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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 Business Strategies: How Agents Can Help Protect the Health of Clients' Businesses in the New Economy

Howard M. Cohen, Senior Resultant, HMC Write Now
Max Silber, Vice President of Mobility and IoT, MetTel

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Working from home can increase productivity and reduce costs.
- COVID-19 has pushed organizations to become more mobile.
- Pandemic trends: Touchless-everything and tele-everything.
- The shift to virtual requires a plan.
- MetTel solves the mobility headache by providing a single point of contact.

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OVERVIEW

Within a few weeks of COVID-19 being seen as a threat, most US organizations went from "business as usual"—conducted in offices, classrooms, and stores—to almost entirely remote operations. After the initial scramble to support employees and customers in this new remote environment, businesses are recognizing the benefits of a work-from-home workforce, both during and after the pandemic.

This rapid shift has driven companies to adopt more mobile technology, from supporting teleconferencing capabilities to adopting touchless payment methods for in-person shoppers. MetTel helps organizations navigate a complex mobile landscape of multiple carriers, devices, and software. The result is that businesses have the right technologies and the lowest costs to support mobile technologies in the new economy.

CONTEXT

Howard Cohen discussed the benefits of work-from-home employees, along with some of the challenges the rapid shift to a mobile workforce created. Max Silber discussed how companies have been pushed to become more mobile and how MetTel can help.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Working from home can increase productivity and reduce costs.

The pandemic is showing businesses that, for most employees, working from home actually increases productivity. Businesses are also finding that a remote workforce can reduce costs.

Working from home increases employee productivity through:

- **Longer work days.** Many employees now start their work day when they would have started their commute and end their work day when they would have arrived home.
- **Fewer distractions.** Even with family at home, employees are less likely to be interrupted than they were in the office; it is more difficult for co-workers to interrupt an employee to ask a question or grab a cup of coffee when working remotely.
- **Lower fatigue.** Without often long and frustrating commutes, employees feel less fatigued throughout the day.
- **Reduced stress.** Away from daily interactions and office politics, employees are less stressed. When they do feel overwhelmed, working from home allows them to take short breaks to reenergize.

> Working from home is the new digital normal, and it's going to be for some time to come.
>
> *Howard Cohen, HMC Write Now*

An at-home workforce can also decrease costs when companies take advantage of:

- **Bring-your-own-device (BYOD).** Employees are encouraged to use their own laptops, phones, and devices, shifting the cost burden away from the organization.
- **Migration to the cloud.** Businesses that take advantage of the cloud are better able to support remote employees and no longer need to own their own servers, storage, network equipment, or data center.

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- **Lower physical plant costs.** With fewer or no employees working in buildings, real estate costs can be decreased or eliminated as can traditional facility-related costs like heating, cooling, and electricity.
- **Improved telecommunications management as employees use their own internet services to connect to cloud-based servers for communication.** Along with this, fewer carrier accounts and systems need to be managed.

COVID-19 has pushed organizations to become more mobile.

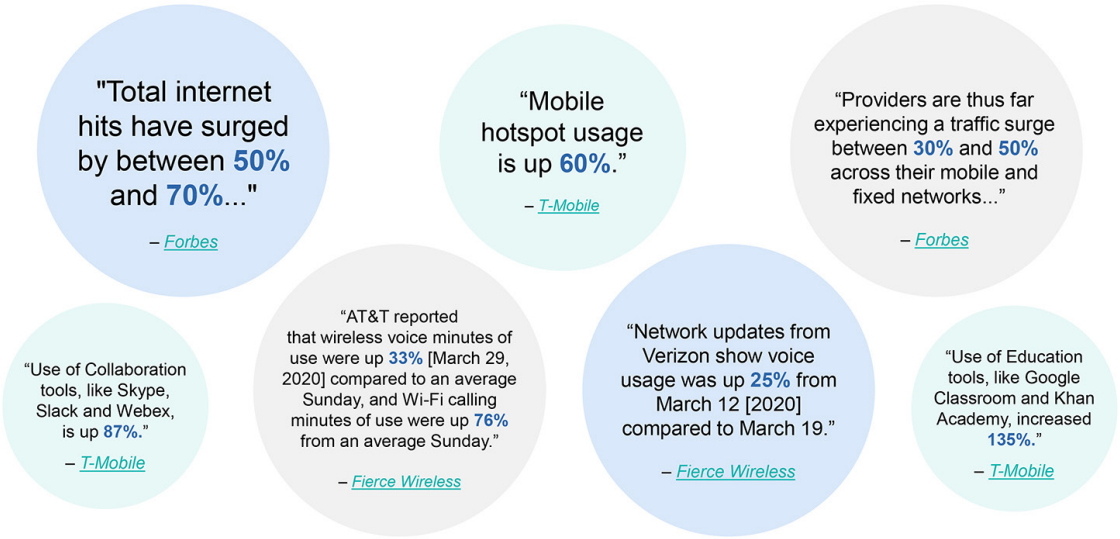
The world has changed rapidly since COVID-19 hit. One key change is the increased demand for wireless solutions, not just for individuals, but for companies in nearly all verticals.

The challenges businesses are facing due to the pandemic are creating new demands, which mobile can help address.

- **Industries and institutions must have a way to wirelessly connect people.** Mobility solutions are central to healthcare for telehealth, education for telelearning, and for delivery and distribution companies.
- **Saving money is a dominant driver.** Even carrier-loyal customers may be more open to switching plans in this environment to streamline and save costs.
- **Future crises are now top of mind.** While not knowing when the current pandemic will end, companies are now looking for easy ways to prepare their workforce for future unexpected remote situations.

> The pandemic has been a game changer. It's opened the eyes of most senior executives . . . that they need mobility to run their business so they're not losing productivity.
>
> *Max Silber, MetTel*

Figure 1: The demand for wireless solutions has dramatically increased



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Pandemic trends: Touchless-everything and tele-everything.

Potential transmission vectors for COVID-19 have forced people and businesses to rethink how they interact with the world around them. Two key trends coming out of the pandemic are touchless-everything, to avoid touching surfaces that others have touched, and tele-everything, to do as much interaction remotely as possible.

Mobile devices support both of these trends.

Trend	Examples
Touchless-everything	– *In-store payment:* Secure mobile devices, such as phones, provide no-touch payment at checkout, using Bluetooth or near-field communication (NFC); no physical credit card or cash transactions are necessary. – *Secure entryways:* Mobile devices using biometrics, like fingerprint readers, allow for secure and touchless entry to facilities; no key card or code pad entry necessary.
Tele-everything	– *Telehealth:* Doctor visits conducted via mobile phone. – *Telelearning:* Classes delivered via laptops and mobile devices at home. – *Teleworking:* Employees remain productive outside of the office itself; during the pandemic, this is often at home.

The shift to virtual requires a plan.

Here are four key elements:

1. **Identify the most critical engagements to virtualize,** then determine what is needed to be effective.
2. **Find the money; don't spend the money.** Working with a provider like MetTel can help businesses find savings in mobile bills so they can spend the money elsewhere, such as in innovation and efforts to virtualize.
3. **Develop a short-term plan for wins and a long-term plan for continuity.** A short-term plan might focus on cutting down the number of vendors or the size of the mobile bill so there is more money for innovation and execution. A long-term plan focuses on where the company wants its services to be in the future.
4. **Think about how to pivot roles to virtual before eliminating headcount.** Retraining a current employee to work virtually costs less than hiring a new employee. Example: Take an in-store salesperson and teach them to sell virtually.

MetTel solves the mobility headache by providing a single point of contact.

Organizations using and implementing wireless solutions have a multitude of carriers, platforms, and data streams; in some cases, they are interacting with more than 30 vendors. MetTel simplifies these relationships, providing a single point of contact for connectivity, equipment, and software, as well as offering MetTel-specific services.

MetTel provides customers access to all major carriers through its wholesale agreement. This not only provides customers with savings due to economies of scale, but it also allows MetTel to recommend the fastest, most efficient, and most secure options to meet their customers' needs, without worrying about vendor access.

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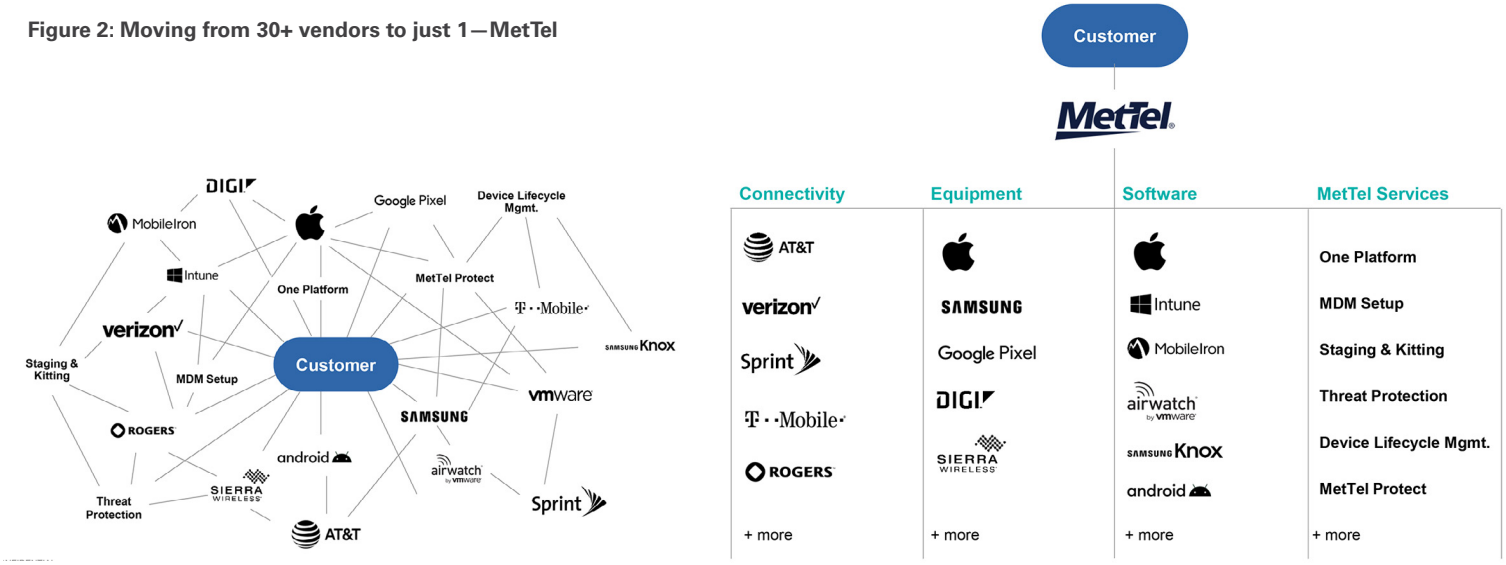
Figure 2: Moving from 30+ vendors to just 1—MetTel



BIOGRAPHIES

Howard M. Cohen

Senior Resultant, HMC Write Now

Howard M. Cohen is senior resultant at HMC Write Now. He is a veteran of the IT industry with more than 35 years of experience as a writer, presenter, and adviser to all parts of the tech industry. He is featured regularly in many IT industry publications and has served on many vendor advisory panels, including the Apple, Compaq, HP, IBM, and NEC Service Advisory Councils, the Ingram Micro Service Network board, and as a U.S. Board member of the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners. Cohen is a frequent speaker at IT industry events that include Microsoft's WorldWide Partner Conference, Citrix Synergy/Summit, ConnectWise IT Nation, ChannelPro Forums, Cloud Partners Summit, MicroCorp One-On-One, and CompTIA ChannelCon. He also hosts and presents webinars and eSeminars for QuinStreet, UBM, and others. He refers to himself as a "Senior Resultant" because he has always understood that we are all measured only by our results.

Max Silber

Vice President of Mobility and IoT, MetTel

Max Silber is vice president of mobility and IoT for MetTel. He is responsible for the company's mobility operations and business development initiatives. A member of the Forbes Business Development Council, he has been highlighted recently in publications like CNN Business. With over 20 years of experience, he has served in a variety of product, sales, and business development positions with some of the world's most innovative technology and telecommunications companies. Prior to joining MetTel, Silber served as senior vice president of business development for IDT Corp., where he led the company's managed services and mobility business unit. Prior to IDT, he was vice president of business development at Net2Phone Inc. and held similar management positions at Amtel and GTE Spacenet Inc.

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