

## Make Remote Working Easier

Today's workers carry smartphones, tablets and laptops that connect them with colleagues and job tasks wherever they go. Collaboration apps have exploded in recent years, and now even the most essential business software applications including presentations, spreadsheets, and documents have all become cloud-based and portable. Google, Microsoft, and a host of SaaS enterprise software companies are hard at work making sure that these trends accelerate, at least as far as core productivity, email and ERP apps are concerned<sup>1</sup>. The adoption of cloud based VoIP and UCaaS solutions is adding fuel to the fire. The result is a truly mobile workforce that can accomplish virtually anything without setting foot in the office.

When Dell recently surveyed its 110,000 employees about their work habits, it discovered something surprising: 58% of employees were already working remotely at least one day a week even though only 17% of Dell's employees were actually authorized to work remotely<sup>2</sup>.

While this emerging reality is already upon us, many managers, business leaders and IT executives yearn for the days when all their employees were congregated in corporate HQs and remote offices. IBM recently told its employees to get back into their offices. This is outdated thinking, or maybe dual personality disorder since in the same month IBM released a blog post about the benefits of remote working. What's holding these companies back?

### Management Concerns

Recent research by industry analyst Trina Hoefling points at several of the most prevalent concerns managers have about embracing mobile and remote workers<sup>3</sup>:

- How do I communicate effectively with employees who are remote? How can we stay connected?
- Are my people really working? How will I know whether my employees are actually doing what they're supposed to be doing?
- Managing remote and part-time workers makes managerial tasks and coordination overly complicated? How can I keep track of which people work where on which days?

### Better Business Communications as a Solution

While the concerns are real, there are ways to address them, and if not completely solve the problem, at least mitigate the issue. The best way to succeed to use the right communications and document sharing platforms. A recent HP study found that 60% workers prefer using their smart phone to their laptop to complete tasks, despite the fact that 68% of them find it easier to access files from a laptop<sup>4</sup>. Also interesting was that 65% of the same group experienced difficulty transferring content to their phones, showing the disconnect between how people want to work and how their existing technology limits them. Embracing modern unified

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<sup>1</sup> <https://venturebeat.com/2017/02/01/microsofts-successful-transformation-from-microsoft-to-microcloud/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-remote-work-cant-be-stopped-1496577602>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.thesmartworkplace.com/the\\_smartworkplace\\_blog/five-truths-virtual-workplace/](http://www.thesmartworkplace.com/the_smartworkplace_blog/five-truths-virtual-workplace/)

<sup>4</sup> <https://blog.ext.hp.com/t5/BusinessBlog-en/How-has-the-mobility-revolution-transformed-your-workforce/ba-p/6586>

communications as a service (UCaaS) brings your workers together in new ways and further mitigates management concerns. With status/presence and calendar integration, a manager will know where his employees are, even if they are on the go. Video conferencing can greatly enhance the quality of a communications session beyond a regular phone call, since non-verbal cues mix with verbal ones in important ways.

### **Questions for Reflection**

If you can accept that work is an activity – a thing your employees do – not merely a place where they go, then you have taken the first and most important step. As you think about your mobility strategy, there are some important questions to consider:

- Which applications are my employees currently using today that I need to think about within the framework of the entire communications ecosystem? Good examples are team collaboration spaces like Slack or conferencing solutions like WebEx Meetings.
- Are there steps that need to be taken in terms of the broader corporate culture to encourage and facilitate mobile workforce?
- Have you promulgated some kind of communications protocol or policy that details which types of communications are most useful for which applications?

### **Closing Thoughts**

Technological innovation is re-defining the workplace and changing the way customers and employees communicate. With the advent of the internet, cloud hosting, and the proliferation of mobile devices, business activity is no longer confined to a physical office. Whether working from home, at a customer's business site, in the car, or at the local coffee shop, the workplace is now wherever employees are located.

Ultimately, the real question for managers in today's environment is not whether to embrace the new mobile workforce but how best to leverage it and create win-wins for both the employee and the organization.

### **About SETEL Unified Communications**

For more than forty years, SETEL has provided the latest communications solutions to companies of all shapes and sizes who are looking for secure, reliable technologies to help employees and customers stay connected more easily. Whether for basic phone systems, comprehensive unified communications, or contact center, business executives trust SETEL to deliver the latest features and functionality together with best in class service and support. Simplify your business communications today. [www.seteluc.com](http://www.seteluc.com) or call toll free 800.743.1340.