

LEARNING TO FISH

HOW TECH DATA IS
ENABLING RESELLERS
FOR TRANSFORMATION



Andy Gass
Senior Vice President UK and Ireland
and Digital Europe for Tech Data



While the channel has been focusing on driving digital transformation for end-user customers, Tech Data has been putting in place the elements that will enable reseller businesses to transform themselves into businesses that are fit to deliver the future solutions and services that digitally-dependent customer organisations will need. We spoke to the company's senior strategy-makers about its plans.

Asked directly about his digital transformation strategy, Andy Gass, Senior Vice President UK and Ireland and Digital Europe for Tech Data, replies by telling a story. 'I attended a conference, and someone asked the CIO of McLaren Automotive what the digital strategy for his business was, and he said: "You're asking me the wrong question. You should be asking me **what's my business strategy for the digital age?**" He's absolutely right. You need to be clear on your strategy and use technology to accelerate your strategy and expand and accelerate what you are doing.'

End-user organisations are not embracing transformation just for the sake of it. They are doing it to **benefit their business** and improve their long-term prospects of success. IT resellers – their trusted advisors on technology – must be ready to help them make use of digital technology to achieve their goals.

But to do that successfully in the new digital age, in which hybrid infrastructures, subscription-based services, closer collaboration and much greater business agility will be requisite, **resellers also need to change the way they do business** and interact with customers.

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Rob Tomlin

Your Trusted Advisor

Tech Data, which itself in turn aims to be the trusted advisor to resellers, has been investing and providing the programmes and resources that will enable resellers to develop the capabilities and agility they will need in this new era. Andy Gass, as the ‘Digital Europe’ part of his job title signifies, is responsible for leading this programme for the company data.

The process starts, he explains, with getting Tech Data’s own internal systems and structure in the right place. ‘We are transforming the way we work, and we’ve been investing more in our digital assets to make sure we can deliver on our trusted advisor promise to the customer. To make sure we can help them build value, make more margin, take cost out and increase customer satisfaction.’

Some of the systems and digital assets Tech Data has put in place are highly visible to customers – **InTouch**, the **StreamOne** cloud aggregation platforms, the dedicated **Software Stores**, and the **Activate-here** electronic software download tools. Others, such as the company’s Compass CRM system and its accompanying integrated computer-telephony are not; all of them will, however, be having a significant impact on the service resellers receive from Tech Data.

Real insights

While these assets enable Tech Data to behave and react differently, what it does with the information it collects while interacting with customers can be even more powerful. ‘Yes, we have all these digital assets, but our digital strategy is really about developing the customer experience, taking it to the next level and using the data behind it to understand where we need to go.

‘If we look at where that takes us, as we start to build richer data, we can start to bring together all the information we have on resellers and the market, then use analytics to get real insights on what is going on in reseller businesses and what we need to do to help our customers achieve the best results.’

Rob Tomlin, Managing Director UK and Ireland, Tech Data Advanced Solutions, is excited about what can be done with data, especially with respect to identifying and driving opportunities in emerging technology areas. ‘Digital transformation is really important. If we can harness the customer data, it will be really valuable, and we’ll be able to help



Rob Tomlin
Managing Director Advanced Solutions
UK and Ireland, Tech Data

resellers sell more. We are super-excited about analytics and IoT in particular. It’s a high priority for us. It’s already driving network and our storage business and it’s relevant.

‘If resellers are talking to a customer and do not have the [credit] capacity or they are not as adept at looking at risk – and there is risk in the end user customer as well of course – then I’m very happy for our team to carry out that assessment for them. It makes sense for us as well, because the more we protect them, the more protected we are.’

New skills and capabilities

Tech Data has been pushing ahead with programmes that will enable resellers to adapt and transform the services and support they deliver to end-user customers. Programmes such as **Microsoft Velocity**, which on-boards and enables resellers on the Microsoft Cloud Solutions Provider (CSP) scheme; and **Mentori**, which is specifically aimed at helping reseller businesses transform themselves, and the Tech-as-a-Service (TaaS) initiative, are all making it possible for resellers to acquire new skills and capabilities and change the way they do business.

To this you can add the training resources provided through the Tech Data **Channel Academy**, which provides freely-available online sales training, and the Tech Data Academy technical training platform. Tech Data is also working on an innovative new end-user lead generation scheme that will be backed by vendors and will ensure resellers get leads that are very well qualified and belong to them exclusively.

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Martin Boyce

Underpinning and linking all of this activity is the **Trusted Advisor** approach, which is fundamental to Tech Data’s long-term business strategy. ‘This is about how we re-engineer our engagement with the customer and it is a journey that both we and the customer need to go on’ said Martin Boyce, Group Sales Director UK and Ireland.

‘It’s a continual learning process. It is about understanding the perceived and the actual challenges they face as they transition from being product-oriented to cloud and subscription-based models. They will struggle to compete if they don’t make that journey and start to have a different kind of conversation with end-user customers – and there is a lot we can do to support them. Our job is to understand their needs and formulate that into programmes that will drive innovation, support and collaboration, so that we accelerate them on that transformational journey.’



Martin Boyce
Group Sales Director,
Tech Data UK and Ireland



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Transformational role

A lot of resellers don't have the resources to invest in developing the new skills and capabilities they will need; Tech Data's role is to give them an effective and cost-efficient way to make the transition and ensure they stay relevant to customers as their needs change.

This is exactly what programmes like Microsoft Velocity and Mentori are designed to achieve. Resellers who have engaged on these programmes are changing and seeing positive impacts on their business. Martin Boyce mentions one Mentori partner who said that, if they had not gone onto the programme, they probably would not be in business today.

'In that particular case, Mentori has completely transformed the partner's business. It's really great to hear that and we're pleased with the work we have done. The question now is how we take more resellers on that journey and introduce them to new ideas, products and services that will give them relevance and drive customer stickiness.'



Andy Dow
Group Marketing Director,
Tech Data, UK

*'We need to **teach resellers how to fish** so that at the end of the enablement programme, they can feed themselves.'*

Andy Dow

TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT

Tech Data's partner
enablement programmes

Velocity

The Velocity programme provides resellers with access to the sales, technical and marketing resources they need to accelerate their participation in the Microsoft Cloud Solutions Provider (CSP) programme. It has been a great success with many partners already advancing to Silver Cloud Competency. Training is the core element of the scheme and all Velocity Partners are fully-funded by Tech Data for the main technical course requirement.

Mentori

The Mentori partner transformation programme provides resellers with the resources and expertise needed to migrate towards predictable, profitable and recurring revenues. It takes resellers on an accelerated transformational journey to business models based on services and subscription-based income.

Tech Data Academy and Channel Academy

The Tech Data Academy provides technical training resources that enable reseller and end-user personnel to achieve competence and specific vendor accreditations are available through the Tech Data Academy resource. For more information on the Tech Data Academy, see academy.techdata.com.

Tech-as-a-Service

Tech Data's Tech-as-a-Service (TaaS) provides a simple way for resellers to offer customers hardware, software and services as a complete package on a subscription basis. It offers high residual values and enables resellers to provide complete lifecycle management for customers.

Trusted Advisor

The fundamental goal of the Trusted Advisor approach is to encourage and enable reseller transformation with the ultimate aim of driving their growth and profitability and helping them to reduce costs and to increase customer satisfaction. It provides resellers with access to a wealth of information and knowledge on key solutions areas.

*'Change is now **part of the DNA of our business** and we have a real commitment to get a deeper engagement with our reseller base.'*

Martin Boyce

Learning curve

We have to recognise, he notes, that everyone involved is on a learning curve at the present time. 'We talk about educating our resellers, but we also need to educate ourselves, to understand the needs, where to take opportunities and where to enable change within organisations. Different people are in different places on the journey and some don't yet realise they need to do it. Change is now part of the DNA of our business and we have a real commitment to get a deeper engagement with our reseller base.'

Similarly, resellers will need to be fully committed to transforming their business and embracing change, said Andy Dow, Group Marketing Director. 'These are long-term programmes and they need long-term commitment at the highest level, both within the reseller and from our vendor partners. We need to work with partners not for partners - give someone a fish and they will eat it. We need to teach resellers how to fish so that at the end of the enablement programme, they can feed themselves.'

