Helping Value-Added Resellers Fast-Track Their Sales and Delivery Capacity Growth

Shelly Duncan, channel manager, Qirx, discusses how sharing intellectual property can help expand the local IT market.

CompTIA: Can you provide an overview of the business?

Shelly: Qirx was founded in 2000 as a professional services company providing IT consulting to the Australian government. Our first virtual deployment was in 2003 for the Australian Department of Industry followed in 2004 by our first virtual datacentre deployment. Qirx became a VMware partner in 2006 and a VMware Accredited Consultant (VAC) Partner in 2008. In 2009, Qirx began providing products in addition to services thus becoming a solutions provider. We continued to grow our partnership with VMware and became a premier partner in 2012. Qirx has served on the APJ Partner Advisory Council for three years. In 2014, Qirx became a VMware Technical Alliance Program partner with the advent of Qirx in a Box.

The main focus for the business at the moment is Qirx in a Box, a hybrid cloud practice builder product that provides value added resellers (VARs) with access to the skills, knowledge, experience and intellectual property developed by Qirx in delivering hundreds of cloud solutions to clients. Qirx in a Box fast tracks the growth of sales and delivery capacity of smaller VARs letting them rapidly expand their businesses.

Qirx in a Box provides a strategic framework and vision for consulting at the executive level, methodologies to manage at the planning and operational levels and a toolkit for implementation at the technical level. It does this across six cloud lifecycle pillars; virtualisation, availability and protection, performance, security, end-user computing and management and automation.

CompTIA: What sets the company apart from its competitors?

Shelly: We evolved rapidly from virtual deployments to federal government. We got in on the cloud right at the very beginning, which means it is in our blood, and we have experience that spans the life of the cloud.

When we looked at ways to grow our business, rather than following the traditional approach of expanding the existing business model into other regions we decided to do something that was unique and outside the square.

There is a lot of space for growth in the cloud market and a lot of opportunity if we partner together. In the past we, like most businesses, considered our intellectual property a competitive edge and wanted to hold onto it. What we realised is that we can use our intellectual property to expand the market by sharing our expertise with other partners and helping them grow their business. This also helps vendors who might be known traditionally for one area but are now across several areas. For example, VMware now spans networking and security but partners might not know that. We help vendors get their tail-end partners up to speed with all of their...
offerings, which helps vendors get their technology to market more quickly as well.

Further, transferring our deep technical skills and extensive field experience through Qirx in a Box helps other VARs design, deliver and support all aspects of the VMware Software-Defined Data Centre (SDDC). It provides the tools partners need to help their clients understand the transformation necessary to move to a hybrid cloud environment, and it lets them design a solution that meets their clients’ specific business goals.

**CompTIA:** Who are your typical customers?

**Shelly:** We work with primarily with partners in the VMware space. These range from larger integrators who want to systemise their go-to-market to some of the new born-in-the-cloud partners who want to expand quickly in hybrid cloud. We help them reduce their learning time and time-to-market by helping them avoid costly mistakes by sharing our key learnings.

**CompTIA:** What opportunities do you see in the local IT channel?

**Shelly:** I think there are a lot of opportunities around vendors that complement VMware technology to provide a complete solution. We are starting to work with these providers to integrate their technologies into our solution so they too can grow their tail-end.

Additionally, the born-in-the-cloud partners offer opportunities. With so many new companies coming into the market, they need to be out delivering and generating income within weeks. This provides an opportunity to partner with them in areas that may not be their core business but help them with that journey.

I believe the channel is not shrinking but the dynamic is changing in the way we go to market. There is consolidation at the big end but there are a lot of new providers at the smaller end. This means they have more freedom and flexibility than some of the big players.

For us, because we are smaller and locally based, we can be agile and work with our partners to develop our solution in ways that will add more value to their requirements.

**CompTIA:** What successes have you had over the past year?

**Shelly:** My role has been setting up distribution channels. We successfully completed that in Australia and New Zealand and have just finished setting up distribution channels in the U.S., ASEAN and the UK.

As a small company with the support of big global vendors like VMware, we were in a great position to take our business to the next level. Our partnerships helped us gain the exposure we needed to gain access and be successful in setting up these new distribution channels.

For me, it has been a unique role having come from large U.S.- or Asian-based vendors and distributors. But I have also been given the freedom to make the role my own and everyone in the company has a vested interest in making the company successful.

**CompTIA:** What are your plans for the year ahead?

**Shelly:** The next step in our distribution journey is setting up a channel in China.
Locally we are looking at what other vendors we can partner with and what programs we can put together for our partners.

We have also just added an online sales training and sales coaching module to Qirx in a Box, and we are looking forward to seeing it take off. This is particularly aimed at new smaller partners or new sales people and will help them manage the lifecycle of the sale, identify opportunities and give them the tools to deliver. We are also looking at what other modules we can add, and are working with partners to see what would be valuable for them.

CompTIA: What advice can you give other IT channel players?

Shelly: Think outside the box. There are a lot of players that have been in the channel for a long time and might be stuck in their way of working. However, the market is changing and cloud is no longer considered a fad, which means traditional players need to figure out how to make it work for them.

Especially with the new generation coming through the workforce, the environment is much more entrepreneurial. I think that all players need to be entrepreneurial within the business and be open to the insights the new generation can bring around consumerisation and how this can help B2B operations.

At the end of the day we should all be working towards delivering the best outcome for our customers.