



Day in a Life

In August we put field sales managers under the microscope. This month, it's the turn of channel partner managers to share a day in their lives.



The challenge

Dealing with change has been pretty challenging. Because I came into my role in Sage from an acquisition, it meant change all around – for me personally, for the business partners and customers who joined Sage at the time, and for colleagues and structures in Sage. Implementing the changes which needed to be made within Sage's mid-market division has been challenging, sometimes painful, but ultimately hugely rewarding to see the scale of development for everyone who has worked to make our division show strong growth over the past three years.

The enjoyment

Well, there's never a dull moment! I'm an extremely goal driven person and I'm happiest when I'm working to achieve goals with others. My job is enjoyable because I get absorbed in working with other people to achieve targets. I work with wonderful people with diverse skills, so I learn something every day. I also get to meet business owners and decision makers of many different businesses and

organisations, and hear their entrepreneurial stories, their hopes and their challenges and, hopefully, solve them with Sage software solutions! Seriously, though, entrepreneurs make up only 3% of the population. They take risks and go for it with their business ideas. They are real heroes, and hearing their stories is very motivating.

The journal

I get up at 6:30 and aim to be breakfasted and out the door at 7:30, but on this particular morning my progress with the Wheetabix is disrupted mid-munch when I spot an army of ants who have decided to mount an attack on the apartment by marching several infantry divisions through our patio door and into the living room. I grab a handy canister of Ant Stop, and battle ensues. A mop and bucket completes the campaign before I head off to the office for the other battles of the day!

From 8:30 to 9 I catch up on email, as I had been out of the office at a customer seminar in Cork the previous day. Then, once the day officially starts, I spend the first two hours agreeing objectives and doing an induction briefing with a new member of our team to help her get to grips with how things work around here.

Sage Ireland now employs nearly 300 people in the Republic, with three offices here plus head offices in Newcastle and London. There are multiple product areas and multiple channels to market, so it can be quite a challenge to negotiate the organisation initially. I am business partner

manager for Sage Software's MMD division, which covers any software solution that sells via business partners (except for CRM solutions). We are in the happy position of being ahead of budget for the year to date and expect to overachieve for the financial year.

At 11 o'clock I follow up from the previous day's customer seminar and check that registrations are OK for the next seminar, due for the next day. I then reply to more emails. I've read somewhere that the average time a manager gets to focus on any one task is roughly ten minutes. Sometimes I think ten minutes is a luxury to have for just one task! It takes me until lunch time to answer the rest of the previous day's email backlog, deleting the inevitable spam without reading it, discuss new wire items for our business partner news wire, which is due to go out the following week together with items for the last quarter of our financial year.

Next I discuss some current issue with our business partner account managers and agree the next steps. Then I sign off some training invoices and nip upstairs to see the marketing people about an incentive scheme we have just kicked off for our final quarter. I drop off the signed invoices with finance and grab a coffee with our CRM project manager to discuss a project implementation process for solutions via business partners.

At 12:30 I grab an early lunch and return to my office to check through and confirm our sales forecast for the last three

months of the financial year and to set up some mechanisms to track particular aspects of this forecast to make sure it's on track and I that get no surprises.

From about 2 o'clock the afternoon is spent catching up on where we are with the Sage Business School, which is a major programme to develop sales professionals in the Sage business partner channel. There is a recruitment process underway to match graduates with their prospective business partner employers in order to kick off "boot camp" training for solution sales and product training.

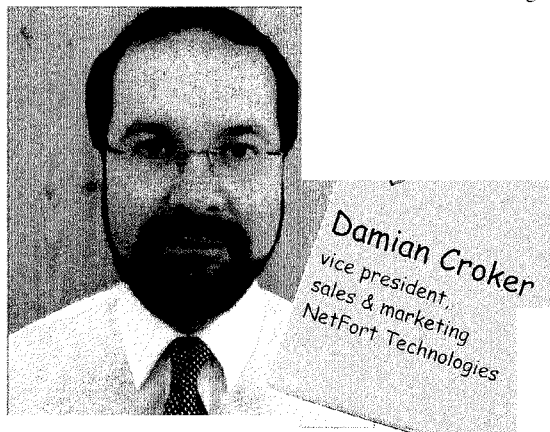
Three thirty finds me working on a key deal with a customer via a business partner. We discuss the detail of where we are in the process, and what more we can do to exceed the potential customer expectations. By now there are more emails to answer, and some copy to write for business partner communications about upgrades to our payroll products.

There's no such thing as a typical day. Some are spent out with customers. Others are spent on research, planning, management, people issues, strategy, internal systems or development. One thing for sure, though: its never quiet!

At 5 pm I find myself answering more emails. By 7 pm I'm ready to leave the office. I'm hoping my other half has dinner ready and that the ant situation is under control, because I'm in need of a relaxing night ahead of an 8 am breakfast meeting in Sandyford . . . during which time my email inbox will be once more filling up.



Never a dull moment . . . Sage's Teresa Maguire



Sandwich for lunch . . . NetFort's Damian Croker

The challenge

The company started out selling direct. All processes and procedures were based on direct but, to scale, we need channel. Therefore, the whole way the company operates has had to change and my challenge was to persuade the company that channel was the way to go.

The enjoyment

There is such a massive opportunity for NetFort to be a key player in the network activity management sector that I get a

real kick out of working with an exceptional team to grow a young business into a world-beater.

The journal

I don't feel too bad this morning considering I had spent the previous night entertaining a new reseller who is over from the UK. I am normally based in the UK but this week I've been staying in a guest house near NetFort's office's on Galway University's Campus. Morning starts with a cooked breakfast and the usual banter with the guest house owner, who takes great delight in pointing out that England has been knocked out

of the World Cup – as if I didn't know!

After breakfast a short walk takes me to the office.

Fortified by a cup of tea, I sit with my CEO and CFO to go through the plans for the day. We have two sales people and an engineer to train from the UK reseller. In

addition, we have commercial discussions to finalise with their sales director and our monthly management meeting. Then we put the finishing touches to a new pricing structure that we've been working on.

The people from the UK reseller arrive around 10. Some of them had gone to a night club the previous night and had not got to bed until four in the morning, but they seem surprisingly alert nonetheless. I show our visitors around NetFort, introducing them to people as we go. They are ushered into a large meeting room where coffee and tea with biscuits have been laid on.

Half an hour later our CEO starts a presentation for the UK reseller staff on NetFort's value proposition and gives a product demo, with me adding my comments along the way. We make a great double act. The visitors throw in some interesting questions, and discussion

quickly gets round to some potential opportunities we could work on together.

Our meeting is interrupted by one of our sales and marketing executives; a university in the UK has heard about our system during a recent meeting of university network managers, and they want a pilot system installed immediately. They have asked if they can have a pilot by the following week and, if successful, would it be possible for us to invoice them before the end of the month? After a nanosecond of careful thought, our answer is yes.

Lunch at 12:30 takes the form of sandwiches, cakes and more tea and coffee. Other people from NetFort join us for a free-flowing discussion on NetFort and the reseller working together, and much more besides.

After lunch the sales people and engineer go off for their separate training sessions, leaving myself and the reseller's sales director to finalise the commercial aspects of our relationship and to discuss and agree a marketing activity to kick-start the relationship.

At 3 o'clock the UK reseller sales director and sales people leave, happy with the training they have been given. The engineer stays for a further day's training.

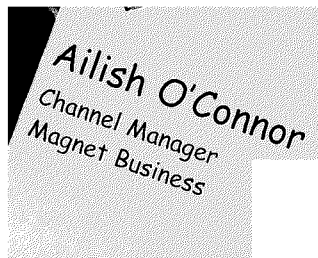
I take the opportunity of a brief pause in the schedule to catch up on email and returning calls to customers who have been trying to reach me. Later I find out how the sales training had gone and am pleased by the positive feedback. Myself and the CEO discuss strategy on the meetings he has scheduled for the next day in Dublin.

A management meeting is scheduled for 3:30, so I make some final changes to my presentation. There are six of us and each has a half-hour slot to make a presentation on our respective areas of responsibility and then to answer questions. As always, there's some animated but friendly discussion. The CTO gives an excellent presentation on our product road map and we wind up the meeting at 7 pm.

I drop off my brief case at the guest house and accompany NetFort's CEO and CFO to watch France beat Portugal and to get some food at a local hotel, where we are joined by some of the other people from NetFort and the engineer from the reseller. I return to the guest house around 11 pm, pleased with the day's achievements.



Off to a smashing start . . .
Ailish O'Connor of Magnet Business



The challenge

As our channel partner base has grown, it has been challenging to provide the same level of individual partner account management. Our channel growth has been exceptional and we now have over 50% more partners than this time last year. To ensure we deliver the same level of account management, most of the admin involved in my role has now been handed over to a very skilled administrator who is dedicated to working in the channel sector of our business.

The enjoyment

No day is the same; actually no hour is the same! This keeps the job interesting. Yesterday I hosted a lunch for some of our partners in the Four Seasons Hotel and today I'm trawling my way through order forms and agreeing installation dates with partners.

The journal

Smashed a mirror in the bathroom this

morning, so was running late .

Finally arrive in the office at 9:30am, just in time for our weekly sales meeting. I report on partner sales for the week and the forthcoming week pipeline, raise issues which require further escalation, and agree marketing for the coming week.

Our hour-long sales meetings are never just that – more like two so it's 11 before I'm back at desk and finally getting to check in with the admin team and returning calls from the morning. I am in the office most of the time so get busy with calls until 1pm.

At 12:30 I grab a sandwich and a breath of fresh air, and then it's into the 'issues' of the day. Thankfully there are no problems to report today. I put the finishing touches to a presentation for a potential partner after lunch and head

into the glorious Dublin traffic.

My 2 o'clock presentation goes really well, so much so that I return to the office with another new partner contract. I brief the team on what follow-up is required for the new partner, and arrange training (both sales and technical) for the new partners' staff.

On returning to the office at 3:30 I realise we have a conference in Waterford the next morning, so not much time to prepare. The rest of the day is spent preparing presentations and getting out of the way of the admin and marketing people, who are busy making up information packs for the Waterford conference.

I leave the office at 6:30 with the car full of posters and stands for the show. Later I'm off to hip-hop dancing class with some of my colleagues.

The challenge

As O2 data partner manager, the key challenge this year is the establishment of a new data reseller channel. We have appointed Clarity Distribution as our sole distributor for our data products and I am focused on signing up the leading IT system integrators and resellers. The challenge is in getting the balance right – everyone is very interested in working with O2 and mobile technologies; however, ensuring we get the right cross-section of partners in terms of sector, scale and geographic coverage with a clear agenda on mobility is the key to success.

The enjoyment

Prior to working in O2, I had spent my entire career in the software development arena. My current role bridges both mobile data technologies and software solutions, which is an exciting mix and very innovating area to be involved in. I get great satisfaction in meeting with partners to determine where mobile business solutions can be incorporated into what they offer to their customers.

The journal

I awake at 6am and snooze the alarm. At 6.20 I awake again and check my phone and XDA for messages.

I get up at 6.30 and am in the car by 7.

By 7:30 my laptop is docked, Outlook is opened, the calendar reviewed, and new e-mails checked. Then it's quickly down to the canteen for breakfast.

At 8:15 I spend a few minutes looking at some of the industry newswires, update task list for today, respond to e-mails, then chase around ensuring we have everything ready for a workshop with our government sector account managers at 9am.

At 09:00 the workshop kicks off with an outline of the agenda and objectives. We have arranged a series of presentations

from a number of our application partners throughout the morning.

At 10:30 we break between presentations. I return two missed calls from O2 account managers – both requesting recommendation on partner to introduce to customer. Check e-mail on my device, which is filling up fast, and reply to high priority e-mails. Chasing for update on approval status for new project.

At 10:45 there's a presentation from second partner. Happy with the way things are going. Good interaction between all attendees. There's a second break at 11:45. Send meeting requests from the XDA to two partners to arrange appointments for next week. Grab a coffee and examine agenda for afternoon meeting with marketing team.

At 12 there's the third partner presentation – excellent event. I make notes on actions and decide on similar event with other sector account managers and partners.

At 1 pm I return to my desk for the first time since 9 am. Add finishing touches to presentation for meeting with marketing team then send reminder to fellow-golfers for the next day's game in the O2 Masters Golf event in Rathsalagh. Fill in the blanks on project proposal document for submission to project planning group.

At 1:15 I have lunch in the O2 canteen. At 2 I meet with the marketing team to examine a three-month plan for data partner marketing. At 3 I have a team meeting to review the status of our Partner Intranet Project. Fifteen minutes later I leave the office to join a partner for a review meeting.

At 4 I have another review meeting with a partner to cover a recently submitted mobile e-mail tender, prospect list, engagement process with O2 sales team, and marketing plans for next quarter.

Although after dinner I clean up and then it's down to Dun Laoghaire for a walk with the children and to Teddy's for an ice-cream.

Niall Gorman
Data Partner Manager
O2 Ireland



Have XDA will travel . . . O2 Ireland's Niall Gorman

The challenge

One of the main challenges is to reenergise CA's channel model in Ireland and to win the hearts and minds of the partner community. This can be achieved by delivering a partner programme that best suits the Irish marketplace. I believe that CA understands what is required to make our partner programme attractive to the right partners. We want a small number of focused partners who will work with CA to grow our business in Ireland. We have developed a partner programme that will reward partners who work with CA to achieve joint business goals. CA has invested time and money building the right support to deliver the business growth required by our partners.

The enjoyment

CA has gone through some major changes over the last 12 months. It is great to be part of these changes, where my knowledge and experience is helping to develop new strategies and ideas. We have now built our partner programme, and I enjoy talking with CA partners about our programme, listening to their ideas, explaining what we are offering, what we expect in return and getting their buy-in. We have local support in place to work with the partners. This includes areas such as account management, training and product updates, tech support, and sales support. I believe our programme is tailored to really help our partners to do well. This has given me a great deal of satisfaction.

The journal

The day starts with the 6:30 alarm. Leave Bray at 7am and join the ever increasing traffic heading for Dublin. I'm in the office at around 7.45.

At 8 I review my plan for the day, catch up on e-mail, bring forward items not

completed on the previous day and drink the first of several coffees.

At 9 I have a conference call with our EMEA channel team. I want to understand what marketing and incentive plans they have for this quarter. I will choose the best offers available and make some minor changes for the Irish marketplace and roll them out here. The call is also a useful way of finding out what works in other countries similar to Ireland. I'm very happy with the call and have some good ideas.

It's 10 o'clock and I have three appointments lined up with reseller partners around Dublin. The agenda is much the same for each partner: We discuss business in general, and I like to get their views on the market. I find out what CA business they are currently doing or targeting, and whether they need any help from us.

We discuss our partner programme.

These face-to-face meetings are great opportunities to get a real understanding of what's happening on the ground.

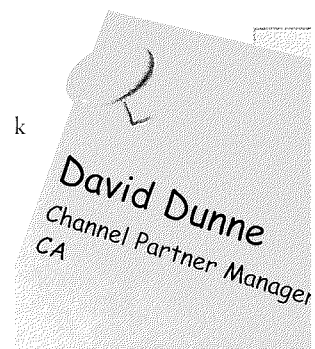
At 1:30 I have a meeting with a distributor over lunch. We discuss targets for this quarter, including what incentives and special offers we can offer the partners.

I make sure that I listen carefully to our distributors. I want to get their view of the market, what's selling best and what actions we need to take to drive business in the traditional partner-reseller arena, also not forgetting retail and OEM business.

At 3 I return to the office in Ballsbridge. I have a meeting with a partner manager to arrange some upcoming road trips to Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Belfast. We want to meet our regional partners to make sure they are also fully up to date with our partner programme, among other things.

At 4 I have a sales conference call to update the sales forecast for the month. Each party needs to be able to explain what will happen, what will not happen, and why.

Six o'clock finds me back in traffic and heading for Bray to eat dinner at about 7.30. Later I'll be playing in a poker classic for charity, which promises to be good fun. I'll hopefully win some money, and it's all for a good cause!



Good listener . . . CA's David Dunne

The challenge

As a value added distributor, Topsec Technology (part of the Top Security Group) represents specific key vendors as though we were their own branch office in Ireland. As such we are not just a sales office, but perform the functions of product management, logistics, sales, marketing, brand development and management training, technical support, product research and development (not something a standard distributor gets involved in), and all of the necessary activities and functions that go along with running a business. Perhaps the biggest challenge is dealing with our vendor peers on a global playing pitch, but working within the confines of the limited size of the Irish market. Irrespective of our degree of penetration into the various market sectors, the market is quite small. One of the resultant characteristics therefore is that most channel IT solutions providers tend to be quite generalist in terms of their technology solution focus. The knock-on effect on ourselves is that we need to be very technically competent, both in pre-sales and post-sales support, to be in a position to help our partners in solution areas where they haven't previously invested time and effort in developing expertise. Finding the right calibre of channel sales and account management staff can be difficult

The enjoyment

It's hard to single out one element. I'd certainly highlight the relationships and the feel-good factor. I enjoy dealing with our channel partner personnel on a regular basis. Another enjoyable element would probably be "the numbers". When I see that our measurable results are continually on the up, then I know that we have got the formula right; our partners like what we are doing and we are both helping with each others success.

The journal

My first task of the day are to chase my

youngest child out of his bed then review my to-do list along with any outstanding items carried over. Next, a quick check of e-mails to see if any issues were not dealt with. I write up notes from discussions with various vendor product managers and marketing managers from my meetings in London. After a quick coffee, I write up brief training notes for sales staff regarding product roadmap information. Then I head to the office.

At 9 I again check my e-mail. Identify if any requests were not dealt with by the sales team. Chase up feedback from the tech support and customer service on a couple of customer service issues that require closure. Another coffee! I check the latest status of stock levels. RoHS (restriction of hazardous substances) environmental regulation has had a very disruptive impact on normal stock lead times from vendors. I compare with sales pipeline data from account managers, and fire off a quick e-mail to vendor logistics to keep us at the top of the priority list. Send a few e-mails to customers with updates to tender-project support. Phone a couple of customers to update the status of outstanding issues, such as license turnaround times. Meet with new CFO to discuss internal administrative procedures and roadmap for enhancement of internal CRM and SOP systems and ecommerce project.

At 11 I deal with inbound customer calls; mostly sales information requests or price requests. Provide price and product information. Process orders. Verify if there have been any vendor price list changes for start of month.

At 12:30 I have a project meeting with one of the account managers. Customer with complex external wireless requirement. Develop network topology and list of further information required about the site. Make up training notes to use this as an example for training the other team members. Provide information or process orders as appropriate. Review end of month sales-out data and product sales performance. Start end-of-quarter sales and management reports. Run report on new customers and prospects. Discuss

service call follow-up with internal account manager. Take a 15-minute break in the sun . . . Heaven!

At 2 I send e-mails to vendor sales managers following the previous day's discussions and decisions regarding the further development of the partner programme in Ireland. Review and update the partner programme proposal document. Provisionally schedule sales and technical training dates for channel partners wanting to receive certification. License management meeting with internal account manager. Review monthly license renewal process. Ensure that reminders have been dispatched. Review renewal history of the last quarter. Any issues arising to be dealt with.

At 3:30 I prepare staff personal development review paperwork in preparation for annual salary reviews. Review product category sales performance versus plan for calculation of bonus from Q2.

At 5 I draft some ideas for channel marketing initiatives and product promotional campaigns. Contact the outsourced website designers for a progress report. Signoff on ad copy and design for Irish Computer magazine. Leave the office at 6.30.

After work, I play with the kids while dinner is cooking. Put a new bell on Christopher's bicycle. Check personal e-mails. Throw on the jacket and helmet and head down to one of the local establishments with the big screen televisions to watch a match with a few friends. ■



David Girvan
Channel Manager
Topsec Technology

