

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1



# divviamo

The People and Technologies Propelling Small and Medium Businesses

Technology Trends

Digital Journeys

Expert Perspectives



# Technology trends, journeys, and perspectives for SMB dynamos



A staggering 99.9 percent of all U.S. businesses are considered “small.”<sup>1</sup> But what they lack in human and financial resources, they make up with ambition, smarts, tenacity, and in many cases, technology.

When I speak with small business leaders, they’re often surprised to learn that Cisco has a wide range of solutions built just for them. Technologies that are affordable, easy to install and manage, and supported by a broad ecosystem of partners who work with SMBs every day.

This publication will help spread the word, and we created it just for you – the entrepreneurs, innovators, and craftspeople behind our most important economic engine. Featuring technology trends, digital journeys, and expert perspectives, it celebrates dynamos like you who are pushing their business forward with the help of advanced technologies.

In this first issue, we highlight the ways SMBs are emerging from one of the most disruptive events in modern history. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it’s the importance of digital maturity – regardless of company size.

The following stories not only showcase the ingenuity and perseverance of SMBs, but also where they are

on their digital transformation journey. With IDC’s Small Business Digital Maturity Index as a common framework, I hope these stories provide perspective and guidance as you steer your company into the future.

If there are specific trends or technologies you’d like to see in forthcoming issues of *dynamo*, or if you’d like to share your story, please reach out to us at [dynamo@cisco.com](mailto:dynamo@cisco.com). Let’s grow together.

**Denise Lee**  
VP, Cisco Small Business



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# Story Links

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72% of SMBs are accelerating technology adoption

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Transforming an in-person business model to digital-first



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**Security**

# Technology Trends





# From emergency to emergence: Finding light at the end of the tunnel

As the global community emerges from a catastrophic health crisis – the ripple effects of which will last years, if not decades – the strength of partner ecosystems and the resilience of small businesses continue to be guiding lights.

“The pandemic hit small businesses the hardest,” says Denise Lee, vice president of small business at Cisco. “We’ve been working closely with our partners to help SMB customers adapt, survive, and emerge stronger than ever.”

In addition to committing \$225 million to support the global and local response to the pandemic, Cisco took a number of steps to help the small business community weather the storm. The company provided a variety of resources, tips, and classes for working from home. It continues to offer free licenses of Cisco Webex® and Cisco security solutions. And it expanded its portfolio of small business technologies, all of which are designed to be simple and secure.

## Reopening business, overcoming financial hurdles

Even more important is the legion of partners working alongside Cisco to help small businesses emerge from this unprecedented time of change.

“Our ecosystem of partners, many of which are small companies themselves, are on the business frontlines,” Lee says. “With localized presence and support, they’re the ones who are working day and night to ensure small businesses survive and thrive amidst the turmoil.”

[ZAG Technical Services](#), a managed services provider with three offices in California and one in Idaho, initially helped its clients transition to remote work and is now assisting them with reopening strategies. ZAG also created a pro bono program to support nonprofit, education, and healthcare organizations during the crisis.

“The needs have been fairly universal,” says Greg Gatzke, founder of ZAG Technical Services. “With more people working from home, companies need connectivity, collaboration, security, and access to key applications.”





**Your Technology Support**, another longtime Cisco partner, has found creative ways to mitigate the financial strain many small businesses are experiencing.

“Instead of big projects, we’re focusing on tweaks and efficiency improvements that help our clients save money,” says Adrian Turri, owner of Your Technology Support. “We’ve adjusted our services and costs, worked with Cisco Capital® to secure some incredible financing, and we’re even paying the interest in some cases. Whatever it takes to get the job done.”

“Our ecosystem of partners, many of which are small companies themselves, are on the business frontlines. With localized presence and support, they’re the ones who are working day and night to ensure small businesses survive and thrive amidst the turmoil.”

### Denise Lee

VP, Cisco Small Business

## Protecting users and data beyond the firewall

Multilayered security is another critical requirement for small businesses adapting to a new normal. With more spokes connecting to each business hub, a secure connection that is supplemented by endpoint protection and identity and privacy management can make the difference between survival and obsolescence.

“Cybercrime is up by 400 percent, hackers are targeting home networks and user devices, and 60 percent of small businesses that get hit won’t last six months,” Lee says. “Being proactive with security is vitally important.”

“Small businesses are aware of cybercrime risks, but they don’t always understand their specific vulnerabilities,” says Vince Zappula, chief revenue officer of **DataEndure**, a Cisco partner focused on digital resiliency. “And many don’t have the resources to fully protect themselves. It requires 24x7 monitoring and the ability to thoroughly investigate and quickly respond if something happens.”

## The power of the portfolio

What may sound like enterprise-scale capabilities that can only be attained with enterprise-scale budgets are more affordable and accessible than ever before.

“While the first push centered on connectivity, collaboration, and security, the second push is focused on reducing complexity. Fewer IT resources, more simplicity, more plug-and-play,” Lee says. “If it’s too complex, it will create vulnerabilities and inevitably lead to problems. Small businesses should be looking for

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fully integrated solutions spanning network, security, and collaboration.”

“The power of the suite is Cisco’s secret sauce. The products are better together than they are alone,” Gatzke says. “Cisco Meraki™ firewall, Cisco SD-WAN, Cisco VPN, Cisco Umbrella®, Cisco AMP. These are enterprise-grade technologies that have been brought to the small business market. They’re easy to use and inexpensive, with payback in months, not years.”

## Success through adaptation

Despite the uncertainty that has been borne from the pandemic, Cisco and its partners see distinct light at the end of the tunnel for small businesses.

“This is the ultimate pressure test,” says Turri. “We have the opportunity to reevaluate everything and determine what’s really important and what’s unnecessary. As a result, businesses are becoming faster and more efficient.”

“Companies are also becoming more adaptable,” Gatzke adds. “They are more comfortable with change, and they have the mindset to make big changes quickly.”

“Things will certainly be different as we emerge from the pandemic, but much of it will be positive,” Lee concludes. “And we’re here with our partners to help small businesses adapt and succeed.”



# Cloud-based security solutions and consultants proving essential amidst wave of cyberattacks

Hackers, fraudsters, and scammers have always been opportunistic. And disruptive events have always created opportunities for malfeasance.

The global pandemic, for example, has spurred an onslaught of data breaches and cybersecurity incidents. According to the FBI, the volume of cyberattacks has increased by 400 percent since the beginning of the pandemic, with upwards of 4000 incidents being reported every day. And certain tactics like ransomware attacks are up 800 percent.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, small businesses are a common target.

Without the resources and expertise to have a comprehensive cybersecurity program, many small businesses are woefully unprepared to identify and mitigate an attack. Even with firewalls and basic security solutions in place, protecting users, applications, and data is extremely difficult. And it has become harder with employees working beyond the firewall and applications hosted in the cloud.

While a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach can be tremendously risky for small businesses, a managed security service (MSS) can be prohibitively expensive. Especially during a time when cash flow is at a premium for countless companies.

That's why many small businesses are choosing a blended option: Cloud-based, self-managed security with upfront consultation and implementation assistance.

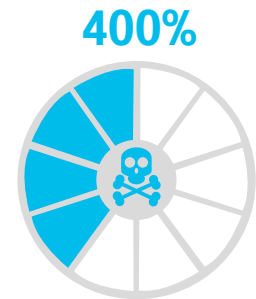
Unfortunately, small businesses are a common target.



Security incidents reported daily



Increase in ransomware attacks



Increase in cyberattacks

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/top-cyber-security-experts-report-4-000-cyber-attacks-a-day-since-covid-19-pandemic-301110157.html>



“Companies with one or two IT people typically can’t afford a dedicated cybersecurity specialist and many can’t afford a full-blown managed service,” says Omar Zarabi, founder and CEO of [Port53 Technologies](#), which helps small businesses leverage enterprise-grade, cloud-delivered security solutions. “Fortunately, cloud-based solutions like Cisco Umbrella® are easy to deploy and simple to manage. They don’t require coding, security expertise, or continuous monitoring. So we help our clients get the right solutions in place and then we pass the baton.”

### **Pandemic exposes legacy IT, validates modernization**

According to Zarabi, the pandemic revealed a clear delineation between the companies that have modernized their IT infrastructure and those that continue to rely on legacy systems.

“We support a wide range of customers and verticals,” he says. “Across the board, their ability to adapt was directly tied to their stage of digital transformation.”

The companies that had cloud-based solutions like Cisco Umbrella, Cisco AMP for Endpoints, Cisco Meraki™, Cisco Email Security, Duo Security, and Cisco Cloudlock were able to make the shift to remote work and extend their security capabilities beyond the firewall in a matter of days. Conversely, those that had security software and file servers on legacy systems faced a much more difficult, multi-week transition.

“It didn’t matter what industry they were in or how big they were,” Zarabi says. “What mattered was how far they were with infrastructure modernization, cloud utilization, and the alignment between the two.”

For small businesses wanting enterprise-grade security and seeking a middle ground between DIY and MSS approaches, Zarabi suggests a free trial of Cisco’s cloud security portfolio.

“We help companies take advantage of the trial so they can get familiar with the platforms and see the security solutions live in their environment,” he says, noting implementation, integration, and training assistance. “And if they decide to buy, Cisco Capital® has financing options for small businesses that align with cash flow realities and minimize upfront investments.”

It’s a no-cost, no-risk way to evaluate the latest security solutions, protect a small business, and weather the current storm.

**“We support a wide range of customers and verticals.”**

**Omar Zarabi**  
Founder and CEO,  
[Port53 Technologies](#)

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# Assessing current capabilities, establishing new goals

A whopping 72 percent of small businesses are accelerating their adoption of modern technologies, according to new research from IDC<sup>1</sup>. And they're doing so to transform internal operations, protect their business, and improve their engagement with customers, partners, and employees.

"While more than 50 percent of small businesses saw their revenue decline in 2020, IDC research shows small businesses that were more digitally mature experienced less revenue loss than their peers," says Shari Lava, SMB research director at IDC. "But what's even more compelling is that 10 percent more of these small businesses even managed to grow revenue compared to their less digitally mature peers."

Because every business is at a different stage of technology adoption, IDC developed the Small Business Digital Maturity Index. It provides a helpful frame of reference as you assess your organization's current capabilities and establish goals that synchronize business and IT needs.

Small Business Digital Maturity Index	STAGE 1 DIGITAL INDIFFERENT	STAGE 2 DIGITAL OBSERVER	STAGE 3 DIGITAL CHALLENGER	STAGE 4 DIGITAL NATIVE
<b>Strategy and Organization</b>	• Company is reactive and focused on efficiencies. No digital efforts exist or starting.	• Digital efforts in progress but tactical. Starting to create a digital plan.	• Company focused on becoming agile. A digital strategy exists, but focused on short-term.	• Holistic strategy to digitally innovate exists. Proactively seeking to transform the market, expand operations and drive CX.
<b>Processes and Governance</b>	• Majority of processes are manual.	• Many processes still not automated. Focused on addressing inefficiencies.	• All core processes are automated and productivity rates improving.	• Full process automation done; agile approach. Significant strides made in process transformation.
<b>Technology</b>	• Tactical investments. No cloud and spreadsheet centric.	• Some cloud resources being used. Very limited use of analytics. Focused on the use of reporting tools.	• There is a tech roadmap for digitalization. Company is using hybrid cloud approaches.	• Cloud-first and committed to using digital tech. Broad adoption of analytics.
<b>People and Skills</b>	• Lack of digital skills.	• Making tactical investments to acquire digital skills. Risk-averse leadership.	• Strategic Investments in talent are being made, particularly digital skills.	• The right digital skills exist. Talent is a top priority and a competitive differentiator. Agile and adaptable culture.

<sup>1</sup> IDC 2020 Small Business Digital Maturity Study

# Digital Journeys





# No budget, no staff, no time...no problem: Cheetah revamps its IT model and cost structure to push forward

John Hodson had been on the job for less than three months when the unthinkable happened. With the pandemic grinding the Western United States to a standstill, the new head of IT for **Cheetah**, a wholesale food supplier in the Bay Area, had to lay off staff and relinquish the company's managed IT services.

"The restaurant industry basically shut down," says Hodson, "and we went from explosive business growth to extreme contraction in a matter of days."

As senior executives formulated new business-to-consumer and non-profit concepts to help the company stay afloat, Hodson had to find ways to revamp Cheetah's IT model and cost structure – without a staff, budget, or the assistance of a managed services provider (MSP). And because the company was no longer protected by a third-party firm, time wasn't on his side.

"I knew if I didn't protect the business, we'd be done," Hodson recalls. "There's no way we would have been able to make it through a malware or ransomware attack in addition to all of the other challenges."

Hodson contacted **Port53 Technologies**, which helps small businesses leverage enterprise-grade, cloud-delivered, self-managed solutions. Port53 suggested Cisco Umbrella® and Cisco SecureX™ to simplify Cheetah's IT operations and protect its users and data. And because cash flow was an issue, Port53 also pointed Cheetah to Cisco Capital®, which offers financing solutions tailored to small- and medium-sized businesses.

"We didn't have a budget, but we had a need," Hodson says. "Joshua at Port53 and the team at Cisco were amazing partners, and they helped us find creative ways to do something meaningful and compelling exactly when we needed it most."

**"I knew if I didn't protect the business, we'd be done."**

**John Hodson**  
Head of IT, Cheetah



**DIGITAL  
MATURITY  
INDEX  
STAGE 3**





## Slashing IT operating costs by \$20,000 per month

With financing from Cisco Capital and guidance from Port53, Hodson quickly configured and deployed the solutions himself – while still supporting hundreds of users.

“It was remarkably easy,” he says, noting Cisco Umbrella was installed in a single afternoon. “It’s rare to have a deployment without any setbacks, but we’ve had zero problems.”

Although Hodson has far more visibility and control of Cheetah’s IT resources than he had when they were outsourced, he says the company’s new solution stack is largely hands-off.

“These are enterprise-grade technologies that are tailored for small businesses. They’re simplified but they don’t feel small or insufficient,” Hodson says. “And that’s important because we don’t have a service desk or team of system administrators. It’s just me. Fortunately, I can see and manage everything with my mobile phone or tablet, so I’m not tethered to anything.”

He’s also no longer concerned with security vulnerabilities, thanks to the combination of Cisco Umbrella, Cisco SecureX, and Cisco AMP for Endpoints.

“We have a lot of security challenges,” Hodson says, noting the company’s customer-facing application, cloud-based workloads, warehouse facilities, fleet of delivery vehicles, and distributed workforce. “But we’re very well protected now. All of our security solutions

are integrated, they’re largely automated with the use of playbooks, and I can manage everything through a single pane of glass.”

Equally important are the cost savings Cheetah was able to achieve. By relinquishing its MSP and adopting a self-managed, SaaS-based IT model, the company is saving \$20,000 every month.

“We have better technology and protection at a lower cost,” Hodson says. “This is truly a success story, and we’re in a position to rebuild our workforce and push our business forward because of these changes.”

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“It was remarkably easy.”

**John Hodson**  
Head of IT, Cheetah

Play Cheetah Video





# Sweet relief: Online shift sparks business boom

Although she lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Louise Schonberg has always been closely tied to her Swedish heritage and culture. Those ties were strengthened in 2015 when she opened [Karameller](#), a small candy shop in Vancouver's quaint Yaletown district.

"I was inspired by my childhood memories," Schonberg explains. "Karameller means 'hard candy' in Swedish."

The shop quickly became a cultural and communal gathering place for Swedish expats living in the area, and not just because of its high-quality candies, all of which are imported from Scandinavia. The shop also upholds time-honored traditions like *lördagsgodis*, which means "Saturday sweets" and signifies the weekly pilgrimage to a candy store after children receive their allowance.

When the pandemic hit, Karameller – like all retail stores in Vancouver – was forced to shutter. And despite the small size of the candy boutique, the losses seemed large. Schonberg was cut off from her primary source of income, Swedish expats living in Vancouver lost an important cultural touchpoint, and a source of happiness and indulgence was stripped from the community at large.



"When everything changes overnight," Schonberg says, "little things that bring comfort or joy become even more important."

Not content to let her business and customers wane, Schonberg acted quickly. After announcing the impending closure of Karameller on Instagram – which resulted in a flood of customers who purchased every

last piece of candy in stock – she transitioned her focus to online sales.

"The website had always been an afterthought," Schonberg says. "It never received more than a handful of orders a month."



Photo Credit: Ema Peter

“It’s been great to support our customers in different ways. We all need a little candy in times like this.”

**Louise Schonberg** Business Owner, Karameller

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And yet, because the site was built the right way with the right technologies, everything was in place for the shop’s online resurgence.

“We set up Karameller’s eCommerce website and store network like we do for most of our clients, with a Cisco Meraki™ security appliance, Wi-Fi, Cisco Meraki Smart Cameras, and Cisco Umbrella® to protect both staff and guests,” says Luis Giraldo, CEO of IT services company [Ook Enterprises](#) and also Schonberg’s husband. “When the pandemic hit, it was easy to make the transition because no reconfiguration was needed. The shop would have been behind the eight ball if we had taken shortcuts.”

With the help of some Instagram influencers and the #shoplocal movement, Karameller received 383 online orders and had its best ever month in April 2020. The size of the average order has been three times larger than in-store purchases. And through curbside pickup, handwritten notes, and personal deliveries, Schonberg has not only found ways to stay in business, but also fill cultural gaps and reconnect with the Swedish community in Vancouver.

“It’s been great to support our customers in different ways,” she says. “We all need a little candy in times like this.”



# Flying high: Drone startup scales to meet pandemic-related needs

**Matternet** had been methodically developing its drone delivery systems for years, but when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a global crisis in Spring 2020, the need for fast, contactless deliveries became increasingly dire.

To address the need, the startup from Mountain View, California, had to scale its business and its infrastructure in short order. And that meant finding a way to seamlessly connect and manage its patented Matternet Stations, which are equal parts drone airport, locker system, and interactive kiosk for sending and receiving packages.

“Our Stations are the endpoints of our network,” says Paolo Resmini, vice president of engineering at Matternet. “Figuring out the right infrastructure that goes inside the Stations in terms of connectivity, ease-of-use, security, and reliability was a key part of the problem to solve.”

With the help of **Stratus Information Systems**, Matternet deployed a full-stack Cisco Meraki™ solution to take its infrastructure and business to the next level. In addition to connecting and securing the company’s new office environment, the Meraki-based network is enabling Matternet to fully

unleash the asynchronous, bidirectional capabilities of its drones and growing collection of Stations.

“The drones are autonomous, but they’re constantly sending and receiving data,” Resmini says.

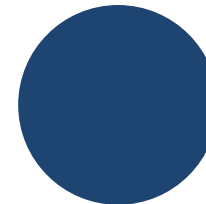
With its new network infrastructure in place, Matternet has helped confront the COVID-19 pandemic on a number of fronts. Its drones are delivering blood samples between hospital and lab facilities within the University of California San Diego Health System. They’re delivering time-sensitive infusions to patients and personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline healthcare workers at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in North Carolina. And in partnership with CVS Pharmacy and UPS, they are delivering critical prescription medications to at-risk communities in Florida.

Matternet is still at the beginning of a long-term journey, but the company has taken tangible steps forward and Resmini believes the Meraki infrastructure – which is managed from the cloud and easily scaled – will be a key enabler of the company’s ongoing expansion.

“As we scale out and grow,” Resmini says, “we need to have technology that will grow with us.”

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Play Matternet Video





# Stepping through the door: Major Tom transforms its services

Major Tom's fundamental philosophy and approach is "finding clarity in the chaos." So it's not surprising that the Vancouver, British Columbia-based digital marketing agency has been a guiding light for its clients and business partners amidst the confusion and disorder of a global pandemic.

"The pandemic has forced us all to look at new ways of working and operating," says Lyn Bryan, CEO of Major Tom. "We're taking advantage of opportunities and overcoming barriers that we had previously avoided, and we're helping our clients do the same."

The agency has adjusted longstanding processes and service models to accommodate current needs and limitations, she explains. Large-scale, strategy-led programs are giving way to faster, more tactical activities that deliver rapid results with minimal risk, investment, and personal interaction.

"We're experiencing a larger volume of shorter business engagements," Bryan says. "There's an urgency to execute."

Fulfilling these needs has required a fair amount of reinvention and creativity, but that's second nature for an agency named after a David Bowie song. In a bold and transformative move, Major Tom recently expanded its online store, Tin Can, to deliver an entirely new portfolio of easily consumable services.

"We created the store in 2019 as a way to give clients and new employees some branded agency swag," Bryan says. "When the pandemic hit, we realized it could be a vehicle for bite-sized chunks of our normal services."

Ranging from \$150 to \$3000, the new offerings include SEO health checks, audience persona development, SSL certificate fixes, twenty-hour digital marketing sprints, and more. And Major Tom recently expanded the Tin Can menu to include complementary services from longtime partners like [Ook Enterprises](#).







“With so many companies floundering and needing to act fast, it’s important to lean on referrals and trusted networks,” says Bryan. “There are other marketplaces, but you don’t always know who you’re working with or what you’re getting.”

Ook Enterprises – a managed IT services provider that uses Cisco Meraki™, Cisco Umbrella®, and Cisco collaboration tools to help its small- and medium-sized business clients – has developed two new, condensed offerings specifically for Tin Can. A flexible technology consultation provides clear guidance and recommendations for addressing a particular initiative, project, or challenge. And a comprehensive 29-point IT assessment and report helps companies identify vulnerabilities, eliminate ambiguity, and improve operational efficiency.

“The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and helped bulldoze over the fear of change,” says Luis Giraldo, CEO of Ook Enterprises, which helped Major Tom transition to 100 percent telework when the pandemic hit and is keeping the agency’s users, devices, and data protected with Cisco Umbrella. “We’re all being forced to be more innovative, nimble, and responsive, so there’s less handwringing and more of a willingness to jump in and get things done.”

Especially when you’re on a spaceship that knows which way to go.

“This is a fierce push into the digital space, which can be a painful but necessary and positive step for companies that have been slow to embrace change,”

Bryan says. “I believe we’ll all be more connected and solidified with our networks and communities – both business and personal – when this is all over.”

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and help you set it up.  
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# Expert Perspectives





# Perspective and wisdom: Learning from past disruptions, preparing for the next

Sandesh Mutha has seen it all. The owner and principal of [SSP](#), a longtime Cisco Premier Partner, got his start as a custom software developer in the 1980s. After specializing in desktop solutions in the 1990s and making the switch to managed services in the 2000s, he is now focused on network and cyber security services.

“I’ve experienced a lot of change across the industry, inside our own organization, and with technology itself,” says Mutha, who offers rare perspective and wisdom for small companies struggling to navigate today’s volatile business environment. “The global pandemic is the fifth major disruption we’ve been through.”

Preceding the current health and economic crisis were two recessions in the 1980s and 1990s, the September 11 attacks in 2001, and the subprime mortgage debacle that spurred the Great Recession

from 2007 to 2009. When asked which event had the greatest impact on SSP’s business, Mutha doesn’t flinch.

“9/11 was the worst by far,” he says. “We lost half of our customers and went 93 days without an order. It was painful.”

It didn’t help that Mutha had purchased the company six months prior, but the adversity helped him prepare for current and forthcoming disruptions. And when the global pandemic materialized in Spring 2020, SSP was ready.

The company had already pushed its applications to the cloud and a colocation data center, due in large part to recurring power outages at its San Francisco office. SSP also deployed virtual desktops two years ago, so its engineers and consultants were comfortable working from home.

“The shelter-in-place order didn’t affect us much because we were already fairly distributed,” Mutha says. “And that was important because our customers needed a lot of help with remote desktops, connectivity, and security when the pandemic hit.”

The solutions SSP already had in place for its customers, including Cisco Meraki™ and Cisco Webex®, were key enablers of the massive shift to remote work. And they helped many of those customers take advantage of opportunities they may have otherwise missed.

“Opportunity is the intersection of luck and preparedness,” Mutha says. “Those first few weeks were rough, but as a country and a population, we’re pretty resilient.”





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## Preparing for the next disruption

With nearly four decades of experience and perspective, Mutha has nuggets of wisdom and advice that can help small businesses prepare for the next major disruption.

“Turn inward first and make sure your employees are doing okay. These things have a real impact on mental health, so it’s important to check in,” he says. “Then you can begin to engage outward. Not with product and service pitches, but with genuine help and support. If you take care of people first – your employees, customers, and partners – sales and revenue will follow.”

Small businesses also need to be attentive and adaptive to increasingly dynamic needs and norms.

“What is relevant today can change tomorrow,” Mutha says. “We’ve seen traditional work models and standards get flipped on their head in a matter of weeks. Who knows what we’ll be adjusting to next?”

“What is relevant today can change tomorrow.”

**Sandesh Mutha**

Owner and Principal, SSP





# The show must go on: The role of Webex in the new digital reality

## Guest Column

Stefan Spies, CEO, [Profil360](#)

My background is in theatre and opera, where I was a director for 15 years and an acting coach for 10 years. And for the past 20-plus years, I have coached and trained professionals in the art of effective presentation and nonverbal communication.

At first, I thought this could only be done in person.

It never occurred to me that there might be a better way to deliver coaching sessions, seminars, and keynotes. I never thought circumstances beyond my control would force me to change my business model. And I didn't think there was much value in cultivating a virtual aspect of my business.

The past year has been quite an awakening.

## Embracing digital transformation

When COVID-19 spread around the world, I had to cease parts of my business operations. It was no longer safe to meet in-person for training sessions or keynote talks. And it soon became evident that if I didn't figure out a way to transform my in-person business model into a digital-first model, I wouldn't have a business at all.





## Webex is so easy for my customers to use that with just one click, they're connected to me without needing to register or login anywhere.

I mostly coach the top levels of upper management, so a high-caliber video conferencing system was a must. And I knew many of my clients would be familiar with Cisco Webex®. A local Cisco partner lent me the system so I could try it out, and I ultimately decided to purchase an upgraded version.

This experience with Webex was the first time I'd ever used an online collaboration platform, so I had to learn a lot, and I had to learn it quickly.

My sessions have mostly followed the same format over the past couple of decades. But for the past several months, everything has been very different. I've discovered new methods for communication, which is very exciting and important to me. Webex has allowed me to explore new, creative pathways that meet my clients' ever-evolving needs. And it has helped me push the boundaries of my business.

I often feel more productive using this new system. I spend less time travelling and more time training. My clients can book time with me no matter where they are using a Webex-based booking application. Appointments for coaching sessions are confirmed immediately, and invoices are sent automatically.

Most importantly, Webex is so easy for my customers to use that with just one click, they're connected to me without needing to register or log in anywhere.

### Changing tactics, changing minds

The world is slowly reopening, but I don't see my business completely going back to its previous format. I hope to explore the possibility of bigger client sessions with more participants visible on screen, and am looking forward to improved features in the breakout rooms. The possibilities are exciting.

With the help of Webex, I am further developing my presence seminars. Introductory videos can now be accessed by the participants independent of location and time. This will be followed by attendance at face-to-face seminars, which will finally be deepened by individual trainings via Webex.

I'm also now exploring recording short video sessions that are about 20 minutes long. These sessions are somewhat like an online course or pre-recorded webinar. By sharing these short videos online, I hope to expand my business to entirely new audiences.

Get a personal room and host meetings with HD video, screen sharing, and up to 50 people.

Sign up for a free Webex plan [here](#).

My contacts are pleased with my pivot to digital workshops. While many were initially skeptical about being in front of the camera, more have become open to the idea and I know I can help take new Webex users on the same journey I just travelled. The value and convenience cannot be overstated for busy, hyper-focused business leaders.

### The drama of a crisis

In every crisis there's a moment where business leaders have to decide whether they will panic or respond with a solution. Many people tend to panic, which leads to a dip in revenue across industries and economies. The organizations that get creative in their responses, however, are made even stronger through a crisis – they become “antifragile” and stand to benefit more after the crisis has passed.

For me, embracing digital transformation and shifting my business online with Webex has allowed me to reconsider my business model and evolve with the times. Cisco has completely changed my business. They removed the business drama associated with this crisis and replaced it with a clear structure and framework that allows me to keep doing what I do best.

Curtains up: The show must go on.