

# Service Support – Key to a Vendor's Success

**It is a proven fact that customers repeatedly do business with companies that provide quality customer service. However there is very little that the vendor can do to set the image right if a vendor fails to comply with the service commitments it has made to the customer**

Service is the primary concern for a customer today while buying a product, and vendors need to ensure that customers get excellent support and services from their end. It becomes even more critical in some of the product segments where businesses ideally depend on technical and customer support, especially security, storage, server products and so on.

Nowadays, it is not just about designing the product, getting it manufactured and then selling it. For a rational customer of today, after-sales service becomes a strong

point in the decision-making process. The end-result for every brand is to keep the customer happy. Backed by utility, convenience, aesthetics, and price, service acts as an extremely important aspect to ensure high customer's satisfaction and thereby long-term association. Aesthetics and pricing do play an important role in making a product look more visually appealing to a customer, but this cannot be achieved at the cost of support service, which a customer understands it very well. In spite of India being a price-sensitive market, consumers are generally open to

pay a little more to purchase a quality product, if it is backed by quality post-sales service support.

## Vendors & Service....

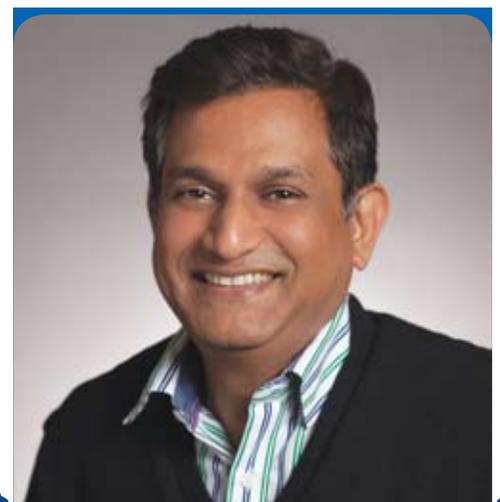
For D-Link, it is its goal to nurture a truly customer-focussed culture by providing service with a personal touch. "D-Link strives to serve customers with respect, knowledge, and personal attention regardless of whether the customer is an individual or a large corporation. As a result, over the years D-Link has invested in developing a robust support infrastructure



**Sudipto Ghosh**  
Executive Director – Services, Lenovo



**Rajesh Gupta**  
Country Manager, India & SAARC,  
SanDisk



**A. Balakrishnan**  
Senior Director-EMC Global Services Lead  
EMC IT Solutions India Pvt Ltd



**Sunil Sharma**  
Vice-President – Sales & Operations, India & SAARC, Cyberoam

that aims to meet the customer’s demands in a hassle-free manner,” says Balgond Chougula, Vice-President – Customer Support Services, D-Link (India) Ltd.

Barracuda considers every customer to be an investment. Customer relationships are built into its core identity. “We rely on our customers for their feedback, referrals, ideas, and their ongoing business. We have a 30-day risk-free trial period on most products, real-time order fulfilment, affordable and easy-to-buy products, no per-user fees on most products, instant replacement option, data migration and recovery services, hardware refresh program and basic, enhanced and premium support options,” asserts Murali Urs, Country Manager, Barracuda Networks, India.

Fortinet, on its part, has expanded its India Technical Assistance Centre by adding support engineers, professional services consultants and Premium Account managers. Besides providing Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 phone support to Indian and SAARC customers, Fortinet’s team oversees Professional Services and Technical Account Management, ensuring expert and timely deployment of local projects. “We have also invested in highly-skilled engineering resources to help customers solve difficult technical



**Murali Urs**  
Country Manager, Barracuda Networks India

issues and deploy complex architectural designs and implementations. These resident engineers will have direct access to Fortinet’s developers and support resources for onsite or offsite implementations, and will ensure a timely, precise and complete service experience for customers,” explains Rajesh Maurya, Country Manager, India & SAARC, Fortinet.

Partners are as important as the end customer to Lenovo and the company has close interactions with them. “We have realized that in pursuit of extending the best support to our customers, we have not been keeping touch with partners sometimes as much as we have to be. To understand them more clearly, we are doing different programs with partners. Firstly, we do calendric meets with the Business partners. Secondly, we have facilitated a fast track priority access for the Business partners. So whenever they have to interact with Lenovo, they will be given a line by which they can reach our contact center. For dead-on-arrival products also, we are



**Anil Zachariah**  
Director, Customer Service EMC

able to give a very fast response to the partner. We also do regular Round table meets with partners to understand their pain points,” explains Sudipto Ghosh, Executive Director – Services, Lenovo in detail.

Service forms an important component of Juniper’s overall product strategy. “Talking about repair and replacement policy, we keep two product guidelines in mind – what is the SLA we have around the hardware and secondly what kind of a software support do we give. For tier 1 domain support, in which we cover all metros and large cities, we have these warehouses in these places from where we get the support. We have set up similar support for the other markets which are important and growing for us. Our intention is to keep looking at supporting the customers from these markets from time to time,” defines Mrityunjay Kumar, Country Director, Enterprise and Channel Business (India-SAARC) - Juniper



**Khwaja Saifuddin**  
Sr Sales Director – South Asia, Middle East and Africa, WD

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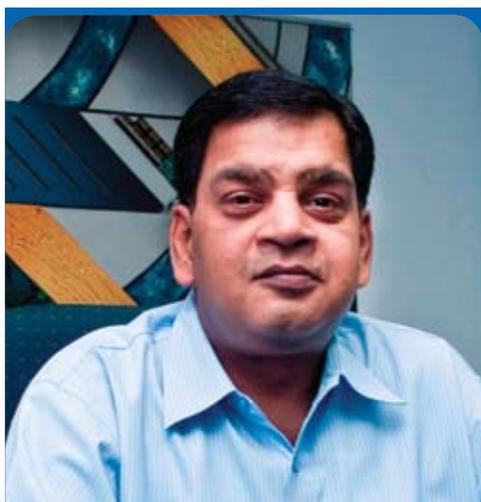
**Kapal S. Pansari**  
Director – Marketing, Rashi Peripherals

Networks about the company's service strategy.

In the case of EMC, while the SLA and the ownership of any service deal lies with EMC, 95% of the support is provided by its partners alone. Anil Zachariah, Director, Customer Service – EMC says, "For a technology company, service plays an extremely crucial role. We always make sure that the partner feels comfortable working with us, whether it is in terms of service, business expansion or growing the market. It is because our partners help our customers implement the solution at the first place that they come to us again and again. We have offices in 7 locations but we serve customers across 120 locations in the country."

Cyberoam provides unrivalled technical and product support and customer care with its Global Support Management Centre (GSMC). "To help our customers reach us with ease, we provide a range of 24x7 communication channels that include email, live chat, phone and support via customer portal. Our well-defined support tiers ensure faster and apt resolution of customer queries," says Sunil Sharma, Vice-President – Sales & Operations, India & SAARC, Cyberoam.

With over 90 support engineers across the globe speaking more than 15



**Anuj Jain**  
Managing Director, Eurotech Technologies Private Ltd

languages, Axis assures that its customers get assistance anytime and anywhere. "We ensure that customers get a peace of mind when working with Axis solutions. After the product sales, constant support is given to our customers. Some of these supports are Phone, FAQ, Chat, RMA, Extended Warranty, Helpdesk and Warranty," opines Sudhindra Holla, Country Manager, Axis Communications India & SAARC.

Providing world-class customer service is central to establishing and maintaining the trust with customers for SanDisk. To meet the needs of a rapidly-expanding global customer base, SanDisk integrated its existing customer service channels like Knowledge Base, Live Chat, and Social Media Monitoring within the company's CRM. "SanDisk also expanded to new channels, such as chat and SMS, to improve visibility and enhance the overall customer experience. As a result, SanDisk increased average retail customer's satisfaction scores from 89 per cent to 94.5 per cent and improved engagement by 17 per cent year over year. Our customer service



**Sunil Grewal**  
Director – Sales and MarCom, GIGABYTE Technology (India) Pvt. Ltd

has also been widely recognized," says Rajesh Gupta, Country Manager – India & SAARC, SanDisk.

Quantum Hi Tech Merchandising Private Limited (QHMP) has set in its own touch points – 20 company-operated service centres along with several partnered ones too to keep its access to customers transparent. "Apart from the same, we also have set up the 50 Collection Centres and dedicated Call centres providing Telephonic assistance and remote troubleshooting which makes us a leader in Support. The extensive network and set-up surely builds the hassle-free support with the key motto of QHMP being we are always happy to serve YOU," says Ashish Mutneja, Director Quantum Hi Tech Merchandising Private Ltd. Furthermore, the company also endeavours to open more and more service centres to increase its reach and give last-mile service and the same process shall continue this year as well.

WD believes that its responsibility



**Shammi Moza**  
Director, F1 Info Solutions & Services Private Ltd

towards its customers does not end with selling a product. It ensures that a user receives a replacement product within warranty with the same ease with which he purchased it. "WD Express, a free pick-up-and-drop service by WD, allows users to send faulty drives from and receive replacement drives right at their doorstep. Additionally, WD also has 74 drop points across India where customers can avail our replacement services. The information on these drop points is also available on our WD Facebook page," explains Khwaja Saifuddin, Senior Sales Director – South Asia, Middle East and Africa, WD.

"With the rapid growth of IT and mobility firms in smaller cities, there arose a need to outsource pre-sales and post-sales functions to third-party Neutral Service providers (NSPs). This has enabled these firms to bridge gaps in their post-sales delivery chain in the interior regions. They are now increasingly looking at NSPs as one-stop shop for pre-sales and post-sales services, within the expected budget, quality of service and reach. Being a Neutral Service Provider, we have a significant role to play. We help IT organizations to focus on their core business, while ensuring their customers' loyalty to remain intact," contends Shammi Moza, Director, F1 Info



**Anil Chutani**  
Vice-President, Technical, Su-Kam



**Mrityunjay Kumar**  
Country Director, Enterprise and Channel Business (India-SAARC), Juniper Networks

Solutions & Services Private Ltd.

Gigabyte believes that there can be no better brand ambassador for any vendor than a happy customer. “We have been continuously improving our post-sales service set-up. In spite of this, we recently started making a renewed, conscious effort of investing hugely into our service set-up, because we feel there is always room for improvement,” says Sunil Grewal, Director – Sales and MarCom, GIGABYTE Technology (India) Private Ltd. The new investment is for setting up sophisticated, high-tech post-sales service centres across India. Though the new centres are only in metro cities, they operate as service hubs for their respective regional zones, which cover non-metro regions to a large extent.

Matrix feels that local empowerment is the only way forward. “We, at Matrix, put tremendous efforts to ensure that channel partners are professionally trained so that the requirements of customers are taken care at the local level rather than depending on us for support,” says Sagar Gosalia, Sr. Vice-President – Marketing & Sales, Matrix Comsec.

Eurotech has an excellent post-sales support system in place along with its qualified distributors/ resellers, since they are well equipped to meet any support challenges. “We continually enhance and



**Sagar Gosalia**  
Sr Vice-President – Marketing & Sales, Matrix Comsec

expand the scope of our services to meet customer’s goals ensuring zero downtime. Our commitment to customers and superior service and technical support are the key factors of the support strategy,” asserts Anuj Jain, Managing Director, Eurotech Technologies Private Ltd.

Rashi has a plethora of services – from Product Marketing to Service solutions. Since the inception of Rashi, the company has given the same weightage to services as compared to its distribution strategy. “Rashi is also the ASP (Authorized Service Provider) for most of the brands associated with us, for example Asus notebook, Toshiba hard drives, SanDisk flash products, ECS motherboards – the list goes on. We serve and distribute with much excellence. It has been one of our core strengths and has helped us to scale the business rapidly,” maintains Kapal S. Pansari, Director – Marketing, Rashi Peripherals.

Complexities of a vendor-channel relationship have led to companies taking



**Balgond Chougula**  
Vice-President – Customer Support Services, D-Link (India) Ltd

multiple routes in the market today. It is due to this reason that Panasonic continues to constantly evaluate the channel requirements, vendor offerings and business models to remain competitive in the industry. “Some of the practises that we have adopted include educating channel partners on a regular basis by taking workshops for channel partners, supporting channel partners through advertising and promotions at the shop front level, holding quarterly dealer meets, keeping in constant touch with channel partners and so on,” explains Toru Hasegawa, Divisional Managing Director, Solutions Division, Panasonic India.

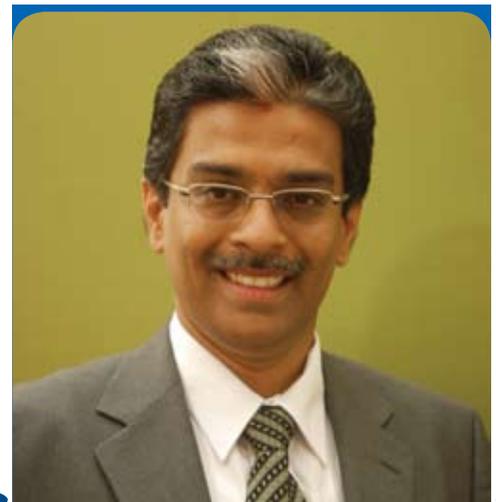
### **For Channel, it’s a Sales + Service Portfolio...**

Just like a thriving partner community is essential to the company’s continued growth, vendor’s assistance becomes equally important for a partner to function and do not just sales but also servicing the customer in a way that he becomes content



**Toru Hasegawa**  
Divisional Managing Director, Solutions Division, Panasonic India

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**Sudhindra Holla**  
Country Manager, Axis Communications India & SAARC

to come back to the same vendor the next time. It then becomes important for a vendor to see that it supports its partners to get the best possible outcome from them.

Being a channel-centric company, for D-Link it has always been its endeavour to enable channel partners/ re-sellers to address customer concerns in a viable and effective manner. It organizes training/ educational seminars city-wise so as to ensure that the partners are updated on the latest developments in the networking domain, and are well versed to handle customer's requirements. "We have also rolled out certification programs for partners/ resellers that will give them extra confidence in their business," says Chougula.

To address service related issues, Su-Kam has 700 + engineers and has its own service centres pan India. "We call the engineers of our partners to the factory and they are then trained on our product range. We make sure that they understand the product and are competent enough to handle the situation at their end. Training is critical to addressing service issues of customers. If they are unable to do it, we have our own back-end engineers in our service centres to look into the problem. If after the warranty period is over, we go back to them and remain in constant touch, because at the end of the day they are using our products and we are to ensure that they are in good working conditions," says Anil Chutani, Vice President, Technical, Su-Kam.

Barracuda is fully committed to helping its partner resellers succeed. The Barracuda Partner Program encompasses a number of rich benefits and services to help partners enhance their businesses. Depending on a partner's needs, different levels of participation in the program are available. Benefits of membership include marketing support, training, lead generation, joint marketing, product information,



**Ashish Mutneja**  
Director, Quantum Hi Tech Merchandising Private Ltd

Interactive Webinars and Partner Seminars, onsite training and special incentives.

Fortinet is dedicated to providing the highest levels of training and enablement to help its partners achieve greater levels of growth and profitability. "The Fortinet Network Security Expertise (NSE) certification training, which is offered free of charge to all Fortinet partners, provides an important differentiator, allowing partners to demonstrate a diverse range of critical security skills to better service existing and new customers," Rajesh explains.

Cyberoam is a channel-driven Network Security Company and has a focussed channel strategy and active channel partner ecosystem all over India. "We value the efforts of our channel partners, and constantly enable avenues to strengthen lead conversion and customer engagement, providing total support at every stage of sales cycle," replies Sunil. In the last fiscal, Cyberoam has trained close-to 1,500 individuals in the partner fraternity.

Gigabyte regularly conducts over 20 reseller / System Integrator (SI) meets across India every quarter, with the

objective of offering technology-based training and education to our channel partners. "Simplified training programs are the most fundamental feature of our channel partner engagement initiatives, essentially because such programs help in enhancing their product knowledge as well as confidence to better manage and support their customers. Service-related knowledge-sharing also forms an integral part of these training sessions," believes Grewal.

Matrix provides complete training to partners at two levels – 1. Professional Level 2. Expert Level. Once a person is trained at both levels, he/she can manage all the needs of customer, except component level repairs. "We invest in terms of manpower and resources to ensure that we follow a training calendar and in turn the partners pay for this training," explains Sagar.

Rashi is rendering services as an authorized service provider (ASP). Hence, it gets per unit support from the vendors. "However, for Rashi providing services is not the only objective but considers it as a value addition to complement or rather complete the IT distribution ecosystem," opines Kapal.

### Moving on...

Service support becomes a very vital aspect, especially if the company happens to be a market leader and has the reputation of being a trustworthy brand. It is the key factor for technology products as it helps customers to overcome the challenges caused due to constant technical evolutions. It is a key differentiating factor that drives growth. As a result, service is more often seen as an assurance from the brand. So while aesthetics and pricing of a product do play a prominent role in making the purchase decision, it is the consistent and efficient service support offered that affirms the brand credibility in the consumer's mind and goes a long way in influencing the buying decision. ■

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## Akamai unveils Cloud Security Intelligence

Recognizing the crucial role data analytics play in more effectively fighting cloud security threats, Akamai Technologies has unveiled the foundation underpinning its Cloud Security Solutions. Known as Akamai Cloud Security Intelligence, a data processing engine within the Akamai Intelligent Platform, the engine is used to continuously analyze more than two Petabytes of data related to web security threats. Akamai uses the resulting intelligence to not only continuously update and improve the Kona Site Defender application security rule set, but also provides the framework around which innovative offerings, such as the newly available Kona Client Reputation solutions are built.

Akamai Cloud Security Intelligence is designed to provide more comprehensive insight into how malicious actors are attacking web properties, which in turn can be used to inform the direction of Akamai's Cloud Security Solutions.

"The Akamai Cloud Security Intelligence data analysis engine provides a solid foundation from which we are able to make our existing Akamai Cloud Security Solutions even smarter and provide a framework upon which new cloud security solutions can be built. The ultimate goal is to continue delivering technology designed to keep our customers' online businesses protected in the face of an ever-changing threat landscape," explained John Summers, Vice-President, Cloud Security, Akamai.

Security professionals can benefit from the power of Akamai's Cloud Security Intelligence through two newly-introduced offerings:

**Kona Client Reputation:** Akamai's unprecedented view of web traffic gives the company access to more web client data than any other security provider. That data, combined with a proprietary query language and advanced heuristics and algorithms creates a reputation "score" for every IP address that crosses the platform. As important, this score can adapt over time, based on the ongoing data analysis of IP address activity.

**Improved Kona Rule Set:** Responding to a consistently evolving threat landscape requires the agility to quickly block malicious activity without hampering legitimate traffic. Already proven to deliver industry-leading false positive and false negative rates, the improved Kona Rule Set has been developed based on the ongoing analysis of more than two Petabytes of security-related data.