

**MBE TIPS FROM
THE TRENCHES
DURING COVID-19**



**HOW U
DOIN'?**

**YOU'RE
NOT ALONE!**

Experiences, Ideas and Advice from NMSDC's
National Minority Business Enterprise Input Committee



STANDING FOR THE INTERESTS OF MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES.

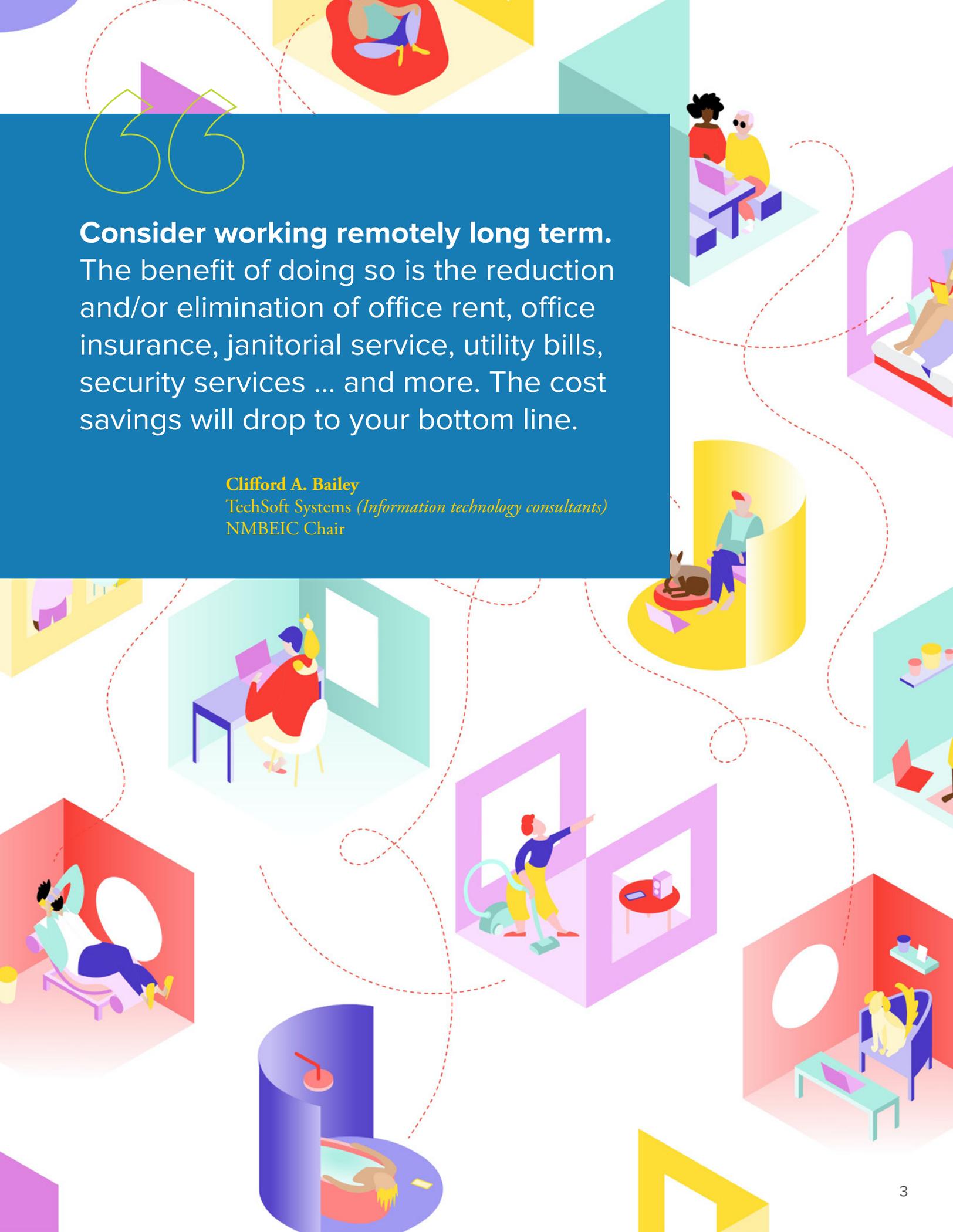
The National Minority Business Enterprise Input Committee (NMBEIC) is a standing committee of the board of directors of the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) and it serves the organization's more than 12,000 certified Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs).

The NMBEIC represents the interests of MBEs in working with the national board, national staff, and affiliate regional council presidents and board chairs. As part of the Network Leadership, the NMBEIC supports and develops strategies and initiatives that serve NMSDC's mission of "advancing business opportunities for certified MBEs and connecting them with corporate members," and doing so in ways that create value and deliver economic and social impact for all stakeholders.



Consider working remotely long term.
The benefit of doing so is the reduction and/or elimination of office rent, office insurance, janitorial service, utility bills, security services ... and more. The cost savings will drop to your bottom line.

Clifford A. Bailey
TechSoft Systems (*Information technology consultants*)
NMBEIC Chair





HEROES ★ WORK ★ HE RE

Here are 5 tips we employed to make sure things continue to run smoothly during the pandemic:

1. Reset our communication pattern

As a standard, we have weekly Project Review meetings. To keep everyone engaged, we are now rotating the leadership of the meeting so that each team member has a chance to do the preparatory work for the meeting, lead the meeting, and to control the flow of the conversation. That person is also the one who usually accesses our system (Microsoft Teams) to launch the meeting and will send a short message to anyone who is not on the line when the meeting starts to move forward.

2. Maximize the use of our online platform

As noted above, we use Microsoft Teams. We are now adding clients to our Teams to enhance communication. Additionally, everyone is becoming more adept at using the various productivity tools in Microsoft Teams.

3. Check processes and procedures

Routinely (*weekly or bi-weekly*) check with employees and team members for recommendations to changes in our processes to keep everything running smoothly.

4. Accelerated Partnering and Teaming

As corporate client projects slowed down and/or were postponed, we accelerated our efforts to work with Local, State and Federal agencies. We found the quickest and most efficient way to access opportunities was through partnering with colleagues who have government contacts, government contracts and other points of access and need an eLearning partner to meet growing online training needs.

5. Expand and Pivot

As a provider of interactive online training and high-impact videos, we realized our eLearning and

multi-media solutions designed to support corporate internal and external brand messaging could fully support the needs for webinars, virtual conferences and complete virtual tradeshow/exhibits. As a result, we are continuing to expand and pivot our services in the educational technology (EdTech) arena to meet the growing needs of small businesses, corporations, educational institutions, and government agencies.

Carlton Oneal

LightSpeedEdu (*eLearning and multimedia communications firm*)
NMBEIC Secretary

Changes made:

- There were a couple of standard operational changes we had to rapidly implement due to stay-at-home orders, one of which was to update our customer contact information to include “onsite” and “offsite” staff mobile phone numbers. As we are in the business of delivering essential business products, we quickly discovered that buildings were left vacant or had minimal staff available to receive

goods. We also were proactive in our decision to invest in inventory, logistics, etc. to ride the tide.

- In addition, we had to quickly adapt to a heightened supply chain disruption and communicate solutions for our corporate clients.
- We increased our community “local value” supplier

commitment to support healthcare and first responders.

- Overall, we approached COVID-19 as an opportunity and matched our preparedness with the pandemic.

Jackie Dyess

Inter-City Supply Co. Inc.

(Janitorial, office products, packaging, safety and food service supplies)

NMBEIC Treasurer



Increased our focus on the following:

- Zoom and Teams Meetings
- Lots of webinars
- Education and training
- Revising 2020 strategy
- Developing safety protocols
- Increased use of social media
- Personal calls to clients
- Partnering with other organizations to bring small business and MBE solutions through presentation
- Over-communicate with team about current and future company plans

Ed Ryland

Arvo Realty Advisors

(Real estate advisory firm)

NMBEIC Vice Chair



I am going to mention the video email again. This was our Game Changer. Clients were working from home and really welcomed a video message from me.



As a safety company we had to pivot in new ways:

- Studied the CDC site and WHO to understand the hospital standards because that was going to drive the Corporate Standards in the future. We even studied recovery in other countries and what small businesses were doing there to guide us as to what we should be doing in the US.
- Everything required for COVID in a healthcare setting we began proposing to our Corporate Clients.
- Instead of email communications, I switched to video emails where I recorded a message with 1-2 slides in my background to speak to the Client about products and services we have for COVID. I dress casually on the video, like the Client is, casual work at home wear. *(Note: I use Loom, but I know others use BombBomb.)*
- Identify what is needed to curb fear. Clients were fearful they could not procure what they needed. Therefore, we changed our distribution model from individual safety supplies (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, etc.) and INSTEAD now packaging into kits for easier distribution.
- Share strong posts every day on LinkedIn.
- Changed our website and LinkedIn profile to reflect our pivot to PPE.
- Services which we would normally charge for, we offered at no cost. Like sending a Reopening Office Checklist for Clients to use to guide their next step decisions.
- We sent PPE to clients who needed it, but did not have time to onboard us.
- I am going to mention the video email again. This was our Game Changer. Clients were working from home and really welcomed a video message from me. Even after the call, I would send a message thanking them!
- I reminded myself of my own mantra: NO = NEW OPPORTUNITY. Maybe a Corporate told me No in the past, but during the pandemic, it may be a NEW OPPORTUNITY.

Pam Isom

Ice Safety Solutions

(Safety company)

Representative, NMSDC Field Services Committee



Now's the time to prepare to win new opportunities.

Bonnie Nijst

FIDGET Branding (*Growth marketing agency*)

NMSDC Vice Chair

In a world where you'll have fewer opportunities to meet people in person, you have to up your digital marketing and sales game.

- **You need a CRM.** Get the information out of your email, Google Contacts, Excel spreadsheets and the stack of business cards on your desk ... and move all of it into a Customer Relationship Management System. There are paid systems and free ones. My favorite is HubSpot's CRM and it's free.
- **Make sure your data is good.** First, check for accuracy. Is the email current? How about the street/ mailing address and the website URL. Is the person's name spelled correctly? Do you have their correct title? Second, do you have the information you need to market to them? Do you have an email address? How about a main line or direct number and/or cell?
- **Collecting qualifying data.** What are the pieces of information you look for to determine if a prospect contact or company is a fit? Maybe it's their industry, company revenue, number of employees, or whether the individual is a decision-maker with budget authority. Whatever it is, make sure you have a place to record this information in the CRM.



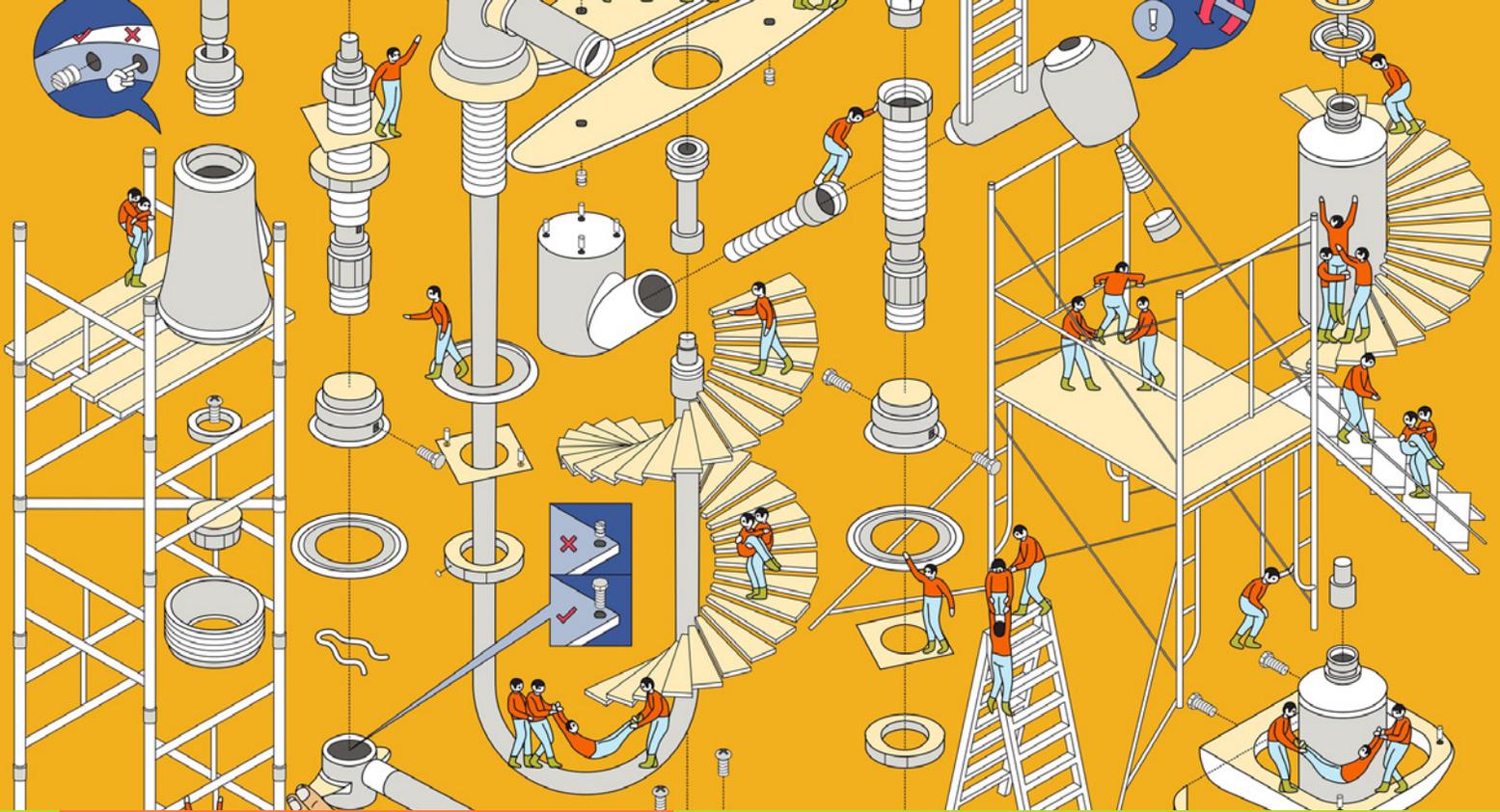
Rethink how you talk about your business.

Yes, people still want to know what products and services you provide, but be sure you also talk about the result or value those products and services will create. How will working with you – especially in the current COVID-19 environment and during what's expected by many to be a years-long period of disruption – make a significant contribution to their company. In short, think less about selling and more about helping.

Pay attention to your online presence.

In an increasingly digital and remote working environment, your website is your company's new address and your homepage is your front door. First impressions count and design and messaging matters, as does grammar and spelling. Make sure your website is someplace they want to come back to, time and time again, for expertise and information. You also want to make sure it's someplace they're proud to refer others to.

By the same token, your LinkedIn profile is like your own personal website for telling your professional story. Update it with awards you've received, add multimedia elements if you have them, and edit out unnecessary information or old work experiences that are no longer relevant. Also, consider new ways to describe your accomplishments and the impact you've had on the customers you've worked with. Your story is a constantly evolving narrative. Your LinkedIn profile should evolve with it.



These are some of the changes our janitorial business immediately implemented to get through the COVID-19 disruptions:

- Immediately invested in training through Global BioRisk Advisory Council, GBAC and ISSA for management trainers. Management trainers trained employees in the field.
- Immediately implemented COVID-19 protocol.
- Working remotely - Admin employees with children were allowed to work from home.
- Locked down our offices. We are no longer open to the public. Anyone coming from outside goes through a recorded checkpoint system: temperature check, health signoff and mask are required to enter offices.
- Staff meetings are conducted through Zoom or 6 feet apart.
- Changed cleaning procedure. For example, washable cleaning rags were replaced with disposable paper.
- Now offering COVID-19 disinfecting services.
- All employees are required to wear masks, as well as other PPE such as face shields, gloves, goggles, and bodysuits (*depending on the assignments*).
- Started a new banking relationship with a smaller bank. After 35 years with our bank, I felt it was necessary. They did not handle their small business customers well during this whole COVID-19 change, especially with the PPP loan process.
- Hiring application process is now online.
- Interviews are conducted over the phone. The second interview is conducted 6 feet apart.
- We are more flexible with employees' time.
- Daily we are watching cash flow and our receivables. We have changed billing terms. Immediately billing after service instead of at the end of the month.
- Staff are currently reaching out on how to support our community.
- As a team we have all made an effort that our BriteWorks Familia is healthy and safe. Each one of us is doing our part to ease the work load or stress of others.

Anita Ron
 BriteWorks Inc.
 (Commercial janitorial services)
 MBEIC Chair,
 Southern California MSDC



We were transparent in our communication with staff regarding how we were being impacted and the actions we were considering.

As a staffing firm providing contingent/ temporary employees to clients that are both essential and non-essential businesses, during COVID-19 we have made the following changes in service delivery:

- Ongoing updates and communication regarding safety and health information to all contingent employees via weekly email blast and telephone.
- Internal staff is working remotely with access to all of their in-office desktop files. If for any reason they visit the office, they are required to wear masks.
- Weekly Zoom staff meetings, updates and communication calls.
- Candidate applications are completed and submitted online, candidate interviews and orientations are administered through Zoom, all skill evaluations are conducted online.
- Client/Customer meetings are scheduled via video or conference calls.

Joyce Johnson

Anchor Staffing (Staffing firm)
MBEIC Chair, Chicago MSDC

Actions taken:

- Reduced full-time employee hours to 30 per week
- Laid off one employee
- Worked to identify more sources of funding
- Dedicated staff time to reconciling aging accounts
- We expanded our geographic coverage
- We were transparent in our communication with staff regarding how we were being impacted and the actions we were considering
- Applied for scholarships/grants for training to build our skills.

Anthony Curtis

Teksync Technologies (IT services provider)
MBEIC Chair, Houston MSDC

Sidd Ahmed of VDart Inc. was NMSDC's 2019 MBE of the Year. You can download his action plan for managing his business during the pandemic [here](#).

Some changes we have made are:

- Our engineers continue to make the internal and external adjustments to our technologies being used specifically for COVID-19 temperature tracking and recording. One of our patent-pending solutions includes HD-sensor-based thermal technologies that are now in high demand in identifying physical body temperatures as people enter facilities.
- We are now in the process of making our solutions available to facilities managers and security companies. We are retooling our marketing and social media presence and implementing the steps for facilities managers and security teams to identify, isolate, and test individuals for the suspect temperatures.
- We have engaged in several reseller agreements with companies who specialize in UV-C COVID-19 eradication technologies in facilities.
- We have also since made the determination that our leased office space and facilities were no longer a necessity since our client servicing takes place largely in the field.
- We have recognized and reallocated the savings to engineering and marketing costs and are more effectively and efficiently able to telework to meet our own organizational and client needs.

Kevin Williams

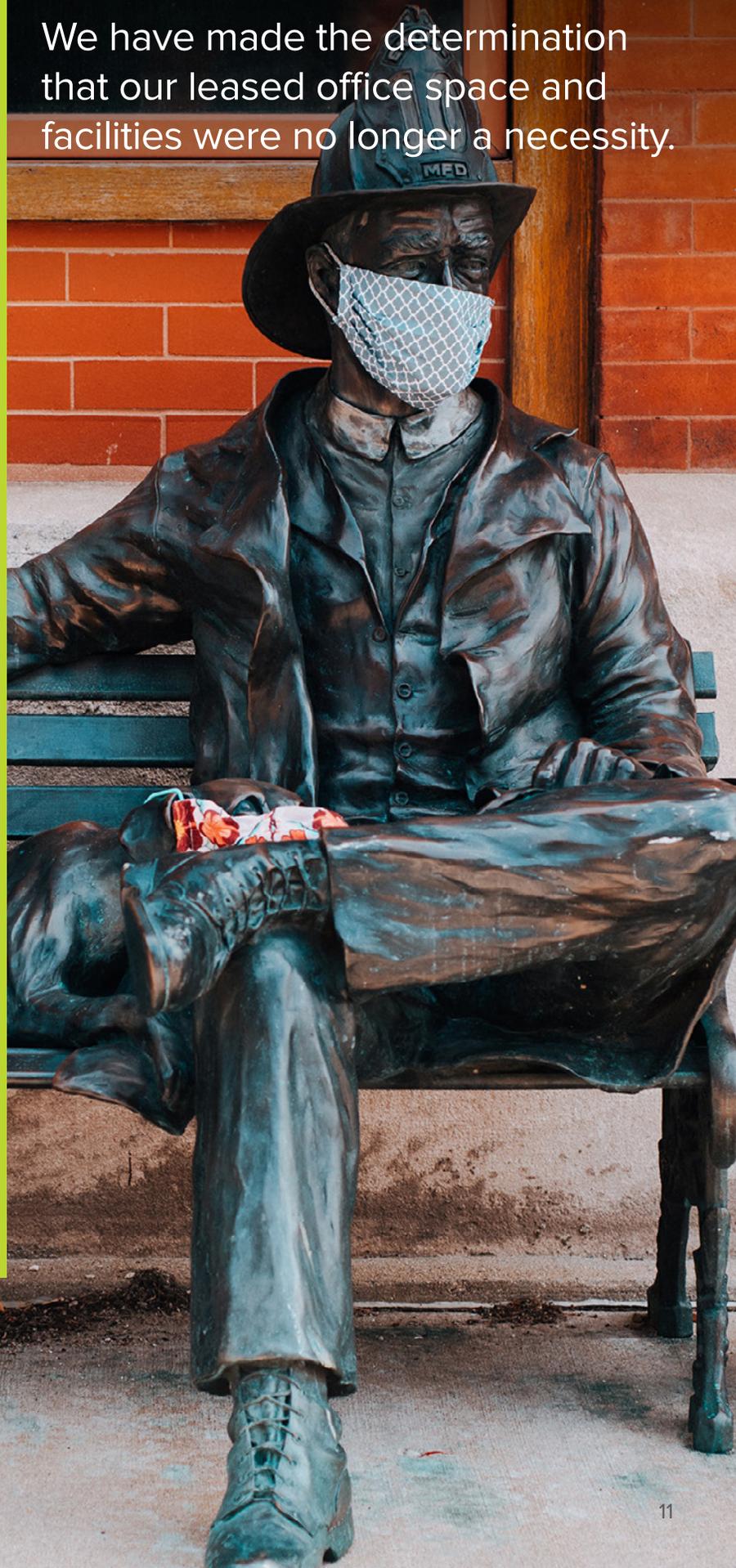
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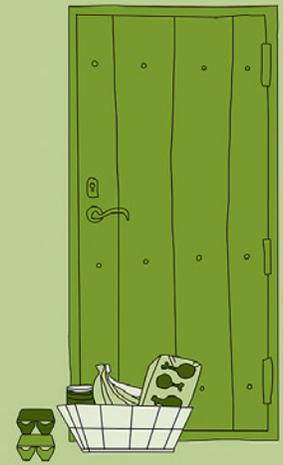
(Emerging technology services provider)

MBEIC Chair, Capital Region MSDC



We have made the determination that our leased office space and facilities were no longer a necessity.





Here are some ways we had to pivot due to COVID-19:

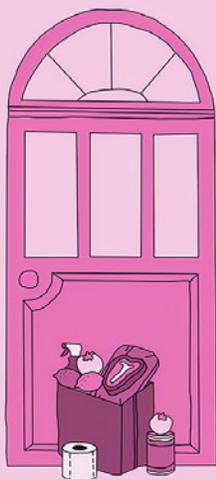
- Have a weekly campaign via newsletter about how the company is doing to stay top-of-mind.
- Our techs are still working but we had to ensure we have all the PPE items and informed our customers that we are following all the CDC guidelines.
- Monthly podcasts for thought leadership sharing on various technologies.
- Working on thermal camera technology deployment.
- Started an IoT program for energy savings for carriers at their cell sites.

Betty Manetta

Argent Associates

(Technology supply chain systems integrator)

MBEIC Chair, Dallas/Fort Worth MSDC





**TOGETHER
WE WILL
SEE IT
THROUGH**