



Online sales and Working From Home are nothing new, yet the last 12 months made clear those who understood that this time would come. Our view of channel activity combined with the most recent survey data tells the story of proactive resellers, putting them at a huge advantage over companies who were still too reliant on offline sales activity.

That is not to say that traditional values have been left behind - far from it. Investing in building relationships to encourage customer loyalty is a key takeaway for the 69% of MSPs who believe they're more valued by their customers now than ever before.

The UK channel had been transforming in preparation for this reality years prior to the pandemic. As a result, channel providers were ready to support untold numbers of businesses move their staff to full-time remote work, almost overnight. Our digital transformation survey aims to explore what to expect in 2021, and how successful resellers may act.

67%

of organisations have seen an increase in hardware sales compared to the previous year.

What does the 'move to online' really mean?

A business without sales won't last long, but a company without customers doesn't exist. The 'move to online' goes far beyond eCommerce sites, to being able to maintain and develop relationships in a way that is enhanced by being online, rather than a sticking plaster solution for face-to-face account management.

A huge 73% of our survey respondents believe that the pandemic has increased their customer's expectations to self-serve tasks online, like understanding their invoice history or service consumption. When asked what they thought the greatest benefit from offering a personalised digital user experience was, 41% said increased customer loyalty. The "old fashioned be there for your customer attitude" can be actively enhanced online by providing features or tools to help empower them, by helping them to help themselves, to make in-person problem solving more meaningful. After all, who wants to make a phone call or write an email every time they need to check something.

What are the benefits of a personalised online service?



This 'move to online' has transformed the channel by allowing resellers to stay connected with their customers and enjoy a massive reported rise in hardware sales while helping the nation set up for life from home - which is reinforced by Stock in the Channel owned data. The Notebook category represents channel growth for obvious reasons, with sales up 25% on the previous year; and with 49% of our respondents stating increased hardware sales as the greatest opportunity for the coming year, channel sales don't look like they'll be slowing down anytime soon.

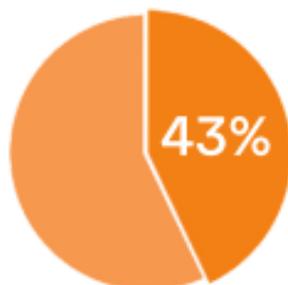
The next frontier: cloud services for everyone

Reselling cloud products is still comparatively young, as such we're seeing the capabilities of services management improving in leaps and bounds. While the last 12 months have seen greater adoption, 2021 could see a transformation of on-demand consumption and flexible provisioning, to allow migration between providers.

Only half of our survey respondents said that reselling cloud services was currently important to their business, however, this figure jumps to three-quarters of respondents telling us that this will be important in the coming year. Resellers are recognising the opportunity to manage their customer's consumption to help save cost and resource, in fact 20% of our respondents think that this will be their greatest business opportunity for 2021.

Over a quarter of respondents said that provisioning across multiple providers will be the greatest challenge, backing up the need for a real-time service with manual control to change suppliers as and when required. Meanwhile, the greatest barrier to offering cloud-based services or products will be automating the processes. By ensuring that provisioning, product management, usage, billing and even support are able to be seamlessly allocated based on a customer's needs, this could usher in a new type of cloud service management to become more accessible to resellers of all sizes.

100% of respondents who already resell cloud services said they will remain important or very important to their business next year.



say that automating processes is the greatest challenge to reselling cloud services.

71% agree that MSPs who fail to invest in an online platform to engage with their customers risk losing business to those who do.

3-in-4

believe that the pandemic has increased customers' expectations to self-serve tasks online.

49%

see increased hardware sales as the greatest opportunity for revenue growth in the next 12 months.

What makes a future-facing reseller?

We are fortunate to enjoy a unique view of the channel. With over 50,000 resellers using Stock in the Channel services, there is a wealth of insights to understand. Combined with our most recent survey data, we've drawn out 3 key characteristics shared by successful resellers:



Working to automate digital sales processes

77% of respondents who have introduced greater automation in the last year have experienced a rise in hardware sales; clearly this is a key driver to online sales growth. It is worth noting that none of those respondents who disagreed that MSPs have become more valuable in the last year had implemented sales automation. The verdict? Relying on manual data-input and making orders by email won't lead to growing sales.

Increasing their cloud services offering

Two-thirds of those who have automated sales processes say that the greatest opportunity lies in reselling cloud services. Having experienced hardware growth through automation, it is realistic to anticipate the same from cloud products, if they could be streamlined in the same way. Automatically reconciling billing into accounting software could be the first step into a more flexible future of consumption.



Enhancing the online service through personalisation

In a year of extreme challenges, the service providers that worked to improve their customer relationships are those that came out on top. Roughly a third of our respondents say that personalisation leads to increased sales, especially in the modern reseller landscape of customers 'self-serving' themselves for more routine tasks such as asking for quotes or re-ordering frequent purchases.

Modern Selling happens online. Where else?

Looking to bring online sales and cloud services provisioning onto one piece of glass? Meet the all-in-one Customer Portal built for IT resellers and MSPs, with over 25 digital features designed to empower customers and support sell-through. Contact sales@stockinthechannel.co.uk to find out more.

