

# Interview with Chris Collinson

**GEORGE SELL**

meets Sky's  
sales and



marketing director, for  
whom having a good  
connection with clients  
is more than just a  
part of the job

Chris Collinson, sales and marketing director at Sky, is back at the company he worked at before he gained experience in a series of roles with blue chip companies and a wide range of TV and broadband providers.

Collinson says: "After leaving education I went to work for Guinness. I was on their graduate trainee scheme for three years until I left and went to work for Coca-Cola in various sales and marketing positions."

"Then I came to Sky in 1997 for my first stint, which lasted about three years. I was responsible for Sky's relationship with all the different cable companies – at the time there were about 17 or 18. After that, when the cable industry had consolidated to just three – NTL, Telewest and Cable & Wireless – I joined NTL just as they were purchasing Cable & Wireless, and stayed there for five years – through Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the purchase of Telewest and the rebranding to Virgin."

"Then I went to work for Talk Talk, where I set up the company's free broadband proposition in mid 2006. After three years in the consumer division I became a director and ran their business-to-

business arm for two years. I realised that b2b was not for me, and I'd had many calls from Stephen van Rooyen – who I'd worked with at NTL – about coming and rejoining Sky. So I've been back with Sky as sales and marketing director for about three and a half years now."

One of Collinson's tasks is to strengthen Sky's presence in the residential development market. He says: "We've got a small but very dedicated team that work very closely with developers. We currently work with eight or nine of the top 10 volume housebuilders, the likes of Taylor Wimpey, Bellway and so on. The team are in regular conversation with the housebuilders, trying to provide solutions to make sure that when a house is built it's all been cabled properly, that our services are in there and they work straight away. It's about trying to meet consumer need – the last thing that a buyer wants when they walk into their new home is to find wires all over the place, you just want to find that everything works.

"So we're working very closely with developers, with Openreach (in terms of broadband and fibre), ►



# SUPPLY CHAIN

and with smaller independent fibre businesses, to ensure that consumers have the widest range of choices available, be it broadband with us, or broadband with other suppliers where we overlay our TV proposition.”

The increased importance of TV and broadband services to consumers is becoming evident in the housebuilding sector. Collinson says: “Ultimately I want to work as closely as possible with all the major builders to ensure that we are making it easier for consumers. Long gone are the days when broadband, and to a degree the TV, is discretionary. They are very much seen as a mandatory offer now. While we are meeting consumer demand, we are also making the developer’s product that bit more appealing, and giving them a strategic advantage over their rivals. If you can sell a house with the consumer knowing it’s all been cabled up, everything works, and that they are eligible to all the latest offers when they move in, then it benefits both organisations.

“Our account management team, that works directly with the developers, also looks at customer support, both in terms of issue resolution for developers and dealing with third-party suppliers such as fibre companies. I think it works well – it’s still a relatively small part of Sky’s overall business right now, but with 150,000 to 160,000 new properties being built each year, it’s growing. My job isn’t being made any easier in the sense that there is more competition out there, so if we can work more effectively with the developers than anyone else then it’s an area where we can see us continuing to invest in getting better and working more closely with this audience.”

When asked whether combined TV and broadband cabling and services are now a prerequisite in a new home, Collinson says: “I think it’s always going to be an option, but it is becoming increasingly important. You hear people saying in our industry that people are

watching less and less TV now – well, the reality is that people are watching much more video content, but it might not be on their main device. Products such as Sky Q that allow you to move and distribute your product and your content seamlessly from room to room, from device to device, can be increasingly important, acting as a central hub. What our product does is provide a simple, central access to content, regardless of where you want to view it. It means there is no need for a number of disaggregated products – what this one does is allow you to watch content wherever you are and whichever device you’re using, across the entire family.

“So it is still a discretionary offer in a new home, but I think it’s becoming ever more important. Some of the research that we’ve done shows that after having the electricity and gas connected and a functioning water supply, broadband and TV are the next priority for homeowners. Buyers want it to be working when they walk in to a new home. The last time I moved home, especially having a young family, one of the most important things for me to get sorted was definitely my broadband and my multi-play TV service. The last thing I wanted to do was to take more time off work during what is a

relatively stressful and challenging period. So working with developers to make sure that the product is there and it’s available when their customers walk in – who will hopefully then become my customers – is something that we’ve both got to work at to make it succeed.”

Collinson adds: “The businesses that will be most successful are those who continue to make life easier for their customers. So what we have with our team dedicated to the developers is the chance for both of us to delight our customers.”

And he is by no means aiming solely at the UK’s volume developers: “If any developers who we are not already working with are interested in what we do, we’d be interested in hearing from them. We’ve been focusing on the big boys in the early stages but we’d like to deal with as many developers as possible – I don’t want to keep what we’re doing a secret!” <sup>sh</sup>

If you would like to feature in Supply Chain, please contact George Sell at [georgesell@me.com](mailto:georgesell@me.com) with a brief description of your company and the name of the potential interviewee

