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BUSINESS

IoT INNOVATOR CHOOSES UScellular®
FOR CONNECTIVITY PARTNER

Cites high-quality service as primary reason for choice over competitors

When VOS Systems, a small IoT-enabled solutions innovator based in Gainesville, Florida, needed connectivity for its IoT products, it chose UScellular, with Mike Halloran, IoT Client Executive, and team over other major telecom companies.

"As this IoT connectivity grows and you have more and more companies playing in this space, there's dozens of companies to choose from. We chose UScellular® primarily because of the relationship with Mike and the customer service," said Kyle Hopkins, VOS COO.

"Anytime that we reach out to UScellular, somebody is always there, they answer. We always get the support we need. We always get the extra mile that we need as a customer and then we're able to provide that to the partners that we work with. And for a lot of partners that we work with, they are not IoT companies, they're not hardware companies, so they don't have the expertise and the connectivity. They don't understand roaming or how all this works in this space.

"And so, we've been able to upsell the advantages we receive from UScellular compared to the other companies that we work with, to where they're now saying UScellular by name in those meetings," Hopkins added.

Customer Support for a Growing Company

For a small company specializing in building end-to-end IoT-enabled solutions on one scalable platform, with hardware and firmware created and manufactured in the USA, it was vital that VOS find the right partner to help it succeed. Hopkins said VOS was looking for a connectivity partner that did not provide just local connectivity and roaming, but also a high level of customer support they needed as a growing company.

"That certainly in my eyes has been the biggest differentiator between UScellular and the other carriers and other types of solutions out there on the market. I have always said that customer service goes a long way, and Mike and the UScellular team always answer the phone—always respond quickly with the detail that we need. So, for me, customer service really is what sets UScellular apart from everyone else," Hopkins said.

The Right Solutions

In addition to customer service, Hopkins emphasized that UScellular has the connectivity, including nationwide roaming, to help the company deploy across the country.

For example, VOS has many different partners and verticals, and Hopkins says they never know where devices are going—whether it is a unique location like a city or town, or to a user that travels from place to place. In addition, VOS currently runs 5,000+ UScellular SIMs in a variety of devices.

He said that with roaming opportunities available through UScellular and its roaming partners, his team knows that there's connectivity wherever their customers go—a big selling point for VOS, so much so that its customer partners also use that selling point in their literature.

"UScellular has, not just great coverage in the local areas that they work in, but also great roaming partners. And that makes a difference in the story that we tell the customer because quite frankly, connectivity sometimes is the forgotten piece," Hopkins said.

"I guess the world that we live in, we just expect connectivity to work, especially with cell phones. The network capability that UScellular brings to the table really, really is important and is a huge differentiator for what we were looking for," Hopkins said.

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> — **Kyle Hopkins,**
> COO, VOS

VOS Personnel Safety Device (PSD) wearable for asset tracking and worker safety.

VOS PSD can be deployed across the country in different environments thanks to UScellular.

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— Kyle Hopkins

Support Across the Country

Erick Cinco, VOS lead engineer, added that other carriers do not appear to have as close a technical relationship with their roaming partners. So, when they needed to investigate a tower that may not be in their network, for example, it was slow to get a resolution or assessment back to the end customer. But with UScellular, Mike and team, they don't have that experience.

"I would say the biggest marked difference for me has been the level of detail that Mike and the team's support provides, from the coverage maps to specific tower and SIM card behavior. It really is unmatched compared to other carriers and that has to do with UScellular roaming relationships," Cinco said.

UScellular has always been able to resolve issues immediately. "There was one time where SIMs were not activating properly, and we got on the phone with Mike, and it was sorted out very quickly. That kind of thing, I know, would have had to go through many layers with other telcos. So, we really appreciate the promptness and how connected UScellular is internally," Cinco said.

Hopkins added that VOS' customers also appreciate the UScellular level of service and connectivity. "They're saying, 'look, we've got a UScellular SIM card inside this device that not only works on UScellular where you have coverage, but it roams on all these other networks.' And so that has really been our biggest competitive advantage from a connectivity perspective, and I think that the support that we've received has been above and beyond, especially compared to the other providers that we worked with over the last several years."

Positive Business Impact

Working with UScellular has given the VOS team confidence to do its best work.

"We can build the best hardware, the best firmware, the best solution," said Hopkins. "But if there is no connectivity, it doesn't matter. And we have been in positions where we would have a customer want to deploy a solution and there is anxiety that goes along with, 'is the device going to work when it gets on site?'

"What do we do in the pre-deployment phase to ensure that the customer has the best experience when they open the box? Before UScellular it was just kind of a shot in the dark. It was. 'Well, I hope it works. We have requested site surveys and coverage maps, but we have not gotten anything. Let's hope it works.'

"But moving to UScellular, that stress has decreased tremendously. We now have more confidence than ever that when we send a device out in the field. If it has the ability to work, it's going to work. And so that confidence has really been a game changer for us, our customers and partners," Hopkins said.

Confidence to Expand Business

This confidence has enabled VOS to expand its business. Hopkins explained that many of their partners are software companies that are not necessarily in the IoT space. So, they don't know the intricacies of cellular. They just think, "hey, it should work."

However, for Hopkins and the VOS team, although some of their business partners were not familiar with UScellular and how they approach IoT connectivity, their partners felt the choice makes sense.

"And then when we actually deploy and they see how those devices work, it's just unbelievable," he said. "We've had customers— partners of ours—that have deployed this solution in very rural areas where their previous solutions or devices did not work. And they were skeptical. But they saw it work and they would say, 'we've never had a device that connected this well in these areas. UScellular is working in locations that sometimes our two-way radios don't even work.' So that's a testament to what UScellular has built."

Innovative VOS Products and Solutions

VOS produces innovative solutions, most notably the VOS Systems Wearable Panic Button, which developed from an increase in wearable panic buttons across the country in the past several years.

"If you look at the increase of violence in schools--specifically K-12, hospitality, retail environments and even healthcare, the need for a different type of solution other than a mobile app really was the drive for this product," Hopkins said.

But VOS did not want to create another button that relied on personal phones or mounted only in specific locations that might be difficult to access in an emergency.

"We wanted to develop a cellular solution--one that actually worked, that was able to get certified on the various networks and that we could target those use cases where cellular was the best fit, such as home health or K-12. And there is legislation that is pushing this," Hopkins said, citing Alyssa's law, which requires panic buttons in K-12 schools and has been adopted by many but not all states yet.
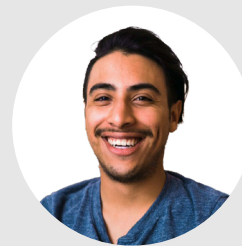
"I would say probably the biggest marked difference for me has been the level of detail that Mike and team's support provides, from the coverage maps to specific tower and SIM card behavior. It really is unmatched compared to other carriers and I believe a lot of that has to do with UScellular roaming relationships."

— **Erick Cinco,**
Lead Engineer, VOS

VOS achieves a hassle-free out-of-the-box connectivity experience at each new deployment site with UScellular.

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— **Kyle Hopkins**

In addition to schools, panic buttons can be lifesavers for hospitality personnel such as cleaning staff at hotels and at large events, the construction industry or even snowplow drivers managing dangerous situations on the road.

"We're starting to see legislation catch up with the need and that has really been the driving factor for our panic buttons. As a U.S.-based IoT company focusing on cellular solutions, we wanted to lead the charge there.

"We wanted to develop a solution that leveraged cellular technology for connectivity because in our eyes, it's the most scalable solution out there. And we wanted to again partner with somebody like UScellular that could have that coverage and that we could have the confidence that it's going to work no matter where it goes," Hopkins said.

One Solution, Many Uses

To grow its business and meet the needs of its partner customers, VOS has taken one basic piece of hardware and produced so many multiple use cases.

Hopkins cited a big push for "duty of care" solutions that, especially after COVID, employees expect their employers to provide, whether it is wearable or some other type of solution. So, VOS is providing hardware to software companies that are providing duty of care solutions to their customers.

They also focus on the construction industry. "As Mike will tell you, that is where we started at and at first, we had tunnel vision for that vertical. But then we took a step back and asked, what else could we use this hardware for? And we caught wind of Alyssa's law and that just kind of opened a Pandora's box of all these other opportunities.

"And what we realized is that when it comes to cellular solutions specifically, there's a lot of hardware providers out there that are basically buying their hardware from overseas, rebranding it as their own and reselling it to their partners domestically. And while they may work, they do not provide the level of service or configurability that our solution does. And we found ourselves as a niche provider of cellular solutions at scale, for duty of care use cases," Hopkins said.

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> IoT Client Executive, UScellular

Looking Ahead

VOS is growing fast. It is building a partner network and channel distribution networks and finding its niche as a hardware provider to software companies that do not necessarily have the expertise or the in-house resources for this type of hardware.

"What makes VOS unique and dynamic is they're a hardware manufacturer as well as a software company," said Mike Halloran.

"There are other companies that buy what we consider off-the-shelf hardware and make it work for their application. Or they're building two or three pieces together of something they didn't develop. But this is where VOS has really set the bar. They've been able to manufacture and write code based off what the needs are, rather than what they expected to use and need."

VOS has equated 75 customers to traffic over 5,000+ connections through UScellular. And VOS will continue to partner with UScellular to reach its goals.

To learn more about UScellular Connectivity Solutions
visit **our website**.

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