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## SIMWOOD THINKING GLOBALLY, LEADING LOCALLY



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# Simwood: Thinking Globally, Leading Locally

Since we checked in last year, **Simwood** have had an explosive year! Global traffic volume, revenues, and run-rate are all up by nearly 60%. It now services over 200 telcos in 24 countries including a number of large multinationals

**T**his is the result of a perfect storm of a few factors according to Founder & CEO, Simon Woodhead: “We’re in the fortunate position of being the ‘go to’ provider for new entrants to the marketplace who need to be buying directly, yet need innovation and dynamism. Competitors are either resellers themselves, or those that are facilities-based like us are somewhat constrained by process, or outsource their development. By contrast, Simwood reinvests hugely into in-house R&D, and relatively little on marketing; the inverse of most. If you want to do it right at the highest level, and surf ahead of the wave, Simwood

is uniquely the only operator in town. We also try to do the right thing and aren’t afraid of a fight if it champions fairness and transparency [as you’ll read later!]. I think that attracts like minds! I love flicking through the pages of your magazine for significant new launches and having ‘customer, check’ go through my head.

Of course, our main customer base continues to grow as well. One of the good things about wholesale is that we grow as our customers grow. The industry is entering an exciting phase with seasoned entrepreneurs driving high growth businesses. Thankfully they seem to choose Simwood and we’re seeing a definite rotation in favour of the

innovators.

A third factor is our international expansion, especially North America. International operations now account for broadly 30% of revenue, with the USA and Canada being the fastest growing.

We became a licensed CLEC in one US state last year, a unique achievement for a UK company. This year we’ve pushed the button on a national roll-out. We have a very experienced small team over there who have built and sold operators multiple times; they’re rolling out Simwood in every State and building primary allocations of numbering, direct porting capability etc. in over 10,000 ‘rate centers’. Every State

has a different licensing and local regulatory regime, so the expertise we now have in-house is absolutely necessary to navigate the waters.

Simwood has a number of carrier partnerships and is offering US numbering with porting now. This gets numbering into customer applications and services immediately, but it’ll be migrated to the Simwood network as soon as coverage is completed in the respective areas. Of course, the interface both via SIP and our API will remain the same and is consistent globally - something our multinationals love.”

Another factor in Simwood’s growth is its continued security



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focus. As Woodhead puts it, “Generally in the channel, regard for end-user privacy and security is pitiful. I believe, we remain the only wholesale operator offering encryption of calls to/from the PSTN. Whilst take-up is frustratingly low across those servicing SoHo users, in the finance space we’re growing strongly. This is driving the creation of a portfolio of off-book security and intelligence services for eligible customers, ultimately for the protection of end-users beyond simple telephony. This is exciting and satisfying at so many levels.”

Earlier in 2018, Simwood published a book called ‘Speaking up on Telephony Risks’ which covered a number of the high-risk areas Simwood is working on solutions for. This was sent to every business in the UK with a turnover in excess of £50m and is available through bookshops. “If service providers don’t want to voluntarily look after end-user security and turn a blind eye to the risks, we’ll encourage those end-users to seek a service provider who does through education. Whilst we’re grateful for the key customers who ‘get it’, we really want this to become the norm. I’ve said before, it is going to bite industry on the arse when end-users realise resellers are sending their calls to resellers of resellers, all over the open Internet, with none of them having bothered to encrypted or secure it. This stuff matters!”, said Woodhead passionately.

In a similar vein, the company’s speaking and education commitments continue to mount all over the world. Whilst the company’s position is strongest amongst technical conferences, they are now being asked to speak at Public Sector and more generic security events, sharing the lessons of many years of research into VoIP fraud, and 22 years of innovation. Woodhead himself has just, at the time of writing, returned from Florida where he was asked to give the opening Keynote at Astricon - the largest event



in the open-source telephony calendar with approaching 1,000 delegates. As he put it, “My talk was nothing to do with telephony, but more generally about privacy. Scaring hundreds of very technically able people into silence with some home truths was gratifying. Trying to compromise their mobile phones whilst doing it, in order to prove a point, was kind of risky but we got 261 and I think the point was made! The feedback has been immense, it is definitely a career highlight.” said Woodhead excitedly. A video of the talk is available at <https://simwood.com/default-distrust>

Late last year Simwood moved into its new HQ in Bristol and a £300k fit-out was carried out over the winter. There were two key aims with this says Woodhead, “Firstly, we wanted an amazing work environment for our growing team. Historically we’d been distributed - the best people being wherever in the world they happened to be - but we’ve been trying to concentrate people into the office through new hires in recent years. We’re half-way there and a great environment helps. Secondly, we’ve turned over almost half the space to customers. We have a permanent training room and customers are welcome to drop

in and hot-desk any time they like. The building is fully on-net, diversely and at high speed, so it is a great place to get things done! Our on-site lab is also a perfect staging environment for customer deployments and we’re doing far more in the way of workshops and architectural guidance with customers.”

In February, the new office was officially unveiled at the company’s first ever ‘SimCon’ event. This was attended by approximately 60 Simwood customers and ‘friends’ followed by a party. “It was a full day of talks by us and key industry speakers. We realised we tended to share knowledge with the community first and then let customers see a video after. This was the wrong way round and we wanted to bring customers the best of our content first, and the best of community content (and contacts) through the many great speakers we know. It surpassed our every hope and was fantastic fun. I’m worried we need a bigger training room for SimCon 2 in February 2019!”

Last but not most excitedly, Simwood gave us an exclusive insight into some new products. It has struck an exclusive deal with a global SD-WAN leader to offer managed SD-WAN from the Simwood network to

its customers. As Woodhead says, “We’ve got the best technology combined with unique commercials, to finally put us in the position to control quality of service and security over the last mile, even for customers not directly connected to our network. The necessary is installed in our data-centres and we’re going through final QA in our lab. We’ll be doing customer training soon!”

Secondly, Simwood is launching a mobile app that aims to ‘just work’. As Woodhead says, “VoIP apps are generally rubbish and even the best don’t solve NAT issues or tackle security comprehensively. At the other end of the scale new-age communication apps like WhatsApp and Viber operate on islands; they may be big islands but they can never be the primary communication channel as not everyone is reachable. The PSTN remains the default so our aim is an app for PSTN connectivity that ‘just works’ everywhere and does so securely. Our customers can provision end users simply by them scanning a QR code! We’re very excited about this!”

*For more information about Simwood see <https://simwood.com> or sign up for weekly blog updates at <http://blog.simwood.com>*