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October 30, 2002

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SOLUTION PROVIDER @ WORK:
 Johnny Chin, President, Onesimus Enterprises



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CRN Test Center

REVIEW: Solution Provider Tool Kit

DOWN TO BUSINESS

Diagnostic Tools Of The Trade

By [Michael Gros](#)

Savvy solution providers should never leave home without a solution provider toolkit that includes diagnostic software, a network sniffer, partitioning software and related products, said Johnny Chin, president of solution provider Onesimus Enterprises, Staten Island, N.Y.

CHANNEL FOCUS

>> **01 COMMUNIQUE:** Offers generous margins, marketing assistance, joint seminars for solution providers in Toronto area.

>> **AMERICAN MEGATRENDS:** Unveiling channel program Dec. 1, will include incentives, technical support.

>> **GFI:** Provides basic support, good margins, sales assistance over the phone, marketing materials.

>> **IMAGINE LAN:** Targets SMB solution providers, offers technical support, good margins, marketing assistance, technical sales materials.

>> **NETWORK INSTRUMENTS:** Provides basic support and training.

>> **POWERQUEST:** Includes rebates, tech support, flexible licensing program, hands-on training.

"End users have always been hesitant to buy sniffers, LAN analyzers, etc. They say, 'We're going to use it once, so why should we buy it? We'll just have consultants come in that have it, and they'll diagnose the problems,'" Chin said. "These tools are definitely things that solution providers use, but not the end client on a routine basis."

In fact, Onesimus is often hired by other solution providers to diagnose complex networking problems. "We do a lot of work for other computer consulting companies because we have more expertise in networking support and the Internet," Chin said. "We've become the VAR for the VAR." Working for other solution providers has become a significant portion of Onesimus' business, he said.

Network troubleshooting tools vendors need to keep in mind that their products are used by both solution providers and customers and should tailor their channel programs accordingly, Chin said. He said he looks at documentation, good technical support and a direct line of communication.

Orem, Utah-based PowerQuest launched its channel program in mid-2001. Marilyn Harroun, manager of channel marketing, said the company plans to sell exclusively through the channel soon.

"When you look at our products and the level of expertise to take them to market, it's foolish to not go through the channel," Harroun said. "Our partners already have relationships with key stakeholders and decision-makers, and we appreciate that."

PowerQuest's multitiered channel program includes complementary products, technical support and MDFs. The company's flexible licensing program lets solution providers choose whether to make money from support or from selling licenses. PowerQuest communicates



Networking support software

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frequently with partners regarding product development and features, and it offers ongoing partner training.

vendors must understand the needs of the solution providers that use their tools.

Product distribution, sales and technical support for Malta-based vendor GFI are handled by GFI USA, an independent company in Cary, N.C. "We've been developing our channel program for most of our six years of existence," said John Kucmierz, vice president of sales. "It's a low-risk program for resellers, just sign up and sell." Because demo copies of the product are available for free via the company's Web site, end users can try out the product before speaking with a solution provider.

The other vendors in this review recently launched or are about to unveil channel programs.

01 Communique, an ISV in Mississauga, Ontario, that sells to solution providers in the Toronto area, focuses on marketing assistance for its partners, said Vice President of Marketing Brian Howden.

01 Communique, which launched its channel program in June 2002, provides general marketing and technical support and recently began working with solution providers to offer joint training seminars for customers. These seminars focus on current business topics and allow solution providers to talk about the services they offer.

Nashua, N.H.-based Imagine LAN has worked informally with solution providers for many years and recently established a formal channel program, said Jan Olsen, vice president of marketing and sales.

"We're focusing now on where our products are most needed, in the SMB market," Olsen said. Imagine LAN offers its partners technical support, leads and technical materials, and will establish a monthly partner newsletter and other services soon, Olsen said.

Bruce Clark, vice president of sales at Network Instruments, Minneapolis, said his company is also making the change from a direct-only sales model to one that includes channel sales. Network Instruments' dual-tiered channel program was launched in January, and includes sales assistance, technical training and lead generation.

"We offer our partners quality, qualified leads," Clark said. "We give them inbound leads from our Web site. If a company looks at our product demo, that means they have a problem to be solved, and therefore are a good lead."

American Megatrends, Norcross, Ga., sells primarily to OEMs, but is unveiling a channel program on Dec. 1 that will include MDFs, technical support and a flexible licensing program, said Mike Shields, corporate software sales manager.

	01 Communique	American Megatrends	GFI	Imagine LAN	Network Instruments	PowerQuest Corp.
Average margin						
Average margin (points)	40	23	30	30	22	13
Distributes to						
Major distributors	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Specialty distributors	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Systems integrators	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Solution providers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Retailers/dealers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
End users	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Discount programs						
Volume discounts offered	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
One or multiple tiers	M	N	M	M	NA	M
One-time discount for large sales	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Solution Provider Support						

Help desk	V	V	V	V	V	V
Sales training	V	N	V	V	V	V
Technical training	V	N	V	V	V	V
Presales support	V	N	V	V	V	V
Post-sales support	V	N	V	V	Y	V
Team sales	V	N	N	V	V	V
Free technical support	V	V	V	V	V	V
White papers	V	V	V	V	V	V
Advisory councils	N	N	N	N	N	V
Online/software configurator	N	N	N	N	N	N
Competitive upgrade offered	V	V	N	N	V	V
"Partnering" program	V	N	N	N	V	N
Separate solution provider Web site	N	N	Y	N	N	NA
Site password-protected	NA	NA	Y	NA	NA	NA
Solution provider authorization						
Sales	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Service	N	V	Y	N	Y	Y
Agent/consultation model	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Lead-generation policy						
Vendor passes leads to solution provider	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Leads prequalified by vendor	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Leads furnished free by vendor	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Solution provider required to report	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Demo-unit policy						
Demos offered free	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
MDF can be used to buy demos	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Market-development funds						
Co-op funds available	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Periodic spiffs/rebates	Y	N	N	N	FREE	Y
Funds based on volume or sales	VOLUME	B	SALES	NA	SALES	B
Vendor inventory policy						
Distributor or vendor offers price protection	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
NA=Not applicable/ not available		Y=Yes	N	N=No	B=Both Vendor & distributor	M=Multiple
SP=Solution Provider		V=Vendor			D=Distributor	Disc.=Discounted

