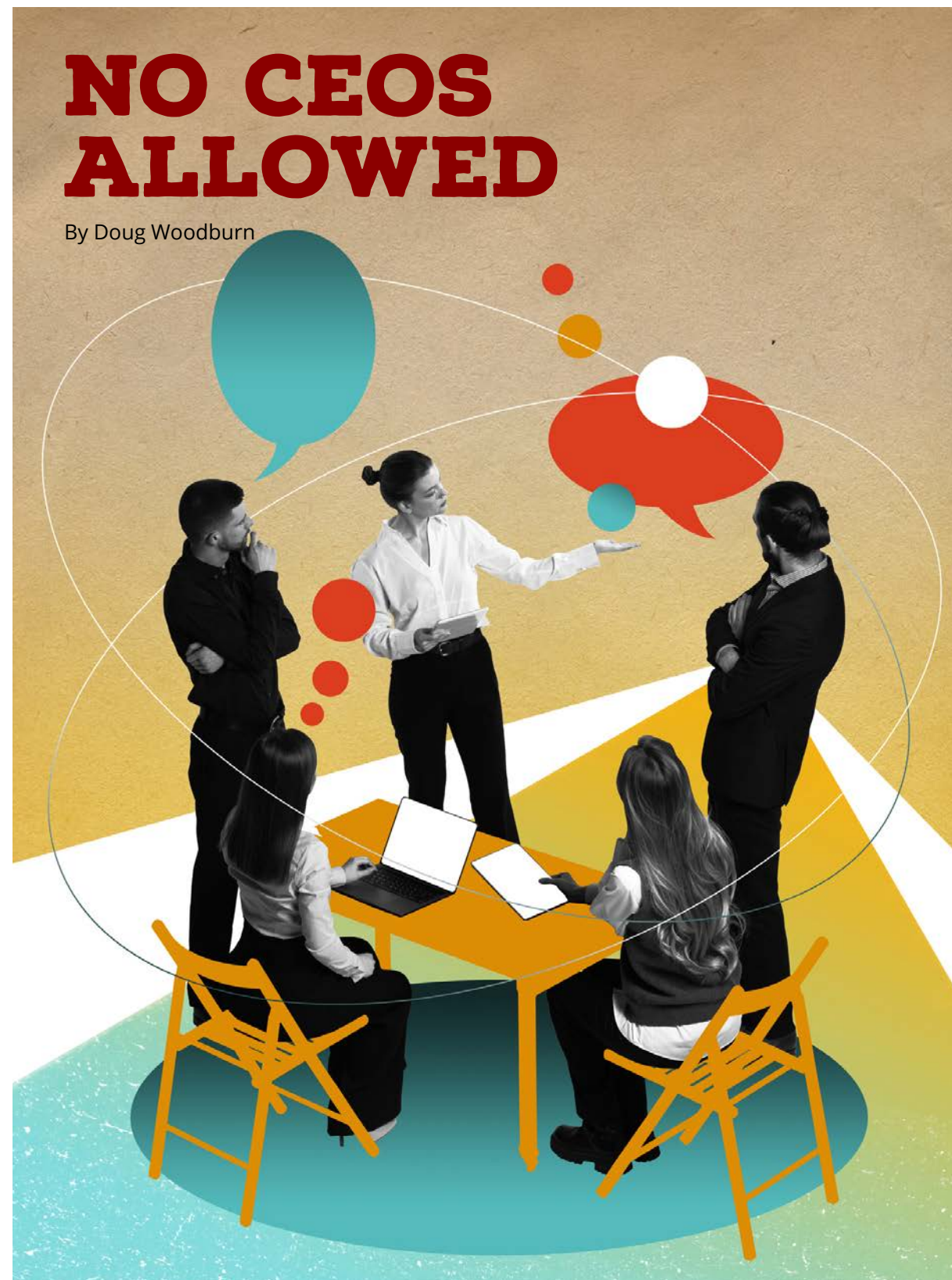
In an outcome-led market, long gone are the days of leading a client conversation with technology. Even with the evolution of AI and other bleeding-edge technology, we still need to have people with purpose driving the narrative and direction. This is where the Oxygen Influencers have a significant role to play.

As I read through the influencer interviews it became very apparent to me that this is a group of people who are propelling change as a collective, with a sense of belonging and purpose. These are a special cohort of individuals who recognise they can't drive change alone, so they look to build like-minded communities to amplify their message and take a 'stronger together' approach.

It is also important to recognise that influencers with purpose are becoming increasingly important in building brand loyalty through buyer engagement. With sales processes now having a more complex web of touch points, it is imperative that businesses identify their key influencers and equip them with the necessary resources to maximise their talents.

Influencers are not a new concept, however, influencers with purpose are, and for the Oxygen Influencers it's your time to shine.





AS THE 25 WOMEN AND MEN featured over the next 29 pages are all proving, you don't need to be a CEO to bring positive change to the industry.

When I launched *IT Channel Oxygen* last year, I was quickly warded off the idea of creating another power list of so-called 'captains of industry'.

Many view such projects as too elitist, especially in an era when the channel is desperately trying to attract a fresh talent.

That's why *IT Channel Oxygen* and Nebula Global Services put together our collective heads to create 'Oxygen Influencers' – a new kind of 'power list' that chimes with our joint desire to shake up the status quo.

Everyone featured in this report is making waves in the industry, but from outside of the boardroom.

We hunted far and wide to find our Oxygen Influencers, asking an array of industry leaders to nominate who they felt should feature in a project like this.

Those they nominated include several channel pros who are pushing the boundaries in areas such as D&I, ESG and schools outreach, rising stars tipped as leaders of tomorrow, and a few people that have achieved something extraordinary in adverse circumstances.

We also talk to a former PE teacher who is now closing seven-figure IT deals, as well as the channel's first reality TV show star.

These 25 people wield enormous influence within their ecosystems, some (judging from their answers) without even knowing it.

If you were compiling a list of role models capable of inspiring the next generation of industry talent, it probably wouldn't be the CEOs (as even the CEOs themselves would be first to admit).

It would be the 25 people featured in this report (or, at least, people like them).

THE CRITERIA

To find these 25 inspirational role models, we asked a range of industry leaders to tell us who they felt should make the cut.

We invited them to consider the following criteria:

- Have gone above and beyond on schools outreach or attracting new talent into the industry
- Are leading the way when it comes to ESG or D&I
- Are relatively new to the industry, but have progressed swiftly to hold important roles in their company or have been earmarked as leaders of tomorrow
- Have achieved something out of the ordinary

SCHOOLS OUTREACH

It's fair to say that few children grow up with a dream of working in the UK IT channel, even though it is a £50bn-plus industry.

Some of our Influencers are determined to put this hidden industry – and the wide array of opportunities it offers – on the map, however.

This includes Lorna Burman, one of several people featured in this report involved in new



“I like the expression; ‘I’m not calling you out, I’m calling you in.’”

Elsa Jasmine Nightingale, Canalys

entirely of people who had no IT industry experience when they joined.

“It always fascinates me that I am now selling hardware and infrastructure solutions into data centres I used to fit kitchens in,” Jefferey commented (see p19 for more).

DEI AND ESG

Also featuring in Oxygen Influencers are a number of industry professionals who have gone beyond the call of their day jobs to raise the bar in areas such as ESG and DEI.

This includes those who have proactively taken responsibility for ESG or diversity initiatives within their own organisation, or have given up their time to set up and run non-profits such as the Technology Community for Racial Equality (TC4RE).

One Influencer who ticks both these boxes is DCC Technology’s Manpreet Bath. In April, she did a “complete pivot” to lead the distributor’s DEI strategy, and is also involved with TC4RE (see p10 for more).

“She took the business case to Exertis to become the DEI lead, and boy is she making some waves,” one onlooker we sounded out said of Bath.

Another of our Influencers, Elsa Jasmine Nightingale, who is Principal ESG Analyst at Canalys, regularly delivers keynotes to audiences of hundreds of IT execs to convince them of the merits of investing further in ESG and DEI.

The world of IT sustainability “is not going in the right direction right now”, she conceded.

So what’s the secret to getting these people to listen, and act on her advice, we asked her?

“Warmth and humour can be incredibly disarming. I’ve still developing this skill myself: especially when I’m on a stage facing perhaps one thousand people in the audience – often senior execs, who hail from a more formal culture of work. I like the expression; ‘I’m not

community interest company, Tech Channel Ambassadors. Its aim is to encourage and support more individuals – particularly school children – to enter roles in the IT channel and pursue a career in the IT industry.

“Being that person at school who did not fit into a compartment and had no clue what they wanted to do, I felt it important to pass on the message that you don’t have to know what you want,” Burman said (see p11 for more).

The channel is on a mission to attract not just school and university leavers, but also fresh talent from unrelated industries.

On that note, two of the Influencers featured in this report are making swift headway in the industry after joining from the fields of teaching and carpentry, respectively.

Former PE teacher George Lavender joined VAR Ampito in 2023, and is now closing seven-figure deals (all the while continuing to run his charity aimed at using the power of football to help disadvantaged young people – see p22 for more).

Having joined Westcoast in 2022, former carpenter Olly Jefferey has already been nominated for the distributor’s BDM of the year and Rising Star, meanwhile.

He sits in a seven-strong team made up

calling you out, I’m calling you in,” she said (see p26 for more).

Among the partner ESG Leads featured in Influencers is NTT Data Business’ Shola Sullivan, who was held up by her peers for the work she is doing with inner London primary schools.

“I’d never heard of CSR before, found it really interesting and couldn’t believe you could get paid in the corporate world to help make a difference,” she confided (see p34 for more).

“Working with schools is just real and refreshing. It’s one of the favourite parts of my role.”

LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Several Oxygen Influencers were hailed for their swift rise in their respective organisations.

This includes Jenny Latimer, who is now Operations Director at up-and-coming reseller Highgate, despite having only “fallen into” the channel nine years ago.

Highgate is known throughout the industry for being 100% remote and operating a four-day working week.

“Every time a new generation enters the world of work, there is a shift in what employees expect of their employers. Be aware of this, be relevant to the next generation, make it relatable, and make it fun,” Latimer said (see p21 for more).

Pax8’s Daisy Pike is another Influencer who was put forward for her rapid industry progress and ability to inspire colleagues around her.

She joined the cloud marketplace in 2021 after starting her career as a control systems engineer in the energy industry, working on power stations in remote parts of the country.

“I loved the technical side of this but wanted to work in a more dynamic industry and utilise my ability to talk about technical topics to

people - in comes technical pre-sales, a field I never knew existed,” she explained (see p31 for more).

BIG ACHIEVEMENTS

Oxygen Influencers also features what may be the channel’s first reality TV star, in the form of FGS’ Ted Stroud.

Stroud recently won the HPE Channel Reality Show, which saw nine early-stage staff at HPE partners compete for a free trip to Las Vegas.

“Be yourself, don’t fake it, work on your strengths and your quirks, and tie that in with your role. Our value as individuals comes from our ability to be ourselves and unique,” Stroud said of what he learned from the experience.

Stroud was not the only Oxygen Influencer to argue that the UK IT channel is under-selling itself, stressing that everyone who works in this industry is “having a massive impact on the future of humanity”.

“We aren’t just ‘IT salespeople’ selling computers, we truly are the engine that is pushing out the world’s latest and greatest IT innovations,” he concluded (see p33 for more).

We hope you enjoy reading their Q&As as much as we enjoyed conducting them.



“We truly are the engine that is pushing out the world’s latest and greatest IT innovations.”

Ted Stroud, FGS

MEET THE OXYGEN INFLUENCERS



KATE AUCHTERLONIE
PRODUCT MARKETING
MANAGER – HYPERSCALE,
SCC

Tell us about your career to date. I am a content marketer 'by trade' – 4.5 years at ANS learning the IT ways, a short stint at BJSS and now I am 18 months into a new role at SCC Digital.

How would your colleagues describe you? Talks too much but always brings the positivity.

You're involved with The Channel Community and have spoken eloquently about the merits of free mentoring for new starters in the industry. Why are you so passionate about this particular cause? Most leaders I speak to say they wouldn't be where they are today without some kind of 'mentor' figure in their career. I hope the

community can help me reach the same heights, and more importantly I can do the same for others.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I'll let you know when it happens!

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Offer amazing benefits that align to Gen Z and Millennial values.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? It's pretty cushy and you don't even need IT skills to be a part of it.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Alien Superstar' by Beyoncé.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Margot Robbie because everyone would go to see it and bring in more £££.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Katherine Ryan, my favourite comedian.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Olivia Jaskolka – Marketing Director at OBT Live. She taught me so many important values at ANS that I still hold myself to today.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Rosie Harris – Head of Product at SCC Digital.



MANPREET BATH
EMEA DEI LEAD, DCC
TECHNOLOGY

Tell us about your career to date. I've pretty much been in the vendor space, focused on the channel, since graduating in 2002. I've worked in sales roles for MSI and Foxconn, and then spent 14 years at Supermicro where I progressed to Sales Director. I managed the channel in the UK and key customers in Europe where the UK channel partners had presence. Then I joined Exertis Enterprise in December 2021 as the General Manager for Datacentre & Commercial. In April of this year, I did a complete pivot to a full-time EMEA DEI role in DCC Technology, which Exertis UK is part of.

How would your colleagues describe you? Modest! Makes things happen. I think they would also say that I lead by example, with a hands-

on approach to getting things done without needing to be in the spotlight.

Leaders we spoke to flagged up the hard work you've done in the arena of diversity, both at Exertis and with the Technology Community for Racial Equality (TC4RE). How easy is it to juggle these activities with your day job? My day job until April this year was the GM for Datacentre & Commercial for Exertis Enterprise, then I was also the ERG Chair for Ethnicity and the Lead at TC4RE for Exertis. I had also been on the LEAD programme (a nine-month programme designed for the future leaders of Exertis and DCC Technology) – so it's been busy!

I really enjoyed all of it and having a great company to support me made all the difference. However, I found myself wanting to do more and more on the DEI strategy, and in April I changed role to be the EMEA DEI Lead for DCC Technology.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? It has to be a client we worked with at Supermicro and had a small part of their real estate when I started to look after them. I grew the account from under \$500K to over \$15m within two years.

My other proudest moment throughout has been helping many team members grow and advance to better roles in their careers. Seeing them succeed and knowing I have contributed to their progress is incredibly rewarding. Leadership to me is not just about results, it is also about empowering others to reach their full potential.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? It's many things:

- A clear career path for those wanting to progress and the opportunity to move into different positions in the company.
- A working culture where innovation and culture is at the core of what you do – they

want to go somewhere that is excelling and giving everyone an opportunity to succeed.

- Seeing more diversity at the top of under-represented groups! There has been a good start for women in businesses, but this needs to be addressed for other under-represented groups.
- Flexible working and adequate equipment to support this way of working with ease. Make the office days interactive and purposeful, as there is no point in getting people to the office for tasks that can be done at home.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? Specialising in specific areas that are the future of technology – whether that is cloud, blockchain or AI to name just a few. The way we sell has changed and you need to level up on your knowledge and become a true expert within your field, a truly trusted partner with expertise to provide tangible options for their needs.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Do it! I just got into this industry and did not know anything about it. It is changing all the time, there are lots of opportunities and it's a fun journey!

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Vibe' by Diljit Dosanjh.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Salma Hayek.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Too many to mention. I have been fortunate to have had good mentors and managers throughout my career.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Anushka Davies – Softcat



LORNA BURMAN
DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL
MANAGER EMEA & APAC,
USECURE

Tell us about your career to date. My career has been a roller coaster of adventure given it has spanned nearly half my life!! From accidentally falling into the world of cyber, running IT for a global company, doing support, starting a reseller business and a self-learnt sales account manager, there has been many twists and turns. Today I am living my dream job and loving it.

How would your colleagues describe you? Always a bit worrying that one! They would probably say I was one of a kind. Hopefully they would also say I have integrity and am easy to get along with, not a people pleaser just an honest, down to earth colleague who tries her hardest!

Leaders we spoke to admired the work you have done with the Tech Channel Ambassadors, specifically around outreach to children. Can you tell us more about that? Being that person at school who did not fit into a compartment and had no clue what they wanted to do, I felt it important to pass on the message that you don't have to know what you want. You have to be brave enough to try stuff. The cyber channel is a diverse

network of talented people from all walks of life and you don't have to be academic to succeed; you just need to want it. I love the channel, I have made hundreds of connections and had some great experiences. Don't get me wrong, it's not perfect and you can have knockbacks. The gift that is cyber is that if something doesn't quite fit, try something else – the world is your oyster.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I thought creating our own family business was. That was a massive learning curve. On reflection, however, I have to say this is equalled by representing my current company alone in Australia earlier in the year, speaking publicly in front of 200-plus people. I had never presented before and had little self confidence. I took the bull by the horns and found myself presenting to top executives and CEOs on the other side of the world. I haven't looked back since and will never doubt myself again.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Only those in the IT channel know its value. We need to spread the word. Since the pandemic, youngsters have suffered greatly with self belief and confidence. I have seen it myself with my own son. He is now trying to access the channel when he finishes college which is great to see. My goal is to make it understandable to the next generation and encourage them to investigate the opportunities out there, whatever their background and ability. It is accessible to all with hard work and determination.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? The channel, in my opinion, has always been progressive. Since the pandemic the benefits of working from home and flexible working have bolstered

this. The inclusion of those that previously would have been unable to access the roles they can now. I think the channel is now more aware of a work/life balance and how important this is.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Go for it. If you have a passion for something whether that be people, numbers, creativity or design, this can all be part of the channel. All types of businesses interact and support each other throughout the channel.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'I Will Survive!' by Gloria Gaynor.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Lady Gaga or Madonna.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Anthony Hopkins.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence



“The channel can do more though to showcase to students what roles in the channel are all about.”

Anushka Davies, Softcat

on your career and why? Nihil Morjaria. He saw something in me when he hired me and gave me the opportunity to grow the distribution network as usecure's first Distribution Manager. He also believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, something I will never forget.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Harriet Robbins, Vendor Manager at Giacom. She shares the same passion for supporting the next generation as well as participation in charity events. Another great human!

**ANUSHKA DAVIES
HEAD OF TALENT,
ENGAGEMENT AND
DIVERSITY, SOFTCAT**
Tell us about your career to date. I started at Softcat in 2000 after graduating with a Computing and Maths degree. I began in sales and did this role for eight years before moving in to creating our Learning & Development function. I then transitioned into a Head of Talent, Engagement & Diversity role after

finding that I wanted to look at ways to diversify our organisation, work on succession planning, and on developing our future leaders whilst keeping true to our values and culture. The role now is about evolving what we have today to make sure our employees are engaged, feel a sense of purpose and belonging whilst developing their careers and contributing to Softcat's vision.

How would your colleagues describe you? Someone who is loyal, who has a strong work ethic and is passionate about people. I care about Softcat and our people and really want others to have a similar experience both at Softcat and in the IT industry.

Leaders we spoke to flagged up the hard work you've done in the arena of diversity, both at Softcat and with the Technology Community for Racial Equality (TC4RE). How easy is it to juggle these activities with your day job? When you are passionate about something and you know it will make a difference, you will put in the time. Juggling our efforts for TC4RE along with the day job is hard as there is a lot to do. However, with our TC4RE buddies, I can share when there are peaks at Softcat and say that I have to prioritise my work for a few weeks. We are all in the same boat as there are a lot of senior people working on TC4RE and we all step in and work effectively together.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I was very proud to have won Softcat's Legend Award a few years ago at our company kick off. I'm proud about Softcat's progress when it comes to our diversity efforts and taking the wider leadership team on this journey. We aren't there yet, but I'm pleased with how we are progressing.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? This is really

JUST WALK ON BY...

From **ARCTIC MONKEYS** to **GLORIA GAYNOR**, **MS DYNAMITE** to **MONTY PYTHON**, our Influencers have an eclectic music taste, with a wide range of genres chosen as their 'walk-on song'. **BEYONCÉ** got a couple of votes, as did songs from musicals. One Influencer even fancies taking to the stage to **THE AVENGERS** theme tune!



interesting as I think the industry is doing a lot to get involved in attracting students to tech, but I do think some of this has to do with the curriculum being changed for students going into Year 10 to make it more exciting for students to want to go in to tech in the future too. I think the channel can do more though to showcase to students what roles in the channel are all about, as they aren't all technical!

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? The channel has made good progress in being more diverse. Don't get me wrong, there is a lot more work to do, but we speak about sustainability more in term of the environment, social and governance piece. I think we have made progress. Over the years there has been a lot of flux in the market whether that be people or tech related. We've progressed on things like flexible/hybrid working patterns, inclusion and amending policies to be more supportive to diverse talent and also our approach to staying ahead in a buoyant industry.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? That careers in the IT channel are not all technical. It's also important to know that

careers can change and evolve quickly, so taking ownership of your role and adapting to the evolving market can create opportunities. There is huge transformation across organisations in the channel and with this can open up new, creative and innovative opportunities.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Giant' by Calvin Harris and Rag'n'Bone Man – but mainly because I'm so short so totally the opposite to being a giant!

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Maybe someone like Priyanka Chopra – she's a pretty famous and a gorgeous Bollywood actress!

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Would have to be someone like Michelle Obama – she is super inspirational and incredibly intelligent.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? I hold [Tech Talent Charter Founder] Debbie Forster in high regard. Someone who has been a mentor to me over the years, she's a force for good and has done a lot to help diversify the tech sector with her research.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. At Softcat, Polly Jacob – Senior Engagement, D&I Lead, Keisha Ffrench – Early Careers Recruiter, Lucy Shen – Project Manager.

Externally – Julie Simpson from ResourceIT, Belton Flourney from Protiviti, Hayley Mooney – Bytes, Hayley Roberts – Distology, Karen Blake from TechTalent Charter... there are so many amazing people!



JADE EASTON
CLIENT DIRECTOR,
TITAN DATA SOLUTIONS

Tell us about your career to date. I started in distribution nearly 18 years ago at Hammer plc completing an IT administration apprenticeship. I transitioned into their sales academy a few years later and have remained in sales ever since. I worked for Hammer/Exertis for 15 years and then embarked on a new journey with Titan Data Solutions 2.5 years ago.

How would your colleagues describe you? Hardworking, tenacious, big team player but also still have an independent competitiveness!!

You've been held up as a high performer in the IT sales world. What do you see as the secret to your success? It would have to be my daughter Alivia. She is my biggest driving factor in everything I do, and

the reason I am so driven and work as hard as I do to be successful. I want her to know that anything in life is possible especially for the next generation of females.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Definitely being a single working mum. It's not easy for any parent but I feel this industry can be one of the hardest at times trying to juggle it all. The IT world can be relentless, it doesn't sleep and sometimes neither do our children!

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? I've seen a huge change across diversity and inclusion, and also an increase in women in the industry climbing the career ladder. It's so great to see but there is still a long way to go.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? I guess it depends on the role you want to explore but transitioning to a new career can take time and effort. Look at companies who pride themselves in successful academy/graduate/apprenticeship schemes. The IT industry is constantly evolving so a genuine interest and passion to succeed will be key to your career. It's not easy but it is rewarding!

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Run the World (Girls)' by Beyonce.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Alan Carr, he's just a pocket full of sunshine and giggles.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Nicola Houghton (UK&I Channel Manager at Datacore). Nicola has been my mentor, colleague and friend for just shy of 18 years. We've worked

together all these years until her recent career change to Datacore. Without her guidance, never ending support and women empowerment values I wouldn't be where I am today.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. There's only one answer to this question... Nicola Houghton!!

DANIEL EVANS
SENIOR PARTNER
MANAGER, DISTOLOGY

Tell us about your career to date. My career started as an apprentice working within a finance team at a large advertising agency; I quickly realised accountancy wasn't for me and jumped in to a front-end sales role at Capita (selling software to the education sector). I then jumped at the opportunity of an account management role outside of the industry and, though I enjoyed it for two years or so, I quickly realised that software sales is the place for me. After being headhunted for a role at Distology I have never looked back; the prospect of a career in cybersecurity was fascinating so I went ahead and accepted a position as a Channel Account Manager back in 2021.

During my years at Distology I have progressed through the ranks from Channel Account Manager, to Sales Lead, and as of April, our first Senior Partner Manager position.

Complementary to my role I started the Distology Pride network, which has been a fantastic opportunity to connect with other organisations in the channel to champion LGBTQ+ topics. I am also a Director of The Channel Community CIC which is a platform for mentorship within the channel. I'm responsible for onboarding new mentees and getting involved in our regular events.

How would your colleagues describe you? My colleagues would likely describe me as approachable,

"I feel fortunate to have not only received mentorship, but met so many amazing people in the industry."

Daniel Evans,
Distology



driven, and well-connected. I've built a strong network over the years, and I think they'd say I'm someone who genuinely enjoys connecting with others and seeing people succeed. I'm also known for being persistent and determined in my work, staying focused on long-term goals while keeping things enjoyable for those around me.

Several leaders we sounded out for Oxygen Influencers highlighted your efforts in nurturing new industry talent through The Channel Community. How much of a challenge has it been juggling this with your day job? Mentorship is something I'm really passionate about so it almost doesn't feel like 'work'.

We have regular committee and director meetings which help us keep on track and accountable for our actions and growth plans. The events certainly take up most of the planning and effort but fortunately I'm often at partner meetings so can tie in my travels to accommodate our London events. There's always

an amount of extra time to put into The Channel Community but it's absolutely worth it in my eyes.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Being invited to be a director at the Channel Community CIC is a huge highlight of my career. As the youngest member I am proud to have been able to support such a fantastic organisation that reaches all areas of the industry. I feel fortunate to have not only received mentorship, but met so many amazing people in the industry, all while supporting others in their career development and journey. I feel genuine happiness when I attend our events and see them grow larger and larger each time we run them. There's lots more to come here so watch this space!

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? I think the channel is an extremely attractive industry; the thing is, I don't feel that the channel is good at advertising it. When I applied for my role at

Distology I had no idea about the industry in general and how fun and exciting it would be. There are so many networking groups, industry events, and amazing companies in this space; all working together closely in partnership. We need to get better as a collective of shouting the benefits to younger talent and handholding them into the industry. The likes of Softcat, Sep2 and Trustmarque are great examples of having brilliant graduate/apprentice programmes who help develop talent but it would be great to see more of this from other organisations in the future.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? Perhaps I'm biased, but I do believe there is a huge focus on cybersecurity and helping organisations stay protected from cyber threats. VARs seem to have a renewed level of focus and energy in protecting clients and ensuring staff and sellers are upskilled in this area. It has been brilliant to see organisations leaning on value added distributors to support in training and development.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? I would say to go ahead and explore opportunities. Reach out and look at apprenticeships/ grad schemes, or entry level roles with a development plan. Attend channel networking events or even reach out to organisations like the Channel Community CIC for advice. Most people are willing to provide advice and support so capitalise on this and use it to your advantage.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Good Life' by Inner City.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? It has to be Rami Malek.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest?
Lady Gaga of course!

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? I would say that Hayley Roberts, our founder at Distology, has made a huge positive influence on my career. She has supported with my personal growth and development but also pushed me to go out there and own my role in the industry. I have always felt like I've had unwavering support from the business to achieve and grow and have had the flexibility in my role to create the Distology pride network and get involved in the Channel Community CIC.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. I think someone doing an absolutely fantastic job in the channel is Jack Hinchliffe at HP. He has done an incredible job of supporting their pride network and also building out successful business partnerships. Certainly one to watch in the industry.

KARLTON GRAY
IT CHANNEL DIRECTOR,
UK&I, SCHNEIDER
ELECTRIC

Tell us about your career to date. I left school with no formal education and have done everything from working in banking to running market stalls, removals and even working as a baker! I first stepped into the channel in 2008 with a role at Midwich as a Business Development Account Manager, before joining APC and Schneider Electric in 2017. Since then, I've held account manager roles, before being appointed Channel Director in 2021.

How would your colleagues or peers describe you? I like to think they'd say loyal, kind – that I lead with empathy, and while I'm driven in terms of how we grow the

business, I care about the wellbeing of the team and our partners. Leading by example and being at the frontline is important to me, so I encourage my team to do their best and I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty to support them – a good colleague and a good person.

You've been open about your own health challenges. To what extent has this shaped your outlook on the industry and your role in it? Significantly. It's made me think differently about how I lead my life, how you care for your people and lead your teams, but most importantly, why you have to live in the moment. If you look too far ahead you forget to see what's in front of you and for me, that is family and friends.

Another thing I've realised is that a healthy home is critical for a positive and balanced life. Time is way more



“This community is thriving. It is genuinely a great place to be.”

Karlton Gray,
Schneider
Electric

important than money, and it's so, so important to spend time with the people you care for – your children and wife – before it's too late.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far?

Professionally, I think being made Channel Director for Schneider Electric in 2021 was one of the standout moments. A close second has been winning industry awards, mainly because I never expected to win and felt being shortlisted was enough. That was rewarding, but for entirely different reasons.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? As an industry, we need to focus on equality and give everyone the same opportunities – no matter their background, age, gender, or skin colour. We also need to do more

INFLUENCERS' MESSAGES TO THOSE CONTEMPLATING A CAREER IN THE IT CHANNEL

<p>“There is so much more here than IT.” Janice Phayre, Telefónica Tech</p> 	<p>“If you want to earn good money, be yourself, are good with people and are prepared to work hard, the opportunities are endless.” Karlton Gray, Schneider Electric</p>	<p>“If you are interested in technology and love a fast-paced career full of opportunities and ways to make a difference, you won't be disappointed!” Natalie Noor, Lenovo</p>	<p>“The industry values fresh perspectives, creativity and a willingness to learn. My biggest regret? Not doing it sooner!” Olly Jefferey, Westcoast</p>	<p>“It's pretty cushy and you don't even need IT skills to be a part of it.” Kate Auchterlonie, SCC</p> 
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to educate young people about the benefits of working in IT and tech at a younger age. This community is thriving, it is genuinely a great place to be, which makes it all the more crucial to showcase what we stand for, and why it can be rewarding from a career perspective. If you want to earn good money, love building relationships and want opportunities to travel, this is the place to be.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? I spoke about equality earlier, but one place we've made strides in is diversity. During the last few years, the channel has seen an influx of female professionals, which is exactly what it needed. Certainly within our organisation, having a channel team of 60% women has changed the culture of our team for the better – and it's been another factor in the continued success of our partner relationships and growth.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? A career in this industry is not easy, but it's so very, very rewarding, and it'll help shape you into the person you want to be. If

you want to earn good money, be yourself, are good with people and are prepared to work hard, the opportunities are endless. IT makes the world go round, it's in the palm of your hand all the time, and that's not going to change anytime soon.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? It would be a long walk out! Firstly, to Maverick Sabre's 'Lonely are the Brave' and then 'Inner Standing'. For some people, those may not be the greatest songs or albums of all time, but they were played everywhere and at a time when I enjoyed some of the happiest moments and memories of my life – new job, getting married, a new child and my first house, all the good stuff. These are also times when music was a release from normality. From sitting in the back of the car listening to the songs my mum loved, to driving to school drop offs and ultimately being free.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Derek Luke – if you haven't heard of him I'd recommend watching some of the films he's been in – Antwone Fisher, Captain America etc.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Funnily enough, my podcast,

You, me & I.T. is about to come out and my first guest was pretty influential in terms of my career and leadership style.

However, if I could have any guest, or guests it would be both the Hamilton brothers – Lewis and Nicholas – to understand the ups the downs and the highs and lows of their careers, and to hear more about their life stories, which are pretty inspirational.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Scott Norman at Midwich – he gave me my first channel opportunity and I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him. My predecessor David Terry was also very influential at Schneider Electric and I have a lot to thank him for too – personally and professionally. Both of them saw potential in me. They took a chance, and trusted me. For that, I will always be grateful.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. There are so many people I'd like to add to this list for a host of personal and professional reasons, like Richard Dallison in my team. But if I had to pick just one it would be Kim Smith – she deserves a standing ovation, and has helped make me the person I am.



“To keep up with the pace of technology, we need creative and curious people to drive us.”

Natalie Hailey, CAE Technology Services

**NATALIE HAILEY
PEOPLE SERVICES
DIRECTOR, CAE
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES**

Tell us about your career to date. My career spans over 25 years, starting in retail customer service and evolving through sales, employability training, and recruitment into HR. I've worked across both public and private sectors, from small businesses to global enterprises, in industries ranging from renewable energy and travel to IT.

How would your colleagues describe you? I believe my colleagues would describe me as visionary, passionate, and results driven. At the same time, I value humour and think it's important to bring laughter into the workplace every day. I'm easy going, approachable and genuine.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? My proudest career achievement is the progress I

made after returning from maternity leave. Balancing work and personal life during this time was a major challenge, but I embraced it fully. I'm proud not just for myself, but because I believe my daughter will be proud when she's old enough to understand.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? With more career choices than ever, attracting talent isn't just about offering the highest salary – it's about creating meaningful work that aligns with purpose. Technology touches every aspect of our lives, driving convenience, intelligence, and efficiency. However, people increasingly seek careers that fulfil their values. By leveraging tech's power for good – focusing on sustainability, equity, and belonging – the IT channel can attract talent eager to make a real difference.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over

the past three years? I feel like the channel has put a lot of focus on diversity and inclusion, and I see this having a positive impact – in particular around gender.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? If you are passionate, innovative, curious and keen to make a difference, the tech industry offers endless career options that allows you to really make a difference. To keep up with the pace of technology, we need creative and curious people to drive us.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Proud' by Heather Small.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Banksy.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Early in my career, a sales manager saw my potential, but also saw areas where I needed growth. He guided me through the complexities of the workplace, in a way that felt relatable and non-judgmental. He created a safe space where I could learn without fear of being reprimanded or sidelined. He was truthful when I made mistakes and coached me to make better decisions and be more mindful of others in the process.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Bob Pigott [Strategic Programmes Director at CAE] – for all his efforts and accomplishments in sustainability and social value.



**OLLY JEFFEREY
BDM, WESTCOAST**

Tell us about your career to date. Commercial site carpentry from 18yrs-26yrs, then took the jump and joined Westcoast as a BDE in the Majors team in 2022. I'm now working as BDM in the Focus and New Business team. (It always fascinates me that I am now selling hardware and infrastructure solutions into data centres I used to fit kitchens in!)

How would your colleagues describe you? Driven, passionate, humble (their feedback!)

You've recently joined the industry, having previously been a carpenter, and work in a wider sales team who have no previous IT experience. How have you and your colleagues found the transition? Initially it was daunting, however this quickly surpassed after the warm welcome and support I received when joining Westcoast. I was given time to adapt and a chance to learn, which I grabbed with both hands and haven't looked back. It took some time to learn all the acronyms though!

What's the proudest achievement

of your career so far? Being nominated for BDM of the year and Rising Star in my first year within the channel.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Embracing flexibility, innovation and social impact. I believe today's talent seeks dynamic environments where they can make a difference. We can showcase how IT solutions drive positive change, whether that's improving healthcare through tech, or supporting sustainability efforts. It's important to highlight career growth too, by providing pathways to certifications and specialised training in emerging technologies like AI, cybersecurity and cloud computing.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? To those just leaving education or considering a career change, the IT channel offers a world of opportunity. It's not just about tech, but solving real-world problems and making a tangible impact. The industry values fresh perspectives, creativity and a willingness to learn. My biggest regret? Not doing it sooner!

What would you choose as your

walk-on song? 'From the Ritz to the Rubble' by Arctic Monkeys.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Michael Caine.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Paul Gascoigne.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Not necessarily a colleague, but without a doubt my big sister Georgie Walsh, who took a similar path having worked in retail in her early career, before transitioning to the channel at a similar age with also no industry experience, working her way up to vendor director at another distributor.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. It would be tough to mention just one, but Jack Bryant my Sales Manager for always supporting and driving my development, Jon Welch, an account manager I work closely with who is Mr. Reliable and delivers brilliant service to all our customers (a leader in waiting) and Carl Harvey, our AM team leader, whose channel knowledge is unmatched and is always putting others first.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

We asked our Influencers which actor they would have play them in a movie of their life, and as with musical choices, the answers were varied. **KATE WINSLET** received a couple of votes, while **DENZEL WASHINGTON, REBEL WILSON, PHOEBE WALLER BRIDGE** and **MICHAEL CAINE** also popped up. Perhaps the most unusual, in our opinion, was Lorna Burman's suggestion of **LADY GAGA** or **MADONNA!**



Image by Vecteezy

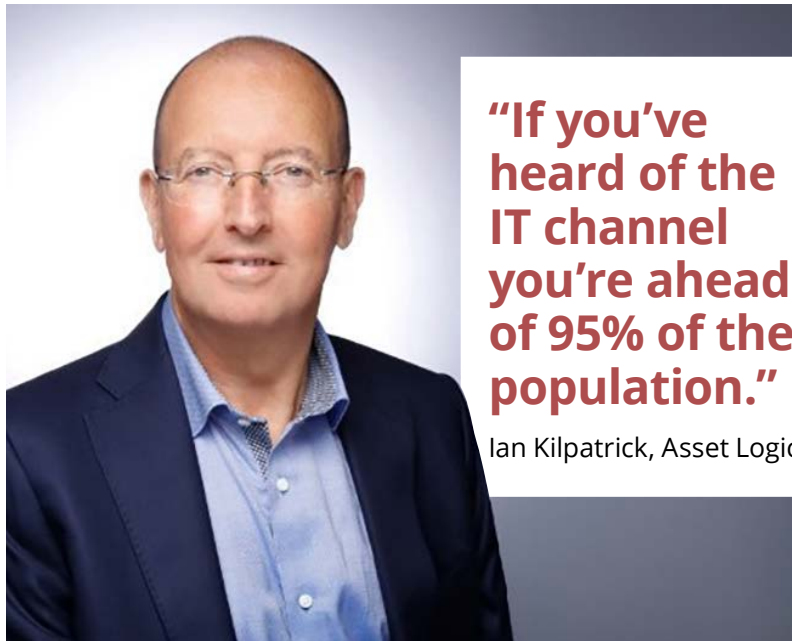
IAN KILPATRICK
CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER,
ASSET LOGIC

Tell us about your career to date. Like nearly everyone I fell into the IT channel. I was co-founder of Wick Hill with one of the clients of our financial and management consultancy. Wick Hill was so much fun I sold out my share of the consultancy. Wick Hill started as a small vendor selling globally to HP customers before morphing into an international distributor. After four decades to broaden our EMEA coverage, I sold to Nuvias where I was EVP for a number of years. I'm now CRO at Asset Logic and on the board of the Technology Channel Ambassadors (TCA).

How would your colleagues or peers describe you? If I'm fortunate, an industry veteran with a strong sense of ethics. If not, old white bloke.

You recently founded the TCA. What motivated you to do that? My co-founders and myself recognised the need to create awareness of the IT channel and career opportunities to youngsters. The majority of whom self-exclude themselves from contemplating opportunities in IT from as young as 12. TCA can transform their lives. Alongside that the recognition that the IT channel needs a strategic plan to address significant talent shortages and associated diversity challenges. Although we're a secret £100bn industry, most people currently in the channel had never heard of it before they discovered it.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? The amazing satisfaction of having fun, enjoying success over many, many, years with the great teams and friends at Wick Hill and watching their future career progression. It may sound trite but that has been an amazing experience for which I am so grateful.



"If you've heard of the IT channel you're ahead of 95% of the population."

Ian Kilpatrick, Asset Logic

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? First by telling kids about it and from an early age! Kids need to know we exist, that it's a great career and you don't have to be a coder or great at maths to get in. We're a £100bn-a-year industry that is awash with career opportunities, and we welcome all groups including girls, neurodiverse, BAME, LBGT+.

TCA have a strategic goal of increasing awareness of the opportunities with government, education, NGOs and children. And by making it clear that the majority of roles require digital skills but do not require coders or maths graduates. We need volunteers (ambassadors) to share a few hours of their time visiting schools and transforming kids' lives.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? DEI continues to progress, and very well in those companies who deliver best practice.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in

the IT channel? It's fun, it's dynamic, it's welcoming and we provide on the job training. Oh yes and the prospects and money are OK! If you've heard of the IT channel you're ahead of 95% of the population.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life' by Monty Python.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? [Distology CEO] Hayley Roberts.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Patrick Dodds, my first boss and incredible mentor. His advice and support helped shape not only my career but also my approach. I would not be where I am without his support and direction.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. There are too many to name. Just a few would be Hayley Mooney, Anushka Davies, Alex Tatham, Hayley Roberts and Helge Sherff. They all should be on the list but there are many, many more.



JENNY LATIMER
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR,
HIGHGATE

Tell us about your career to date. Like many, I fell into the channel, starting at Total Computers as Vendor Coordinator, just over nine years ago. I loved my time at Total. I learnt a lot and found an interest and flair for marketing and alliances. I took some time to develop my skills personally, completing some business management and marketing courses, and then I felt ready to 'fly the nest'.

I joined AMC, another reseller local to me, in 2020, in the first week of lockdown! I spent my time there absorbing as much information as I could and furthering my knowledge and skills.

In July 2021, I felt ready to take another step. Whilst on the lookout for my next role, I struck up a conversation with an ex-colleague from Total, Bob Sahota. He was about to become Sales Director at Highgate, and it turned out they needed a 'me' to grow the operations side of the business.

How would your colleagues describe you? I hope words

like 'supportive', 'kind' and 'knowledgeable' would all pop up.

Having risen quickly through the ranks in the sector, do you enjoy the added responsibility and profile that comes with holding a senior role? I've always been one of those people that's saying 'what next' and 'how do I get there,' but also takes each day as it comes. I've been working towards this role for some time, so the added responsibility didn't happen overnight. It was gradual, so just another part of my career development and I do very much enjoy it. As for the profile, my aim is to use it for good, driving awareness for important causes (sustainability, DEI, getting the next generation into tech) and being a role model for others in the channel that are aiming high!

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Highgate recently became a 'Great Place to Work' certified company. During the employee survey we conducted for this, 100% of our employees voted that they believe they are treated fairly, regardless of their race, sexual orientation, gender and age. Over the last three years, the senior leadership team have strived to make Highgate an inclusive

workplace, and one where our employees can thrive, develop and be the best and most authentic version of themselves, regardless of background. To hear that we've achieved this made me immensely proud.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Every time a new generation enters the world of work, there is a shift in what employees expect of their employers. Be aware of this, be relevant to the next generation, make it relatable, and make it fun!

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? Sustainability – every aspect of the topic; understanding it, incorporating change, driving awareness, and working together for the better.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Give it a go! You can enter this industry with no prior IT knowledge (I'm talking about myself here!) and succeed! Grab all the opportunities that come your way, and you'll meet some brilliant people too.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

A very popular couple stood out when our Influencers were asked who they would have as their first talk show guests – the OBAMAS. BARACK scored three votes and MICHELLE received two. LEWIS HAMILTON received two votes - one alongside his brother NICHOLAS. Other interesting choices were ANDY MURRAY, KATHERINE RYAN, LADY GAGA (again) and BANKSY.



What would you choose as your walk-on song? As a hardcore Swiftie, I would have to choose '... Ready for It' by Taylor Swift.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life?

I always wanted to be Hermione Granger when I was younger...it's the curly hair (...and maybe some personality traits too), so perhaps Emma Watson could play me!

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why?

This is an easy one, Mr Bob Sahota. I have had the pleasure of knowing Bob since my very first days in the industry. Starting out as my favourite colleague to party with, we quickly became firm friends. Bob was, and still is, always ready to share his experience and wisdom, helping me think outside the box and giving me the confidence to aim high, and then a bit higher (salespeople love a stretch target!) When someone believes in you, it's so much easier to believe in yourself.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this.

Daniel Evans! His involvement with the Channel Community as mentee matchmaker is amazing. He's helping so many others further their careers. Plus, he's acing his own career, and he's an advocate for LGBTQI+, and his enthusiasm and energy is infectious. Plus, he's just the loveliest guy!

**GEORGE LAVENDER
ACCOUNT MANAGER,
AMPITO**

Tell us about your career to date. My IT career has been relatively short as I have only been in the game for the last 18 months. However, it's been a really great start. I have enjoyed learning my new trade and understanding the vendors, technologies and customer verticals we work with every day at

Ampito. I think I have started well and been happy with some of the deals I have been able to close but most importantly I have very much enjoyed building relationships with customers, vendors and distributors.

How would your colleagues describe you? Always a tough question to answer, but I would say defiantly curious. Our sales director calls me Curious George as I am always asking questions. Coming from a background in education I would say that's a good thing as I am just here to learn. Hopefully they would also say hardworking and supportive and I think all would say High Energy.

Before joining the IT industry, you were a PE teacher. How easy have you found the transition? Different for sure. There is certainly a big change from having your lunch in the school canteen or the PE office to now a flash restaurant in Canary Wharf! But jokes aside, it's been really good and I am glad I made the change.

At first, like anything, it was a slight challenge as of course it was a very different environment with different challenges from those I encountered teaching in secondary schools. However, I am lucky that I have had a good support system within Ampito from all my colleagues and especially the founder Manny Pinon and CEO Angela Whitty who have helped me settle in.

In 2016, you set up a charity aimed at using the power of football to help disadvantaged young people. How do you juggle



this with your day job?

Crazy when I think it's been that long! Of course, with sales being 24 x 7 I had to make some adjustments moving to this new role. But so was teaching, so I am kind of used to juggling the demands of running a charity with a busy job. I am passionate about supporting the young people we work with in the community.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far?

If we are taking about my IT career, I would have to say my biggest deal to date which was £1.2m and hitting my half year number was a great achievement. Not only was it a significant number for me, but it was with a customer who had not traded with us for some time so I was proud that I was able to change that.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent?

I think just exposure to be honest. I certainly would not have understood the opportunity that the industry had to offer if it wasn't for Manny taking a chance on me! We have also arranged for some of the young people involved in my charity to have conversations with people at Ampito and in the industry and I think it's a real eye opener for them.

There is a perception that you have to have experience or be technical which is not true if you are willing to learn. There are so many roles that are available which a lot of young people are not aware of. There is certainly a chance to attract and grow new hungry talent if more is done to educate them on the possibilities.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel?

Investigate it and understand all the roles within the industry. Be bold and reach out to organisations to see if you can gain a real-life perspective and understand what opportunities there are – not just to be technical or sales focused but look at all the roles available. As a company we are looking to do career talks in locals schools in the next year. I am keen to share my experience of my first 18 months and show what's possible as well as taking some of the wider team who can share their experiences and knowledge.

What would you choose as your walk-on song?

Either 'Tennessee Whiskey' by Chris Stapleton or 'Ain't No Stopping Us Now' by McFadden & Whitehead.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life?

I wasn't sure who to say so I asked Angela and she said Matt Damon as she thinks there is a likeness. Not sure I see it myself.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest?

Either Steven Gerrard or Mike Tyson.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why?

Manny Pinon – founder of Ampito. He gave me my break in IT and has been a constant supporter.

**YVONNE MATZK
CEO & FOUNDER OF
COACHERE AND FOUNDER
& CHAIR OF THE CHANNEL
COMMUNITY**

Tell us about your career to date. How long have you got? A jungle gym and not a linear ladder. I started as a YTS apprentice administrator at a car sealants manufacturer, got promoted to sales admin, left and became a holiday rep, came back



“Stop asking for degrees and make the industry more accessible and welcoming.”

Yvonne Matzk, Coachere

from repping and did telesales, before getting a job selling cars. I got promoted to fleet sales manager and business manager, moved to London, worked for Thomson Directories selling advertising and Stepstone selling online job ads, before being offered a job in IT sales recruitment.

I got poached by one of my clients, an IT reseller, started as an account manager, then account director, then Cisco specialist and Cisco business manager.

I was headhunted by Kelway (now CDW) to build its Cisco business and, off the success of that, was ultimately promoted to director, partners & marketing. I left in March 2020, retrained as a corporate business coach and founded Coachere, a coaching and consulting business, in October 2020.

Along with some industry friends, I went on to create the Channel Community in April 2021.

You've been working tirelessly to introduce free mentoring to the channel – particularly those new to the industry – though the Channel Community. What was your motivation for doing this? To pay it forward and help and support as many people as possible who

can't afford coaching and don't have access to mentors and a friendly support network.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far?

Building and leading the Cisco division at Kelway that went on to win multiple global awards.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent?

Stop asking for degrees and make the industry more accessible and welcoming to the different talent pools out there.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel?

Do it, it's a fantastic industry with so much opportunity for growth. Also, remind them that you don't have to be technical to have a successful career in the IT channel.

What would you choose as your walk-on song?

'I Believe' by Yolanda Adams. The lyrics are very inspirational.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life?

Rebel Wilson.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? I have two – the first is Darren Sharpe, who saw something in me, convinced me to get into IT, and ignited my passion for Cisco technology.

The second is Phil Doye, who empowered me to make my own decisions and gave me the freedom and support to create something special. He also gave feedback (good and bad) and taught me to focus and double down on my strengths and find other people to do the things I wasn't so great at.

**REBECCA MONK
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER,
SOFTCAT**

Tell us about your career to date. I've spent my whole career in recruitment and HR, starting in a recruitment agency before moving into telco and then the film industry. I joined the IT channel in 2017 when I started at Softcat as HR Director and fell in love with the industry – particularly the people, the variety and the dynamism.

How would your colleagues describe you? My colleagues would say I get stuff done, I push for results and I have high standards. They'd also say I can be grumpy!

You've been held up by peers for your work with The Tech Channel Ambassadors (TCA). Why have you dedicated your time to this initiative? When I first met the founding team at TCA (Ian Kilpatrick, Hayley Mooney and Hayley Roberts), I was bowled over by their enthusiasm for getting new talent into our industry. We've all benefited from being part of the IT channel and we simply want to pay it forward by letting as many people know about this sector as possible.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Two stand out. Every year, standing on stage in front of the whole of Softcat at our annual Kick Off is a privilege that I feel very proud to be able to do. And in 2023, my department won the HR Team of the Year award at the CIPD awards, which are the most prestigious awards in the HR industry. I'd been wanting to win that one for a long time so that was a very special moment for me.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Demystify technology by talking about it simply and in plain English – basically make it easier for people to understand what we do. And promote it more – everyone has heard of the big

vendors so let's use that to our advantage to tell more people about the IT channel.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? The obvious one to me is diversity. The strides we've made, particularly in gender diversity, have been astonishing. There is lots more still to do of course, but let's not forget how far we've already come.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? This industry can give you everything. Whatever field of business you want to work in, we've got it all!

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Edge of Seventeen' by Stevie Nicks.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Angelina Jolie if I'm very lucky!

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Andy Murray. He's a very funny guy and I have a tennis obsession, so he'd be perfect.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? I was a different person before I started working for [former Softcat CEO] Graeme Watt. He boosted my confidence so much, simply by valuing my input, listening to my contributions and working so closely with me. I can't thank him enough for everything he's done for me personally, and for my career.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Keisha Ffrench. Keisha is a Senior Recruiter in my team at Softcat and she's responsible for hiring a lot of our early careers talent. She's on the frontline of trying

to encourage new talent into our industry and definitely one to watch!



**HAYLEY MOONEY
CHIEF COMMERCIAL
OFFICER, BYTES**

Tell us about your career to date. Having left school midway through my A-levels, I stumbled into a recruitment agency and was given two options – a customer service agent at L&G or a licensing admin role at a computer sales company I had never heard. The latter option was the lower paid but the recruiter told me I could end up earning loads of money in the long term.. and turns out she was right! A pure chance decision!

Starting in distribution back in 2001, I worked my way up through the channel, moving to the reseller world in 2005, and I've stayed there for the majority of my career to date. I have most recently spent a lot of time with the cloud providers, selling solutions to all types of customers and partners. I love my job and I love this industry.

How would your colleagues describe you? Hopefully, as committed, empathetic and motivated to succeed.

You've been instrumental in setting up The Tech Channel Ambassadors, which raises awareness of the IT channel in schools. Why is this cause so

**OXYGEN INFLUENCERS ON...
WHERE THE CHANNEL HAS
MADE MOST PROGRESS**

"The obvious one to me is diversity. The strides we've made, particularly in gender diversity, have been astonishing. There is lots more still to do of course, but let's not forget how far we've already come."

Rebecca Monk, Softcat

"Channel companies have, in their own way, started walking the talk on sustainability. Sometimes now, more than vendors."

Elsa Jasmine Nightingale, Canalys



"Sustainability – every aspect of the topic; understanding it, incorporating change, driving awareness, and working together for the better."

Jenny Latimer, Highgate

"The inclusion of those that previously would have been unable to access the roles they can now. I think the channel is now more aware of a work/life balance and how important this is."

Lorna Burman, uSecure

"I've seen a huge change across diversity and inclusion, and also an increase in women in the industry climbing the career ladder. It's so great to see but there is still a long way to go."

Jade Easton, Titan Data Solutions



"I believe the most significant progress in the channel over the past three years has been in increasing the representation of women. While there is still much work to be done, the growth in woman-to-woman support networks and mentorship opportunities has been particularly noteworthy."

Daisy Pike, Pax8

"The strides we've made, particularly in gender diversity, have been astonishing."

Rebecca Monk, Softcat



important to you? If only I knew about the opportunity that this industry provided me, back when I was 19. If I hadn't walked into that agency, I might never have made it here. Our industry is totally unknown to schools and pupils and so we must unite as a big voice to make a difference and raise awareness so that we build a pipeline of people for the future. If we don't do it now, we will not be able to achieve the goals we are all setting ourselves for gender diversity, skills and business growth.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I continue to be grateful for every opportunity I have had to date in my career but I'm particularly proud to be part of the Tech Channel Ambassadors. Being part of what we hope will be a wave of change is very rewarding. We have all put a lot of extra time and effort in (on top of the day jobs) to bring this to life. We won't see the outcomes of it yet, but hopefully in 10 years' time, we will be able to measure the impact and success.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Firstly, as already mentioned, we need to tell people about it! Not just schools, but we should be open to recruiting outside of industry. We need to consider how we reach new communities and train ourselves to not talk in technical lingo or in acronyms! We must look at education diversity, take advantage of apprenticeships and the talent pool that it opens for us. Working with local communities including schools and charities will also make a difference.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? I think the channel will always need to adapt and be agile but those businesses who have remained laser focused through the last few years will have

done very well in terms of growth. Adapting to vendor changes, service delivery demands, and the rise of AI is not easy, it's disruptive and costly, yet the only way to really stay relevant and competitive. I think the security service landscape will continue to be important for all of us, and I'm excited to see how the marketplace opportunity works out for all of us.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? This quite honestly is a hugely rewarding industry, both financially and socially. Come and give it a try as you will find a career, no matter which way you want to go. There is a role for everyone!

What would you choose as your walk-on song? Haha! It has to be 'Lose Yourself' by Eminem.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? I think Kate Winslet – she is a real-life woman... we need more of those on the big screen!

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? I'm going to have to go with Kim Scott. Her book, Radical Candor, has helped me so much and I'd love to pick her brain!

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? I would say 100% my husband, Paul. He's part of our industry and he is the calming, pragmatic and considered influence on my excitable and energetic approach. He helps me get the balance right and in terms of my career progression, he has been unwavering in his support to our family as we go on this journey.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this? [Distology CSO] Sarah Geary.



ELSA JASMINE NIGHTINGALE
PRINCIPAL ESG ANALYST,
CANALYS

Tell us about your career to date. I started out working in journalism. I wrote articles for The Independent on Sunday and presented local news for Latest TV. Alongside that, I was working with non-profits – including Amnesty International in London. After graduating, I moved into renewable energy, working first for African Clean Energy in Amsterdam, then Vestas in Copenhagen – helping them to launch the company's first long-term ESG strategy. Thereafter, I worked with Schneider Electric – a highly formative role for me: it really scaled the sustainability consulting work I was doing with businesses.

Now, I have the pleasure of running Canalys' Sustainability Practice. I split my time between public speaking (something I thoroughly enjoy – especially audience Q&As), writing, research, hosting webinars, and advising companies on the tough road ahead that is IT sustainability in an AI era.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'm hoping warm, friendly, and informal at times. I think the new generation of leaders recognise that informality is a powerful trait. You can build truly

meaningful relationships if you are more honest, and at times more vulnerable to show your true self with clients. Boundaries are crucial, but being personable is powerful, powerful quality – I think.

As an analyst, you've earned a name for regularly standing up in front of hundreds, if not thousands, of people to highlight the challenges and opportunities the industry faces in areas such as DEI and ESG. What's the secret to getting these people to listen, and act on your advice? Warmth and humour can be incredibly disarming. I've still developing this skill myself: especially when I'm on a stage facing perhaps one thousand people in the audience – often senior execs, who hail from a more formal culture of work. I like the expression; "I'm not calling you out, I'm calling you in". Meaning, if you spend your time lamenting companies, they'll walk away. But if you approach an issue with warmth, empathy, and yet, honesty (at times, brutal honesty), that's where you find a middle ground that is solution-focused.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Not giving up entirely – the world of IT sustainability is not going in the right direction right now! Melodrama aside, probably hosting DEI and ESG workshops for Canalys clients. Workshops are more intimate – when you're face to face with people, you can really move the needle and get things done.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Truly flexible working, four-day working weeks (I'm such a fan), genuine work life balance, pay equity audits, regular, open feedback sessions (townhalls if you will), and the opportunity to feedback anonymously to a third party and via surveys. It's clear job descriptions, flat hierarchies,

part-time options, return to work schemes for new parents – all the things that also really move the needle on diversity, equity and inclusion. I'm seeing more and more companies mandate five days in the office, such a mistake!

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? Channel companies have, in their own way, started walking the talk on sustainability. Sometimes now, more than vendors. One of our earlier interviews focused on many IT vendors cutting or eliminating their DEI teams altogether. Partners, while their teams might have been smaller to begin with, are not doing that in the same way.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don't be fazed by acronyms and jargon. Without wanting to sound completely pretentious, I think it was Einstein who said; "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself". Truthfully, I think some people hide behind buzzwords. When you really drill down, they aren't clear what they mean. So don't be afraid to ask, politely, what someone or something means. If a leader responds in the wrong way to that, you're not working in the right team.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Dy-Na-Mi-Tee' by Ms. Dynamite – partly just to see the audience reaction!

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Phoebe Waller Bridge – she's utter chaos, and I love her!

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Can I say Phoebe Waller Bridge again? Or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, total badass!

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? At the moment? Rachel Brindley (Senior Director of Channels at Canalys). It sounds completely cliché to say she understands people management like few I've met, but she does. Taylor Swift's discography helps as well.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Ben Caddy – my Canalys colleague, for working tirelessly on IT sustainability day in day out. But also; Vlad Galabov (Director of Cloud and Data Center Research), my new Omdia colleague. Not only is he a fountain of knowledge, especially on data centre sustainability, he also brings such warmth to his work: As I said earlier, that is a power that should not be underestimated.

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

We asked our Influencers to think about a colleague that has had a positive influence on their career. Every Influencer gave a different name. Step forward **AARON WATTS, DEBBIE FORSTER, GEORGIE WALSH, NIHIL MORJARIA, PAUL HUNTER** and **RACHEL BRINDLEY** to name just a few. Three nominees were named as deserving a place on this list – see the box on page 35 to find out who they are.



Image by Vecteezy



NATALIE NOOR
SMB & CHANNEL
DIRECTOR, LENOVO UKI

Tell us about your career to date.

I've held product category and sales roles within two large IT companies and grown up with the channel over the past 20-plus years.

How would your colleagues describe you? Authentic, trustworthy, positive.

You've already returned once from maternity leave to resume your high-level role and are gearing up to do it a second time. How easy is it to transition between the two?

The juggle is tough, and resuming your position after a break is not easy but over time things settle and you feel a sense of belonging again. It takes time, effort, some welcoming colleagues and an industry recognising that flexibility and a supportive culture is key for both men and women.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Am super proud of my current role, becoming SMB & Channel Director at Lenovo, as I feel I can make a real difference.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Work closely with education establishments delivering talks/events to show up-

and-coming talent what a fantastic industry it is to work in! I was recruited whilst still at University and I fell in love with the industry. I built my reputation and relationships early, and I still love it 20+ years later.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? We have made some fantastic progress in sustainability. At Lenovo we're very proud of the Lenovo 360 Circle which is a community we've built within the channel with partners and industry experts to share knowledge and ideas to make a difference together. We all still have a long way to go though.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? If you are interested in technology and love a fast-paced career full of opportunities and ways to make a difference, you won't be disappointed!

What would you choose as your walk-on song? I love musicals so I'd choose 'This is Me' from The Greatest Showman.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Kate Winslet.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Michelle Obama. I love her.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Paul Hunter. He saw something in me 20+ years ago and I'll be forever grateful.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Anjana Srinivasan [General Manager, Device Partner Sales, UK at Microsoft]. She is a fantastic leader, cares deeply, an amazing partner to work with, mother to a beautiful little boy and a lovely person.

APAY OBANG-OYWAY
DIRECTOR - PARTNER
SALES, MICROSOFT UK

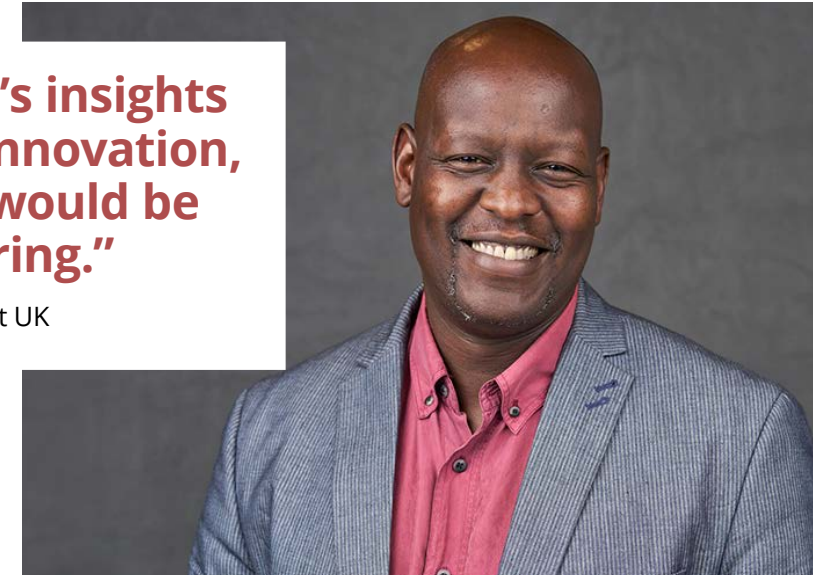
Tell us about your career to date. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to continue serving our technology partners and customers as the Director - Partner Sales at Microsoft UK. With over 20 years of experience in the channel and small and midmarket organisation space, I have been fortunate to drive diversity and racial equity in the tech sector. My previous roles include Channel Director EMEA at Symantec and Director, Northern Europe for Ingram Micro Cloud, where I developed the UK cloud strategy. I am humbled by the impact my team and I made in these roles. My journey has always been guided by a commitment to diversity and inclusivity as integral parts of delivering sustainable strategic growth. I am thankful for the support and collaboration of my colleagues and partners along the way.

How would your colleagues describe you? Although I cannot speak on behalf of my colleagues, I aspire for them to view me as a committed and inclusive technology leader who prioritises strategic progress and diversity. I am thankful for their cooperation and support, and I hold their outstanding work in high esteem. In the grander scheme of things, there are more significant concerns in life, and I am honoured to have the chance to contribute in my unique way.

Leaders we spoke to praised your hard work in the arena of diversity, with the Technology Community for Racial Equality (TC4RE), among other things. How easy is it to juggle these activities with your day job? Balancing business success with driving meaningful change is never easy. However, the mission makes it worthwhile. Working with talented and dedicated people every day, who are empowering organisations and

“Barack Obama’s insights on leadership, innovation, and inclusivity would be incredibly inspiring.”

Apay Obang-Oyway, Microsoft UK



individuals to achieve more, is truly inspiring. I am deeply grateful for the incredible support from colleagues in our amazing technology industry. Together, we are striving for significant impact, and I am humbled to be part of this journey.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? With humility and gratitude, I can say that I've had many proud career achievement moments. However, my proudest moment was marrying my wife and lifelong partner. While it may not seem directly linked to my career, her support has been crucial to my professional success. I am deeply grateful for her and for the allies, mentors, sponsors, and colleagues who have contributed to my journey. Their support and collaboration have been invaluable, and I am humbled by the impact we've made together.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? To attract the next generation of talent, the IT channel must embrace the transformative power of AI. AI is revolutionising opportunities for individuals, communities, and businesses, addressing some of humanity's biggest challenges - from health and education to digital productivity, cybersecurity, food security, and climate change. The current and next generation of talent seek organisations that are purpose-driven, innovative, and committed

to making a positive impact. By showcasing our role in leveraging AI to create a better future, we can inspire and excite the next generation to join us in this mission.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? Over the past three years, the UK channel has excelled in driving digital transformation by leveraging cloud computing and cybersecurity advancements. They've significantly improved operational efficiency, customer experiences, and business resilience. This progress not only fuels innovation but also empowers organisations to tackle global challenges and seize new opportunities. All this is only possible because of the channel.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? To education leavers and those contemplating a career in the IT channel. The technology industry is an amazing place to work. It offers incredible opportunities for personal growth, lifelong learning, and making a meaningful societal impact. You'll connect with brilliant minds,

innovate, and drive solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges. I am ever so grateful to be a part of this wonderful industry. Join us to be part of a community that empowers individuals and transforms organisations, making a real difference in the world.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'All the Stars' by Kendrick Lamar and SZA. This song represents business leadership, innovation, diversity, and inclusivity with its powerful lyrics and inspiring message. It embodies the drive to excel and uplift others, making it a perfect walk-on song.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? I would go with Tyrese Gibson. His versatility, charisma, and ability to portray strong, dynamic characters would perfectly capture the essence of leadership, innovation, diversity, and inclusivity that I strive to embody. Plus, I've been mistaken for him on a number of occasions! It's a fun connection that always brings a smile.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? My first guest would be Barack Obama. While my answer might be clichéd,

he is a hero of mine. His insights on leadership, innovation, and inclusivity would be incredibly inspiring. Plus, his ability to connect with people from all walks of life would make for a fascinating and engaging conversation.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Honestly, it's impossible to name just one person, as I have been blessed to have numerous individuals who have positively influenced my career. Their unwavering support, mentorship, and insightful guidance have been invaluable. Each has challenged me to think differently and push beyond my limits, fostering both personal and professional growth. I am deeply grateful for their impact on my journey and humbled by the collective wisdom and encouragement I've received. Their dedication to excellence continues to inspire me every day.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. One person who truly deserves recognition is Belton Flournoy, MD at Protiviti. He is a thoughtful leader with amazing achievements already and a humble human being. Belton is incredibly creative in his thinking, linking technology, security, and humanity's challenges seamlessly and making complex issues simple. His dedication to excellence and inclusivity is truly inspiring.

**JANICE PHAYRE
ESG MANAGER,
TELEFÓNICA TECH**
Tell us about your career to date. It started with going to the Heart of the City Foundation course for ESG, 14 years ago. My company at the time won a dragon award 18 months after that. Skip on – thousands of hours of volunteering, hundreds of cakes eaten to raise funds for our chosen charities and £10,000s given to those chosen charities, hundreds of school children brought

“Seeing the pictures of the solar panels we built on a school in Lebanon was a highlight.”

Janice Phayre, Telefónica Tech

to the offices, hours and hours of wellbeing courses, lots of Mental Health First aiders and far too many spreadsheets and portals to deal with all those Carbon Reduction Targets and then a move to Telefónica Tech last year as Head of ESG.

How would your colleagues or peers describe you? My friends would say “persistent” and “committed” and “passionate”. My colleagues might have different words for it. I always try to start with a smile though, so usually people ask me how I remain so happy, which is actually just an act.

You've been a champion of ESG in your two most recent roles. What's the best, and hardest, part of your job? The best part is being able to help, both with staff wellbeing but also with community work, raising funds for charity or supporting local schools, or socially isolated elderly. You can genuinely be there for someone, at a tough bit in their life. That is an honour. The hardest part is that it is all very new and changing and at times political and some people think it can be dismissed as a “nice to have” rather than a necessity. Regulation and



client commitments are changing this though.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Seeing the pictures of the solar panels we built on a school in Lebanon was definitely a highlight. The faces of the kids and the volunteers learning in the office space or watching a young person in the organisation run a lunch and learn. That is when I feel proudest. I like getting awards too.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? I feel I may be too old to answer this. I see a lot of young people contributing to make a difference to our organisation's culture and to add to their own communities. Make sure that you support them in being themselves.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? There is so much more here than IT.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? My Karaoke song is 'Big Spender'. That has a great intro. “The minute you walked in the joint...”

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Dawn French.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Barack Obama.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? This is very hard. I've been lucky enough to work with Chris Gabriel, who is such a powerhouse of energy and ideas, and Ian Caswell gave me my chance and believed in me, which is what it's all about. I also work with the totally inspiring Ellen Dickson, who is making such a difference in Belfast, and Chris Brookes' empathetic leadership makes everything seem so easy. And then Gemma Telford is my magnificent mentor.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Richard Eglon. He is really looking at how to bring us together and make a difference.

**DAISY PIKE
MANAGER OF SOLUTION
CONSULTANTS, EMEA AT
PAX8**

Tell us about your career to date. I started as a control systems engineer in the energy industry, working on power stations in remote parts of the country. I loved the technical side of this but wanted to work in a more dynamic industry and utilise my ability to talk about technical topics to people – in comes technical pre-sales, a field I never knew existed! Cut to scrolling LinkedIn Jobs one evening and this unknown tech company with a random name popped up and so I applied for the role of Solutions Engineer at Pax8 and haven't looked back since!

How would your colleagues or peers describe you? The person who is the go-to for restaurant and

holiday recommendations! More corporately, they describe me as a driven, compassionate, and adaptable leader who empowers my team, champions their successes, and fosters a collaborative and supportive work environment.

You've risen quickly through the ranks at Pax8 despite being relatively new to the industry. How easy was it to achieve this? Although new to the channel industry, I come from a very technical background that has honed my problem-solving skills and ability to quickly grasp new technologies and concepts. This solid foundation, coupled with the unique opportunities presented during the early days of Pax8's international expansion, has been instrumental in my career growth. Additionally, my self-belief and the support from leaders at Pax8, who recognise and value my contributions, have been crucial in enabling my career growth. Their mentorship and the collaborative environment at Pax8 have empowered me to leverage my skills effectively and drive impactful results.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? My proudest achievement has been growing my team into an



indispensable part of the Pax8 ecosystem. We've consistently delivered exceptional value to our partners and their customers, all while fostering a team culture where everyone genuinely cares for each other and is willing to go the extra mile. Seeing my team thrive and support one another has been incredibly rewarding.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? Increasing the visibility of the diversity of roles within the IT industry (i.e. it's not just coding or technical support!) and shouting about them to university graduates from various degrees that might not traditionally feed into the tech industry.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? I believe the most significant progress in the channel over the past three years has been in increasing the representation of women. While there is still much work to be done, the growth in woman-to-woman support networks and mentorship opportunities has been particularly noteworthy. These platforms provide essential guidance, encouragement, and a sense of community, helping to elevate women within the channel.

By fostering an environment where women can learn from and support each other, we can create a more inclusive and diverse industry.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Do it! This is a fast-paced, fast-growing industry and is the place to be if you love technology and want to be part of the technological enhancements shaping our future.

OXYGEN INFLUENCERS ON... ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TALENT

"Truly flexible working, four-day working weeks (I'm such a fan), genuine work life balance, pay equity audits, regular, open feedback sessions (townhalls if you will), and the opportunity to feedback anonymously to a third party and via surveys. It's clear job descriptions, flat hierarchies, part-time options, return to work schemes for new parents – all the things that also really move the needle on diversity, equity and inclusion. I'm seeing more and more companies mandate five days in the office, such a mistake."

Elsa Jasmine Nightingale, Canalys



"Stop asking for degrees and make the industry more accessible and welcoming to the different talent pools out there."

Yvonne Matzk, Coachere

"First by telling the kids about it and from an early age! Kids need to know we exist, that it's a great career and you don't have to be a coder or great at maths to get in. We're a £100bn-a-year industry that is awash with career opportunities, and we welcome all groups including girls, neurodiverse, BAME, LBGT+."

Ian Kilpatrick, Asset Logic

"By leveraging tech's power for good – focusing on sustainability, equity, and belonging – the IT channel can attract talent eager to make a real difference."

Natalie Hailey, CAE Technology Services

"We're on the verge of a revolution with AI and automation transforming IT services. This creates opportunities for new roles and thinking, attracting diverse talent eager to make a real impact, especially as the channel influences customer success in SMB/SME markets."

Andy Readman, Pax8



"I think the channel can do more though to showcase to students what roles in the channel are all about though, as they aren't all technical!"

Anushka Davies, Softcat

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'Here Comes the Hotstepper' by Ini Kamoze.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Natasha Lyonne.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Dead or alive? Beatles or Stones? Why decide?! John Lennon and Mick Jagger!

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Aaron Watts for giving me the trust to grow and shape the Solution Consulting team across EMEA.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Thomas Welton – AI, Data & Automation Solution Consultant at Pax8

**ANDY READMAN
DATA & AI DIRECTOR,
PAX8 ACADEMY**

Tell us about your career to date. I've spent 17 years in the IT industry across large enterprises and small MSPs. Achieving my dream of becoming a Service Delivery Manager at Wirehive in 2016 was significant, but being told it wasn't the right fit pushed me to grow. I transitioned into an Azure Architect, became a thought leader in Data & AI, and built a business strategy consulting team at Pax8 Academy in EMEA.

How would your colleagues describe you? My colleagues at Pax8 describe me as a passionate and inspiring mentor, a confident public speaker, and someone always ready to help with creative problem-solving.

How have personal experiences shaped your approach to your career? After losing my mother

to Motor Neurone Disease and learning I have a 50:50 chance of developing it, I see the world differently. I don't separate work and life; I want work to be as fulfilling as every other aspect of my life. I choose to work with incredible people and passionately impact their success.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Transitioning from Wirehive to Pax8 and launching Pax8 Academy Consulting. We defined the framework and approach, and I'm especially proud of developing my colleagues into strategic consultants who now drive meaningful business transformations for our partners.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? We're on the verge of a revolution with AI and automation transforming IT services. This creates opportunities for new roles and thinking, attracting diverse talent eager to make a real impact, especially as the channel influences customer success in SMB/SME markets.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? The growth of community. Across Europe,



IT businesses are coming together to collaborate openly and drive shared success. Pax8 Marketplace partners exemplify this desire to connect and learn from each other.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? If you're passionate about IT, this industry offers sustainable growth, diverse roles to specialise in, and a chance to work with the latest technology. Seek out companies with a culture focused on personal development. Service providers with 20-200 employees are ideal for exposure to different technologies and identifying what you truly enjoy.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? The Avengers theme, because the Pax8 team feels like superheroes assembled to help our partners grow, increase efficiency, and reduce risk.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Jason Segel. I adore the lovable and realistic characters he plays in romantic comedies and How I Met Your Mother.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? The Sidemen, the world's biggest YouTube group. I admire their work ethic and how they've merged pleasure with business.

Plus, they'd guarantee millions of views to help build a following.



**TED STROUD
ACCOUNT MANAGER AND
PROJECT MANAGER**

Tell us about your career to date. I started working in the IT industry in 2018, starting off as the Quality Manager, streamlining internal processes and continual business improvement. Moving into account management, business strategy and marketing. Now working closely with innovative startups and suppliers to build new go-to-market offerings for our clients.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'm unsure how they would describe me. But I would like to think they see me as helpful and positive.

You recently won HPE's inaugural 'Channel Reality Show', which was designed to showcase early-career partner sales staff. What was your key takeaway from the process? There were two main takeaways. 1) In account management, we must always remember that you are talking to real people. You must view the big picture, ask yourself how we can help this individual, whilst also helping the business achieve its goals. You aren't selling specific products, you are finding business needs and problems and creating

a solution to solve that issue. 2) Be yourself, don't fake it, work on your strengths and your quirks, and tie that in with your role. Our value as individuals comes from our ability to be ourselves and unique.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Winning the HPE Channel Reality Show was certainly up there. But, overall, what I am most proud of is the development and growth I have gained through my career. Learning how to hold my own and knowing I can bring value into a room with people far more experienced than me, is incredible.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? By investing in more exciting marketing channels and ideas such as the Channel Reality Show. The excitement of the IT channel is that we are directly part of the world's innovations. We are bringing the future to life and having a massive impact on the future of humanity. We need to communicate that more. We aren't just "IT salespeople" selling computers, we truly are the engine that is pushing out the world's latest and greatest IT innovations.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? The proactivity in innovation has majorly progressed over the past three years. For example, the rapid growth in GPU technology has allowed for some seriously rapid innovations in AI. I believe we're at the very early stages of an incredible boom in the IT channel and global economy. That's due to the rapid innovations in high compute power, which is the key to effective and sustainable artificial intelligence.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? The IT industry

is incredible. You get to see the rapidly changing tech landscape. Receiving first view on where the future is going, whilst also helping to bring it to life. There is so much room for creativity and innovation, you can combine the wide range of technologies to come up with new methods of bringing value to businesses and the world. It's seriously exciting.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Who wouldn't want to be played by Bradley Cooper...

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Brian Cox. I find space fascinating, particularly seeing how tech and space science can collaborate further.

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Lewis Simmonds. He used to be head of

"Working with schools is just real and refreshing. It's one of the favourite parts of my role."

Shola Sullivan, NTT Data Business



Channel at HPE. Now he works with us at FGS, and the level of mentoring I've received from him is second to none. He's taught me how to bring innovative ideas to life, how to make a positive impact to the business and team and given me the opportunity to meet some incredible people. I owe a lot to that man.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Matt Hawkins, CEO - CUDO Ventures. Matt and his team at CUDO are a rapidly evolving and innovative startup, that are making AI easily accessible, sustainable and eco-friendly.

**SHOLA SULLIVAN
ESG LEAD UK&I, NTT DATA
BUSINESS**

Tell us about your career to date. I began my career in the secretarial/PA industry and fell into CSR/ESG whilst supporting a comms team and taking on some CSR tasks. I'd never

IN THE MIX FOR 2025

Our final question was who our Influencers thought deserved to be on this list. Five of them, **ANUSHKA DAVIES, HAYLEY MOONEY** (both nominated twice), **DANIEL EVANS,**



JANICE PHAYRE and **YVONNE MATZK** already are! Others mentioned twice were **HAYLEY ROBERTS, KEISHA FFRENCH** and



BELTON FLOURNEY, NICOLA HOUGHTON, along with Phayre and Roberts, had also been named as a positive influence (see box on page 27). Other notable potential Influencers

were **ALEX TATHAM, JULIE SIMPSON** and **RICHARD EGLON.** Maybe a letter will be winging its way to some of these channel players next year...



heard of CSR before, found it really interesting and couldn't believe you could get paid in the corporate world to help make a difference. That was over 15 years ago and I have been in the ESG space ever since.

How would your colleagues or peers describe you? Authentic, passionate, persistent, selfless and sarcastic!

You've been held up for praise for your schools outreach work. What motivates you to do this? I'm passionate about raising aspirations and believe that every child should have access to the same opportunities, no matter their socioeconomic background. Working with schools is just real and refreshing. It's one of the favourite parts of my role. Kids certainly tell you how it is!

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? It must be during Covid when I suggested that we purchase devices for a local school that we support. I knew that many of the students couldn't afford their own devices or were having to share a parent's phone between siblings to try and do their work, and how that would further disadvantage them to their peers. Once the devices had been delivered, the school sent a lovely 'thank you' photo

of some of the kids in the playground (those that had to be in school) with the devices and handmade signs saying thank you. That really made my day and reinforced that what we do makes a difference. I still think about that photo fondly.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? More emphasis on women in tech and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Research tells us that fewer than one in five IT professionals are female and only 9% of UK tech employees are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. We must do more to make it more accessible and inclusive.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Research roles of most interest to you, take courses and attend workshops to help you gain more knowledge. Network, network, network, connect with as many people as you can and basically keep going! I am a great believer that things happen for a reason, so keep banging on those doors, eventually the right one will open for you.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? 'All Night Long' by Lionel Richie. It's a family favourite

and I have fond memories of listening to it growing up. It's also a great song to get up and dance to.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Tiffany Haddish. I find her hilarious. I have had many moments in my life that I (and others) look back and laugh hard about. She could do it justice!

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Wim Hoff. I like his unconventional approach to life and his positive mindset. I find him fascinating and enjoy his guided breathing techniques. I am yet to take the plunge to the cold shower challenge, building up to that!

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? Janice Phayre. I have learnt so much from Janice and some stuff we have figured out along the way together! We were a bit of a double act! She is one of those people who will fight your corner when you are not in the room and has the biggest heart.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Janice Phayre! I am so happy to be recognised alongside her! She deserves it.

BEN WATKIN
DIRECTOR, EMEA
CHANNEL, VERKADA

Tell us about your career to date. I've spent 25 years in the technology space, working across the globe in roles spanning sales and the channel. Some of the countries that I've been fortunate to work in include the UK, Kenya, Canada and the US. These experiences have been incredibly valuable throughout my career – I believe having a global view of business and cultures is important for success in today's interconnected economies.

How would your colleagues describe you? I've always believed, and learned from the leaders I admire, that success comes from hiring talented, high-achieving people who earn respect through their actions. To help them thrive, you must create an environment where they feel supported, demonstrate that you've got their back, and consistently lead with integrity and authenticity.

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? Early in

my career I was presented with an opportunity to be the account manager for one of the largest accounts for Cisco UK. I was warned off taking such a role as many colleagues believed the shoes I had to follow were too big for me to fill.

I had a vision on how I would transform Cisco's relationship with the customer from a provider of technology to true business advisor aligned to their outcomes.

I partnered with the channel, listened to executive careabouts and created joint teams between the customer and our organisation. This was all to create accountable based relationships that cared about the outcome. The result, they became one of Cisco's largest advisory services customers within 12 months.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent?

I am hugely excited that the next generation of talent looks for the purpose and impact of an organisation. I also believe it is important for businesses to show how they are solving real-world

problems and taking sustainability seriously. Beyond that, they need to build innovative workplaces that foster collaboration and have clear progression paths so that talent can see a growth trajectory for themselves.

Lastly, to find them, I believe you have to go meet them where they are. Think social, collaborative workspaces that are innovative in engaging them.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years?

I believe those who have thrived in the past three years have worked hard to stay close to their customers and shift towards providing value added services whilst making their companies great places to work that retain and attract talent. Those who have tailored their solutions to meet vertical market dynamics I believe have made the most progress. To continue this the IT channel has to find the balance between investing in vendors who support them today and identifying those who will help them grow in the future. Easier said than done!

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel?

I was, and to this day, believe I was very fortunate to join the IT Industry after my education. Satya Nadella once said, "all companies are software companies," and I believe this captures the essence of IT perfectly. IT is at the forefront of everything we do and integral to every part of every business. The IT industry challenges you to always ask questions, continue building knowledge, and solve problems. If you want to be at the forefront of innovation, you need to be in IT.

What would you choose as your walk-on song?

Given the furor around Oasis reforming for their concerts next year (I didn't get tickets!) it's got to be 'Wonderwall'.



"If you want to be at the forefront of innovation, you need to be in IT."

Ben Watkin, Verkada

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life?

Tough question and after a family discussion, Benedict Cumberbatch! He's in some of the greatest Sci-Fi & fantasy movies, loves solving problems, good dad and overall a good guy to go grab a beer with.

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest?

I am a huge fan of Formula 1. It would have to be Lewis Hamilton, he's in my opinion one of the greatest drivers of all time but is also one of the few sports people who transcends the sport and uses his platform for the greater good.

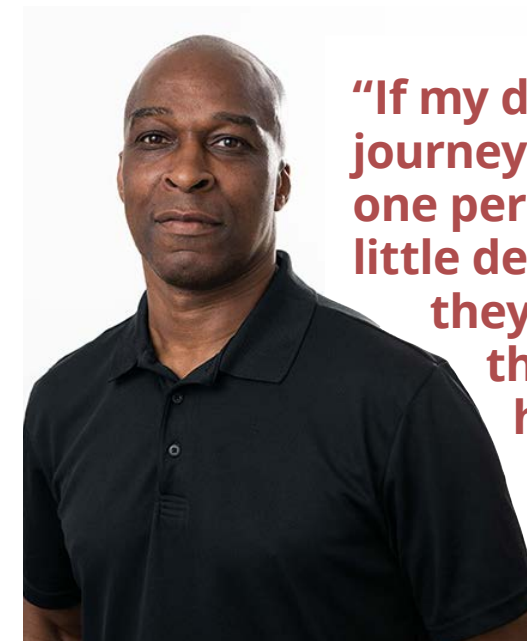
Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why?

I believe the early parts of our career are shaped by key encounters. In the early 2000s I was fortunate to be at Cisco, surrounded by so many impressive colleagues. One of those colleagues was Duncan Mitchell, who led Cisco Service Provider at the time, a part of the business I wanted to join. He offered me a breakfast meeting at 7.30am, which I then asked to move back slightly (it was a tough commute honest!). Ultimately, I took the early meeting and got the greenlight to join Cisco Service Provider.

It's incredible to look back and see how an early start to the day kicked off the rest of my career. I was also fortunate to meet my wife at work, and to this day, I believe she is the most amazing professional colleague I've ever had.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this.

Caleb Augustin, my Americas counterpart. He hired me, for which I am truly grateful for but also recognising the huge impact he's had on building a channel organisation within Verkada. His commitment to the channel with a genuine passion for joint success with our partners inspires me every day.



"If my doctoral journey energises one person to dig a little deeper than they believe they can, it has all been worthwhile."

Dr. Colin Williams, Computacenter

DR. COLIN WILLIAMS
BUSINESS CTO, SECURITY,
COMPUTACENTER

Tell us about your career to date.

Do you have a spare week? I have over 30 years in the IT channel performing numerous roles that include technology sales, strategy and leadership, and crazily doing all of them at the same time in whatever roles I've had. Which has resulted in me showing up and acting very differently to others throughout the time I've been in this amazing industry. I've worked within the largest IT VAR in Europe, Computacenter, for over a decade and working in some amazing teams. And I've helped us to enlighten, delight and satisfy some of the most challenging customers on the planet by delivering value added technology products, services and solutions.

How would your colleagues describe you?

Very fair and decent I hope. Everyone knows I believe the world should be fair and decent to everyone regardless of role, financial status, gender or other social group (then D&I initiatives wouldn't be needed). Very sharp because I'm a quick and critical thinker and very

decisive (I don't tolerate "faffing"). Lastly I have very high standards for both myself and everyone around me, which means I'll make sure I always deliver the highest level of performance available and will help others to do the same to ensure we achieve real success as a team.

Your peers have praised the work you're doing with the Technology Community for Racial Equality (TC4RE), among other things. How do you juggle this with a high-level position at Computacenter?

TC4RE has been a wonderful ride so far because it uniquely brought together a number of competing technology organisations to work as a group guided by a common cause to change the race ratio in the IT industry and ensure there are opportunities for ethnic minority candidates on merit, whether an existing employee within the industry or an early career new entrant. Balancing the extra workload of TC4RE has been easy because so many people in the community pick up the work, meaning it doesn't fall to a single person (that said there are a number of individuals in the TC4RE community such as Nush

[Anushka Davies] and Julie [Simpson] and without their disproportionate amount of effort we simply wouldn't be effective).

What's the proudest achievement of your career so far? I hope this isn't a lazy one, but it was achieving my doctorate from the university of Worcester in 2024 after many years' part-time study. I didn't really undertake and complete the doctorate for me because it doesn't significantly change who I am and what I do in the industry. I did it for tomorrow's me, to act as a beacon to show what's possible regardless of obstacles or challenge. If my doctoral journey energises one person to dig a little deeper than they believe they can, it has all been worthwhile.

How can the IT channel make itself more attractive to the next generation of talent? There is no one single thing because there are many dimensions to the channel as an entity and that's without discussing the sheer span of roles within. It may help significantly if the reseller players do more to explain what "the channel" really is and how it delivers value to technology vendors and customers alike (the recently formed TCA may help with this). Which means channel partners and the individuals who work within them need to tell their stories to a greater degree to showcase how exciting it is to be part of this ever-changing, continually reinventing industry.

In which area has the channel made the most progress over the past three years? The increase and advancement of women in technology-focused roles. It's taken well over a decade but has picked up pace in the last few years and it's great to see so many women achieving their own career aspirations across a broad spectrum of technology engineering, architecture, sales success and exec leadership roles within the many channel partners.

What's your message to education leavers or those outside the industry contemplating a career in the IT channel? Don't forget the IT basics. It's easy to attempt to leapfrog them and focus on emerging technologies such as GenAI (and without doubt they are important skills for the future). However, by understanding the core IT foundations, for example the role of networks, cyber security and the importance of data, to name a few topics, as key building blocks of industry everything else will fall into place and a greater span of opportunities will be available.

Also emphasise that soft skills matter now more than ever, which means the ability to build rapport, maintain a conversation, and become known as a "finisher" are very important attributes for future employees.

What would you choose as your walk-on song? Something by Earth Wind and Fire because I'm a true super fan. Either 'Boogie Wonderland' or 'September'.

Which actor would you have play you in the movie of your life? Denzel Washington, because I'm frequently stopped and told by people he looks like me (note how I said this from my direction haha).

"It's great to see so many women achieving their own career aspirations... within the many channel partners."

Dr. Colin Williams,
Computacenter

If you had your own talk show, who would be your first guest? Easy one, Barack Obama. He achieved the impossible by becoming the first black president of United States of America. It matters not whether he was deemed good or bad (and every prime minister or president polarises opinion), but he was highly effective and led with an air of dignity, intelligence and real authority underpinned by a level of statesmanship that he has still retained even out of presidential office. I will simply ask him "how did you do it" and also say "thank you for helping so many people across the globe to believe impossible really is possible".

Which professional colleague has had the most positive influence on your career and why? It was a sales leader called Simon Church, decades ago when I was leading a pre-sales team at a company called Action Computer Supplies. Simon remains one of the most talented and focused sales leaders I ever met. He had sales charisma, was process driven, meaning nothing was left to chance, and had that energy that picked you up and took you on the same journey he was on. He was very supportive towards me and allowed me to dare to be different with few boundaries which unlocked endless amounts of creativity and corresponding energy. His support and unwavering sponsorship helped me to believe I could be anything in the IT world with planning, capability and focus. I have continued to believe this throughout my career.

Name one other person who deserves recognition in a list like this. Yvonne [Matzk], Coachere. She is somebody regarded by her peers as a key person in the channel for many years. Yvonne is a bundle of energy and well known for doing the right things, giving back to the industry and acts as a role model to others. Yvonne gets a massive recommendation from me.



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