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## Finding a Route to Recovery: Four Strategies

Judging by the lack of media coverage, it's a stealth movement.

But you may have seen it. You may even be doing it: Some small businesses are proactively finding roads to recovery, using network technology to reposition themselves.

Their rules: Rethink the way business has been done, and accelerate recovery by investing in 21st-century technology that raises revenues, controls costs, and/or improves cash flow. The businesses are also strategic about who provides the technology.

These leading businesses' strategic routes to recovery are:

### 1. Raise revenues by getting better and bigger

- **Surpass competitors.** A small doctors' office uses its new voice network to convert prospective patients to its practice. Its call routing sends new patient inquiries and referrals directly to the staff who can most quickly help them and arrange their first appointment. The practice is now growing daily. It will soon pay off its network system lease, and will use that cash flow to add applications that offer other competitive advantages.
- **Don't lose revenues.** Make sure that customers can place orders. A hardware distributor significantly increased annual sales simply by installing a reliable network to replace a system that failed periodically.
- **Improve the customer experience.** With a unified communications network, your business can know who's calling before you pick up the phone, and can answer every call, quickly routing it to the employee who is best able to help the customer, even if that employee is working from home or traveling.
- **Move into new markets.** Facing declining revenues, the hardware distributor recently opened two more branch offices. Its [unified communications](#) platform at headquarters makes expansion cost-effective because the platform supports all the branches; each needs only a router, a switch, and IP phones. Customers perceive that the handling of their calls occurs at their local branch.

### 2. Control labor costs by increasing productivity

- **Automate recurring tasks.** An 18-employee medical office now saves up to 30 minutes per incoming call by eliminating written phone messages. Its IP phone system automatically routes calls to the appropriate staff. With caller ID and their own voicemail boxes, doctors and nurses hear callers in their own words. No more cryptic memos. Accuracy is increased, and staff do their jobs better and faster.
- **Reduce technology-related labor costs.** The 75 employees at an industrial supplier no longer have to stop working every few months while their system is reconfigured. A new network system ended that. The firm has also trimmed the hiring and overtime of technology staff, outsourcing some tasks to the expertise of a reseller.

### 3. Improve cash flow and profits by cutting overhead

- **Reduce telecommunications expenses.** What is your monthly telecommunications bill (for equipment, call charges, and service)? A two-physician office that replaced its old system with an IP phone system reduced its bill by 36 percent. A multisite distributor saved more than 50 percent. After the three years it will take these businesses to pay off their new system leases, their savings will rise to 68 and 80 percent, respectively.
- **Do it yourself, and over the web.** The distributor also saves hundreds of dollars monthly by hosting its own large conference calls. In addition, its technology staff no longer have to travel to branches or manage local telephone company contractors for simple services such as changing phone users or producing call reports. They now do these tasks on the web.

### 4. Reevaluate your technology suppliers

- **Choose a vendor with products and services designed for a business like yours.** Do your network solutions demand too much time, skill, coddling, or coordination? Do they help your business innovate? Does the vendor offer the breadth of products, warranties, and financing that you need?
- **Find a reseller that goes above and beyond.** Unlike a firm that simply takes your order for technology products, a reseller partner can help you achieve strategic objectives. Like the businesses in this article did, you can find a partner who has a high level of expertise, takes time to understand your needs, and recommends the best solutions. A reseller who offers technical support for all your network technologies, and who is backed by strong vendor resources, will help ensure that your network simply works.

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### Next Steps

[Find an experienced local Cisco® reseller](#) that meets your specific needs.

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