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DATA CENTRE MASTERY

Data centre solutions vendor Cannon Technologies and regional distributor Cerebra Middle East FZCO are upping the tempo in the data centre space. The two companies are looking to expand their partner base in the Middle East to gain more market share.

Looking to cement its data centre solutions offerings, UK-based Cannon Technologies and its Middle East distribution partner Cerebra Middle East FZCO have joined hands to launch a series of channel initiatives that aim at helping partners to take advantage of opportunities in the data centre, cloud and virtualisation segment.

With data centre, cloud and virtualisation challenges increasing every day, the need to help reseller partners to develop the right business model has become even more imperative for Cannon and Cerebra.

Consequently, the two companies have teamed up and are upping the tempo around data centre solutions and how reseller partners can develop avenues of earning recurring revenues.

James Coughlan, director, New Business MEA at Cannon Technologies Ltd, said in the data centre industry speed of delivery can be a key component for the end-user selecting a vendor or channel partner. Coughlan said at Cannon Technologies, the company believes that it has been able to achieve success in the Middle East market through partnership with Cerebra, that stocks Cannon equipment locally.

He said in addition, Cannon has developed a top class customer service organisation that delivers fast and accurate response times both in pre-sales and post-sales situations. "We work closely with our partner to insure that they are fully up to speed on the latest Cannon offerings," he said.

Asit Ahuja, director and CEO at Cerebra Middle East FZCO, said the company is a niche IT distribution house offering data centre and IT

Infrastructure management solutions to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) market. "We partner with a variety of resellers, system integrators and value-added resellers in the small, mid-sized and enterprise markets," he said.

Ahuja said Cerebra's focused business practices and value addition provide access to products, programmes, services, support and



Asit Ahuja, CEO, Cerebra FZCO, (l) with James Coughlan, director, New Business MEA at Cannon Technologies Ltd.

knowledge that helps the channel to gain a competitive advantage in the way that they provide solutions to their customers. "Our strategy in the region is to bring to our channel partners best-in-class solutions focused on storage and infrastructure, and add value to the product offerings of all the vendors we partner with," Ahuja said. "The region lacked true value-added distribution and we saw a space for ourselves in this fast growing market."

Founded in 1978, Cannon's Middle East presence was established in 2010 and the company has steadily been growing its market share in the region since. The company has also been supplying equipment to the region for many years prior to establishing presence with its biggest project to date located at the Injazat data centre in Abu Dhabi.

Today, Cannon Technologies has a two-tier channel model after it appointed Cerebra to deliver all its offerings from the smallest rack to full turn key data centre solutions. "Cannon works closely with Cerebra to deliver the highest quality design that fit customer requirements in the region," said Coughlan.

Ahuja agreed and said the market conditions at present suggest that the mid-market is a potential growth area in the region. Cerebra along with Cannon are focusing on highly affordable mid-market products which will also be extremely attractive for the enterprise segment that may have downsized their IT spending. "Overall, the Middle East market is fast growing and so is the IT channel in the region. The data centre industry has been seeing an impressive year-on-year growth and the trend will continue in 2013, especially in the Middle East. "Our product offerings carry a huge business potential for a variety of resellers and system integrators across all verticals in the region," he said.

With more partners expecting the renewed focus by Cannon and Cerebra in the data centre space to open up opportunities for them, how are the two companies engaging channel partners across the region?

According to Coughlan, Cannon and Cerebra will be holding reseller events in the coming months to highlight the benefits of Cannon in the data centre sector. "We intend to educate partners on

data centre efficiencies and how working with Cannon will ultimately contribute to improving a client's data centre performance," he said. "We are currently building our partner portfolio in the region. We will be targeting specific partners with company profiles that can deliver the highest quality projects."

He explained that Cannon is seeking partners that have experience in the data centre environment and can hit the ground running with its offering. "We specifically require partners with skills in critical power and cooling environments," he added.

As a value-added distributor for Cannon Technologies, Fujitsu, FalconStor, Fibrenetix and Milestone, all the vendor offerings complement each other well, said Ahuja.

He added that it is Cerebra's endeavour to enhance its solutions portfolio in accordance with the requirements of the valued channel

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JAMES COUGHLAN, DIRECTOR, NEW BUSINESS MEA, CANNON TECHNOLOGIES LTD

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partners across the Middle East geography. Ahuja further explained that the company plans to augment its support for Cannon solutions in the following areas: pre-sales assistance, proof of concepts (POC), technical support and post-sales support, training and channel enablement, incentives for channel sales teams, lead generation activities, joint marketing activities and credit support.

Remarking on data centre trends in the Middle East region, Coughlan added that as the data centre space is inherently generic in all verticals, Cannon doesn't have a specific vertical focus at present, however, as the company continues to gain market share it will be appointing more people to take these specific roles.

Coughlan said the company sees the mid-market as an area with high growth potential in the Middle East belt with many organisations having to think about higher power densities and cooling requirements that did not affect users in this sector previously.

"As data centres are a universal requirement across all business verticals, we do have specific products for tailored for certain

industries although there is always a crossover in this regard," Coughlan said.

He added that through Cerebra, the company will be working closely with the channel partners in the region to bring. "We are not only be rolling out an exciting partner programme for resellers in the region, but will also be adding further value to the channel by providing vertical specific solutions," Coughlan explained.

Ahuja added that like Cannon, Cerebra does not focus on any specific verticals at the moment, however, as the company expands its vendor portfolio, it plans to onboard resources with domain expertise across various verticals in the region. "Our industry specific portfolio will initially cover storage, infrastructure and security solutions for the oil and gas, banking, healthcare, telco, media, education, retail and hospitality verticals," he said.

Ahuja pointed out that Cerebra already runs a lot of channel initiatives and along with vendors like Cannon it is in the process of formalising vendor specific partner programmes and initiatives in the Middle East. "The Cerebra partner programme aims to incentivise the channel further with rebates, certification incentives and awards," he said.

Aside from partner initiatives, Ahuja revealed that Cerebra is the authorised service provider (ASP) for most of its vendor partners including Cannon. "We provide pre-sales as well as post-sales support to all resellers in the region. The level of support may differ from country to country at present, but we plan to offer level one support across all territories in the near future," he said.

Looking ahead, Ahuja said being in the business of distribution, Cerebra has to be strategically located in vantage positions across the region in order for its vendors and resellers to benefit. "Presently, we have offices in the UAE and KSA. We plan to move into the North Africa region in the next financial year. We are extremely excited about having stepped into KSA this year and see the Kingdom as a major growth area for us and our channel ecosystem there," he said.

Ahuja said that Cerebra will continue to work very closely with channel partners to bring to them best-of-breed data centre solutions. "We will not only be rolling out exciting partner initiatives in the near future in the region and in the process help our partners to develop expertise and some mastery, but also add further value to the channel by providing vertical specific solutions," he said. ■