



# The Frontline Collaboration Solution Buyer's Guide

The History, Landscape, Fundamentals, and Essentials of Collaboration Software for the Deskless Workforce





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# INTRODUCTION <<

## How to Read The Frontline Collaboration Solution Buyer's Guide

Hello, and thank you for reading The Frontline Collaboration Solution Buyer's Guide. We created this guide for organizations **considering a new communication solution** for their deskless workforce and frontline operations teams.

There's a lot of information about collaboration software out there — some helpful and some... not so much. Orion was founded by two visionary technologists who also serve as volunteer emergency medical technicians (EMTs) (one serves as a volunteer firefighter and emergency manager, as well). These founders believed **next-generation push-to-talk (PTT 2.0) and the ability to amplify frontline work with voice-enabled bots and workflows should be available to every organization.**

Those two founders took that same passion for collaboration technology and created this guide to help organizations understand the **history, landscape, fundamentals, and essentials** of collaboration software for the deskless workforce.



**Jesse Robbins**

Orion Founder and Executive Chairman



**Greg Albrecht**

Orion Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer

By the end of this guide, you will have a full grasp of collaboration software for the deskless workforce.



# LOOKING AHEAD



## What to Expect in The Frontline Collaboration Solution Buyer's Guide

### IN THIS GUIDE, WE'LL ANSWER 5 QUESTIONS:

- 1 Where have collaboration solutions been? *(Page 6)*
- 2 Where are collaboration solutions headed? *(Page 10)*
- 3 Where are collaboration solutions now? *(Page 12)*
- 4 What questions should I ask collaboration vendors? *(Page 21)*
- 5 Which collaboration platform is right for my organization? *(Page 26)*

By the end of this guide, you should have a clear and complete understanding of how you can connect your deskless workforce and enable digital transformation for your entire organization by using the most appropriate intelligent collaboration platform.

We hope you enjoy this guide. To make sure you have the latest edition, email [info@orionlabs.io](mailto:info@orionlabs.io).

Thank you for reading, and thank you for investing in your company by taking the time to learn more about collaboration for the deskless workforce.

Now, let's explore the history of collaboration solutions.





## **SECTION 1:**

### **The History of Communication Technology**

*Where Have Collaboration Solutions Been?*

# THE HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

## Where Have Collaboration Solutions Been?

### THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY



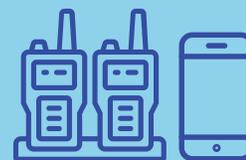
Walkie-Talkies/Radios



Digital Radios



Cell Phones



Multiple Devices



Push-To-Talk Apps



**COLLABORATION PLATFORM**

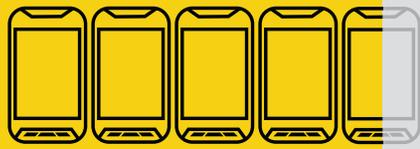


# THE HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

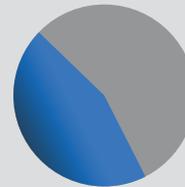
## Where Have Collaboration Solutions Been?

**IT ALL STARTED LAST CENTURY**, when the **walkie-talkie** and subsequently the **analog radio** many organizations still use today were invented. That radio slightly evolved into a **digital mobile radio (DMR)**, but even digital radios need licenses, have limited coverage, and cost an unreasonable amount for their value. Additionally, those radios can't share location or send photos, videos, files, or even text messages well. These radios helped create siloed, disconnected organizations and have largely kept organizations trapped in the past.

In search of a better solution, some deskless workers turned to using **shadow technology**, such as **using their own cell phones** just to communicate with each other. In fact, on average, professionals use **4.5 different communication tools** or methods to communicate with team members at work.<sup>1</sup> And 42% of people using traditional tools must **switch between them during their workday**.<sup>2</sup> These professionals report having to switch communication tools multiple times a day, often because they can't reach someone. Of course, employees using their own devices come with their own sets of problems, including **security and compliance issues**.



**4.5 DIFFERENT  
COMMUNICATION TOOLS**



**42% OF PEOPLE SWITCH  
COMMUNICATION TOOLS  
DURING THEIR WORKDAY**

**Push-to-talk (PTT) apps** solved some of the problems frontline workers using multiple devices were experiencing. However, many users quickly discovered several popular PTT apps were not secure (creating large **security and compliance risks**) and none of the apps created a path for innovation (like automation, intelligence amplification, and analytics) or **digital transformation**.

It quickly became apparent deskless workers needed a collaboration platform to connect them to the rest of the digital enterprise.

<sup>1</sup> Voice in the Workplace: Every Minute Counts. Orion Labs, Inc. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

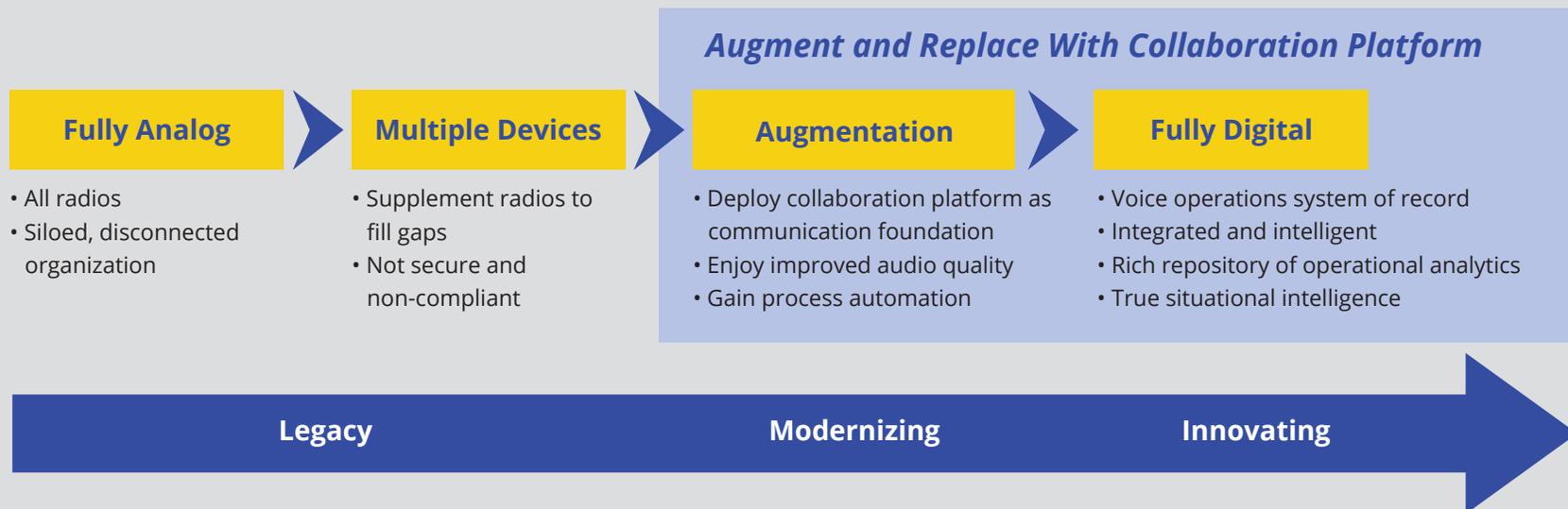


# THE DIGITAL JOURNEY



## The Path to Connecting the Deskless Workforce

### THE DIGITAL JOURNEY



As you can see, all the elements of the history of collaboration solutions are still very much at play in organizations today. Where those solutions fall on The Digital Journey usually corresponds with where organizations are on their paths to innovation and going fully digital.

The truth is only a voice-first intelligent collaboration platform connects deskless workers to the rest of the digital enterprise and allows organizations to **augment or replace their current communication solutions** on their digital journeys.

A collaboration platform connects your deskless workforce to the rest of your digital enterprise with an instantly deployable, secure solution.



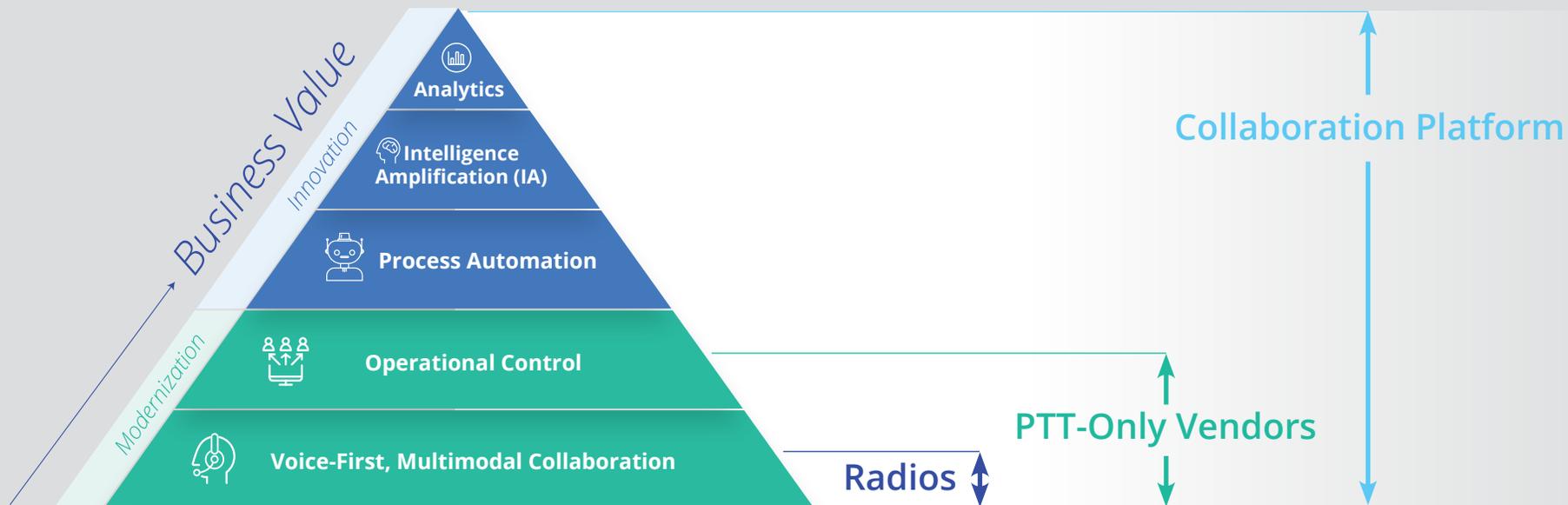


## SECTION 2:

### The Collaboration Solution Landscape *Where Are Collaboration Solutions Headed?*

# THE COLLABORATION SOLUTION LANDSCAPE

## Where Are Collaboration Solutions Headed?



One of the biggest problems with **radios and PTT apps** is that they simply don't support your organization's digital journey, as they have no path to innovation.

A voice-first intelligent collaboration platform should be built to solve the problems digital enterprises face today and well into the future with innovative offerings like **process automation, intelligence amplification, and analytics**. These collaboration platforms should empower deskless workers and create a connected workforce by incorporating them in an agile and responsive enterprise — ultimately culminating in the digital transformation of their entire company.

A voice-first intelligent collaboration platform is built to transform the way your deskless teams work and become your **VOICE OPERATIONS SYSTEM OF RECORD**.





## **SECTION 3:**

### **Collaboration Solution Functional Comparison**

*Where Are Collaboration Solutions Now?*

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

## Where Are Collaboration Solutions Now?

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Coverage</b>			
Any Distance (On-Site, On the Road, Across Town, Around the Globe)	✗	✓	✓
Optimized for Low Latency	✗	△	✓
Operational on Low Bandwidth	✗	△	✓
<b>Security</b>			
End-to-End Encryption (E2EE)	✗	✗	✓
FIPS 140-2 Compliant	✗	✗	✓
<b>Multimodal</b>			
Voice	✓	✓	✓
Text	△	✓	✓
Photo	✗	△	✓
Video	✗	△	✓
Files (PDFs, etc.)	✗	✗	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Devices</b>			
Mobile	✗	✓	✓
Tablets	✗	△	✓
Browser	✗	△	✓
Smart Watch	✗	△	✓
<b>Interoperability</b>			
Land Mobile Radio (LMR)	✓	△	✓
Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)	✗	△	✓
Session Initiation Protocol (SIP)	✗	△	✓
<b>Networks</b>			
LTE	✗	△	✓
5G-Ready and Optimized	✗	△	✓
Private LTE (CBRS)	✓	△	✓
Wi-Fi	△	△	✓
Satellite	△	✗	✓
Mesh	△	△	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Dispatch</b>			
Centralized Control	✗	△	✓
Regionalized Control	✗	△	✓
Localized Control	△	△	✓
<b>Advanced Location Services</b>			
Real-Time Geolocation	✗	△	✓
3D (x-, y-, and z-axis) Indoor Location	✗	△	✓
Geofencing	✗	✗	✓
Mapping Overlays	✗	✗	✓
<b>Group Communications</b>			
1:1	✓	✓	✓
Any Size Group	✗	△	✓
Mass Communication (All-Call)	△	△	✓
Web-Based PTT	✗	△	✓
Real-Time Translation	✗	✗	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Ease of Interoperability</b>			
Open Platform	✗	✗	✓
Open Software Development Kit (SDK)	✗	△	✓
Open API	✗	△	✓
<b>Deployment Options</b>			
Private SaaS (Self-Hosted, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud Platform)	✗	△	✓
Public Cloud	✗	✓	✓
On-Premise (Air-Gapped)	✗	△	✓
<b>Administrative Capabilities</b>			
User Management	✓	✓	✓
Group Management	△	✓	✓
Push Notifications	✗	△	✓
Message Transport	✗	△	✓
Contact Management	△	△	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Administrative Capabilities</b> <i>continued</i>			
Message Routing	✗	△	✓
Tracking User Status/Presence	✗	△	✓
Role and Permission Management	✗	△	✓
Conversation Modes	✗	△	✓
<b>Automation</b>			
Process Automation Capabilities	✗	✗	✓
Voice-Activated Workflows	✗	✗	✓
Bot-Activated Workflows	✗	✗	✓
Location-Activated Workflows	✗	✗	✓
Standard Workflow Library	✗	✗	✓
Voice Bots	✗	✗	✓
Voice-Activated Checklists	✗	✗	✓
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	✗	✗	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Automation</b> <i>continued</i>			
Emergency Alerts	△	△	✓
Geofencing	✗	✗	✓
Lone Worker Alerts	✗	✗	✓
Bot Marketplace	✗	✗	✓
Simple Workflow Automation	✗	△	✓
Complex Workflow Automation	✗	✗	✓
Inventory Query	✗	△	✓
<b>Intelligence Amplification</b>			
Real-Time Access to Internal Systems	✗	△	✓
Real-Time Access to Third Party Services	✗	△	✓
Real-Time Access to Information (Manuals, Knowledge Databases, etc.)	✗	✗	✓
Real-Time Access to Subject-Matter Experts (SMEs)	△	△	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
<b>Analytics</b>			
Historical Data	✗	△	✓
Real-Time Current Data	✗	△	✓
Heat Map of Operations Over Time	✗	△	✓
Metadata Capture	✗	△	✓
Predictive Analytics Capabilities	✗	✗	✓
Prescriptive Analytics Capabilities	✗	✗	✓
Staffing Forecasts	✗	✗	✓
Traffic Forecasts	✗	✗	✓
Potential Bottleneck Identification	✗	✗	✓
Dashboards	✗	✗	✓
Third-Party Integration	✗	✗	✓

## KEY

- ✓ Complete Offering
- △ Sometimes Offer
- ✗ Never Offer

# COLLABORATION SOLUTION FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

*continued*

	Radios	PTT Apps	Collaboration Platform
Levels of Metadata Capture			
User	✗	✗	✓
Team	✗	✗	✓
Location	✗	✗	✓
Time	✗	✗	✓
Sensor Data	✗	✗	✓
Proximity	✗	✗	✓
Activity	✗	✗	✓
Message Archiving	✗	△	✓



## **SECTION 4:**

### **37 Essential Collaboration Solution Vendor RFP Questions**

*What Should I Ask Collaboration Vendors?*

# 37 ESSENTIAL COLLABORATION SOLUTION VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

## What Should I Ask Collaboration Vendors?

During your RFP or Requirements Definition process, make sure you ask any collaboration software vendor you're considering (at least) the following 37 questions:

*How much do we believe in the power of these questions? Feel free to copy and paste them and send them to any collaboration vendor you may be talking to.*

### Range

1. Are users able to communicate on your solution wherever they are, around the globe?
2. Is your solution regionally bound?
3. Can your solution operate at scale without latency?
4. Can your solution operate with low bandwidth?
5. Does your solution's service operate across all LTE networks natively or is it siloed to one network provider?
6. Does your solution's service operate across all LTE networks in any country?
7. Does your solution's service operate over Wi-Fi? Mesh? Satellite?



# 37 ESSENTIAL COLLABORATION SOLUTION VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

*continued*

## What Should I Ask Collaboration Vendors?

### Functionality

8. Does your solution facilitate real-time language translation?
9. Does your solution provide message recording/playback/archive seamlessly available via a web browser?
10. Does your solution's collaboration capabilities include support for multimedia messages such as images, video, and attachments?
11. Can your solution incorporate real-time location of team members?
12. Can your solution incorporate real-time location indoors?
13. Can your solution incorporate real-time location at a subterranean level?
14. Does your solution have a dispatch console for centralized, regionalized, and localized control?

### Innovation

15. Can your solution provide data analytics capabilities associated with your solution's collaboration data?
16. Can your solution provide data associated with your solution's usage, including metadata for user, team, location, time, sensor data, proximity, and activity?
17. Has your company created a rich library of process automation workflows or an app store repository of bots with specific actions?
18. Does your solution enable users to create new bots and workflows?



# 37 ESSENTIAL COLLABORATION SOLUTION VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

*continued*

## What Should I Ask Collaboration Vendors?

### Innovation *continued*

19. Does your solution provide real-time access to systems, information, and subject-matter experts?
20. Does your solution have patents that support and protect your solutions?

### Security

21. Is your solution encrypted end-to-end (E2EE) from the original design to ensure highest levels of security?
22. Can you (the vendor) see the content of your client's messages?
23. Can your messages be intercepted?
24. Is your solution using an ephemeral key encryption model?
25. Does your solution preclude bad actors or involve unmonitored content?
26. Is your solution FIPS 140-2 compliant?

### Scalability

27. Is your solution utilizing an old-fashioned Client Server architecture as opposed to a cloud-native one?
28. Can your solution scale dynamically and quickly?
29. Can your solution's user and group size scale linearly or is there a design constraint at a certain number of users?



# 37 ESSENTIAL COLLABORATION SOLUTION VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

*continued*

## What Should I Ask Collaboration Vendors?

### Interoperability

30. Can your solution interoperate with 3rd-party operations platforms such as ESRI and ATAK?
31. Does your solution provide a rich set of API's and publish them for advanced services interoperability?
32. Can your solution support any smart and/or ruggedized device?
33. Can your solution interoperate with LMR (land mobile radio)?
34. Can your solution interoperate with VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)?
35. Can your solution interoperate with SIP (Session Initiation Protocol)?

### Usability and Deployment

36. Does your solution provide a compelling and immediately intuitive user interface to speed adoption and sustain usage?
37. Can your solution be deployed in an on-premise environment?



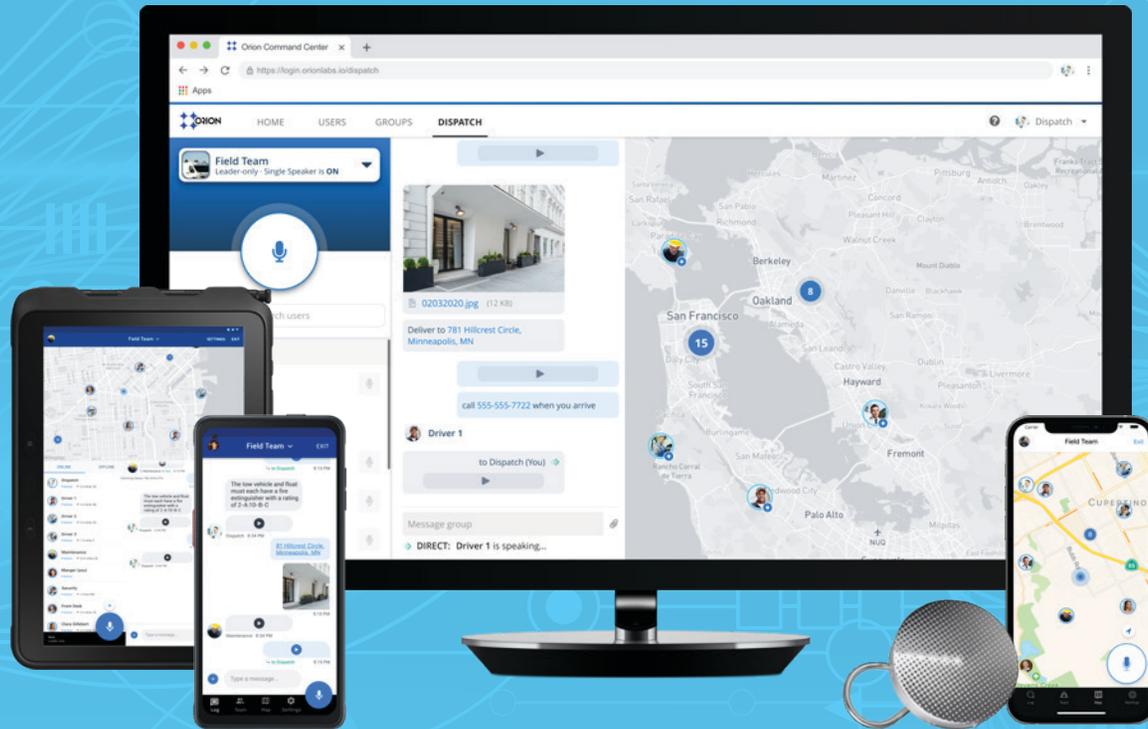
## **SECTION 5:**

### **The Voice-First Intelligent Collaboration Platform**

*Which Collaboration Platform Is Right for  
My Organization?*

# INTRODUCING ORION

## Connecting the Deskless Workforce



The truth is, there's only one collaboration solution today that can meet the needs of enterprises looking to invest in **innovation** and **digital transformation** for their deskless workers and frontline operations teams.

Orion is the leading voice-first intelligent collaboration platform that empowers deskless workers by enabling real-time team communication, process automation, location mapping, and access to enterprise systems to improve workforce productivity, safety and compliance, and customer engagement.





# WHY VOICE-FIRST MULTIMODAL COLLABORATION?

## Digital Enterprises Need Communication Built for Today's Workforce

Orion enables digital enterprises to move beyond multiple devices and current antiquated communication tools with Voice-First Multimodal Collaboration.

**Voice-First = Heads Up + Hands Free**



Connect your deskless workers with a voice-first "heads-up" solution built for the deskless workforce to keep them safe and focused on the most important aspects of their jobs.

**Multimodal = Voice + Text + Photos + Videos + Files**



Communicate securely with voice, text, photos, videos, and files such as PDFs. Collaborate with a multimodal experience on the go and on one device, creating a truly connected workforce.



**HIGH-QUALITY VOICE**  
Communicate with HD-quality voice with extremely low-latency push-to-talk (PTT) that works even on low-bandwidth connections.



**END-TO-END ENCRYPTION**  
Utilize enterprise-grade end-to-end encryption (E2EE) and security to protect your proprietary and sensitive information, communications, and — most important — your connected workers.



**ANY SIZE GROUPS**  
Enable unprecedented collaboration for your deskless worker teams with unlimited dynamic group creation, 1:1 talk modes, and instant mass communication capabilities.



**REAL-TIME LANGUAGE TRANSLATION**  
Collaborate with employees in any region using real-time language translation.

Unified, secure collaboration on one platform.



# UNMATCHED COVERAGE



**Any Distance. Any Network. Any Device.**

Distance, concrete walls, and stairwells should never be a factor when your employees are communicating with each other. Orion enables your employees to communicate whenever, wherever, and however they need.



## ANY DISTANCE

Communicate over any distance, including onsite, on the road, across town, or around the globe. And certainly don't worry about floors, stairwells, or concrete walls.



## ANY NETWORK

Utilize any network for your communications, including LTE (5G-ready), private LTE (CBRS), Wi-Fi, satellite, and mesh.



## ANY DEVICE

Enjoy the broadest range of smart device support, including smart and/or ruggedized devices running iOS, Android, and more.

Your deskless workers deserve to communicate over any distance, on any network, and on any device they need.



# OPERATIONAL CONTROL



## Coordinate and Centralize Operational Visibility, Management, and Decision-Making

Connect your deskless workers to headquarters with powerful console-based control, dispatch, and oversight.



### OPERATIONS CONSOLE

Communicate with distributed teams and handle dispatch with secure, web-based push-to-talk via a browser. Create control at central, regional, and local levels for team empowerment and accountability.



### ADVANCED LOCATION SERVICES

Enjoy centralized or distributed location visibility, mapping, management, and decision-making with advanced location services. Leverage real-time geolocation of each employee for better response, safety, and accountability, and utilize 3D (x-, y-, and z-axis) indoor location for asset and team member tracking beyond GPS capabilities.



### ARCHIVING AND COMPLIANCE

Record, playback, and archive all staff messages and interactions, including voice, text, and visual media, as configured to company policy. Search and retrieve information at organizational, group, and user levels, as well as by date, time, and location.



# THE ORION DIFFERENCE

## Build a Path to Innovation and Digital Transformation

### The Orion Business Value Model

Orion's SaaS platform takes your deskless workforce and ultimately your entire organization through the stages of modernization and innovation following the Orion Business Value Model, which was built to solve the problems digital enterprises face today and well into the future.



#### Voice-First, Multimodal Collaboration

Communicate securely with voice, text, and visual media across any device. Interoperate with LMR and VoIP Bridges.



#### Operational Control

Use a dispatch console to coordinate operational visibility and decision-making to enhance productivity.



#### Process Automation

Utilize Orion Bots to automate processes and workflows to enable workers to focus on higher value duties.



#### Intelligence Amplification

Amplify employee intelligence by providing real-time context and access to systems, data, and SMEs to dramatically improve productivity.



#### Analytics

Optimize and gain insights into the day-to-day operations across your deskless organization to maximize overall performance.

# THE ORION DIFFERENCE *continued*



## Build a Path to Innovation and Digital Transformation



**Orion transforms the way your deskless teams work and becomes your voice operations system of record.**

**451** Research

**S&P Global**

*"Frontline worker communication and automation is now an essential priority as enterprises increasingly focus on improving efficiency and agility. This shift has created a massive new market opportunity in industries where frontline workers drive outcomes such as transportation, logistics, manufacturing, and healthcare. Orion's platform is purpose-built to deliver enterprise digital transformation to these critical frontline and deskless workers."*

— Raúl Castañón-Martínez, Senior Analyst, 451 Research

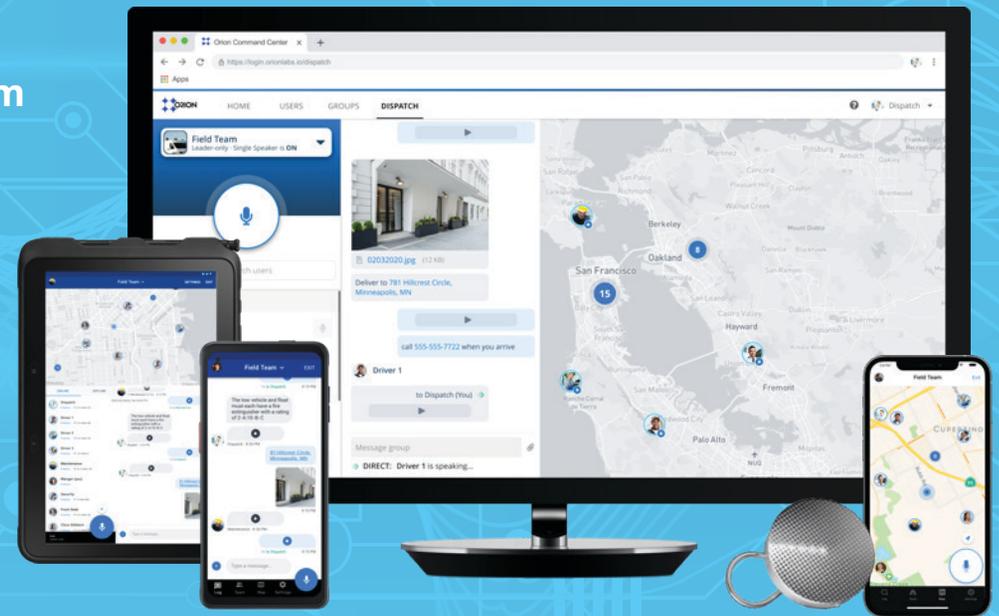


# ORION IS THE COLLABORATION SOLUTION FOR YOU

**Connect Your Deskless Workforce Today**

Orion pioneered the voice-first intelligent collaboration platform so you could empower your deskless workers and create a connected workforce.

**Contact Us**  
[www.orionlabs.io](http://www.orionlabs.io)



## About Orion

Orion is the leading voice-first intelligent collaboration platform that empowers deskless workers by enabling real-time team communication, process automation, location mapping, and access to enterprise systems to improve workforce productivity, safety and compliance, and customer engagement.

Orion was recently named a Top 10 Intelligent Transport Systems Solution Provider for 2021 by Logistics and Transportation Review, a Top 10 Industrial IoT Solution Provider 2020 by Manufacturing Technology Insights, and an IDC Innovator. Orion holds 28 patents that support its award-winning solutions. The company is headquartered in San Francisco and backed by leading investors. For more information, visit [www.orionlabs.io](http://www.orionlabs.io).



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



## **Greg Taylor**

### *Orion Chief Executive Officer*

Greg was appointed Orion's Chief Executive Officer in January 2020 after serving as Chief Operating Officer from April 2019 and is a member of the company's Board of Directors. His focus is on accelerating the company's leading market position and global growth.

Greg is a veteran executive and technology entrepreneur. He has led innovation and re-invention of global enterprise technologies, creating new categories, and achieving phenomenal market adoption and value creation. Recently, Greg served as President and Chief Operating Officer of global SaaS leaders HighQ (acquired by Thomson Reuters), Eka Solutions Inc., and notably served as the Executive Vice President of Triple Point Technology, the global leader for in-cloud commodities management software (acquired by ION). Prior to Triple Point, Greg served as Executive Vice President for Netkey Technology, Inc. (acquired by NEC), iMediation Inc. (acquired by OpenText), and Vice President at Datalogix International (IPO, acquired by Oracle).



## **Jesse Robbins**

### *Orion Founder and Executive Chairman*

Jesse Robbins is Executive Chairman and Co-Founder of Orion Labs. Jesse served as Orion's CEO from 2014 to 2020. Jesse serves on the board of Heavybit, the program that helps developer and infrastructure tools startups succeed.

Prior to Orion, Jesse was founder & CEO of Chef, the leader in cloud automation, used by thousands of companies like Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft. He also founded the Velocity Web Performance & Operations Conference and edited the Web Operations book. He is credited as a creator of the DevOps movement. Prior to founding Chef, Robbins served as Amazon's "Master of Disaster" where he was responsible for Website Availability for every property bearing the Amazon brand.

Jesse is a volunteer Firefighter/EMT and Emergency Manager.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS *continued*



## **Greg Albrecht**

### *Orion Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer*

Greg Albrecht co-founded Orion in 2013 and serves as its Chief Technology Officer.

Prior to Orion Labs, Greg helped lead a development team at Splunk, where he was heavily involved in building the company's second major product, Splunk Storm. In addition to his technical expertise, he is also an active EMT and a startup veteran with an extensive background in technology infrastructure and software development.



## **Ellen Juhlin**

### *Orion Head of Product*

Ellen Juhlin is Head of Product at Orion. Ellen leads development for Orion SaaS solutions including platform services, automation and voice bots, hardware, firmware, iOS and Android mobile apps, and cloud-based solutions. Ellen defines Orion's product roadmap and is responsible for growing Orion's relationships with government customers.

Prior to Orion, Ellen held product development roles at Meyer Sound with a focus on digital audio platforms, used by major live entertainment companies including Disney and Cirque du Soleil.

