



From strength to strength

iDirect have had a very successful 2007 and continue to go from strength to strength. Helen Jameson speaks to Peter Slade, Vice President & General Manager of iDirect EMEA to discover what is driving this success and what's new in the EMEA region.

Question: How would you sum up 2007 for iDirect?

Peter Slade: Overall 2007 has been a year of strong growth both for the company and also for the region as well. There is a level of consolidation that's going on with our new CEO who has recently come on board. So there's two things going hand in hand right now – managing that strong growth we've seen over the last four or five years or so as well as consolidating our customer base and the products we are promoting to those new customers and those new growth territories.

Question: Congratulations on your new Headquarters that has recently been established in Dubai. Is the Middle East and Africa becoming a more important target market for iDirect? What does this mean for your services in the region?

Peter Slade: It most certainly is an important market for us. It's one of the strongest growth areas for the company. The main example for this is the lack of resources and lack of telecommunications infrastructure. This makes it a very promising market with growth potential across a range of market segments including GSM backhaul, Internet broadband, mobile communications. The

sweet spot for iDirect has always been private commercial enterprise but we're also moving into government networks so iDirect's versatile satellite platform really has been the basis to help us establish this and help us to capitalise on the tremendous appetite for satellite-based communications. In fact we have achieved more than 40 percent of hub sales in the market according to a Frost & Sullivan report. We won a very nice Frost & Sullivan award for being the leading supplier of hubs into the Middle East marketplace. So what we're doing in that office is demonstrating commitment to that region now. It's an area where we have been looking to see how we can best support our customers there. It's not a trivial matter to actually put an office in Dubai but now we have got that momentum going. We're pleased to be able to start supplying some local clients from that particular office.

Question: Can you explain what kind of challenges you have faced in setting up the office?

Peter Slade: Well yes, you have to register the company in order to do that. Also, if you are going to be employing people locally you have to register the company and have an



Peter Slade, VP and General Manager, iDirect EMEA.



office. So what we have been doing is parachuting our teams from outside the region but you do get to the point where you need to start to place people in region so that's what we're doing. We've already recruited for local sales, for local pre-sales, for support and post sales support. In fact my regional Vice President for Middle East and Africa, Rash Jhanjee is located in Dubai. And I guess the other challenge is to find the best place to put an office. It's an actively growing place. So we're actually located in a place called Silicon Oasis that is really well positioned for us to look after our customer base.

Question: In addition to the new headquarters, you are also opening a training centre? What does iDirect offer in terms of training in EMEA?

Peter Slade: It's not just a technology training capability. We're committed to providing our partners with training on solutions as well as technology.

So through this Dubai training centre we ensure that our customers are well informed, receive the best results from our technology and the ability to be able to keep our partners at the forefront of iDirect's capabilities. So we're offering installation, operation and demonstration systems that really allow us to provide this professional service to what is a rapidly expanding customer base.

Question: In which market sectors in the EMEA region do you tend to do the most business? Who are your principal customers?

Peter Slade: Well, I guess it stems from the fact that we have adopted IP natively within the product set so there is a very general market, very broad so that anyone who is looking to offer an integrated IP-based solution can do so. IP is almost a ubiquitous solution today.

There are one or two protocols that are still being used but generally IP is the protocol used for voice, video, Internet, intranet and so it is really a general market and one which demands additional levels of security and real time applications support – that has been the key thing.

So traditionally, iDirect's ability to be able to supply and support VoIP over satellite really separates the men from the boys, if you like. Having realtime applications such as that demands some very clever technology and if you don't have that then you are at a real disadvantage at trying to support real time applications.

Question: Has the EMEA region always been key to iDirect? What does the region offer and what challenges does it present?

Peter Slade: It really has been key and, as I said, the Middle East has been one of the

most important growth markets for iDirect. It is one of those markets that does not have a great deal of terrestrial infrastructure so it is a perfect market for us to extend into. I guess it is unique from the point of view that it has been rapidly growing. The economy is strong, there is an increasing demand for resources and as I say, there is very little terrestrial infrastructure to be able to support that. It does make it an ideal market for satellite communications. It's also important to understand the dynamics of owning a satellite system that includes things like a lower cost of ownership. That is one of the key things that iDirect has done very well. However, the technology can only go so far. You also need to have that low cost of ownership as well to allow these emerging service providers to actually get onto the ladder. That's another important reason why iDirect has been so successful in the Middle East.

Question: iDirect has just been named in the Washington Business Journal as one of the fastest growing companies. What is driving your success?

Peter Slade: My view is that it's actually the versatility of the iDirect platform has been key to the success that iDirect has enjoyed. The satellite communication applications are continually diversifying and you have to have something that has that ability to be versatile so that you can enable service providers to support any emerging customer application regardless of satellite bandwidth, what type of frequency, the network topology and location.

All those various different factors come into play and iDirect has that versatile capability so we are able to say: 'no matter what comes forward, you can select iDirect and we will supply you with support for that requirement'.

It's all down to versatility – dynamic bandwidth management, satellite capacity, efficiency, there's all manner of different capabilities that we define as flexibility - advanced routing capabilities, secure in all environments, mobility, and network management simplicity. There are a lot of built in capabilities that you buy out of the box when you buy iDirect.

Question: What do you think will be future trends and developments in terms of satellite-based broadband solutions?

Peter Slade: I think that IP over satellite will be an integral part of all next generation communication networks providing an integrated extension to terrestrial wireless communications as well as actually being the prime delivery in that communications environment.

IP routing for voice, video, data, video applications, because as a result of these large terrestrial carriers and operators who

are beginning to integrate satellite communications into their core networks, need this capability to provide the various service offerings such as retail operations, distance learning, and business continuity. There are lots of markets that are emerging. It's really what terrestrial has been supplying but with IP having that real quick, easy route to market and end-to-end manageability that is inherent within the solution it will make a real difference.

Question: What part do iDirect's partners play and does iDirect have many partners in EMEA?

Peter Slade: We do indeed and we have really been looking at the Middle East now for almost four and a half years. It's a region where some of our earliest customers were placed so there are some really strong organisations that are pretty well known within the Middle East area that are supplying services and integrated solutions right across the Middle East territory.

Question: And what about Africa? Are you doing a lot of business in Africa at the moment?

Peter Slade: Africa is another one of those huge growth areas for us. Nigeria has been one of our strongest areas as we have got multiple customers and multiple hubs based in Nigeria. It's a strong, oil rich part of Africa that is really at the forefront of pushing communications services really across the whole region and out of Nigeria. Organisations like Africa Netcom, companies like Direct On PC – these are all organisations that have selected iDirect for their multi-service platform, for their intelligent service requirements.

Question: What are iDirect's aims and objectives for 2008?

Peter Slade: I think it will really be looking at the fact that satellite capacity is still a major constraint. It has been so far, and with bandwidth costs high and especially in the EMEA region, it has really suffered with the bandwidth crunch.

So in 2008, we're going to anticipate that service providers will be seeking to replace old technologies with technology that offers this high bandwidth efficiency and versatility that I've mentioned.

We'll be looking with our new evolution product line with the inclusion of DVB-S2 and ACM adaptive coding and modulation that is integrated into the product set that provides at least a 50 percent efficiency going over standard DVB-S or ACM systems. So I think that 2008 will be a year that is going to demand these new and emerging technologies that will provide that bandwidth efficiency and saving capability, and iDirect will have those capabilities within our platform. ●