

## Evolution: 3G market opportunity realised in Sub-Saharan Africa

‘What ICDL did was very good and very well delivered’,

says Harry Tayler – the managing director of Evolution Communications Ltd – who talks to ICDL about what he’s achieved.

The mobile telecommunications market suffers from poor penetration, coverage and connectivity. In the North of Africa this is often next to zero, for example, while South Africa has 15% coverage of 3G. So with an increasing reliance on data connectivity for business processes – the key driver – a market opportunity was realised to provide solutions that would remove this predicament.

“Businesses expect to be online wherever they are now. Everyone expects to have a ubiquitous connectivity, but sub-Saharan Africa is a very price-sensitive market. By identifying customers’ needs and utilising new technology it is possible to resolve the connectivity issues without resorting to high-end, expensive solutions.”

Harry Tayler, Managing Director of Evolution Communications Ltd

### The origins of the market opportunity

Tayler used to work for Inmarsat in London, which engaged with Intellectual Capital Development Ltd (ICDL) in 2005, and undertook some value-based sales training for its account managers. The training wasn’t kept internally; the training of selected distribution partners and resellers followed too. ICDL also helped Inmarsat with some market research, and as a result of this training and research he began to see the current market opportunity. He therefore set about establishing his own company, Evolution, while developing and maintaining a strategic relationship with Inmarsat as a key partner for bridging the connectivity gap. ICDL helped Evolution to recognise the scale of the market opportunity in Africa. This gave a structure in so far as how the company would access it.



## Training and subsequent growth

The result of the research and the sales training was, according to Harry Tayler, some significant growth as a result of “numerous high value opportunities in an under-exploited part of the world”, he explains before commenting that “Evolution has utilised ICDL’s sales techniques to forge business relationships in a previously under-served region as far as the distribution of Inmarsat communications is concerned.”

Within the Inmarsat sales channel there is a high level of consolidation, particularly amongst the existing wholesalers. This means “the drivers for shareholder value in many of those organisations are derived from synergies gained from mergers with other wholesalers, rather than growth in underlying growth in customer acquisition, and/or satellite air time revenues.” This consolidation has led to there being a number of resellers and customers who find themselves either neglected or badly served by the larger and more established wholesalers.

## Credibility, nimble and responsive sales

In response to this situation, Evolution intends to provide more nimble and responsive sales support and customer services across the sub-Saharan region of Africa. Tayler also has plans to go further afield. He understandably wishes to stress the achievements that he is making more than those of his former employer, but nevertheless comments that Inmarsat has also discovered noticeable improvements throughout its own sales channel, such as “a better grasp of customer needs, a greater desire to exploit and grow the market. This includes channel partners from Norway, the US and UK.

Some personal benefits were also created as a result of the sales training and the market research. It helped to build and improve credibility with the channel partners, helping to establish a clear leadership position within the Inmarsat community, and this value became embedded in the corporation itself and within certain parts of the sales channel. “It is likely that Inmarsat will continue to derive incremental value from ICDL’s sales training through 2007 and beyond. The training is very good at focusing the mind”, believes Tayler.



## Price-focused plain vanilla, or added value?

With the market focused on price as a key strategy, ICDL helped Evolution to sell on a basis that wasn't just 'plain vanilla' to avoid the commoditisation and problems associated with competing on price. More emphasis is placed on finding out what his customers' problems are, and the issues facing the channel partner's own customers. "Typically connectivity and coverage are the key issues. They bear huge costs in order to send and receive data, which Evolution can solve. More than this, the technology helps to speed up decision-making, streamline their communications, and improve health and safety, the whole gamut", he explains.

He also comments that his company is working with and selling to a number of Blue Chip firms in South Africa and further north. Evolution is rapidly establishing a reputation for being responsive to customer needs, and this includes the attainment of understanding of their markets and how they operate. Some 'extremely strong' relationships have been developed with several government entities too, as well as with some large oil and gas companies.

## How does ICDL compare to its competitors?

Harry Tayler has worked with other sales training companies within ICDL's own space, and believes that ICDL compares 'very well'. In fact he thinks that ICDL are streaks ahead of the competition. "TAS and Miller Heiman's broad offerings are very good for implementing general sales methodologies, but for creating real differentiation and competitive advantage their approach is not as good as ICDL's. For the more strategic, or complex, projects their delivery is lacking when compared with ICDL, which has a core competency and its team members stick to it; they deliver what they say they are going to deliver", he says.

These plaudits are very genuine. Evolution is planning to keep in touch with ICDL and work with the company in the near future. This is because significant benefits has been realised as a result of ICDL's approach, some of which Tayler admits he would not have otherwise has thought of himself without



the training and the market research. Evolution has a plan for rapid but structured growth. This includes broadening its portfolio of services, as much as it involves expanding into new geographical markets. The latter will be on the cards within a 36-month period. He says that working with ICDL is very much part of his expansion plans to enable him to grow, differentiate his offerings and to sustain a competitive advantage.

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