ENSURING BUSINESS CONTINUITY IN TIMES OF CRISIS:
A GAME PLAN FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In this Q and A, **Herb Thompson, SLED strategist** at VMware, and **John Punzak, senior director of healthcare and SLED business development** at VMware, share how agencies can overcome their business continuity challenges to deliver a better constituent experience.

Herb Thompson

John Punzak

It's no longer business as usual for state and local governments. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted service delivery and led to significant loss of revenue. Business continuity has never been more important, and to strengthen these efforts, governments must empower the remote workforce, increase connectivity and enhance enterprise security.

What business continuity challenges have state and local governments faced since the pandemic began?
John: We've seen a three-phased approach throughout this crisis: reaction, adaptation and acceleration.

In phase one, the question was: "How do we respond to this and keep the business going?" For most agencies, that meant sending most employees home or to remote offices and setting up lines of communication.

As we move into phase two, agency leaders are looking at how to be more resilient, especially around enterprise security, because so many employees are working outside the firewall. Government agencies must consider how to scale to facilitate remote work because they typically have not been set up to manage that type of workload over the internet. At the same time, they are taking a significant hit to their capital budgets, but they may be able to enhance their operations with CARES Act funding.

In phase three, some state and local governments will accelerate digital-first initiatives and continue modernizing their legacy applications with the help of multiple cloud vendors. However, increasingly complex IT environments will bring new challenges.

How will the public sector's approach to networking and security need to evolve?
Herb: In some cases, state and local governments have gone from something like 500 remote users to 20,000 or 30,000 remote users. The old model of putting a moat around the data center only works when people are inside the perimeter. Going forward, governments will need to adopt zero-trust security networks to gain visibility into users and devices.

How can state and local governments best leverage the cloud to be more agile?
John: Three types of technologies will be beneficial for state and local governments: a digital workspace platform, an application development platform and a hybrid cloud infrastructure platform.

A digital workspace refers to the devices people use to access their work. With a digital workspace platform, it does not matter what device you use. Employees have easy, secure access to business applications. IT teams also can monitor and manage all devices coming into the network from a single place, which enhances security and network performance.

An application development platform can help prevent situations like unemployment insurance delays. Most states struggled to process benefits at scale because their applications were running on legacy systems. This is an opportune time to modernize and adopt cloud applications that can easily scale on Amazon, Azure or Google resources. An application development platform allows for this flexibility.

A hybrid cloud ties in nicely with this because many state and local governments have virtual machines running on premises, but many have started moving those application workloads out to the big three hyper-scalers that I just mentioned, so they have the agility to scale on demand.

How can state and local governments balance budget considerations with technology modernization? Also, how can they ensure the solutions they adopted during the crisis continue to meet their needs?
Herb: My recommendation would be not to just procure individual point solutions but to look at IT security holistically. With revenues down, many agencies need to consider network, security and endpoint management and figure out how to leverage the cloud in a more unified way. This can help reduce total cost of ownership, eliminate duplicative products and point solutions, and improve security. By implementing a more encompassing single pane of glass management approach, you can also reduce support costs and other product costs.

What are some key considerations for state and local governments as they try to become more agile and responsive?
John: State and local governments must invest in future-proof infrastructure and technologies that will not quickly become obsolete. Investing in software, rather than hardware or an appliance, can help them integrate new capabilities as their business needs evolve. The mission of government is the same in the era of COVID-19. They still must deliver, but the way they deliver has changed.

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