

ALL CHANGE FOR NTT AS DIMENSION DATA AND OTHER BRANDS BECOME ONE COMPANY

Many companies that have been acquired by NTT over the past few years are now coming together. From next week everything will be NTT, Michael Wheeler tells Alan Burkitt-Gray



Michael Wheeler, head of global IP network business, NTT

If you're used to dealing with companies such as Dimension Data, e-shelter and even NTT Communications, over the coming days everything will change – all 28 different companies around the world that are owned by the Japanese NTT group – will simply be known as NTT Ltd.

The old name, NTT Communications – or NTT Com as most of us still call it – will be used solely for operations inside Japan.

Michael Wheeler, who's head of NTT's global IP network business, has been at the heart of this change, one of the global integration team of about 100 people who have been planning the project.

"It's been an interesting journey," he says, speaking from a Tokyo airport on Friday on his way to ITW. "The exciting part is bringing together all these different companies – we've made a lot of acquisitions over the last few years and they've been standalone businesses until now. We're bringing them together. We're integrating all the different service offerings and sales organisations."

It's a giant enterprise, he notes.

"The company has 43,000 people and \$11 billion revenue, headquartered in London, with offices and staff around the world."

The CEO of NTT Ltd will be Jason Goodall, currently group CEO of Dimension Data, who has been with the Dimension Data group since 2000, when he became COO of its Internet Solutions division in South Africa.

The integration job will not be over next Monday. "It will take up to a couple of years, though some tasks will be over in a few months," he tells me from Tokyo. "Legal and tax will take longest. This is the beginning of the end, but there'll be some bumps along the road."

But, "bringing everything together under the one brand will create opportunities that have been missed in the past. It's not that products and services have been hiding – but there has been less coordination than there might have been," he says.

"Now there are ambitious plans around product development. These kinds of benefits

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are part of the process of integration. I will still be in the global internet backbone business, but some of the other roles will be defined over the next several months. Jason's executive team will be announced after 1 July."

The familiar brand names "will go over time", he says. "There are some regulatory requirements, but other than that it's stationery and business cards. It doesn't change a lot for us but it gives us go-to-market opportunities."

It's the end of the first phase of a long process, and Wheeler concedes that some other things in NTT have been delayed while the integration team has been busy.

"To be honest most of us have been doing two jobs for the last few months," he says.

Last year the company opened new points of presence (PoPs) in Dublin and Manchester, and then added Toronto in April. Usually there are three or four PoPs being explored and examined, "but in the last five or six months not so much because of the integration", he admits. "But when the integration is done, there will be new opportunities for the Dimension Data business – in new countries and markets."

So how does NTT look at new opportunities? "There is a generic list of markets that make sense, and this is driven by the sales organisation, when they hear from customers," says Wheeler. "That initiates a look at the business case. We identify the infrastructure needed and the cost and then do the financial analysis." Management reviews the case: "Is it a real sales forecast or a pie-in-the-sky forecast?" he says. "If we have a financially viable business case we move forward. If not, we set the idea aside but know what it would take for that market to be a success, and we can go back and revisit the idea. We take out as much subjectivity as possible."

The three recent additions – Dublin, Manchester and Toronto – "are all at the baby or toddler state", he says. "Any PoP takes two to three years to get to maturity. New business cases are always being looked at. Those three are relatively new. We're driving our go-to-market strategy and getting customers signed up."

But Wheeler is optimistic. "It's definitely been hard work, with a lot of investment, a lot of documentation and data, but the return is very tangible and real," he says. And now it's time for him to catch his flight across the Pacific to ITW. ☐