

GCI announces acquisition of Freedom Communications

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Leading Managed IT Services company GCI today announces its acquisition of Hertfordshire based Unified Communications Specialist Freedom Communications for an undisclosed sum. It is the organisation's 5th acquisition in under 12 months and follows GCI's acquisition of high profile Cloud Specialist Outsourcery only 6 months ago.

Commenting on the acquisition, Adrian Thirkill CEO at GCI stated, "2016 was a busy and productive year at GCI. It was about setting the framework for growth and preparing GCI to catch the moment as next generation managed IT services transition from adolescence to mainstream business transformers. Our acquisition of Freedom is another steady step in our journey to deliver progressive and cost efficient managed services to all our customers. Freedom's heritage and skills as a Unified Communications Systems Integrator, and its focus on transitioning customers from old world to new, is perfectly aligned with our own growth strategy and is a great fit for us."

In terms of strategy, Adrian Thirkill continued, "We are very clear that within the range of IT services now available, some will be real winners in the digital transformation stakes - and therefore winners for our customers too. We are backing the big four of Unified Communications, Cloud, Compliance & Security - underpinned of course by next generation Infrastructure & Networking technologies. On that note, alongside its considerable experience, Freedom Communications adds another 40,000+ Skype for Business seats to our Microsoft UCaaS arm taking GCI to more than 180,000 Skype for Business seats overall. This quietly elevates GCI to the top tier of UK service providers capable of delivering and supporting Microsoft Skype and Cloud PBX at scale - and across multiple sectors."

Adrian Thirkill continued, "To add a sense of perspective regarding this achievement, it is worth mentioning that in a UK ecosystem of more than 25,000 Microsoft partners, GCI is 1 of only 10 UK Cloud Service Providers accredited to serve both the direct and indirect market, 1 of only 13 on the Skype Operations Framework and 1 of only 23 Microsoft High Touch Partners in the UK."

Pat Botting, Managing Director at Freedom Communications commented, "We are delighted to share this announcement. Our investment and growth alongside an almost unique, holistic go-to-market model coupled with GCI's comprehensive managed service and cloud solutions make this acquisition the most significant that the UK Unified Communications (UC) market has seen to date. Not only is this great news for our people, but it is also great news for all our customers now gearing to full UC adoption. Exciting times ahead."

Commenting on the acquisition Clare Barclay, General Manager at Microsoft UK stated, "When I met with GCI on their stand at Future Decoded in London a few short weeks ago, I said that I was confident about the opportunities we had to work together and I am delighted to see GCI forging ahead now with further unified communications and cloud investments. Freedom Communications is of course already well known to us as a leading Microsoft partner and has a great track record. The collective strengths and learnings across the blended GCI, Outsourcery, Freedom Communications operation means that customers are in a great position to benefit from its expertise in Microsoft Office 365, Skype for Business and Azure. The age of digital transformation is upon us, and it is organisations like GCI that will help customers truly reap

the benefits.”

Another driver for the deal is Freedom Communications' expertise in the public sector where it is listed on 9 of the 11 lots of RM1045 Network Services Framework – which the public sector uses to procure Unified Communications and network related services. This will see GCI well placed to enable public sector organisations to catch on quickly to the transformational benefits of UC and Cloud services. GCI is already enabling Ealing Council to transition from a legacy environment to Cloud and will result in them having one of the largest Skype deployments in their sector. Other notable examples include the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and London University.

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About GCI

Multi-award winning GCI is one of the UK's leading Managed IT Service Providers, with offices across the UK. GCI excels in helping customers transform their business through use of innovative, contemporary and robust IT services. Whether a customer's requirements include Unified Communications, Cloud, Compliance & Security or Network aspects, GCI is able to provide a fully managed service to meet their digital needs as their businesses (and the environments they operate within) change and evolve. Specialists in Microsoft Skype for Business and PCI Compliant Contact Centre Services, GCI serves a range of vertical markets both directly and through accredited partners.

GCI is certified to ISO27001 (Data Security) ISO14001 (Environmental Assurance) and ISO9001 (Quality Assurance). It is also a PCI Certified Class 1 Service Provider. The organisation is also accredited to G-Cloud and the Crown Commercial Service for the Network Services Frameworks.

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