



The customer summary

Customer name
The Workaround

Industry
Professional Services

Location
Toronto, Ontario

Number of employees
1-10

The Workaround: Using Cisco Meraki to Work Around Covid

A unique coworking business in Toronto survives COVID-19 by leveraging Cisco Meraki to automate and streamline operations.

Challenges

- Staying operational during COVID-19
- Needed upgrades in technology & infrastructure
- Needed automation to help with employee layoffs
- Wi-Fi & Internet concerns

Solutions

- Cisco Meraki
- Cisco Webex

Results

- Technology upgrades and better customer service
- Survived during COVID-19
- Automation efficiency
- Improved internet & Wi-Fi
- Growth for the future

A unique business model and surviving COVID-19

The Workaround is not your garden variety remote workspace. It's a 13,000 square foot co-working space – with a twist.

“It's a traditional co-working space, but we have an added amenity of having childcare on-site,” says Amanda Munday, the CEO & Founder of the Workaround.

On-site childcare at work? Yes, and work it does.

“Most of the people that work here are parents. They drop the kids off next door, and then they come back here and they can actually focus for the day,” says Munday. She adds, “Parents walk into this space, exhale, grab a seat, grab a coffee, and get to work. What's great about the Workaround is that we could have 60 or 70 people here and it's quiet.”

What makes it even more unique is that The Workaround resides inside a former bank building, vault and all. Munday says, “It sounds wild, but if you think about a typical retail bank location, there's lots of boxed meeting rooms with glass – glass is expensive, by the way – and so, it wasn't that hard to flip the bank into a workspace. We ended up turning the vault into a nap room, not for the babies, but for the parents.”

The Workaround was thriving. Business was good. But in March 2020, everything changed.



“We had only been open 18 months when COVID hit and the Ontario government announced that schools and childcare centers would be closing,” says Munday. She says, “I knew the minute they made the announcement I was going to have to lay off my staff. That was hard because I had a full team running my front desk, my childcare, and checking in members manually.”

So, Amanda, who says she has some, but very limited, knowledge of IT, immediately went into survival mode. She went searching for solutions that could solve her problem of running her business whenever she was allowed to again, with less staff. The answer came to her very quickly. Through automation.

“I've lusted after the Meraki system since I opened The Workaround. It's the Cadillac of systems. I had gone with sort of a DIY, build it yourself, no-name system that worked pretty well, but it didn't do everything I needed it to. With Cisco Meraki, everything changed.”

Amanda Munday
CEO & Founder, The Workaround

A well-timed Cisco contest and a dream come true

At the very time Amanda was trying to figure out what to do next, she saw that Cisco was holding an essay contest for small businesses that could use the highly-coveted Cisco Meraki platform. She jumped at the opportunity.

Munday says, “The timing of the contest really aligned with my reopening and to an extent, lifted a weight off of me.”

Amanda won the contest, and in doing so, she was able to obtain the exact system she said she always wanted.

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Automation and improved Wi-Fi capabilities

The Workaround today is better than it was pre-pandemic, thanks in large part, to the Meraki infrastructure that gives her organization and her customers everything they need.

“The thing about the Meraki system is, it doesn’t fail,” says Munday. She says, “When my members come into this space, they need to know they can have seamless video calls, a seamless internet connection, and not have to worry about going to the front desk to check in



with a staff member because they’re missing a meeting because the internet went down. We can’t have that friction. I need the system to work.”

She adds, “Not only is Cisco reliable, there are so many elements of security built in that take all the pressure away from me. I’ve got to have the bandwidth capacity to deal with a lot of people using our secure network. Cisco Meraki does all that and more.”

On top of all that, Amanda is enjoying the automation she so desperately wanted. She now has an automated entry system where members can click a button on their phone and have secure, authenticated entry. They have a mobile payment option that works with the automated entry feature. If someone doesn’t pay their bill, they can’t get in.

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A new Workaround and expansion possibilities

The Workaround, today, like many other businesses worldwide, isn't operating "business as usual," but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, the Meraki system is working so well, Amanda is already talking about expansion, post COVID-19.

"During the lockdown months I've been preparing for expansion because I'm confident that not only will we be busy, but we'll be busy enough to handle multiple locations, says Munday. She says, "I'm more optimistic than ever because we've deployed Cisco Meraki infrastructure and technology here at our first location, we can then replicate that as we build more locations and just really have a robust system that allows the company to grow without worrying about Wi-Fi, internet failing us and key access failing us. We've got the technology in place and we are ready to go."

Amanda says as much as she's looking forward to expansion, she first wants to get back to the business at-hand, the reason why she started her business in the first place.

She says, "Our community needs an alternative child-care model that is safe and welcoming to people of color, entrepreneurs trying to make ends meet, remote workers, freelancers, and anyone trying to get work done, and needs childcare to make it all happen. We want to make a difference for all of them and that's what we're going to do."

For more information

Please visit cisco.com/go/smallbusiness

Product list – The Workaround

- Cisco Meraki
- Cisco Webex

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