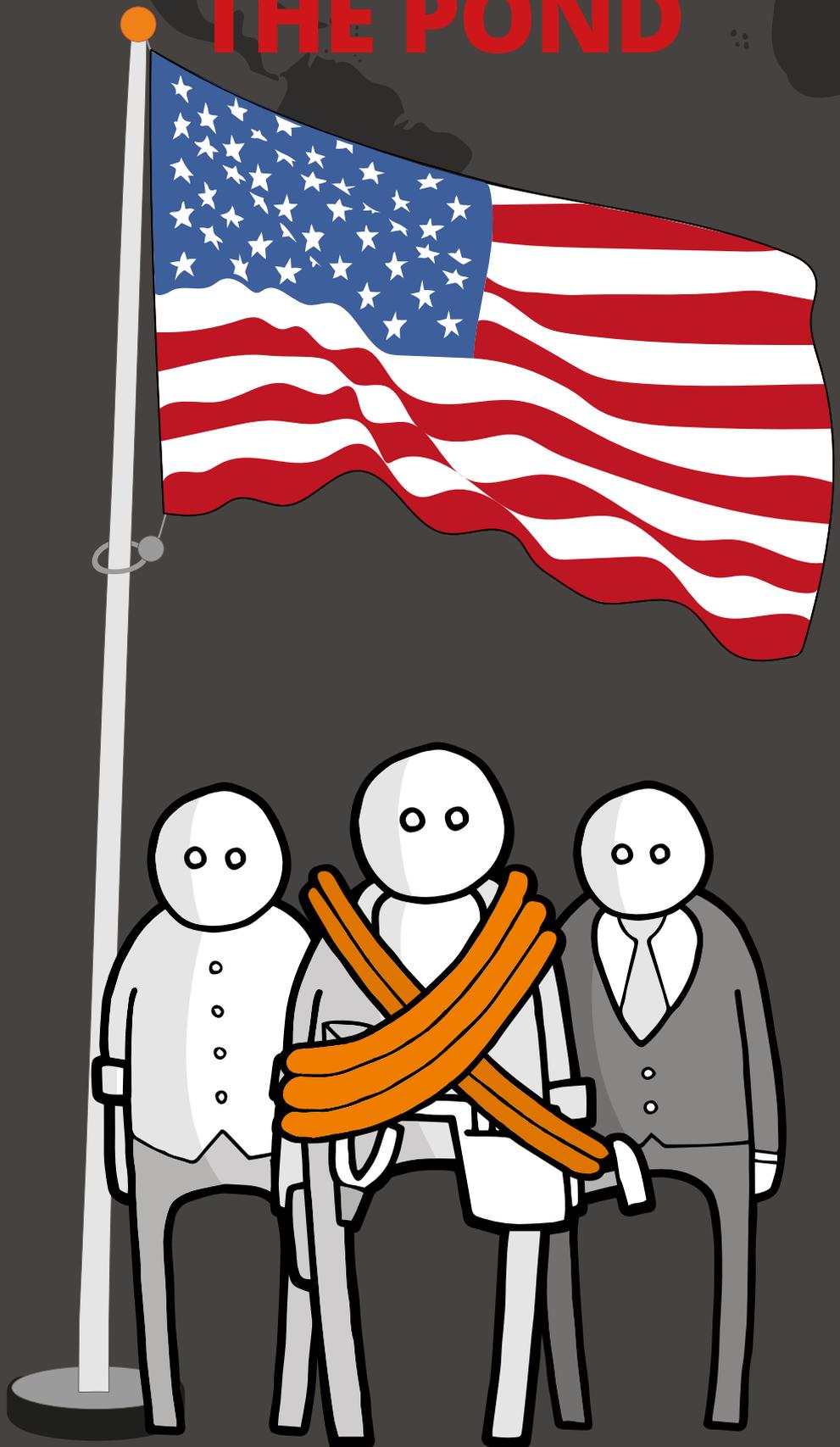


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SIMWOOD

SIMWOOD CROSSES THE POND



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SIMWOOD CROSSES THE POND

Simwood are never ones to stand still, but since we last reported, in 2016, things have changed incredibly. We caught up with founder and CEO Simon Woodhead on what is new and in the pipeline.

An entirely new application stack

Simwood is a cornerstone of the open source communities it operates in, with members of the team speaking around the world at conferences on its technical innovations. Earlier this year they released their 'new stack' which leverages many new technologies. Woodhead expanded:

"I've just got back from Astricon in the USA where I was speaking about Anycast - what it is and how ITSPs/carriers can leverage it. It is a keystone of our new stack, dramatically improving performance and stability from our already extraordinary levels. Customers are loving the new features in there such as enhanced encryption and the Opus codec. Opus is particularly interesting for innovative ITSPs as one single codec adapts in-call from mobile quality in low-bandwidth scenarios, through to studio quality audio in others, whilst also handling packet loss exceptionally well. Given 'me too' haven't yet bought the magic box that gives end users the privacy they deserve, it'll be some time before they can buy one that gives them the best quality adaptive codecs too! Progressive customers are all over these headline features, but there's so much more in there for them. The new stack is an open beta for customers to try at their own pace but our largest customer has already moved the majority of their production traffic over."

Network upgrade

On last year's speaking tour, Woodhead was discussing evolving networking technologies and how Simwood was re-architecting its own extensive IP network to capitalise on them. In his words;

"Merchant Silicon and Software Defined Networking (SDN) are game changers and 2016/17 saw us replace our legacy 'fridges' with super lightweight but ultra-performant merchant silicon solutions from Arista. This has dramatically simplified things, reducing costs and improving reliability, with massive capacity and performance gains. We've done a huge amount of internal development on the SDN piece, putting our software in charge of network security and optimisation. This has been the foundation for many of the other things we've done since."

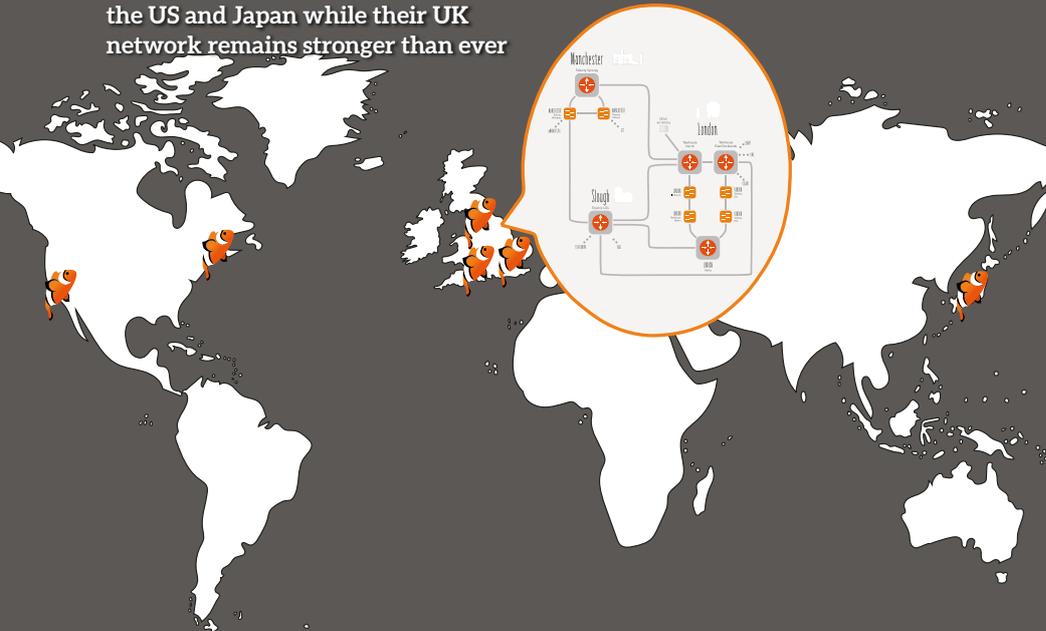


US expansion

Simwood has recently deployed its new stack in New York, San Jose, and Tokyo, expanding its footprint across the globe. Woodhead says, "The 'new stack' and other changes effectively give us 'Simwood in a box' and we can deploy and scale new PoPs extremely quickly. It is important to stress though we're not using 'the cloud' and are remaining true to our philosophy of owning 100% of the infrastructure our service depends on, so we're in control of the experience customers have. For practical reasons, there's a few differences overseas but service is running on Simwood IP addresses on bare metal hardware. All the new stack features including enhanced encryption are there."

"We're very fortunate to have a very large Fortune 500 customer. Having won their UK business in 2016, followed by a large swathe of the rest of the world in 2017, they wanted us to service them in their home market - the USA. In addition to the PoPs, Simwood Inc. is established and is a certified CLEC (Competitive Local Exchange Carrier) and we're building up our position in the food-chain there. We're a US carrier now and able to provide US-local services from a similar position in the food chain to that we occupy in the UK. I don't know of another UK operator that has achieved this. It is very important to us that we're not reselling anything and are accountable for our customers' experience."

Simwood's reach has extended to the US and Japan while their UK network remains stronger than ever



“Given how well known we already are in the US from our work in the VoIP community, and existing customer timelines, I think we’re less than 12 months away from the US overtaking the UK in terms of our volumes!”

New office and training

“We’re really lucky to attract the best talent on the planet across technical disciplines thanks, I think, to the leadership we try to show in the communities we contribute to. That talent is wherever it happens to be and we’re perfectly used to working with a large part of the team remote. Thankfully though, some of those people are local to us and we’ve been growing our office-based team. In September we relocated from Southampton to Bristol, with almost all the team relocating with us! We’ve now got our own building which is eight times the size, giving plenty of room to expand and dedicate to the team’s welfare, making us even more attractive to the best of the best.”

One consequent initiative, revealed exclusively in Comms Business, is the Simwood Academy which Woodhead describes:

“We’re setting aside broadly 25% of the building for public space and notably a classroom. We’re making this space available at no cost to the various communities we work with, the leading VoIP open-source projects, for them to run UK-based training. We’re not running the training, but we’re very good friends with those who do across Asterisk, FreeSWITCH, Kamailio and other projects. They can use our space at no cost for the good of the community. We’ll also be putting on some Simwood-ran events for our customers as there’s a real thirst for knowledge amongst

those who want to innovate and do something different to ‘me too’. Stay tuned for course dates after the fit-out is completed in November!”

Acquisition & Security Pivot

In another exclusive, Woodhead revealed a major acquisition and strategic pivot:

“It is too early to give the name, but we’ve agreed an acquisition for circa £3m in cash, to acquire an awesome team with decades of experience building mobile networks.”

“Building Simwood into a full MNO is attractive in a number of respects, one of which is the innovative fixed-mobile convergence offer we launched in 2015. There’s still loads of demand for that as, whilst ‘me too’ have come to the party now, nobody offers the feature set we did. There’s real demand for someone to do it properly, something we had to compromise on previously.”

“Fixed-mobile convergence is the thin end of the wedge though, and some way down our hit list. Ahead of it are solving the UK’s ‘not spot’ problem, building JV MNOs in other countries for specific projects in IoT and of most relevance to our core business: mobile security or rather securing mobile networks.”

“We have a large customer who handles well over half the world’s credit card transactions. We help them with security where fixed-line telephony is concerned, and now can help with mobile too, globally. There’s all manner of solutions out there for IP security, but securing the mobile device that many other solutions depend on is very hard and poorly served. We’re building solutions to the key problems, leveraging the infrastructure we already have, and that we’re about to build.”

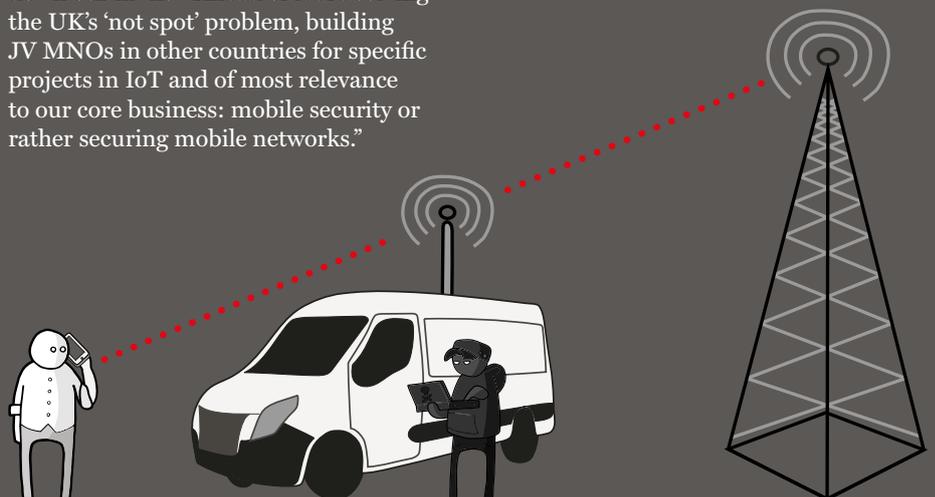
“I think if you look at Simwood in a few years you’ll describe us predominantly as a security company. We’ll still be selling ‘minutes’, but they’ll be smart minutes. This is a natural course for us given our engineering resources, infrastructure, and the work we’re already very well regarded for globally around VoIP Fraud. There’s some huge challenges in the world that we’re super excited to be building solutions for, to supply existing customers that are already world leaders in their own field.”

“We’re very interested in speaking to channel partners with law enforcement and Government relationships globally, as the solutions we have coming solve real problems they have, for which solutions do not exist at present.”

“We’re funding this internally, there’s no external investment, but we’ve gone all in and it is a big thing for us. I wouldn’t rule out any of that down the line, and we have some good friends in the space, but they need to taste the magnitude and potential of what we’re building first.”

Conclusion

“As always, we’ve got loads going on and continue to punch so far above our weight. We may be 20 years old, but it is a really exciting time. I’m hugely grateful to our team, friends, and the amazing strategic customers that keep us pushing forwards.”



IMSI grabbers allow calls to be intercepted by impersonating the cell tower