

Five questions with Hawaii's tech leaders

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought new tech to businesses looking to stay connected during remote and hybrid work schedules.

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Has demand for your services increased with more people working from home? If so, how did you handle the increased workload?

Aryn Nakaoka, AlohaTone.com: The rush home was huge, and we found out a lot of homes are not set up for work. WiFi, cabling and power were concerns. Our app helps to solve those deployment issues.

Mike McMurdo, Cetra Technology Inc.: The transition to remote work has increased the demand for our services and we handled this by adding or re-deploying personnel to those services and revising operations to increase efficiency.

Jason Stone, Tech Partners Hawaii: Demand for IT services has increased for those businesses still operating through Covid. Luckily, since we create strong computer and network environments for our clients it was an easy switch.

Kelly Ueoka, Pacxa: We are seeing significant increases in demand for our services to enable the remote workforce and help resolve issues related to virtual environments and their cyber threats. Our team has done an excellent job of continuing to deliver best-in-class solutions and services to our customers.

Brandon Arakaki, Cowabunga! Computers: Absolutely increased. However, we also made big changes and partner with the largest software companies to provide online virtual assistance which decreases our time spent in traffic.

What significant trends or changes do you foresee in the future of the technology industry, locally or otherwise?

McMurdo: The increased use of technology for remote work as well as the need to improve network security will continue to be critical for many industries for the foreseeable future.

Ueoka: One trend we are seeing is an increased reliance on technology as a whole as remote and hybrid work become more mainstream. Another trend is the rising dependence on software-as-a-service (SaaS) technologies, especially in cybersecurity areas.

What is the biggest challenge that your industry is currently facing?

McMurdo: Network security has become even more challenging in this pandemic. Where once a business may have had only two people working remotely, it now has maybe 75 people accessing their desktops remotely. This places not only an incredible burden on the company's infrastructure but exponentially increases the number of ways bad actors can break into a company's network.

Ricky Zheng, ZR Systems: As a service provider, we are only as strong as our customers so our long-term viability will depend on the rebounding of the local economy.

Ueoka: Changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic have significantly increased the need for advanced cybersecurity and the ability to rapidly pivot to changing business needs of our clients.

Stone: Covid has put a major damper on the Hawaii economy, and we're working hard to ensure our clients businesses survive and thrive.



MIKE MCMURDO,
Cetra Technology Inc.



ARYN NAKAOA,
AlohaTone.com



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KELLY UEOKA,
Pacxa



RICKY ZHENG,
ZR Systems

Nakaoka: Many of our customers are retail or tourism-based [and they are] still slowly recovering from 2020.

Arakaki: Educating customers the traditional sit-in-the-office model is outdated.

What impact has virtualization had on your company?

Nakaoka: We use virtualized machines on dedicated hardware to allow for live migrations in case hardware has an issue.

Ueoka: Virtualization plays a significant role in improving cost efficiency, reliability, and flexibility of workloads for our customers.

Stone: Virtualization and cloud computing have had a significant impact on our client's ability to scale staff and resources effectively.

McMurdo: It is "virtually" impossible for any company not to be dependent on virtualization.

What's something that changed because of Covid that you think will continue after the pandemic is over?

Nakaoka: Our mobile apps and remote desktop allow our customers to work from anywhere, that's not going away.

McMurdo: Video conferencing meetings via Zoom and other platforms have proven to be efficient and cost effective and will most likely continue to be used.

Zheng: The ability to work from home has definitely made us more open to having a distributed workforce that does not need to come in every day to the physical office.

Stone: Working from home has become the norm for a lot of businesses.

Ueoka: Remote and hybrid work arrangements are here to stay, as are the cyber vulnerabilities and threats that come with them. We are working with our clients to ensure that they are protected in a way that best fits their businesses and their operational needs.