

VOLUME 2

Bridging Digital & Societal Divides



# SMB dynamo

The logo features the text "SMB dynamo" in a white, sans-serif font. The word "dynamo" is significantly larger than "SMB". The letter "o" at the end of "dynamo" is replaced by a circular graphic composed of four colored segments (blue, green, orange, and dark blue) surrounding a white center with a small white circle inside.

The People and Cisco Technologies Propelling Small and Medium Businesses

Technology Trends

Expert Perspectives

Digital Journeys

## Story Links

### Technology Trends

Educating the next wave of technologists

Advanced technologies are increasingly affordable

### Expert Perspectives

Confronting the digital literacy crisis

Crossing the digital divide

### Digital Journeys

Network provides essential lifeline for at-risk youth

Collaboration technologies helping save lives

The importance of security in times of crisis

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# Bridging digital and societal divides

In our lifetime, the gulf between the haves and have-nots has never been wider, and the business world has stepped forward to play an active role in confronting the problem.

In this edition of *SMB dynamo*, we showcase small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) as well as passionate individuals who are working to bridge digital and societal divides. All of them are making a positive impact within their community, and they're doing it with the help of Cisco small business solutions.

Life Learning Academy is using Cisco Meraki™ technologies to give the Bay Area's most vulnerable teens a brighter future. Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is using Cisco Umbrella® to protect its

operations so it can continue to distribute food to hundreds of thousands of people every month. And San Francisco Suicide Prevention is using Cisco Webex® to connect its community of volunteers and save lives.

The stories in this edition of *SMB dynamo* not only show how SMBs are helping people and communities in need, but also the role digital maturity plays in supporting and enabling those efforts. With IDC's Small Business Digital Maturity Index as a common framework, we hope these stories inspire you to [assess your technology capabilities](#), push them forward, and use them for the greater good.

**– SMB dynamo editorial team**



# Technology Trends





# Increasing access to technology education on a global scale

“People are wired with an innate desire to learn,” says Laura Quintana, vice president of Corporate Affairs at Cisco. “Yet, while desire may be evenly distributed, access to educational tools, resources, and opportunity is not.”

[Cisco Networking Academy](#), the largest and longest-running corporate social responsibility education program in the world, is working to level the playing field.

“We believe that all people, regardless of where they live, their means, age, gender, or background, deserve equal access to education and the opportunity to pursue meaningful work that provides for themselves, their families, and contributes to the betterment of society,” Quintana says.

For 23 years, Cisco Networking Academy has provided a bridge to career opportunities for more than

12.7 million people in 180 countries. Working with nearly 12,000 affiliated academies and more than 650 affiliated employers around the world, Cisco Networking Academy has proven what’s possible when companies, nonprofits, governments, and academic institutions come together for a shared purpose – empowering all people with career opportunities.



12,000 affiliated academies



650 affiliated employers



Reaching 12.7 million people in 180 countries



Here are a few of the global programs Cisco Networking Academy has created to level the playing field and bridge digital divides around the world.

### Skills for All

Cisco Networking Academy recently launched [Skills for All](#), a bold step forward in its mission to power an inclusive future for all. Skills for All is a free, mobile-first program that delivers leading-edge adaptive and gamified learning experiences, including self-paced courses, interactive tools, and career resources. If an individual is connected to the internet with a mobile phone, they are empowered as a learner at Skills for All.

The program is designed for learners like Marie Kamga, a Cisco Networking Academy alumna. She equally values the practical skills she learned in her coursework and the attention she continues to receive from potential employers. Today, she is a cybersecurity intern preparing for a long-term career in the industry.

“The most important skills Cisco Networking Academy courses have taught me are practical networking skills,” Kamga says. “They have made me very attractive to employers.”

### Prison outreach

The more educated offenders are, the less likely it is they’ll return to the correctional system. In fact, inmates who participate in education programs have a 43 percent lower chance of recidivating than those who do not, and their odds of finding a job after their release are 13 percent higher.

That’s why Cisco Networking Academy offers free [classes in prisons](#) around the world. With courses that range from basic IT skills to advanced cybersecurity, inmates gain real-world skills and, equally important, confidence.

“The most important skills Cisco Networking Academy courses have taught me are practical networking skills. They have made me very attractive to employers.”

### Marie Kamga

Cisco Networking Academy alumna



The classes have been life changing for people like Luigi Celeste, who was sentenced to nine years in an Italian prison for killing his father – a violent and habitual abuser – to protect himself, his mother, and his brother. Eager to learn new skills, Celeste enrolled in several Cisco Networking Academy courses and became the first inmate in Italy to receive Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification. He later became the first inmate in the world to earn his CCNA Security certification. And today, he is a self-employed cybersecurity expert and network consultant working with companies around the globe.

“The recidivism rate in Italy is 70 percent on average,” says Francesco Benvenuto, director for government affairs at Cisco Italy. “But the Cisco Networking Academy students have a recidivism of zero percent. Because even if they don’t achieve a difficult Cisco certification, after following the classes, they decide to do other kinds of jobs, honest jobs.”

### Women Rock-IT

With a growing number of female students turning their backs on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects, Cisco Networking Academy created the [Women Rock-IT](#) program in 2014. Through live, interactive TV broadcasts, young women hear from successful female role models and learn about the STEM skills that are key to technology-driven careers.

Now in its seventh year, Women Rock-IT has produced 72 live broadcasts, featured 129 inspirational speakers,

and reached more than 1.8 million young people. As a direct result of the Women Rock-IT program, 757,000 girls have enrolled in technology courses. And some of them will flourish like Gemma Alcock, who is now the founder and CEO of Skybound Rescuer.

“My company specializes in the use of drones for public safety. It’s such a new industry, one that didn’t exist when I was in school, so it wasn’t a career I could aspire toward,” Alcock says. “But if you have enough passion for something, you are the right person to take it forward. When your dream career starts taking you to places you’ve always dreamt of visiting, it’s an incredible feeling.”

“When your dream career starts taking you to places you’ve always dreamt of visiting, it’s an incredible feeling.”

**Gemma Alcock**  
Founder and CEO,  
Skybound Rescuer

Interested in  
technology education?  
Find a location near you that  
offers [Cisco Networking  
Academy courses](#).



# The importance of accessibility and affordability

How advanced technologies are helping small, minority-owned businesses take XL steps forward

Adrian Coulter learned the importance of accessibility at an early age.

As a child with unusually large feet, he had outgrown most available shoe sizes by the time he was 13 years old. And as his feet continued to get bigger – eventually reaching size 16 EEE – his footwear options continued to dwindle.

“For most people, footwear is a simple luxury that is easy to obtain,” Coulter says. “But for people like me, it’s not so easy.”

Large shoes existed, of course. They just weren’t accessible.

“There was only one store in town that sold shoes my size, and it was the same place my grandpa bought his footwear,” the Minneapolis native says. “As a teenager, it’s really embarrassing shopping at the same store as your grandfather.”

Today, Coulter is the owner of [XL Feet](#), a growing specialty shoe retailer with annual revenue exceeding \$1.5 million. And he credits much of his company’s success to enterprise-grade technologies that are

increasingly affordable – and therefore accessible – for small business owners like himself.

“I started from nothing and built this business myself, largely on the shoulders of technology,” Coulter says. “I feel like I’ve created an army of employees, but they’re mostly ones and zeros. They do all of the heavy lifting.”

Before he founded XL Feet, Coulter sold mobile phones for two prominent cellular companies. He saw how those companies leveraged technology to drive down operating costs, reach new consumers, and amass billions of dollars in revenue. And when he branched out on his own, he adopted many of the same tools.

“From the beginning, I had access to enterprise technologies that are used by multi-billion-dollar corporations, and that’s been a huge key to my company’s success,” Coulter says. “Advanced technologies are more affordable and easier to use than many people realize, and it blows me away that more small businesses don’t take advantage of them.”

As XL Feet enters its next phase of growth, Coulter is doubling down on his use of technology. With the help of IT services partner [Procellis](#), he’s leveraging a host of Cisco Meraki™ solutions to increase operational efficiency and insights.

“We’re embracing analytics to better understand and serve our customers,” Coulter says.



Size 16 EEE Feet



100,000+ online customers



\$1.5+ million in annual revenue



The behavior and preferences of more than 100,000 online customers is now being tracked. Multi-touch marketing campaigns are now automated. Shipping variables are routinely evaluated and adjusted. And the company's mix and volume of inventory is continually optimized.

"We're doing the things big, well-funded companies have always done," Coulter says. "And that allows us to compete in ways that would otherwise be unimaginable."

Due in large part to the company's use of technology, XL Feet has steadily climbed search engine rankings and displaced several competitors that were in the specialty shoe business more than a decade before Coulter.

"As a black entrepreneur and small business owner, I need tools that help me grow and give me control and security of my intellectual capital," Coulter says. "We couldn't do what we do without technology as the backbone of the business."

**"We're embracing analytics to better understand and serve our customers."**

**Adrian Coulter**

Owner and Founder, XL Feet

Get a personalized report on your company's digital maturity.

Take the five-minute, nine-question IDC assessment [here](#).





# Expert Perspectives



# Digital literacy: A call for awareness, understanding, and action

Literacy has long been a dividing line between the privileged and underprivileged, and also a telling indicator of an individual's future prospects. Over the past three decades, technology has created a similar and equally troubling divide.

Digital literacy has become a very real crisis, one that many don't see. But Ed Christmas, founder and president of Cisco partner [Sology Solutions](#), is determined to raise awareness of the problem and inspire others to follow his lead in confronting it.

"The digital divide has been growing for some time, but the pandemic was a huge wakeup call," says Christmas, whose company specializes in IoT-driven technology services. "While many of us were able to adapt and push forward with things like remote work, distance learning, and online services, millions of people who don't have access to computers or the internet were falling further behind."

For most of us, technology has become an essential component and enabler of everyday life, helping us

stay informed, connected, and productive. Without those critical capabilities, our realm of opportunity becomes much smaller. According to the U.S. Department of Education, adults who are not digitally literate have a lower rate of labor force participation and tend to work in lower skilled jobs than their digitally literate counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Amidst the crisis, Christmas sees opportunity.

"This is an untapped resource pool," says Christmas, a small business owner who often has to compete with larger companies to expand his workforce. "I believe in conscious capitalism. Doing good is good for business. And it's in all of our best interests to promote digital literacy and pull forward the communities that have been left behind."

**"This is an untapped resource pool."**

**Ed Christmas**  
Founder and President,  
[Sology Solutions](#)



<sup>1</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018161.pdf>



## The importance of awareness

Addressing the problem starts with awareness – on both sides of the digital divide. Those of us with technology-privileged lives must be cognizant of the crisis at hand, who it affects, and the impact on our society as a whole. And those without access to technology need to understand the importance of digital literacy and the possibilities it can open.

“For many young adults in underserved communities, they’ve been robbed of vision and hope. They primarily

see poverty and crime in their neighborhood, not role models with successful careers. How can you dream of getting into sales or customer service if you’re not aware those jobs exist? How can you apply for and perform those jobs in today’s day and age without basic computer skills?” Christmas asks rhetorically. “You can’t be what you can’t see.”

That’s why Christmas is heavily involved in the [All Stars Project](#), which creates free, after-school development programs for inner-city youth and their families. He says

the program changes lives forever, and he encourages other companies, both large and small, to get involved in their local community.

“It’s important to give back,” he says. “The kids and families often have a much bigger impact on a business and its employees than the other way around. It’s eye opening.”





It can be difficult to confront a problem you can't see. And with the majority of the population moving swiftly forward into the digital future, it's easy to lose sight of the minority being left behind.

"We need to bring all walks of life together and have open conversations about digital literacy," Christmas says. "Sharing different experiences and perspectives leads to awareness, understanding, and empathy – and those are the catalysts for change."

### Relationships, tools, and training

Change must take place on two levels, Christmas explains. The first is on an interpersonal level, forming new relationships and partnerships that bring together both sides of the digital divide.

Christmas is a founding member of [Digibridge](#), a nonprofit organization that forms coalitions of stakeholders within academia, community organizations, and public and private companies. The coalitions work together to bring broadband internet and digital literacy to underserved communities.

"Public and private partnerships can have a huge impact," Christmas says. "Not only in bringing connectivity and technology to poor communities, but also in nurturing the quality of life and economic well-being of people within those communities."

If bridging the digital divide on an interpersonal level is the first step, providing access to modern tools and training for how to use them is the second.

**"We need to bring all walks of life together and have open conversations about digital literacy."**

**Ed Christmas**  
Founder and President,  
Sology Solutions

"This isn't just about internet connectivity," Christmas says. "The long-term goal is to improve digital literacy, expand workforce development, and increase entrepreneurship and commerce within underserved communities."

It requires a collective effort, he adds. Nonprofits, academia, local government agencies, and the private sector must all work together to break down walls, form new relationships, and solve problems.

"Politics and bureaucracy slow everything down and impede change, especially at the federal and state levels," Christmas says. "Corporations are nimbler and faster, and they can form mutually beneficial partnerships with local municipalities, schools, and nonprofits."

Learn more about [Corporate Social Responsibility at Cisco](#) and see how Ed Christmas' company, [Sology Solutions](#), is [connecting the unconnected](#) within its community.

Small businesses, in particular, can lead the way.

"You can't just throw money at the problem. You need to be present, have the pulse of the community, and actively bring people together. Proximity has power," Christmas says. "At first, the digital divide seems overwhelming. But if you change one life, you can be a force multiplier."



# Bridging the digital divide: A mission born from experience

Ivory Robinson grew up on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Born in East Buffalo, New York, during the height of the crack epidemic, the youngest of 10 siblings had an underprivileged upbringing and faced an ominous future.

“As a kid without a jump shot or four-second 40-yard-dash, I didn’t have many opportunities,” Robinson says.

Throughout his childhood, he had a front row seat to gang activity, drug deals, murders, and everything in between. What he rarely experienced, however, was technology. His high school had a few computers, but none of them connected to the internet. And simply getting to school was often a dangerous proposition.

“We had to walk through two of the roughest spots in the city in terms of drugs and crime just to get to the bus stop,” Robinson says. “To be honest, it was often easier to skip school than attend.”

Robinson barely graduated, finishing third from the bottom of his senior class. More than half of his peers never received their high school diploma. And things haven’t improved much in the two-plus decades since, with the graduation rate at his alma mater remaining



“Going from the bottom of my high school class to the top of my Air Force class wasn’t because I suddenly got smarter, it was because I had the right tools, the right training, and the opportunity to apply them.”

below 60 percent and many communities in Buffalo still struggling with poverty.

Robinson believes these circumstances, which are all too common in the United States, can be dramatically improved with greater awareness of the digital divide and more infrastructure and resources dedicated to bridging it.

“Connectivity is essential because it gives us an opportunity to expand our personal world, both socially and professionally,” he says. “When you aren’t connected – to others, to information, to opportunities – you become isolated. That can lead to mental health issues, substance abuse, and all of the other problems that are present within underserved communities.”



### **Gaining confidence, experience, and knowhow**

After growing up on the wrong side of the digital divide, Ivory Robinson joined the United States Air Force. As an air traffic control specialist, he was introduced to advanced technology for the first time, and more importantly, he was taught how to use it. Soon thereafter, he graduated at the top of his Air Force recruitment class.

“Going from the bottom of my high school class to the top of my Air Force class wasn’t because I suddenly got smarter,” he says. “It was because I had the right tools, the right training, and the opportunity to apply them.”

Armed with confidence, experience, and knowhow, he left the military, moved back to his hometown, and formed an IT services company that netted \$25 million in revenue in its first five years.

Robinson had successfully crossed the digital divide. And yet, with Buffalo remaining economically depressed and behind the technological curve, he was still confronting it on a daily basis.

“It’s really hard to find skilled technologists in Buffalo, and it was a struggle to build teams and deliver on projects,” Robinson admits.



There were some bad hires, finger pointing among partners, a complicated deal that turned litigious, and negative press. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, not only enflaming business tensions but also triggering family tragedy. Robinson's father died of COVID-related complications, and less than a month later his mother was diagnosed with early-onset dementia and needed ongoing assistance halfway across the country.

After a rocketlike ascent as a business owner in the IT industry – a rarity for an African American from East Buffalo – Robinson was forced to disassemble the company he had built just a handful of years prior.

As he picked up the pieces of his personal and professional life, Robinson ruminated on his past, present, and future. And he couldn't help but think about the millions of people who are in a far worse predicament – simply because they don't have access to the information and tools the rest of us take for granted on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis.

"I had to reevaluate what I'm doing, why I'm doing it, and who I'm doing it for," he says.

### Being a bridge for others

After successfully crossing the digital divide, Robinson was determined to help others do the same. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, he installed a Cisco Meraki™ mobile hotspot in his Tesla Model X and spent his weekends [visiting underserved communities](#).

"I would hang out in a neighborhood or parking lot for four or five hours every Saturday, just to give people internet access and talk to them about the digital divide," Robinson says. "New information was coming out every day about symptoms, lockdowns, and masks. A lot of people weren't getting that information, and many lost their lives as a result."

As the pandemic brought the digital divide into stark, life-and-death view, Robinson recognized the urgent need for greater technology awareness and innovation within underserved communities.

"When a portion of our society has internet access and another portion doesn't, it fosters inequality," he says. "The internet is so much more than social media and online gaming. It impacts health, economics, education, communication, and commerce in ways that are difficult to comprehend when it's so engrained in our lives."

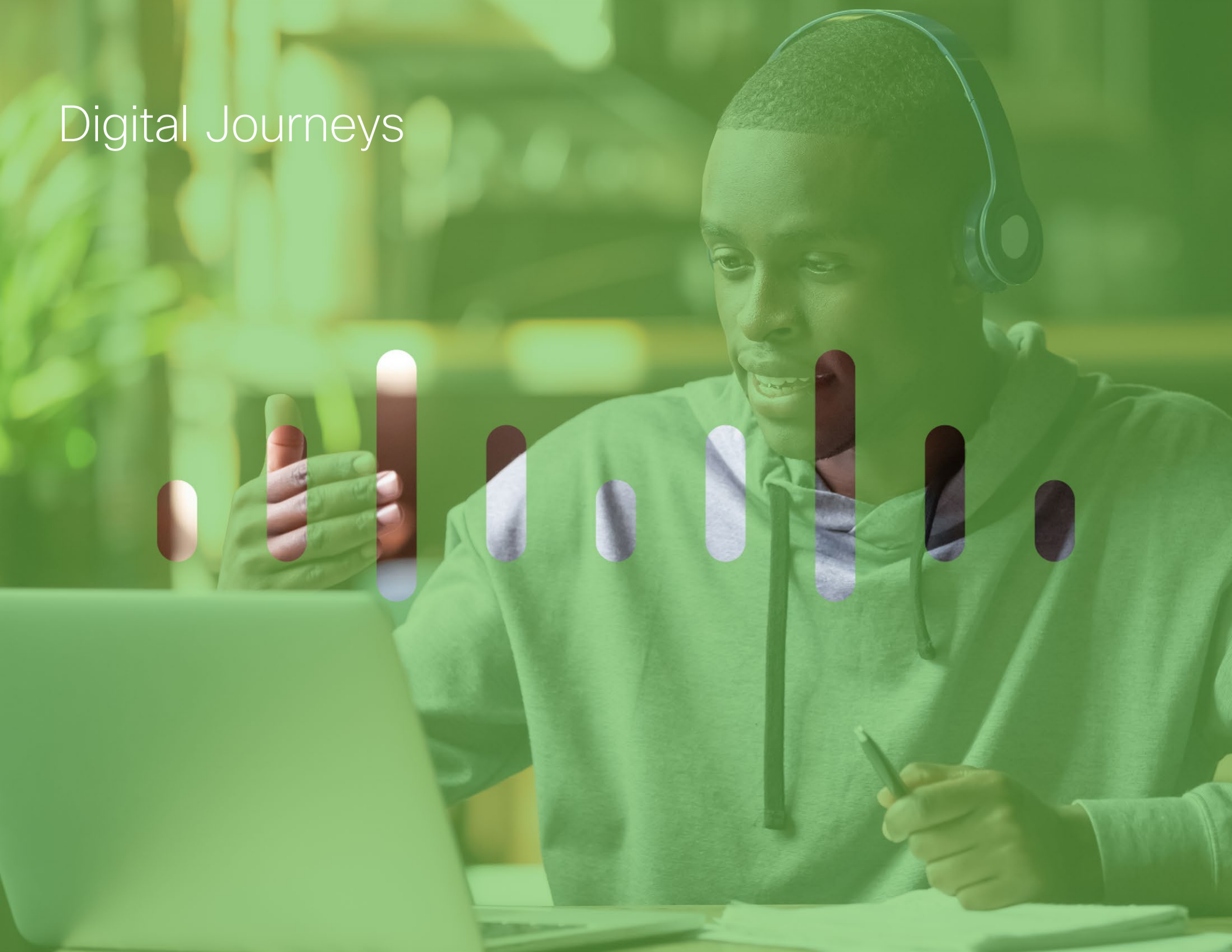


Learn more about [Corporate Social Responsibility at Cisco](#) and see how Ivory Robinson's company, HarpData Connections, is [helping businesses grow with advanced technologies](#).

While many things must take place on multiple levels to confront the digital divide, all of them start with a conversation that leads to awareness, acceptance, and understanding.

"Raising awareness is the biggest challenge," Robinson says. "If I post something online, the people who are able to read it can't imagine life without the internet and have trouble relating to the problem. But this is a crisis. Generations of people are being left behind. The good news is technology can change lives – just like it changed mine – and we all have an opportunity to help turn the tide."

# Digital Journeys



# Staying connected to at-risk youth

## Cisco Meraki network provides essential lifeline for vulnerable teens

**Life Learning Academy** (LLA) is a proverbial lifeboat for the Bay Area's most vulnerable teens. Most of its students have experienced trauma, poverty, and housing insecurity. And all of them have been unsuccessful in traditional school environments.

"We help kids turn their life around and give them a better trajectory for the future," says Dr. Cassandra Blazer, director of policy and evaluation at LLA. "Most come to us as high school dropouts and leave as college hopefuls."

A San Francisco public charter school founded by the nonprofit Delancey Street Foundation, LLA takes in roughly 60 students on an annual basis. In addition to a rigorous academic curriculum that helps 15 to 20 students earn their high school degree each year, the school provides an "extended family" atmosphere. Students eat meals with staff members. They participate in group sessions focused on emotional development, responsibility, and judgement. And through applied learning – including a culinary academy and organic farming program – they receive vocational and social skills that are essential for future success.

### **Pivoting quickly to support remote education**

The tight-knit community became even tighter in 2019 when LLA opened a dorm that offers full-time accommodation for students struggling with homelessness and housing insecurity. The school's IT services partner, **Your Technology Support**, outfitted the dorm with a Cisco Meraki™ network and laptops that connect to LLA's primary campus.

Those connected laptops became vitally important when the COVID-19 pandemic reached California in Spring 2020.

"A couple of students stayed in the dorm, but most went back to their caregivers when the shelter-in-place order was given," Blazer says. "We had to pivot quickly to support and educate them remotely."

LLA staff worked overtime to develop a distance learning program that includes academics, workforce development, and social and emotional learning – often combining them in new, creative ways. The school's culinary instructor, for example, started packaging and sending ingredients for family meals and creating instructional videos for how to prepare them. The students watched the videos on their laptops and took a picture of the meals they had made – helping them







“More than 90 percent of our students logged on and did some work. It’s amazing how committed they were.”

**Dr. Cassandra Blazer**, Director of Policy and Evaluation, LLA

We'll send you some gear  
and help you set it up.  
Sign up for a test drive of Cisco  
Meraki cloud networking [here](#).

learn and apply new skills, get course credit, and put food on a table that might not otherwise have it.

LLA also made the transition to remote classes, teacher office hours, and group counseling sessions. Your Technology Support helped arrange hotspots and internet access for students without connectivity, enabling them to connect from anywhere using the school-issued laptops. And because the laptops are remotely managed with Cisco Meraki Systems Manager, technical issues were quickly and easily resolved.

“More than 90 percent of our students logged on and did some work,” says Blazer. “It’s amazing how committed they were.”

### **Maintaining an essential lifeline**

Although the pandemic disrupted a critical support system and pulled some students out of the LLA lifeboat, the laptops provided an essential lifeline. One that connected them back to the people who were committed to their well-being and success. One that delivered vital educational resources, face-to-face collaboration, and dedicated support – no matter where they were.

“Through all of this, our mission and value to the community were reaffirmed, and we used technology in ways that will continue as we move forward,” says Blazer. “We just need more laptops.”

# Collaboration technologies helping save lives

## Volunteer community goes virtual to ease mental distress

Depression, isolation, and anxiety can all lead to feelings of helplessness and thoughts of self-harm. And for many who experience these struggles on a persistent or recurring basis, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shelter-in-place mandates quickly exacerbated the mental anguish.

**San Francisco Suicide Prevention** (SFSP) saw a 30 percent spike in high-risk calls in the early days of the pandemic. But increased call volume wasn't the only challenge facing the oldest community-based telephone crisis center in the United States.

"During chaotic and overwhelming times, our lines act as a critical intervention for many folks who need emotional support," says Van Hedwall, director of programs for SFSP. "But when the pandemic started, our volunteer pool dropped in half."

The community, camaraderie, and interpersonal support within the SFSP call room had always been significant draws for volunteers, he explains. With COVID-19 protocols limiting onsite assembly, SFSP had to adjust quickly to reconvene its volunteers, handle the uptick in calls, and continue to save lives.

### Enhancing communications and collaboration

A Cisco employee and SFSP volunteer suggested Cisco Webex® as a possible solution, and in just four days, the crisis center was able to deploy a full communications and collaboration suite. Eighty volunteers were activated with Webex Calling, allowing them to take calls from their homes through a secure, private connection.

Cisco partner **Masergy** helped configure Cisco Webex Contact Center for advanced call routing. And the combination of Cisco Webex Teams and Cisco Webex Meetings enabled SFSP to reunite its community of volunteers, albeit virtually.

"We're able to integrate web meetings, web calling, and web messaging all in one place," Hedwall says. "It gives our volunteers that feeling of being together in the call room."

### Saving an untold number of lives

With the help of its new communications and collaboration platform, SFSP is fielding roughly 300 calls and saving an untold number of lives every day. And even though volunteers are now back in the call room, Hedwall says Cisco Webex will continue to play an important role.

"This technology has really helped us look forward into the future," he says. "It has enabled us to find new ways of doing what we've always done, which is being the emotional support for San Francisco."

If you or a loved one is in distress, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.



# The importance of security in times of crisis

## Second Harvest protects and scales its operations to meet growing food demand

Silicon Valley – the global epicenter of technological innovation – is often perceived as a region of wealth and prosperity. But one out of every four people in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties are at risk of hunger.

To address food insecurity, [Second Harvest of Silicon Valley](#), one of the largest food banks in the United States, works with a network of 310 nonprofit partners to provide groceries for the community. Second Harvest’s mission became even more important – and more challenging – when the COVID-19 pandemic ground Silicon Valley to a virtual halt.

“There was already a huge amount of inequality in the area,” says Elizabeth Whamond, director of IT for Second Harvest. “When pandemic-related unemployment spiked, the situation became much worse and demand went way up.”

In April 2020, Second Harvest provided food to more than half a million people, an 85 percent increase compared to pre-pandemic distribution. Meeting the demand was no easy feat, especially with half of the organization’s staff suddenly working from home, a reduction in volunteers due to a statewide

shelter-in-place order, and an entirely new food distribution model.

“We had to change everything on a dime,” Whamond says. “Instead of having a farmers’ market style approach where people can pick and choose the food they receive, we had to pre-box food and place it in trunks to avoid contact.”

### Boosting security amidst chaos

Fortunately, Second Harvest received an outpouring of assistance to confront the growing need.

The food bank experienced a significant increase in monetary donations. The U.S. National Guard sent more than 100 reservists to box food and help with logistics. And IT services partner [DataEndure](#) helped Second Harvest transition roughly 100 staff members to work remotely.

“We’re very much a face-to-face organization, so we had never done that before,” says Whamond. “DataEndure was a great partner. They helped us make the switch to telework, assisted with firewall and domain controller upgrades, and kept us protected with 24x7 monitoring.”



Backed by Cisco Umbrella®, DataEndure’s Security Operations Center as a Service (SOCaaS) proactively detects, identifies, and escalates threats, which allowed Second Harvest to focus on food distribution amidst the chaos of the pandemic’s early days.

“Security is always important, but it’s absolutely critical in times of crisis,” says Vince Zappula, chief revenue officer for DataEndure. “Hackers see disorder and confusion as opportunities, and nonprofits are often a target. There was a 600 percent spike in phishing attacks between February and March 2020.”



## Scaling with speed

With its technology infrastructure fortified and half its staff remaining productive from home, Second Harvest was able to focus on ramping up food distribution. Knowing its three warehouses couldn't meet the growing demand, the food bank began looking for additional space.

"The Cisco real estate team stepped in and helped us locate and acquire a fourth warehouse," says Whamond. "Then we had a call with the Cisco Tactical Operations team, and they got us fully outfitted and online the very next day. Their assistance and speed were remarkable."

The "TacOps" team – which helps relief agencies in times of crisis – acquired and configured Cisco phones and a Cisco Meraki™ network for the warehouse. The rapid response ensured the new facility could become operational and begin distributing food in days instead of weeks or months.

"It was a really hard situation, but the community at large came together to help," says Whamond. "I think people saw how vulnerable and interconnected we all are. There was a lot of giving."

If you'd like to donate to Second Harvest, visit [shfb.org](https://shfb.org).



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**Elizabeth Whamond**

Director of IT,  
Second Harvest