Neuralytix

RESEARCH NOTE

Flagship Solutions Group, a mid-size Florida based IBM partner, is a shining example of the innovation and creativity that provides real customer value in the cloud era.

# Flagship Solutions Group: Thriving in Advent of the IT Cloud

## Analysis

There is a great deal of attention and focus on all the different variants of indirect partners in IT markets. Since the early days of the industry, IT manufacturers have been working with partners to help sell, deliver and support their solutions to the IT buyer. These IT partners add unique value to the generic solutions most vendors sell. As with any large pervasive group, some are more adept in one area compared to another. One partner, Flagship Solutions Group, a mid-size solution provider based in Florida and largely focused on IBM solutions is a shining example of the innovation, creativity and value-add that the channel can provide the customer.

One example of their innovative solutions is a proof of concept that Flagship wrote for the Miami Dolphins. Flagship created a social media intelligence and engagement solution using ISV software to the Dolphins. This helped them to increase their fan engagement, customer service, and positively increase the attendee experience. Flagship's solution provides real time data about attendees for such things as tracking attendee traffic to direct fans to available entrances at the stadium at game or event times. Flagship has been nominated for an IBM Beacon Award for this implementation.

Flagship is also being recognized by IBM itself for the work it is doing with IBM SoftLayer (IBM cloud). Many kudos for Flagship for stepped up the plate, offering migration, integration, monitoring, and services for SoftLayer customers. This is a new area of business growth for Flagship. The company will continue to resell solutions, services etc., but has raised its hand to offer this to the IBM Softlayer base, thereby increasing the collective base and once again adding true value to the solution.

## Guidance

“There is gold in them there hills” as the saying goes. In this case the hills are the IT indirect partners. Flagship is an example of one such piece of gold. As with gold there are others, but there is also a lot of sand! They exist but are rare and should not be overlooked, or over controlled. The gold can be found when suppliers:

- Provide training, tools and access to their platforms as these partners are nimble, have knowledge of alternative platforms as well as the vendor (IBM for example in this case).
- Allow the partners the freedom to chart their own course to fit the customer’s need vs. telling them what they can and can’t do.
- Listen, learn and support the partners as they expand their capabilities, providing ongoing support.

There are many other elements, highlighted as the ‘table stakes’ for those interested in engaging with partners. This is true not only for existing partners, but for partner recruitment as well.

The cloud and channel are the winning combination. This is not survival of the fittest. This is evolution. As the markets mature and change, the ones that continue to evolve will dominate in the evolution of the market. Those that do not or choose not to, will not necessarily perish, but they will be relegated to areas outside of the evolution, hence be less profitable, and their tenure will be more in question.

There are also valuable lessons to be learned by other members of the channel community. Rather than running or avoiding cloud providers including suppliers with a cloud offering, partners would be well served to embrace the cloud. It is not likely anyone can or will stop the market transition to the cloud. Value can be added by partners in many variants of the cloud offering. Partners can add value when they host, build, or offer managed services. Worrying or avoiding the cloud will not work. That may prove to be more detrimental than adopting a way to embrace the model. This of course requires planning, financial metrics, etc. Payment for cloud is not resale, but subscription based. For many this is a transition. For those who have or are crossing the chasm, the model has proven it can and does work for those going in eyes wide open and accepting of the business change.

## Conclusion

The channel without the cloud or vice versa is almost preposterous. The cloud is the next evolution of the IT market. It is not a new product, new service, or a new model. At the highest level it is about payment issues. Various cloud models offer the customers the option for either capex or op ex.

The cloud predictable nimble, support just as all IT does. The success and growth of the cloud needs partners such as Flagship.

This is true for all suppliers, not just IBM, but it’s good that IBM recognizes the continuing value of their partners.