



MODERN COLLABORATION FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY

The remote opportunity that's close at hand

Introduction

There may be times, when employees may not be able to commute to their usual workplace, travel for meetings, or attend events.

It's when business-as-usual becomes very unusual. And it's when business continuity becomes vital.

Yet, as we help our clients transform their organizations and find a better way to operate their day-to-day business, we're also delivering business continuity planning for the future.

Cloud-based unified communications and collaboration solutions mean effective, productive work can take place no matter where people are; online and digital events bring people together virtually, when they can't be in the same physical space.

What's more, these solutions are not simply an alternative arrangement, something to fall back on in times of disruption as an acceptable substitute. They are the foundations that underpin the connected future, and key factor in business transformation. They foster a sense of inclusion, trust and purpose and lead to higher levels of productivity, and greater overall effectiveness. They deliver not just better engagement and teamwork, but also improved work/life balance for your workforce.

Here, we consider four areas to address that will help your organization adapt during uncertain times, adopt a more robust approach to remote working, and achieve a more productive, effective way of working.

In unifying people and how they work, modern collaboration truly can ensure business continuity.





Getting the right tools

With access to the right resources, individual work and teamwork can be augmented to deliver true business value.

Be wowed by the cloud

Working remotely is about not just being able to send and receive email. To succeed, your remote workforce needs access to a wide array of documents and systems - from files and reports to data, productivity tools and a range of business applications. These may include the corporate intranet, and the appropriate software to serve HR, CRM, ERP, work coordination, IT needs, and so on.

This is where cloud-based solutions come into their own. Rather than having to install multiple software applications natively on all devices, your teams can access everything they need in their browser, via the cloud. They can do this from any connected device and gain access via mobile apps too.

Working remotely does not mean they are working in isolation.

Able and available

One of the beauties of modern cloud-based communications and collaboration tools is that they allow you to see when colleagues are present and available online. In simple terms green means available, orange means away, red means busy. Calendars for future meetings are still an option, but these availability indicators enable workers to work smartly, being aware when might be a good moment to ask a quick question, update a colleague, to make a call, or when to just send a message they can reply to when they are next available.

These solutions offer agility without fragility. You can jump from an audio call to a video call, or you can stop simply talking about a document and share your screen or give control to another colleague to do the same. You can also share files for review or editing, with copies stored centrally in the cloud. This ensures that you don't end up with multiple versions on local drives and that everyone is working from a single document, thus eliminating duplication of out of sync content.

Efficient and effective

These collaboration tools offer a unified communications solution letting multiple users convene wherever they are in the world. Getting together is just a couple of clicks and everyone can be present - meeting, greeting, and working as a team, just as they would do in person. You can discuss issues in small project groups or larger teams and connect one-to-one directly with colleagues on the fly.

It's far from just being a compromise. Progressive organizations are finding that this way of modern

Getting together is just a couple of clicks and **everyone can be present - meeting, greeting, and working as a team, just as they would do in person.**

collaborative working is both highly-efficient and also hugely effective: travel time is reduced, there's zero time wasted getting in and out of meeting rooms, and everyone can return to their work or move on to their next virtual meeting or call.

Seamless access via integrated apps

Using unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions like Cisco Webex Teams or Microsoft Teams really can help you accelerate productivity and reduce the time it takes to get everyone up to speed on things they may otherwise miss out on. Teams can record briefings, meetings, or training sessions, and share them to enable others who were unable to attend to watch later. Latest developments include the ability to automatically offer transcripts of recordings, live subtitles, and ways to seamlessly connect to larger meeting rooms and video conferencing solutions.

And beyond file-sharing and collaboration, your organization can pick from app integrations covering every area you might need – delivering a powerful hub for all your teamwork. Whether for sales, marketing, administrative, creative or operational tasks, your users can have access to the apps they need without the need to constantly switch windows to do so.

Change for the better

This brief description only scratches the surface, but the potential for productivity gains and efficiencies is huge. It's why forward-thinking organizations of all sizes are embracing these solutions, recognizing them as fundamental to transforming their business, attracting and retaining talent and staying competitive – with business continuity as standard.

Although there are quick wins to be made, the bigger picture will always consider the longer-term, and the organizational change management involved. This approach considers how all your different departments, teams, and individuals work and interact, and ensures a secure and effective transitioning to new ways of working, as well as robust business continuity planning.

Gaining the skills

One day, augmented and virtual reality may deliver ways that make it seem we are physically onsite at our organization. For now, the focus is on simply enabling our employees to function effectively from where they really are, whether at home or another remote location.

Supporting success

Make no mistake: working remotely can be quite a challenge, especially for those new to it. Whilst technology can underpin any remote-working strategy, the people part should not be forgotten. At heart, humans are social animals – and having a place to go, familiar faces, daily routines, opportunities to socialize, and interact face-to-face, are all part of the experience of going to work. The key is to avoid dehumanizing and isolating working experiences, and to instead find ways to bring people together, to be inclusive.

Rather than just let people work it out for themselves, the onus should be on HR teams and line managers to support success for its remote workforce. This may cover how to create a suitable and safe working environment, and working effectively without distractions, as well as related topics such as the importance of taking screen breaks, getting out from behind the desk, and taking time for meals, or exercise. Above all, the message must be about getting the balance right, between being present, and always 'on' and making time for themselves, and for their relationships with work colleagues.

New ways of winning

It means supporting people as they adapt to new ways of working and learning new skills. There may be collective etiquettes, or rules, that you wish to introduce. These smarter ways of collaborating may mean you can finally eliminate email overload, for example. Or perhaps establish guidelines on how people show their availability or set up their virtual workgroups. There will be individual preferences to acknowledge and advise on too – perhaps which notifications someone wants to allow as interruptions, or setting access and editing rights on documents, or perhaps using a blurred or bespoke background in video calls to remove unnecessary visual distractions and offer privacy.

Again, the challenges offer opportunities. With new ways of working together, there are new ways of winning together.

The key is to avoid dehumanizing and isolating working experience, and to instead **find ways to bring people together, to be inclusive.**





Developing a new mindset

In changing and challenging times, uncertainty and disruption can stimulate, even demand change. Necessity can be the driver for digital transformation.

The good news here is that for everyone in your organization, the new tools and ways of working will be largely intuitive and natural. They will still be working with familiar software and solutions, whether working remotely or onsite.

The difference will come from how people's work at an individual level can supercharge how the organization co-operates and collaborates as it evolves and achieves.

Manage the change

It won't just happen by itself though. Rapid changes can lead to unexpected effects. The open and participative nature of communication and collaborative tools offer more than just new ways of accessing information and collaborating, but also controlling, interrupting, and influencing.

It's vital to plan out how you will manage these tools, especially when you have people working remotely. Some organizations prefer to allow employees to self-organize and create their own workgroups and networks, whereas others may prefer to organize and control these centrally. Avoiding duplicated workstreams, inappropriate access to confidential files, and ensuring effective etiquettes are in place, are all among key considerations. After all, open participation shouldn't mean a wide-open organization.

Support the transition

Whether internally organized, or delivered by external organizational change management teams, skilled in providing specific services, there must be suitable, planned support to manage the change. Whatever their role, function, or seniority, people will be adjusting as they learn the tools and skills of remote work.

It means there must be a cultural expectation and confidence that people will be supported, as well as that of actual, active support being delivered. Of course, the technology, such as workplace analytics, can assist you here too, helping you spot those users who are less engaged, and allowing you to then offer individual help to ensure no one gets left behind.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. Remote working is not just about how the organization collaborates and communicates internally, but also with external customers, clients, and other stakeholders.

Done well, your new ways of working – as individuals, and collectively - will lead to a new organizational mindset.

The open and participative nature of communication and collaborative tools offer **more than just new ways of accessing information and collaborating.**

Ensuring secure connectivity

If you're used to always knowing your employees will be working from their usual workspace, then the idea of remote working may sound like a compromise, or second-best option.

However, with the right arrangements in place remote working can offer a boost to your productivity and effectiveness. The latest cloud-based productivity tools allow people to connect, communicate and collaborate, no matter where they are; employees can engage via a suite of unified tools – messaging, calling, meeting, and file sharing, without having to physically meet, or travel. Subsequently, there is less downtime, increased efficiency and enhanced productivity.

But for this to happen, there are some basics that need to be in place.

Making connections

Firstly, good quality internet access. Many - even most - of your workforce may have robust and high-speed internet access, but others may not, or may lack the bandwidth to sync files, data, or support audio/video conferencing. Network testing to establish whether an extended period of remote working is viable is highly recommended.

Survey those who might need to work remotely, to identify the gaps and provide guidance on the optimum configuration for their individual environments. These could include, for example, using wired - not wireless – connections, and asking other household members to restrict when they stream large files or video content which may affect the available bandwidth. If need be, you may wish to invest in mobile hotspots, data plans, or allowances to enable those needing to enhance or upgrade their access to do so.

Left to their own devices

It's your call, whether you will allow staff to use their own devices to connect, or whether they must only use company issued devices. In this era of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), your organization may already allow people to carry and use organizational data on their own phones and other devices. Whilst this may be an effective and efficient option, you need to remain vigilant and maintain your company's security standards. To achieve this, you need to make sure you maintain a rigorous security strategy and policies to provide suitable user identity and access management, information protection and endpoint management services.

Ensure you're secure

It's vital that you have secure connections between people, devices, apps, and data. To achieve this, you need a holistic identity solution in place that gives you flexibility and control.

Essential steps include ensuring that the minimum-security policies have been maintained across all devices connecting to corporate applications – that the correct security policies, software patching and endpoint protection services are maintained.

Protect your data

Protect your sensitive data across multiple devices when sharing. See and control how files are used with a comprehensive and integrated information protection strategy.

It is also important that users have the suitable devices to support their collaboration experience. You may need to consider providing webcams for use in video meetings, and high-quality headsets that are suitable for all day use. Many people will have earphones, but they may lack a microphone, or be of good enough quality for regular phone or video use.

As with any change, there will be a learning curve involved if people are not used to working from home or being asked to use new tools and technologies. Whichever route you opt for, the goal is a workable, usable, secure solution that will enable your business continuity.

With the right
arrangements in place,
**remote working can offer a
boost to your productivity
and effectiveness.**

Seizing the remote opportunity

It can seem that remote working is a means to an end. Just another way to get things done and enable your employees to carry on as if there was no disruption to the usual way of working.

It's far more than that. It is not just changes in technology that are required, but changes in the way we work, in our skillsets, culture and working behaviours.

It all presents a far greater opportunity – a remote opportunity that's close at hand.



A chance to thrive and prosper

No matter the circumstances that drive the need, remote working is more than a suboptimal way of ensuring business continuity. With careful assessment, planning, implementation, and support, the threat of a disrupted future can be transformed into an engaging and participative, digital working environment that's secure by design.

Far from being dislocated, isolated, and fragmented, your organization can thrive and prosper, with your teams connected, communicating and collaborating better than ever before.



Help to transform your business

No matter what lies ahead, now is the time to ensure your organization is prepared for the future.

If your organization has yet to fully embrace remote working, and the effective use of cloud-based communications and collaboration, then do get in touch.

NTT Ltd. is a partner you can trust, and we'd be happy to discuss how we might work together.

Not only can we help you transform your business, we can deliver certainty in uncertain times.

No matter what lies ahead, **now is the time to ensure your organization is prepared for the future.**



About NTT Ltd.

NTT Ltd. is a leading global technology services company bringing together 28 brands including NTT Communications, Dimension Data and NTT Security. We partner with organizations around the world to shape and achieve outcomes through intelligent technology solutions. For us, intelligent means data driven, connected, digital, and secure. As a global ICT provider, we employ more than 40,000 people in a diverse and dynamic workplace that spans 57 countries, trading in 73 countries and delivering services in over 200 countries. Together we enable the connected future.

Visit us at our new website hello.global.ntt



Together we do great things