Empowering the Remote Workplace

6 Strategies and Tools to Use Today
As the number of mobile workers continues to rise—a trend that shows no signs of slowing down—the ability to connect and collaborate with your team will become even more important. In fact, a report from IDC forecasts the mobile workforce population to rise to 105 million workers by the end of 2020.¹

With so many people transitioning to remote work, companies are faced with the task of updating policies, procedures, and practices to best optimize mobility. Tasks and projects can easily fall through the cracks in a remote environment unless teams are set up for success from the start with powerful digital tools that encourage teamwork and collaboration. Let’s examine six strategies to enable and empower the remote workplace and how Modern Workplace tools can work for your organization.

¹ "U.S. Mobile Worker Population Forecast, 2018–2022," 2018, IDC
Communication is Key

Good, clear communication lies at the heart of enabling remote teams. While tools like email can be useful, they often waste time and slow us down more than we tend to think.

On average, a single employee will receive 304 business-related emails a week and check their email 36 times in an hour.²

With an average of 16 minutes needed to refocus on a task after handling incoming email, this lost time adds up fast, especially after including multiple team members on a thread.²

Instant messaging using tools like Microsoft Teams and Slack immediately open lines of communication. Utilizing instant messaging platforms provides an easy way to combat email’s inefficiencies. Moving replies and acknowledgments out of email threads and into quick chats where they belong helps keep conversations focused and projects moving forward. Instant messaging also has the added benefit of speeding up response times which helps alleviate feelings of isolation when working great distances from your co-workers and helps maintain an atmosphere of teamwork.

² “You Waste a Lot of Time at Work,” Atlassian, 2017
“Since adopting Teams, I’ve noticed a dramatic decrease in the amount of email I’m accumulating. Teams and Slack are now the ‘first apps’ I launch when I get online in the morning.”

— Eric Vogelpohl
Director of Solution Development
Create a Digital Collaboration Environment

Outside of lines of communication, finding the right content, tools, contacts, and conversation threads are some of the biggest timewasters in a workplace.

This effect is compounded when working remotely. Forrester research shows 85% of workers say having the right technology can make or break their ability to collaborate effectively, making the decision of tools that empower instead of hinder a weighty one. Choosing multiple ad hoc apps from different vendors often doesn’t help resolve these issues either. An integrated solution often offers a better long-term value.

Modern Workplace tools enable remote workers in powerful ways, especially integrated, cloud-based solutions that provide a seamless experience without having to jump between multiple apps or hunt down information in disconnected systems.

Microsoft Office 365 and Office Online offer real-time coauthoring that boosts digital collaboration and makes gathering and reviewing information faster and more efficient. Take it a step further using SharePoint Online to create a shared document repository to save documents to the cloud for instant accessibility or combine the instant messaging capabilities of Microsoft Teams with features like OneNote shared notebooks to centralize and share project information using photos, videos, and handwritten notes that are automatically saved to the cloud and made visible to the team. With many paths forward using Modern Workplace tools, remote employees can feel connected and stay productive with the ability to quickly find what they need from wherever they work.

85% of workers say having the right technology can make or break their ability to collaborate effectively.

---

“We don’t send attachments anymore. We collaborate in real time, which means, ‘Wait, which version are you looking at?’ has become a thing of the past.”

Thomas Hallstrom
Director of Client Development
Simplify Meetings

Let’s face it, meeting inefficiencies kill productivity. Issues like poor call connectivity, an unclear agenda, or simply having too many meetings on the calendar can cause them to quickly lose their value while productivity plummets.

With most employees attending 62 meetings a month—31 hours of which is spent in unproductive meetings—US businesses lose a cumulative $37 billion annually.4

On top of productivity issues within the meeting itself, the way information is recorded and shared during and after the meeting is often inconsistent and difficult to track down.

Tools like Microsoft Teams provide a rich and immersive meeting experience that transforms a typical meeting into a collaboration hub. From 1:1s to large company conferences, meetings can be initiated directly within Teams. Sharing screens and adding Office files can be done via desktop or mobile, and people can join meetings on the go with a global dial-in number using only a mobile device and the Teams app. Meetings in Teams also aren’t restricted to your organization alone. Teams offers the ability to securely host audio, video, and web conferences or live events with anyone inside or outside your organization so you can stay connected with anyone at any time.

With everything on one platform, participants can worry less about technology complications as they share ideas quickly and make choices that impact the business.

Resources even remain available before, during, and after meetings to enable people to act with the proper context and without requiring excessive structured meetings. Greater transparency provides a focus on productivity, resulting in fewer, more constructive meetings that free schedules to target other important tasks.

4 “You Waste a Lot of Time at Work,” Atlassian, 2017
Use Video Conferencing

Remote employees often miss out on the face-to-face communication that onsite coworkers enjoy. In addition, verbal and non-verbal cues often greatly improve communication and understanding.

Properly reading emotions or tone of voice can be difficult in written messages like email.

It’s also not always feasible to bring everyone into an in-person meeting to talk through projects, even if you’re physically present in the same building. Enter video conferencing.

Video conferencing lets you meet up from virtually anywhere, providing an “in-person,” real-time collaboration experience often lacking for remote workers. From a desk, home office, or in the car on the go, tools like Microsoft Teams make it just as easy to join a video as a voice call. Meetings can even be recorded and accessed later to clear up any questions that come up after the fact or if someone can’t attend.

Beyond ease of use, we all know the benefits of meeting face-to-face to get things done faster. In one survey, 89% of remote employees said video helped them feel more connected to their coworkers while helping reduce the amount of time taken to complete projects or tasks, saving valuable time during the workday and boosting efficiency and camaraderie.5

Those same benefits apply outside the organization as video conferencing can help you build relationships with your clients with the trust-enhancing benefits of face-to-face communication.

5 “Why videoconferencing is critical to business collaboration,” GigaOm, 2019
“Getting the team together, even though we work remotely, is so important. We chat, joke, and collaborate so we keep our rapport and our interactions feel real. It’s comfortable and helps us stay connected and working as a team.”

— Barb Coplen
Senior Solution Architect
Stay Productive on the Go

Work is no longer limited to sitting at a desk with a computer.

At least 40% of the workforce works remotely at some frequency today, and that number will only increase as the needs of businesses evolve and adjust. Whether working remotely full-time, traveling to a client site, operating between office locations, or just on the road, problems like decreased efficiency, lack of communication, or connectivity issues can hinder your ability to work, not to mention the difficulty of switching between disconnected apps and managing multiple devices.

Integrated mobile device apps and capabilities keep what you need easily accessible wherever you are.

Secure, integrated tools also enable remote workers to avoid the pains of a slow corporate VPN and speed up teams' ability to collaborate on the fly. A Forrester survey found Office 365 implementation saves a mobile workforce over 45 hours in one year of lost productivity per mobile employee. Think of what you could do with over a week's worth of time back just by taking advantage of typically non-productive time during the workday.

At least 40% of the workforce works remotely at some frequency today.

---


7 “The Total Economic Impact Of Microsoft Office 365,” Forrester, 2015
Make Security Easy

Establishing a secure connection between servers and devices is always a top-of-mind concern as more and more employees work offsite.

Managing potential data breaches and other security incidents becomes even more complicated after factoring in the potential for lost and stolen mobile devices.

Integrated security alleviates the strain on IT and data security enforcement with only a single admin panel necessary to manage security for apps, what can lead to a 19% reduction on IT support effort according to a Forrester report.8 The Office 365 advantage provides remote workers with the ability to easily move across applications with a single sign-on approach on mobile devices, web, or desktop and the peace of mind granted by secure, cloud-based file collaboration. Team-wide and organization-wide two-factor authentication, encryption of data in transit and at rest, and data loss prevention with remote-wipe options keep sensitive information secure in any situation using SharePoint, Teams, OneNote, and the whole Office 365 suite.

Teams has the added benefit of enabling external collaboration with clients or external groups for secure file sharing via SharePoint. Access permissions can easily be managed in Teams in two ways: external access that lets you find, call, and chat with users in other domains and guest access to add individuals to your teams using their email address. The latter allows you to collaborate as you would with any other users in your organization. External and guest permission can be changed and/or revoked at any time, making data management easy as business needs change.

---

8 “The Total Economic Impact Of Microsoft Office 365,” Forrester, 2015
Keep Moving Forward

At the end of the day, many of the best practices for a distributed workforce are similar to an onsite team. The primary difference lies in knowing how technology can be used to empower individuals regardless of their location.

Making the right technology choices today can solve many future challenges and setup your mobile workforce right away.

As you progress forward into the world of mobility, remember these strategies to help make your employees feel empowered and encouraged to do their best work with tools like Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, and Office 365 to back you up.

Need help with your remote workplace? Blueprint experts are ready to help you take action today.

Blueprint has deep expertise with Modern Workplace tools and strategies, as well experience within multiple industries to help your team now. Find out more at:

bpcs.com/solutions/modern-workplace

Who We Are

Blueprint is a technology firm that connects strategy, modern business solutions, and products to transform and grow companies.

We provide companies around the world with the insight, agility, tools, and infrastructure needed to achieve business goals and accelerate digital transformation. Our solutions and products address your highest value use cases and directly correlate to return on investment. Find out more at:

bpcs.com