

## Redmond Channel Partner

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### Cover Story

## 2008 Marching Orders

*The new product launch wave hits early in 2008, so what's a partner to do? Microsoft insiders and partners point out channel opportunities and challenges in a year without Bill.*

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by Anne Stuart

### Manage the Coming Changes Arlin Sorensen

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2008 promises to be a year of major opportunities for partners serving the small to midsize business (SMB) space. We can expect 2008 to be our best year since the Y2K-driven madness of 1999.

Next summer, Microsoft will change the landscape with the release of Windows Essential Business Server. Windows Server 2008 and a host of other products will come to market earlier in the year. Meanwhile, Hewlett-Packard Co. has released its "Shorty" blade chassis, targeted to SMBs.



In addition to those opportunities, we need to monitor some other trends driving change in our industry in 2008 and beyond:

- Virtualization will mature and begin to penetrate the SMB market.
- Social networking will become an accepted way of doing business.
- Customers will increasingly expect continual connectivity to all their resources anytime, anywhere, using any device.
- SaaS, hardware as a service and hosted apps will begin to take hold in our space.
- Managed services will become more commoditized and customer expectations will increase.
- Business-process consulting involving approaches such as Six Sigma, lean manufacturing and others will begin to impact the SMB space.

Initially, it's easy to be overwhelmed by all these trends. But while these changes require channel partners to adapt, they represent significant business opportunity as well.

Our work is really about change management. These trends are happening now, and they offer us a real chance to make a difference as we guide our SMB clients through the uncharted waters ahead.