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CHANNEL ROUND-UP

VENDOR

■ It emerged that the bosses of telecoms giant **Avaya** are considering a buyout backed by a private equity firm, according to Reuters. Avaya listed on the New York Stock Exchange in January last year, having been through a bankruptcy process that saw it offload its networking business to Extreme Networks. Reuters reported that the vendor's management is considering a buyout, citing people familiar with the matter. The news agency said the deal would value Avaya at more than \$5bn (£3.8bn). The comms vendor currently has a market cap of just under \$1.5bn.

■ **AWS** is looking to steal a march on the tape storage market following the launch of its S3 Glacier Deep Archive service. At a charge of \$1 per TB of data per month, the vendor claims the cost is way below traditional tape and off-site storage solutions that many business rely on for longer-term storage needs and regulatory compliance. The vendor is working with a number of storage software vendors on the initiative, including Commvault and Veritas, to supply the tools for using and managing the service.

■ **Datto** unveiled a new Developer Programme to help technology vendors integrate their own applications with Datto's solutions, aimed at MSPs. The firm claimed its programme is designed to create an open ecosystem with open integrations between the technology solutions used by MSPs, making it easier for them to combine different applications to service their customers. Under the programme, Datto will offer additional resources such as technical support and marketing.

■ **Dell Technologies** celebrated a strong return to publicly listed life with its fourth-quarter and fiscal year results. The vendor posted a 15 per cent increase in overall turnover for its fiscal 2019 to \$90.6bn. For its Q4 financials – the first reported since it returned to the stock market – the firm posted a nine per cent year-over-year increase to \$23.8bn. Fourth-quarter revenue for Dell's infrastructure solutions group – a combination of its storage, servers and networking businesses – saw a 10 per cent year-on-year increase to \$9.9bn, with servers and networking growing 14 per cent YoY

to \$5.3bn and storage up seven per cent to \$4.6bn. Full-year revenue in the infrastructure solutions group was even more positive, hitting \$36.7bn.

In separate news, CEO Michael Dell took to Twitter to claim his firm was "running circles around rivals" following an ad in the *Wall Street Journal*.

More here.

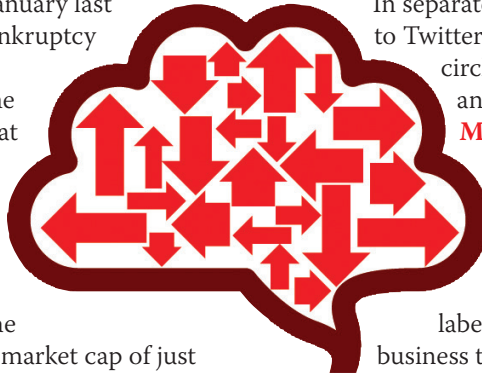
■ **Google** was hit by another massive fine by the EU's antitrust regulator the European Commission (EC), for what the organisation labelled as anti-competitive business tactics in relation to the vendor's search advertising business. Google was fined \$1.49bn and accused of stifling competition by contractually restricting publishers using its AdSense service from hosting competitors' adverts. The EC said AdSense gave priority to Google on results pages.

■ The two separate HP businesses had a bumper news month in March so it makes sense to lump them together:

Firstly, **HP** boosted its presence in Bristol with the opening of a new Labs office in the city centre. The company established its Labs division in 1966, which operates as an industrial research laboratory for the vendor. It established its first Labs office in Bristol in 1985, which has since served as the EMEA department for its Labs division. HP said the Bristol team will relocate to the new facility, which will continue the legacy of its predecessor as the vendor's lead research facility for security technology.

HP also unveiled a new financing and leasing arm which it claimed would help channel partners cater for 'as-a-service' and consumption model demands from customers. The firm said its Integrated Financial Solutions will support partners looking to move their business towards a **recurring revenue model**.

■ Separately, **HP Inc** stressed its battery recall statement earlier this year, adding more commercial models which have mainly been sold through partners, and which contain Chinese lithium batteries. Models affected include: the HP ProBook models 640 G2, 640 G3, 645 G2, 645 G3, 650 G2, 650 G3, 655 G2, 655 G3, 430 G4, 440 G4, 450 G4, →



455 G4, 470 G4; the ZBook models 17 G3 and 17 G4; plus the HP x360 310 G2; HP Pavilion x360; HP ENVY m6; and HP 11 Notebook PC.

HP Inc also warned the channel that it will aggressively combat partners trading in counterfeit, cloned and imitation print cartridges. The vendor's print supplies business has been thrown into the spotlight over recent weeks, after it saw revenue in this area drop three per cent year on year globally, and nine per cent in EMEA. [Full story here.](#)

■ Meanwhile, **HPE** unveiled its new Right Mix Advisor offering as an "industry first" in helping businesses develop their future hybrid cloud strategies. The initiative recommends appropriate workloads and applications to aid customers in their move to public clouds, according to the vendor, as well as advising how to migrate those workloads to attain the right mix of hybrid cloud catered to the specific needs of the business.

■ **Huawei** opened a cybersecurity lab in Brussels this month as it looks to reassure European legislators that the Chinese giant does not pose a security risk. Huawei's deputy chairman, Ken Hu, said that trust is one of the major challenges facing all tech firms in a global community. The news came as US authorities continue to lobby European governments to reject Huawei from having access to national infrastructure contracts, alleging that Huawei is involved in state espionage and hacking.

Huawei claimed its new Brussels lab will have three key functions: to showcase Huawei's end-to-end cybersecurity practices, including around 5G, IoT, and cloud; to communicate with stakeholders and partners on cybersecurity strategies; and to provide a product security testing and verification platform to Huawei customers.

■ Network management vendor **Ipswitch Networks** has been snapped up by app development specialist **Progress** for \$255m, as the firm looks to break into the SMB sector. The deal will give Progress access to over 24,000 customers globally that use Ipswitch's secure file transfer offerings and its network monitoring products.

■ **Microsoft** is running data science bootcamps across the UK to make the tech industry more accessible to women. The free courses will be run on 2 May by the tech giant and eight of its partners in London, Manchester, Scotland and Wales, to address the low numbers of women in tech roles. The vendor made the announcement as part of its International Women's Day celebrations.

In separate news, Microsoft unveiled its SIEM-

as-a-service plans, announcing a preview version of Azure Sentinel, a cloud-based security analytics service that features AI-driven detection and threat hunting powered by its cloud platform. It also rolled out an AI Business School as an extra resource for executives looking to create an AI strategy in their own organisations. The school is developed in partnership with INSEAD, a graduate business school with campuses across Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Partners also welcomed Microsoft's introduction of Azure Stack HCI. The vendor claimed Azure Stack HCI offers customers the ability to run virtualised applications on hyperconverged infrastructure while also featuring the same software-defined compute, storage, and networking software as Azure Stack. [See reactions here.](#)

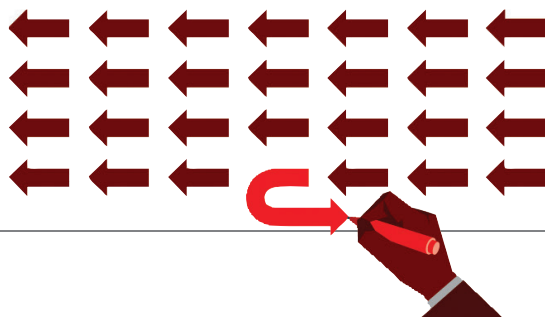
■ **Nutanix** saw its share price plummet over 30 per cent after releasing its second-quarter results, despite reporting healthy revenue growth of 17 per cent to \$335.4m. Market watchers were expecting revenue of around \$348m for the upcoming third quarter, but the vendor revised the figures down, predicting between \$290m and \$300m.

■ **Nvidia** has outbid rival Intel to acquire next-generation chip maker Mellanox Technologies for \$6.9bn. Mellanox was established in Israel in 1999 but is now headquartered in the US.

It manufactures chips for datacentre servers that power cloud computing and had a market valuation of \$5.9bn before being purchased. The vendor was reportedly in the middle of a bidding war between Nvidia, Intel and Microsoft according to Reuters.

■ **Oracle** is set to make a wave of job cuts, as it continues to morph into a cloud-first business, reports have claimed. The cuts were first reported by IEEE Spectrum, with Oracle seemingly confirming the rumours. Some estimates say there could be as many as 10,000 job cuts. [More here.](#)

■ Communications device maker **Plantronics** this week changed its name to **Poly**, to recognise the combined comms and collaboration expertise it secured after its \$2bn Polycom acquisition last year. The name change signals a new focus on innovation and a pipeline of new products, the company revealed.



DISTRIBUTOR

■ **Ingram Micro** launched its new Internet of Things marketplace, which it describes as an online platform for identifying technologies, use cases and support for autonomous commercial devices. Its IoT marketplace also offers guidance to channel partners on some of the top IoT vendors such as HPE, IBM, Microsoft and Cisco. The firm made the announcement at its annual Ingram Cloud Summit, which celebrated its first decade this year.

■ **Midwich's** revenues rose by 21.6 per cent to

£573.7m in a year which saw it land in the Italian and Swiss markets through acquisitions. Pre-tax profits rose by 11.5 per cent to £21.1m.

■ **Tech Data** saw revenue grow by four per cent in Q4 to \$10.5bn, with operating profit growing by nine per cent. The US distributor missed revenue estimates, sending stocks falling 8.8 per cent overnight. However, CEO Rich Hume, said the distributor would be more aggressive in future in culling low return areas of its portfolio, and hinted that the firm could resort to divesting segments to ensure high shareholder returns. The distribution giant is expecting to finish its current fiscal year with low single-digit revenue growth.

■ Datacentre distributor **TIM** revealed it was on the hunt for emerging vendors to help break into the DACH market. The Dell EMC and NetApp distributor currently only works with around 15 vendors. Co-COO Tim Henneveld said TIM is relatively new to the security space. It only formed new partnerships with cybersecurity vendors

Bitdefender and Virtual Solution in 2017 and 2018 respectively and is keen to add to its vendor stable.



RESELLER

■ AV integrator **AVMI** is in full growth mode, after hiring a new VP to oversee its expansion in the US. The AV player expanded into the market a few years ago, but has now appointed Craig Bonner to head up its US operation and has launched a recruitment drive. The firm has also opened a new service centre in Manhattan and plans to add 20 members of staff to its existing 30-strong base this year. [Full story here.](#)

■ **BearingPoint** has celebrated its eighth consecutive year of growth since its MBO in 2009, driven largely by sales in the Dutch giant's western Europe division. Global revenues for the Amsterdam-based firm were up four per cent year on year to a record €739m (£631m). In good news for the UK, managing partner Kiumars Hamidian said the UK and Ireland booked growth "far above the market average". The UK's consulting industry on average grew by just over five per cent last year, France saw its advisory market accelerate to over six per cent growth, while the Benelux recorded growth of around four per cent.

■ **Bechtle** posted €4.3bn in revenues for its FY2018, a 21.1 per cent hike year on year. The German firm saw its EBT rise by double digits too, growing 18.7 per cent to €193.2m.

Separately, Bechtle and IBM finally closed a deal which will see hundreds of Big Blue staff transfer to the German reseller, a year after the proposal was first mooted. A total of 350 IBM staff will join Bechtle next month, and the deal will also see Bechtle's onsite services division take on infrastructure services for IBM Germany. [Full story here.](#)

■ German VAR **Cancom** posted across-the-board

growth for its full-year 2018 as international sales jumped by almost 60 per cent. Group revenues grew by 18.7 per cent to €1.38bn last year, while adjusted EBITDA rocketed by 24 per cent to €114.8m.

Organic revenue growth stood at 12 per cent.

Its German homeland still accounts for the vast majority of Cancom's revenues at €1.2bn, but its international business, significantly bolstered by its two acquisitions in the UK last year, is now a €178.3m-revenue operation after logging 57.2 per cent growth.

■ Public cloud specialist **Cloudreach** has expanded into Sweden – its first office in the Nordics – in a move the firm says is designed to better serve its high-profile customers. The new base will be in Stockholm, which Cloudreach's head of Europe Chris Bunch says will give the company access to top talent attracted to the city's high quality of life. Cloudreach's first organic expansion of 2019 follows an acquisitive 2018. Last year, the private equity-owned consultancy crossed the Atlantic to snap up US-based ETA and Relus Cloud, adding enterprise analytics and AI expertise to its portfolio. It also opened two new European offices, in Cologne and Berlin, in 2017.

■ **Computacenter** smashed through the £4bn revenue barrier for its FY ended 31 December 2018, sending its share price up two per cent on the back of the news. Revenues rose by 14.7 per cent to £4.35bn at the London-listed reseller and IT services powerhouse, with supply chain up 20.5 per cent, and services growing 1.5 per cent to £1.175bn. In the UK, services revenues fell by 5.6 per cent to £450.2m following an 18 per cent drop in professional services revenue. However, a 17.1 per cent surge in supply chain revenue ensured total UK revenue rose by 9.7 per cent to £1.61bn. In local currencies, German and French revenues rose by 8.3 and fell by 4.1 per cent to hit €2.116bn and €557m, respectively. FusionStorm, the US IT solutions provider Computacenter snaffled in September, generated £3m of adjusted operating profit in the final three months of the year.

Separately, Computacenter shelled out for €13m-turnover Swiss VAR PathWorks, adding a reseller arm to its operations in Switzerland.

The London Stock Exchange-listed firm said the acquisition "closes a gap" in its own portfolio in the central



European country. PathWorks – a Lenovo Platinum partner, HP Gold partner and Dell partner – is an 18-year-old VAR based in Neudorf, in the district of Lucerne, with 10 employees.

It also bolstered its office numbers in Germany, opening a new office in the city of Dresden. The 2,690 square metre office space across two floors will initially be staffed by 60 employees who relocated to the new site. Another 100 will be recruited and trained this year, Computacenter claimed, and it is looking to reach an ultimate headcount of 200.

Separately, CEO Mike Norris said the firm's US expansion had gone "astonishingly well" after it opened its first office in New York. [More here.](#)

■ **Dimension Data** went beyond its product selling and integration comfort zone to launch a new Managed Services Platform that offers advanced analytics teamed with professional services. The firm claimed that the service "liberates IT and operations teams" to focus on core activities such as improving customer experience, exploring emerging technologies and maximising cost efficiencies.

■ Swedish player **Dustin** made two acquisitions in as many days, snapping up the hosting business of Danish Microsoft Dynamics partner Norriq and buying out Dutch VAR NoRisk IT. Based in Denmark, Norriq is a 300-employee-strong Microsoft Dynamics consultancy operating from 11 offices in seven countries. The deal will see Dustin acquire Norriq's hosting and IT outsourcing operations in Denmark, consisting of 30 employees. Meanwhile, NoRisk will become part of Vincere Groep, a €67m-turnover reseller acquired by Dustin when it made its debut in the Dutch market last year.

■ **Econocom's** group profits fell by more than 25 per cent in 2018, missing its €120m recurring operating profit target. Group revenues grew 2.7 per cent organically and eight per cent overall to €2.8bn, while recurring operating profit sank by 25.7 per cent to €114.6m. Its Technology Management and Financing arm, Econocom's largest business unit, bore the brunt of the bottom-line decline, as recurring operating profits tanked by 42.3 per cent to €53.3m, while revenues dipped by 1.6 per cent to €1.36bn.

■ SAP partner **Invenio Business Solutions** has received an £11.6m investment to help it grow via acquisitions. The Reading-based firm was given the cash injection from UK investment firm Business Growth Fund. The firm plans to scale its offering by building out its existing

services portfolio and through acquisitions.

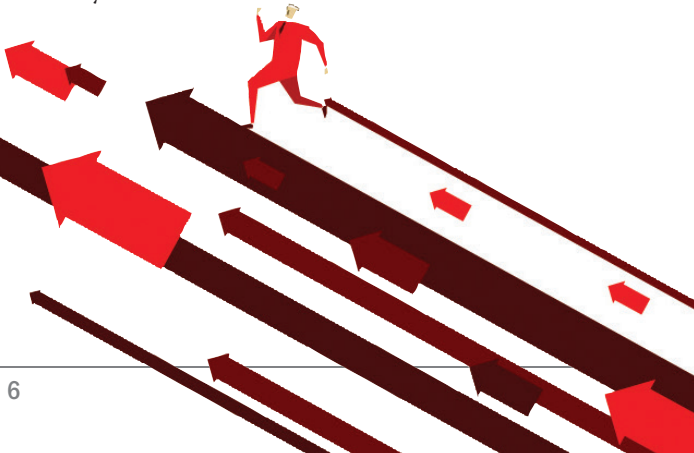
■ **NTT Security** is set to bolster its SOC presence in Germany in direct response to customer fears that the UK will not fall under EU data residency requirements after Brexit. The firm's EMEA SVP Kai Grunwitz said he is making efforts to ensure its security operations centres in Gothenburg and Munich can run independently in the wake of Brexit, as many of its customers follow strict EU data residency laws. [See full interview here.](#)

■ **SCC** is strengthening its foothold in Leeds with a new office. The IT and services giant claimed it chose to bolster its Yorkshire presence because of the city's "thriving" technical, professional services and finance sectors. The new facility will accommodate sales and administration activities, while its first Leeds office will be used for engineering and technical purposes. The space will host 10 staff members, with room to grow that number to 40 employees. The new office marks the eleventh location for the Birmingham-headquartered VAR.

■ **Softcat** posted a 28.5 per cent increase in 'invoiced income', previously known as revenue, to hit £608.8m for its H1 results. However, adoption of new accounting standards – known as IFRS 15 – caused the results to be a little skewed due to the reseller giant having to 'net down' some revenue streams, specifically around software and vendor services, which meant it recognised just the margin element of the transaction as opposed to the gross income. [Full story here.](#)

The firm's CEO Graeme Watt also revealed that Softcat would be opening another new UK office, this time in Birmingham. See [full interview with Watt, here.](#)

Finally, the reseller giant became a Dell EMC Gold partner in Ireland after opening its office there last year. The reseller is already a Titanium partner in its home market, but last year expanded internationally for the first time in its 25-year history.



RESEARCH

■ Female tech execs out-earned their male counterparts for the first time in 2018, according to recruitment firm Odgers Berndtson. A study of almost 1,000 job searches, starting in 2015, found that female technology leaders doubled their salary, to £330,000. This was from £122,000 in 2013, which was less than half the male average salary at the time.

■ PC sales will continue to slide as much as 3.3 per cent in 2019 and fall at a compound annual rate of 1.2 per cent through 2023, according to IDC's Worldwide Quarterly Personal Computing Device Tracker. This is despite an increase in commercial sales and anticipated pent-up demand caused by component shortages at the close of 2018. The best-performing segment is expected to be detachables (such as the Surface) and notebooks, which according to the report will offset market share losses of traditional desktop and slate-style tablets. IDC also predicted that Windows 10 migration projects in the SMB and mid-market space will fuel spending on new PCs during 2019.

■ IDC's Worldwide Quarterly Server Tracker reported a 12.6 per cent revenue spike to \$23.6bn during Q4 2018, marking the fifth straight quarter of double-digit server growth. Volume server sales grew 17.8 per cent to \$19bn, with mid-range server revenue up 30.3 per cent to \$2.5bn. High-end system sales dropped 28.3 per cent to \$2.1bn. Dell was top of the class with market share of 18.7 per cent, closely followed by HPE with 17.8 per cent. IBM came third with 8.3 per cent market share for the quarter.

■ Professional service provider TEKsolutions' latest report claimed that the majority of enterprises are unprepared for a 5G revolution. The survey of more than 300 enterprise IT and line-of-business managers discovered that 43 per cent see 5G networks as a 'moderate to significant' business opportunity, while 46 per cent see a 'slight' opportunity. However, 44 per cent of line-of-business managers and 70 per cent of enterprise IT managers have no plans to adopt 5G-enabled systems in the next 24 months. Of those preparing for 5G availability, only 12 per cent of line-of-business managers and four per cent of IT managers

claim they're in the selection and implementation phase of upgrade and adoption projects. Another 28 per cent of line-of-business managers and 17 per cent of IT managers are in the planning and design phase of 5G projects.

■ A shift from threat prevention to detection is among the top growing trends that will dominate 2019, according to Gartner. The market watcher has published its top seven security and risk management trends for the year. Gartner research VP Peter Firstbrook said the trends pinpoint ongoing strategic shifts in the market that are not yet widely recognised, but are expected to have broad industry impact and significant potential for disruption. [Full story here.](#)

■ The UK has moved up to third place in the list of countries expected to produce the most disruptive technology, according to research by KPMG. Its annual Technology Innovation Hubs report showed that the UK has risen one place from last year, now ranking behind only the US and China, with Japan and Singapore rounding out the top five. The KPMG report also found that over \$7.7bn was invested in UK tech start-ups in 2018, more than one and a half times that invested in start-ups in Germany, and over two and a half times the investment seen in French tech start-ups. [Full story here.](#)

■ Durable goods manufacturers are set to increase investment in the Internet of Things (IoT) at a growth rate of 29.4 per cent between 2019 and 2024, according to a report by ResearchAndMarkets. This is because cloud computing is making IoT and smart manufacturing devices more cost efficient and manageable, the report claimed.

■ EMEA Q4 server revenues jumped 12.3 per cent YoY to \$4.4bn, with all top five vendors in the region (except IBM) seeing revenue growth, Gartner has revealed. But the leap was more down to component shortages than to underlying demand, the analyst warned, stressing that shipment levels are still below those of 2016. Top of the pack was HPE, closely followed by arch rival Dell, with IBM in third place. Lenovo is in fourth place, with Cisco grabbing fifth place.

ANALYSIS

As yet another month goes by with Brexit dominating the headlines both in the UK and Europe, the prospect of a further delay was the last thing most of us wanted. But it was what we got.

During March, Westminster continued to make itself, and by proxy, the UK, look more indecisive and incompetent by the day, but the IT channel did its best to carry on as normal. However, there was no denying Brexit has had an impact, if only in the sense that it seemed many were holding back on either making announcements or making statements, until 29 March had been and gone.

Although an extension to Brexit was an inevitable outcome due to Theresa May not being able to get support for her deal – there's a surprise – the technology sector did have its share of growth, acquisition and innovation stories in March, but it seemed on a slightly smaller, and frankly more boring scale than in past months.

However, starting with the vendor world, it was a busy month for **HP Inc** – with its annual Reinvent global partner conference taking place in Texas. Around 1,500 partners from around the world came to hear the vendor's plans for itself and its channel, ranging from boosting device-as-a-service uptake to its managed print market plans and also where it is looking at future acquisitions.

Part of its messaging around print, and coincidentally off the back of a three per cent drop in global revenue, was the need for partners to use genuine products, rather than cheaper imitation products, which risk costing customers more in the long run due to the damage they could do to the machines. While customers are keen to save money where possible, it is often worth shelling out that little bit extra to ensure warranties are safe and avoid any unnecessary issues caused by poor-quality imitations. That is HP's messaging, anyway.

In less welcome news, the vendor was also forced to add more commercial models to its battery recall statement, many of which have been sold through the channel, because they pose a potential overheating risk.

Rival **Dell Technologies** appeared on a high this month, after Michael Dell claimed his firm was running circles around its rivals, following a strong return to publicly listed life. In total the firm saw a 15 per cent increase in overall turnover for FY 2019 to \$90.6bn. Full-year profit was also up considerably.

Michael Dell also released a sentimental video this month, showing how Dell had promised and delivered computing for all.

AWS was in bullish form this month, going after the longer-term tape storage market with a cut-price launch of a service known as S3 Glacie Deep Archive. Working with a number of technology partners such as **Commvault** and **Veritas**, AWS' offering comes in at \$1 a Terabyte per month, and the vendor claims this cost is significantly below traditional tape and off-site storage solutions that are currently on the market for longer-term storage and regulatory needs. It's definitely a case of watch this space. In the consumer world, tapes are making a comeback, but it seems AWS is keen to do away with them in a business sense.

Microsoft unveiled a host of initiatives during March, including data science bootcamps across the UK to encourage more women into the industry; a global launch of its SIEM-as-a-service plans with the launch of Azure Sentinel – a cloud-based security analytics service; and also the launch of Azure Stack HCI – the latter of which was welcomed by partners, as it will help them convert more customers to the technology which allows them to run virtualised workloads in a familiar way but with hyperconverged efficiency. The vendor seems keen to help its partners capitalise on new revenue streams, as Azure continues to change how it interacts with its channel.

Not enjoying such a great month was **Oracle**, which was almost forced to confirm rumours that it would be slashing thousands of jobs globally as it presses on with its painful transition to a cloud-first business; and also Google, which was hit with another massive fine from the EU for allegedly stifling competition and engaging in anti-competitive business tactics with its search advertising business.

It was a fairly quiet but nonetheless positive month for distribution, with **Tech Data** enjoying Q4 revenue and profit growth, but hinting that it will be fairly aggressive in culling low-return areas of its portfolio as it emerged it had missed revenue estimates. Despite this, the global giant expects to finish its current fiscal year with low single-digit growth.

In Europe, **Midwich** saw revenue increase after acquiring in the Italian and Swiss markets over →

the past year, and datacentre play **TIM** revealed its quest for emerging vendors to help it corner the DACH market.

Finally, in distribution, **Ingram Micro** was proactive in launching its new Internet of Things Marketplace, which it described as an online platform that will help guide resellers on some of the top IoT vendors such as **HPE, IBM, Microsoft** and **Cisco**. Given that Ingram was the first to launch a Cloud Marketplace and then seemed to lose ground quickly to rivals, it is nice to see the firm back in the innovation hotseat for a change, particularly after a tough few months caused by speculation over its future ownership.

As has often been the case, the reseller side of the channel was the one that saw the most positive action, particularly, this time, in Germany.

Bechtel saw revenues grow 21 per cent to €4.3bn for its FY2018, and also closed a deal with IBM, which will see around 350 Big Blue staff join the Germany-headquartered VAR's ranks in April as it takes over infrastructure services for IBM Germany.

Sticking with Germany, **Cancom** posted across-the-board growth for 2018 with a jump in international sales of almost 60 per cent; and **NTT Security** revealed it was set to bolster its SOC presence in the region after customer fears that the UK will not fall under EU data residency after Brexit (see top – what Brexit?). Definitely a case of making hay while the Brexit sun shines (for everyone else).

Computacenter continued to go from strength to strength in March, revealing how smooth the opening of its first New York office actually was, and smashing through the £4bn revenue barrier for its latest financial year. And in keeping with the German theme, **CC** opened a new office in Dresden, with plans to grow employee ranks from 60 to 200. It also acquired Lenovo Platinum partner **PathWorks** in Switzerland to complete a bumper month of activity.

Similarly on an acquisition front, Swedish player **Dustin** grabbed two new additions, and SAP partner **Invenio Business Solutions** snared an £11m-plus investment to start its M&A quest.

Closer to home, **Softcat** enjoyed yet another positive financial year, despite new accounting standards forcing it to 'net down' some revenue streams which recognise just the margin element of a transaction as opposed to the gross income, but it also revealed it was set to open another office, this time in Birmingham, and its fairly new Irish office also gained Dell EMC Gold partner status just a few

months after opening. All positive stuff for Softcat.

Birmingham-based **SCC** revealed it, too, was set to open another office, this time in Leeds, marking its eleventh UK location.

The only real sour note in the reseller space was **Econocom**, whose group profits dropped by more than 25 per cent, during a time when current CEO Jean-Louis Bouchard admitted it was a mistake to let his son Robert take over the company for a brief, yet obviously impactful (not in a good sense) time over the past year.

It is refreshing to see a CEO talk so candidly about such an issue, and should serve as a lesson to all parents who think their children would automatically be the best bet to run a family company after them. Stripes need to be earned, rather than just passed down between generations.

Looking at trends, it was positive news for the UK, as a KPMG report placed the region third in the list of countries expected to produce the most disruptive technology, just behind the US and China. This was most welcome news and definite tonic to the continuing Brexit headache. Indeed, UK tech start-ups have had over one and a half times the amount invested in them than in Germany, and two and a half times more than in France.

In other positive industry news, it emerged that female tech leaders had out-earned their male counterparts for the first time last year, proving that the shift for a more balanced industry was working. In 2013, most female tech leaders were earning less than half that of their male colleagues.

On the PC front it was a mixed picture, with IDC predicting a 3.3 per cent slide in sales for 2019, but a boon for the detachable space, which will offset losses in the traditional desktop and slate-style markets. Definitely an area for channel players to consider investing in now if they haven't already. IDC also predicted that Windows 10 migration projects in the SMB and mid-market space would help to fuel some new PC spending.

To conclude, March wasn't the most exciting of months, despite some really positive activity in the reseller space, which is going from strength to strength, particularly with the emergence of more pan-European players than ever before.

In a boon for all, the news for the month was overwhelmingly positive and the mood still seems to be focused on growth and innovating to stay ahead of the game. Exactly where it should be.

Let's hope that next time we meet, Brexit will be a long-distant memory.

MISCELLANEOUS

■ Citrix admitted that hackers may have accessed and downloaded internal business documents after possibly using password spraying tactics, which exploit weak passwords to gain access to its network. The virtualisation giant revealed that the FBI had contacted it on 6 March to advise it of the possible breach. Ongoing investigations suggest the hackers may have accessed and downloaded unknown business documents, Citrix said, but it was keen to stress that the security of any Citrix product or service was not compromised.

■ Econocom's chief executive Jean-Louis Bouchard has said it was "a mistake" to let his son Robert take over the €2.8bn IT services company. Addressing investors following the publication of its full-year 2018 results, Bouchard said his son hired people "lacking experience" into Econocom's management team who were "unable to make decisions". **Full story here.**

■ This month marked 30 years since Tim Berners-Lee (*pictured*) invented the World Wide Web, submitting a proposal for an 'information



management system'. That system has now evolved from a concept to something on which civilisation is heavily dependent, and Berners-Lee likens himself to a Doctor Frankenstein in relation to his creation, telling the BBC in an interview that it marks a "downward plunge to a dysfunctional future." See what some channel players had to say about

the Internet's birthday **here**.

■ CRN launched its *Women in Channel A-list* this month, with a rundown of some of the top female executives in the UK channel. To find out more, click **here**.

■ The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published guidance on its new artificial intelligence (AI) framework, which will monitor firms using the technology. The ICO says the framework will be used to help its investigation teams assess the compliance of data controllers, and manage any data protection risks associated with applications using AI. According to a blog post, the framework will focus on two areas: governance and accountability, and AI-specific risk areas.

EVENTS

■ **HP Reinvent, George Brown Convention Center, Houston** – at its annual global partner shindig, which saw over 1,500 partners descend on Texas; CEO Dion Weisler claimed its acquisition of print giant Apogee has helped it address a 'fragmented' European managed print market. The vendor also talked about future acquisitions and its plans for device as a service growth. For a full round-up of all the news from the event, see **here**.

See also a viewpoint on the conference from CRN managing editor Tom Wright, **here**.

