

3Com Gets Connected

EXPANDED CHANNEL EFFORTS, PRODUCT ROLLOUTS RAISE APPEAL

BY HERMAN MEHLING
Santa Clara, Calif.

SINCE FIRST getting its toes wet in the small-business market in 1996, networking vendor 3Com Corp. has tried hard to tap reseller and customer mind share while pursuing a huge chunk of market share.

Over the past year, 3Com upped its commitment to the small-business market by improv-

ing its channel program, recruiting thousands of resellers and rolling out new products every few months.

"Compared to other networking vendors, 3Com realized fairly early on that the small-business market lent itself very well to its skill set," said Virginia Brooks, analyst at The Aberdeen Group, a Boston-based research firm.

"It does a great job of volume manufacturing, and with the acquisition of U.S. Robotics [Inc.], it enhanced its expertise in mass marketing," said Brooks. "And, 3Com has done a good job of establishing the OfficeConnect product family in the [small-office/home-office] space."

"3Com makes incredible products for small business, its support is good, and its prices

Mind Share



KERRY LANGSTAFF, Marketing Manager

are competitive," said Gibby Cohen, president of W.A.W., a reseller in New York. "Even if its prices were not competitive, I'd sell the products anyway because they are so easy to use and so reliable," Cohen said.

"According to 3Com research, and that of independent market-research firms, 3Com is the market leader in network interface cards [NICs], hubs and modems," said Kerry Langstaff,

**SMALL
BUSINESSES
WANT PRODUCTS
THAT COST LITTLE,
ARE EASY TO
INSTALL, USE AND
MAINTAIN . . .**



JOE DIDATI, Director of Marketing

**SINCE LAUNCHING
OUR SMALL-
BUSINESS PARTNER
PROGRAM . . . WE HAVE
RECRUITED ABOUT
10,000 RESELLERS.**

marketing manager for small-business operations at 3Com, based here.

To maintain its grasp of both mind and market share, 3Com decided to work more closely

with the reseller channel during the past 12 months, said Langstaff.

"Since launching our small-business partner program in February 1997—focusing our recruitment on resellers that do 50 percent or more of their revenue with small business—we have recruited about 10,000 resellers," she said. "That's about one-third of the total number of resellers

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3COM GETS CONNECTED WITH EXPANDED CHANNEL, PRODUCTS

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that target small businesses with LAN and WAN products, according to research done by VARBusiness' channel information services group."

Langstaff noted that 3Com made about

a half-dozen enhancements to its small-business partner program and introduced a number of new products over the past six months.

"We now have a Web-based reseller locator tool that allows any user to locate

small-business partners and, in a few months, we will offer the tool via an 800 number," she said.

Other key tools it introduced are: the Network Designer, a Web-based network configuration tool; and the Networking

Benefits Calculator, an interactive tool for measuring return on investment on a network for small business.

"The Network Designer provides resellers with on-the-Web diagrams of network models for all 3Com products, helping them to configure a network they are working on," said Langstaff.

The Networking Benefits Calculator is part of the free Networking Basics and Benefits CD-ROM, which allows resellers to walk a small-business customer through a step-by-step guide to networking fundamentals. In doing so, the calculator points out what type of infrastructure is needed to meet future needs.

"In addition to new tools, 3Com now provides lead assistance through various marketing programs and trade shows," said Langstaff. "And, we offer presales assistance to our small-business partners."

Earlier this year, 3Com introduced a demonstration program specifically for small-business partners.

"It allows them to play with any 3Com product and then purchase it at a 50 percent discount," Langstaff said.

3Com's core small-business products are: EtherLink NICs; Megahertz PC cards; the OfficeConnect family of routers, modems, hubs, switches and application servers; the SuperStack family of routers, hubs and switches; as well as U.S. Robotics modems.

Over the past few months, the vendor rolled out new Fast Ethernet Office-Connect hubs, the OfficeConnect Dual Analog modem and the OfficeConnect ISDN LAN Modem.

THE COMPANY HAS

IN ADDITION TO NEW FOCUS, IT PROVIDES LEAD ASSISTANCE VIA MARKETING EFFORTS, TRADE