

the Hybrid Out of adversity comes opportunity

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The world is still in the grasp of a global crisis, the likes of which has not been seen in generations. The Covid-19 pandemic has torn a gaping hole in many lives and livelihoods. Loved ones have been lost, businesses have perished, jobs have vanished, and the well-being and resilience of people have been put to the test in this global war with the invisible enemy.

Despite this extreme adversity – and in fact, because of it, humankind has responded with courage, hard work, ingenuity and creativity, each of these resources called upon to keep our way of life intact, and preserve that which we need more than mere nourishment – hope.

But practically nothing can happen without teamwork & collaboration, and almost all of the success stories emerging from the pandemic are testament to this fact. From the fight on the front-line in our hospitals, to the ground-breaking research in vaccines, from the continuing supply of power, food and essentials, to the remarkable transition to life & work online, none of this would have been possible without our ability to function well as a team and collaborate – often on a national and international scale.

In Part 1 of this report, we; explore the DECT technology's unique ability to deliver solutions for teamwork and collaboration, show how products using DECT have played their part in responding to the pandemic, and then look briefly towards the post-Covid future with examples of how lasting changes in some markets could result in exciting new opportunities for our members.

We will then bring some of these emerging changes into sharper focus in Part 2, through interviews with DECT Forum members. The two big questions we seek to answer are:

- As restrictions continue around the world, could we be poised at the beginning of a tectonic change in several global markets, where innovative new ways of working developed out of adversity, combine with our previous way of working, to form new potent 'hybrid' business models & services, that deliver unprecedented opportunity?
- Could that rapid acceleration of digital transformation and the great agility & competitiveness that so many organisations demonstrated during the last year, be sustained and driven even faster market transformation and growth?

Benjamin Franklin's words "Out of adversity comes opportunity" have been widely quoted in recent months and adopted by some political and industry leaders as a mantra to inspire us and turn hope into determination. Now we want to show that these words really do ring true for members of the DECT Forum and for future users of the DECT technology.

Not just good for teamwork & collaboration – DECT is built for it!

Whilst most people might know DECT as a cordless telephone technology, this 1:1 communication mode is just one use case of this very adaptable and robust RF technology!

DECT was built to support team-based communication in a number of ways. Even in a single cell system, DECT supports ‘open listen & talk’ intercom (as opposed to walkie-talkie ‘press-to-talk’), and with a fully mobilised cell in the form of a handheld radio, DECT provides a very cost effective solution for a mobile team who are able to communicate, completely hands-free, with ultra-reliable low-latency radio performance. Connected multicell systems support a very sophisticated range of use cases such as enterprise wireless PBXs, large intercom systems, corporate conferencing solutions, and microphone systems for large suites of lecture theatres. A fully synchronised multicell DECT system can support hundreds of live channels of CD-quality low-latency audio with user densities easily up to 1/sq. m.

No RF technology can claim to be interference-free but the DECT technology and its highly regulated band make interference literally unheard of! And with its rock-solid unwavering low latency which now can be as low as <5 msec, every word will be heard in the most extreme of conditions. This is why the best professional intercoms use DECT, this is why conferencing systems in corporate headquarters and conference centres around the world use DECT, and this is why call centres employing hundreds of staff on one floor of a building use DECT headsets. There simply isn’t another technology that brings teams together and facilitates collaboration in this way.

Whether it’s for team-based ‘high-stakes’ communication where failure is not an option, or for giving an important lecture to a large conference, or for collaborating with colleagues and business partners anywhere in the world with crystal clear audio, DECT is the technology built for the ultimate in collaboration!



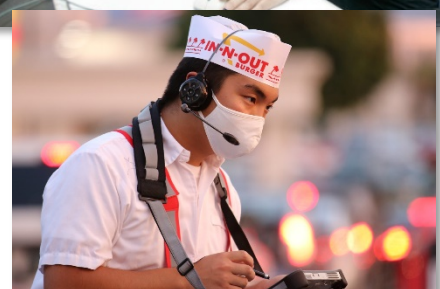
Now it really is collaborate to survive!

In an age when the ability to collaborate globally was already becoming a prerequisite for business success and survival, Covid-19 has raised the stakes, making effective virtual 'e-collaboration' absolutely essential for organisations of all types, shapes and sizes. It seems fortunate in the extreme, that all of the collaboration technologies and network capacity needed to make the remarkable transition to near 100% virtual collaboration, were already available and indeed transferrable with a reasonably high degree of success as many of us migrated from the office to the home! Almost overnight, and across all kinds of organisations, prior plans for digital transformation aimed at implementing higher levels of e-Collaboration turned from years into weeks! Necessity overtook risk and caution, and the extraordinary was achieved by so many



On the front line ...

Alongside other communication technologies, DECT-enabled products played their part in the fight to keep our societies safe, supplied and cared for. DECT Intercoms & headsets were used extensively to keep teams well-coordinated and deal with emergencies. But as we witnessed through our media, different combinations of cordless phones, pagers, and even walkie-talkies were thrown together in an effort to deal with the changing and sometimes desperate communication needs of the day!



... and at home,

Within a few weeks, homes across the world turned into offices, classrooms, care homes and isolation shelters, as we entered the first lockdown. Home-office environments and even make-shift labs were hurriedly set up in kitchens, bedrooms and basements. What was assumed to be temporary, became very much less so, and organisations everywhere had to very quickly adapt to having much of their workforce widely distributed and available only at the end of a domestic broadband connection or phone line.

As mobile and broadband networks struggled to meet demand, people turned to their fixed or VoIP lines in order to reach out to loved ones or to conduct an important business call, and the sale of DECT phones and headsets rocketed. At the same time, in order to sustain teamwork and collaboration, organisations turned to online video conferencing platforms such as MS Teams, Zoom and BlueJeans then quickly had to settle into a new way of working.



... but quality audio was recognised as foundational

During the pandemic, the importance of good audio has been rediscovered! There is absolutely no doubt that the video in 'video conferencing' has been hugely important in maintaining a virtual 'face-to-face' experience, but many were reminded that quality audio communication is absolutely foundational in any collaboration whether or not it includes video, or information sharing. Without video you still have a meeting – without audio, there is no meeting!

Individuals and organisations everywhere, including the world's media, quickly found out how much teamwork and collaboration (and even a chat with friends & family) can be enhanced when the audio experience is improved. Through products like DECT headsets, cordless phones and microphones, the role that DECT played in e-collaboration in the Covid months, and will continue to play in the months and years to come, is to help make the audio experience in e-collaboration as good as it can possibly be. As we know, poor audio quality can have very negative effects on collaboration, such as stress, frustration, misunderstandings, poor meeting productivity, bad decisions and even lost business - from product sales all the way to major contracts! If we get the audio wrong, we very quickly face the consequences!



The Future will be 'Hybrid'

As the weeks and months have passed under Lockdown, and travel restrictions across the globe came into effect, it seems more and more likely that the world of work, education and recreation will never be quite the same as before. Millions (perhaps Billions?) of people are asking the question now - what will the 'New Normal' look like? Around the world today, all types of businesses and other operations in areas such as Education, Entertainment and Healthcare are beginning to answer that question. They are asking what our new online practices have taught us about how we could collaborate better when the pandemic is finally at an end?

Indeed it's highly likely that when we bring together the innovations, triumphs & successes that have emerged during the pandemic, with a return to a life without 'restrictions', we will see hybrids of 'past + pandemic' working practices & business models that could signal one of the biggest market changes across multiple sectors in recent years. These 'hybrids' will most commonly be a blend of the physical and virtual that meet the needs of a market that both thrives on the physical, but is now fully adapted to the virtual!

For example, schooling and further education were forced online for significant periods of time, but as schools and universities welcome their students back, we are already seeing a move towards a hybrid of physical and remote participation in lessons, lectures and tutorials. This could make mainstream education more accessible. The benefits of physical attendance at schools, colleges and universities could be combined with online participation for those who, for a range of reasons, cannot physically participate.



Similarly, the live entertainment industry was initially decimated, but more recently we've seen musicians & artists go online and event organisers using online events platforms to stage ticketed concerts and theatrical performances! It's highly likely that in future, hybrid events will become the norm, where the online experience will be an attractive option to many concert-goers and this will consequently present a new source of income for event organisers and artists. Indeed, the hybrid event will extend to the hybrid experience for those actually attending the event, as they listen to a streamed version of the act, whilst enjoying the physical atmosphere and ambience!



Hybridisation will pervade many different markets that DECT Forum members serve. With the understandable reluctance of individuals to fully return to daily commuting and global business travel, and with organisations now beginning to understand the operational & cost benefits of hybrid working, we will see hybrid working become the norm. New audio challenges will arise for meetings involving participants both around the conference table and working from home. Hybrid conferences and trade shows will take place, with delegates participating online, and perhaps even local & national governments will embrace a hybrid debating model?



In Healthcare, there will be important lessons learned from the innovative communications solutions that were hurriedly put in place when pressure on our frontline health services became extreme. Teamwork and collaboration were absolutely vital and put to an extreme test as hospital wards were quickly reconfigured for the rapidly increasing and unprecedented numbers of highly infectious high-dependency & intensive care patients.

Doubtless other markets are also undergoing 'hybridisation' that could represent compelling change that will be a threat to the slow to respond – but an opportunity for the agile!



Look out for Part 2 of this report

In Part 2 we will interview DECT Forum members in order to hear from them what major changes and hybridisation they are starting to witness first-hand.