Your employees working remotely

Our support to
keep you moving

The future is exciting.
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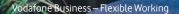# Managing your business through unexpected disruption is a challenge

Preparing is possible, but there will always be incidents we can't predict. Knowing how you can keep your business moving and your people connected, motivated and engaged throughout change will be a key priority for many.

Businesses are finding themselves having to make unfamiliar decisions quickly, especially around remote working. Employees who normally work in the office and those that are used to communicating with their clients and colleagues face to face may find it hard to adapt to this new way of working.

At Vodafone Business, we've been practicing flexible working for nearly 20 years and have learnings and experience to share should you find yourself having to close your offices unexpectedly. We have supported different workstyles and remote working and have seen positive impacts to both productivity and employee engagement. We know it may seem overwhelming, but with the right tools and technology in place, wherever your team are and whatever their situation, you can keep them connected, carry on working, deliver for your customers and keep your business moving.
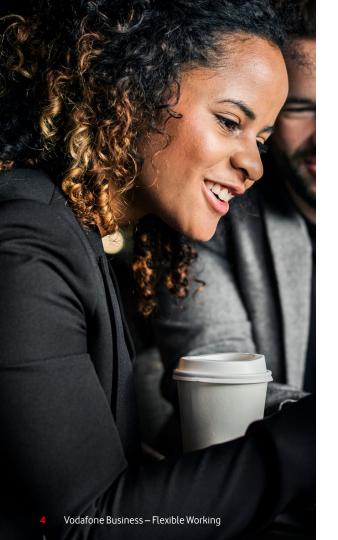
Power to your people

For many employees, working remotely will be daunting. Adapting to this new way of working, will take time and bring with it challenges.

Employees could be concerned that working from home might be unproductive. Others may not be aware of the digital tools they can use to support them during the working day.

You can reassure your staff by providing them with the tools they need to work efficiently and as normally as possible. It involves giving them the right mix of technologies to give them confidence to work flexibly, equipping them with the skills to react to changing business and customer needs.

Ways of working

Changing working practices may have implications to the processes many of your employees are used to or take for granted. It will really help to consider and provide clear guidance on ways of working when at home:

Tell people about best practice for managing their data, using devices securely, and give them health and safety guidance if they are working remotely.

Make sure you factor in any potential risks that come with working environments outside of the office, such as those posed by using work equipment at home.

Communicate openly and honestly with people about how to use their technology and access information securely and ensure robust security measures are in place if people will be accessing sensitive information on personal devices or laptops.

Tools and technology

Technology is the foundation of successful flexible working. With the right mix of infrastructure, applications, and communications tools you can enable your employees to stay connected and work flexibly wherever they may be.

Here are some tips to help you get ready for the improvements or changes you may need to make for flexible working:

1 Decide what hardware, devices, laptops or equipment your teams might need. You may be able to provide business owned kit but if not and your team use their own devices ensure they are supported and secure with clear guidance around BYOD.

2 Find out what applications people need to do their jobs. Then get to grips with how urgently and frequently they need them, and which digital tools will help to improve productivity and performance.

3 Consider what support you have to offer employees. How will you provide employees with access to a helpdesk to offer remote IT support when they need it?

Although it might seem challenging, businesses can adapt and continue to run with the right technology:

- Make sure employees have a secure Wi-Fi connection

- Provide tools so that team members can join voice or video conferences from any location

- Keep employees connected and support a wide range of working styles with unified communications and cloud-enabled collaboration tools

- Supply people with faster internet access on their mobile devices (4G or 5G) when working on the move

- Give people the freedom to access the corporate network through a virtual private network

Choosing the best tools for the job

If flexible working is becoming a core part of your business operations, let's take a closer look at the technology your people will need to make it work as effectively as possible.

What do they need to keep close to customers and colleagues?

What encourages them to collaborate and share ideas?

What will help them to be productive, stay responsive and ultimately deliver great work?

We asked ourselves the same questions when we set out to become a flexible business. We realised that some employees prefer to talk on the phone while others use online chat or video applications.

Just about everyone needs to be able to send and receive emails, find files and connect to the company system in and outside of the office. And some teams need remote access to more sensitive applications such as human resources or financial management systems.

Going mobile

Put people in the same office together every day and you have a level of certainty that calls will reach them, teams will bond, ideas will bounce, and information will flow. To enable teams to work in more flexible ways, you need the same level of confidence that no call will go unanswered and people will stay in close contact whether they are working from home, or anywhere else.

Smart mobile devices are probably the most obvious piece of flexible working technology. 4G and 5G make access to the internet faster on devices with mobile connectivity from smartphones and tablets to dongles and laptops.

With a reliable connection, managers can be reached to review documents in need of urgent sign-off, and executives can stay at the top of their game, accessing and editing large files on their connected mobile devices.

Unified communications also make it easier for people to stay in touch while working from home. Linking video, voice conferencing, instant messaging and email through the same application gives small businesses a way to redirect landline calls to a person's mobile. For larger companies it's a way for employees to reach customers and colleagues using the channels that are the best fit for them.

You can choose to provide employees with their work smartphones and laptops, or let people work on their own personal devices. Either way you need to be mindful of the necessary security measures to protect corporate data from malware, viruses and phishing attacks.

Staying secure

If employees are going to connect to your servers and access potentially sensitive information outside of the office, then a virtual private network (VPN) gives people a secure connection to your company system wherever they may be.

IT departments can also remotely manage devices running on most operating systems. Software can be installed on smartphones and laptops to help your business keep track of the applications that are running on the device. If the device is lost or stolen, the employee or IT team can lock or wipe the device remotely, stopping company information from getting into the wrong hands.

Any business can become vulnerable to viruses and malicious attacks, but for IT teams with thousands of employees to support, mobile threat management tools will scan all traffic to and from a mobile device to block inappropriate content and protect both the data and the device. Managed mobility services also ease the pressure of delivering mobility at scale, taking care of everything from the policies, processes and security, through to the day-today management and deployments.

Working together

Regardless of where people are located, you want everyone to have easy access to the information they need. By moving servers, files and applications into the cloud and replacing old and restrictive IT systems with a virtualized environment you can give employees exactly that.

Office 365, for instance, gives people cloud-based access to the everyday programmes, such as Excel or PowerPoint, they would otherwise live on a desktop. Other cloud tools, such as Google Apps and Microsoft Teams help people communicate, share calendars, join video meetings and store and share documents they can work on together.

Working smarter

With the Internet of Things (IoT), more and more is becoming connected to the internet, giving businesses pause for thought over how this can help the company and its employees work smarter and more flexibly.

A smart building system, for example, can help a business adjust its energy consumption hour by hour based on the number of people using an office. Employees can come and go as needed and the company has a smart way to save costs.

Or a connected soft drinks cabinet can send alerts to nearby field engineers of any faults and if so, can pinpoint which part needs replacing. Someone can swiftly be sent to fix the issue without any time wasted on routine maintenance check-ups, improving the level and efficiency of service the engineer can deliver.

It's worth considering whether technologies, such as IoT, could be the secret ingredient to smarter working.

We are committed to finding smarter ways of working for you, your people and your business.

Get in touch for more guidance on the best flexible working tools to keep your people connected and your business moving.

Flexible working checklist

Critical success factors

Identify business managers to put the wheels in motion. Observe and listen to the needs of employees. Regular communication to keep your people engaged.

3 steps to flexible working

Key tasks and actions:

Step one: GET READY

- ☐ Know what the business wants to achieve
- ☐ Find out more about your employee's working styles and needs
- ☐ Build the business case
- ☐ Be clear on the change management implications – how will the culture, policies and processes need to adapt
- ☐ Secure budget and key people buy-in

Step two: ROLL-OUT

- ☐ Detailed planning of working practices and policies
- ☐ Full scope of technologies and changes to work environment to be developed and rolled-out
- ☐ Communication of changes to culture, policy and process throughout organisation
- ☐ Provide training and support for results-based management, data security, health and safety

Step three: MAINTAIN

- ☐ Ongoing management of IT infrastructure and mobile technologies
- ☐ Ongoing training and access to IT support
- ☐ Metrics in place to measure success
- ☐ Regular employee feedback to learn and improve as you go

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