

The Special Services Mindset

The last few years have seen unprecedented change in the Communications Channel. We have seen traditional PBX vendors wrestle with new digitally-focused competitors. We have seen channel propositions realigned and consolidation as channels have bulked up to create the mass and economies of scale needed to make a margin-based business viable. After watching **Ant Middleton**, previously a member of the Elite Boat Services, deliver a speech about building a powerful sense of team **Gary Bennett**, Channel Sales Director, UK & Ireland at Enghouse, explains how those principles can be applied to the Channel

The constants in those thriving in this environment are an ability to execute any approach, underpinned by a thoroughly-tested strategic plan. Still more important is a continuous focus on team work - vendors and distributors understanding their roles and together with the importance of pooling skills and resources for the greater good.

With this in mind Enghouse invited Ant Middleton, former member of the elite boat services and chief instructor on Channel 4's hit TV show, "SAS: Who Dares Wins", to share his thoughts on how to thrive in a hostile, rapidly-changing environment.

In his powerful speech, Ant focused on key aspects of team work that can drive success, not only in army and special forces units, but also in the business world where collaboration is key.

Ant began to learn about the importance of team work in the Army. His first few years were marked by great individual success picking up prestigious awards including Best Recruit, Best Personal Trainer at the Royal Engineers and gaining his maroon beret in P-Company. But over time, he became conscious that something was missing. Frustrated and uncertain of the path forward, he left the military.

After time on 'civvy street', Ant returned to the forces with a renewed sense of vigour. He had come to realise that what was missing was an understanding of the importance of the team. Army life needs to be about working together to achieve common goals.

It's a lesson channel partnerships can learn from. There needs to be a mutual understanding of the objective of any



Ant Middleton

business opportunity, with all parties committed on pulling together to focus 100% on achieving the end goal. Any focus on individual business objectives must be subsidiary to the focus of the partnership, and any examples of divergence must be addressed.

It's also important when working in any team to acknowledge skill gaps



Gary Bennett

and ask team members or partners to help. Team work is about honest communication with colleagues: playing to your strengths but being open about your weaknesses.

Ant knows how important this is and wasn't afraid to ask for help from his team when made section commander during a tour of Afghanistan. Conscious that the promotion had come before he was ready, he was up front with his team and told them he wouldn't always get things right - and that he would need the rest of them to step up when needed. In return for his honesty he received unwavering support.

Again, the parallels with the channel experience are striking. Vendors, resellers and distributors need to work together on a variety of projects, helping each other when required. Vendors can, for example, provide critical product training support while resellers could help open new markets to vendors by giving them the benefit of their vertical expertise.

In line with this focus, Ant recalled a moment in Afghanistan, where, paralysed with fear, he was unable to punch his way through a door into a room where he knew an enemy combatant was likely to be hiding. A fellow soldier sensing Ant's hesitation gave a reassuring squeeze to his shoulder. Just knowing that his team had his back gave Ant the strength to carry on.

There is a lesson here for businesses too. When times are hard, colleagues or partners working on the same project, will sometimes need to step outside their comfort zone. Having a solid team behind you to reassure and support you is fundamental to the success of the overall goal. **COMMSBUSINESS**