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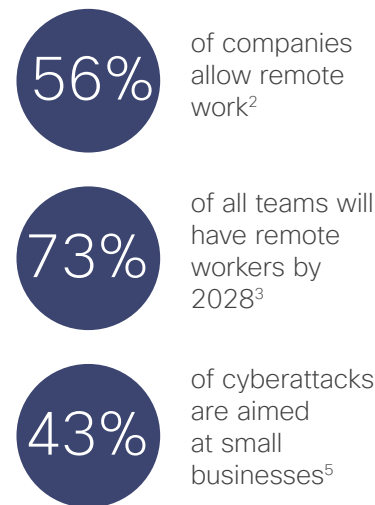
The Essential Guide to **Working from Home**

Working from Home is Here to Stay

Many small businesses have been moving to remote work by necessity, and that's not likely to change any time soon. In fact, having employees work from home has multiple benefits. It can reduce operating costs such as rental office space, travel, and commuting expenses, and make it easier to get and retain top talent who prefer workplace flexibility.¹ In fact, over the last decade, working from home has become more prevalent with 56 percent of companies allowing remote work.² A recent study projects that by 2028, 73 percent of all teams will have remote workers.³

As a result, video conferencing, collaboration, and secure calling are increasingly becoming an IT requirement for businesses of all sizes. Small businesses are twice as likely to hire full-time remote employees as their larger counterparts,⁴ so IT staff are setting up and supporting an unprecedented number of offsite workers and their devices.

To reduce the strain when you add and remove remote employees to your small business, you should keep five facts in mind:



Fact 1: Complexity is the enemy

For many people, working from home is their new reality and they're still learning how to work virtually. But as a small business owner, you have a business to run. To ease the transition to working remotely, it's important to keep things as simple as you can.

In a small business, you've got to be savvy. You don't have the time to add more complexity to your already busy days. You don't have to become an expert in technology to work remotely, but you do need the right tools and advice. With years of experience in remote work, Cisco can help.

You need solutions that are easy to deploy and manage while powerful enough to fend off cyberattacks.



Fact 2: Security is critical

Every small business needs to make security a priority because networks, systems, and users are bombarded with a continual stream of threats every day. Your business could be one data breach from oblivion. According to Verizon, 43 percent of cyberattacks are aimed at small businesses,⁵ and many businesses don't recover. Although security solutions are becoming more efficient at detecting threats, attackers are also becoming more sophisticated and persistent. Your security needs to extend to remote workers and their devices. Look for a reliable network that:

- Allows secure endpoint access to your network
- Offers easy-to-use management and configuration
- Protects your sensitive data by verifying the identity of users, devices, and applications
- Defends against threats with cloud-delivered security
- Can detect and block cyberattacks

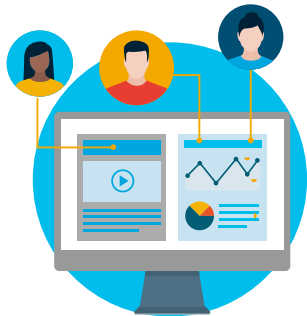
1. [Top three business benefits of remote work](#), ITProPortal, January 2020
 2. [2018 Global State of Remote Work](#), Owl Labs, 2018
 3. [Future Workforce Report](#), Upwork, March 5, 2019
 4. [Global State of Remote Work 2017](#), Owl Labs, 2017
 5. [2019 Data Breach Investigations Report](#), Verizon, 2019



Fact 3: Communication is key

The ability to communicate is vital for any small business; disjointed and clumsy collaboration tools can make matters worse. Meetings become a challenge when employees experience delays from login issues, connection dropouts, audio problems, or blurry video. If all people can make out is a bunch of fuzzy shapes in a room, it’s difficult to tell who is talking or perceive body language. In the absence of good solutions, sometimes virtual teams “go rogue” and cobble together a collection of file-sharing and collaboration tools that may or may not be secure. To keep everyone productive, you need tools that:

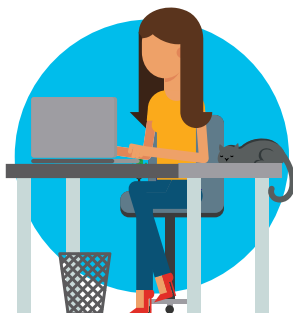
- Give your workers a variety of ways to communicate with voice, video, web, or messaging—all in one place
- Come with built-in security, with encryption to protect the privacy of both the data in use and in transit
- Offer high-quality video and easy screen-saving



Fact 4: Teamwork should be easy

Collaborating with remote teams is different than in person, but it’s easy if everyone is using the same secure interface. When teams can work in multiple modes (voice, video, web, messaging), all in one place, they can be extremely productive. Your virtual workspace should make it possible to easily:

- Exchange messages and files across devices
- Search the space to find conversations and documents
- Privately message one person or create a group chat in seconds
- Use a digital whiteboard to brainstorm
- Launch video meetings



Fact 5: People have different requirements and needs (so be patient)

Like any change, the move to working from home can be confusing and hard. If your team is new to remote work, they may have questions and need answers about the new virtual culture.

- “Do I have to turn on my camera? (My hair is a mess!)”
- “Is it ok if my team sees that I’m working out of my kitchen in my background?”
- “What if UPS comes and my dog won’t stop barking?”

The Internet service provider (ISP) your employee subscribes to at home may come in to play as well. Some issues may be outside of their control and yours. Many ISPs today are configured to support massive loads and handle video streaming traffic, but if performance for remote workers suffers, they can turn off video during a call (if the software doesn’t adapt automatically to network issues), or even route audio to their phone.

Be prepared for an increase in IT calls and encourage employees to use chat tools like Webex Teams™ so they can communicate and help one another. You might set up virtual “water cooler” rooms and “coffee break calls” to help people feel more connected. Also consider adding or increasing your training options so people can learn more about being productive virtually.

The state of remote work. Where are we now?

It wasn't long ago that working outside a traditional office was deemed too difficult or impossible. But today, the technology to work together from disparate locations is mature and it works. Over the last few years, companies that forced remote workers back to the office in a misguided effort to improve collaboration lost countless skilled employees and damaged their reputations. Many studies show that flexible work benefits both companies and employees.



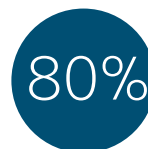
FOR EMPLOYEES:

remote work increases job satisfaction and lowers stress



FOR BUSINESSES:

remote work improves productivity and employee retention⁶



of workers say they would turn down a job that didn't offer flexible working⁷

To attract and retain top talent, remote work is a benefit you simply can't ignore.

Key questions and considerations for small business decision makers

Aren't all video conferencing tools the same?

Many video conferencing tools aren't designed with security in mind. The consumer tools that you use to chat with friends and family aren't the same as an enterprise-grade product. Regardless of size, small businesses should never compromise on security. Employees often need to share sensitive information, and Cisco Webex[®] collaboration tools are secure with protected file-sharing and built-in security for mobile meetings. Webex provides strong encryption, compliance visibility, and control. Whether people are communicating within the business or collaborating with suppliers and vendors, data remains secure because Cisco Webex is secure by default with encryption to protect the privacy of both the data in use and in transit. It's trusted by governments, hospitals, and Fortune 100 companies around the world.

Can't I just use email to communicate?

Email is the bane of most offices. The sheer volume and non-relevance of much of the email communication can quickly overwhelm even the most organized employees. The right collaboration tools are key to employee productivity. After meetings, collaboration tools can help team members stay in synch using a virtual workspace that captures all of the interactions and information about a project. The Webex Teams[™] collaborative workspace:

- Offers secure exchange of messages and files and lets you easily search the space to find past conversations and documents
- Allows you to privately message one person or create a group chat in seconds
- Makes brainstorming easy with a digital whiteboard
- Integrates with Webex meetings, so you can keep the collaboration going



Here are a few tips you can give your employees about working from home:



It's easy to work a 16-hour day from home, but don't!

Do what you can to keep your work from infiltrating your home life. At the end of the day, turn off your phone, shut off your laptop, and close your office door (if you have one).



Be patient with your team members

who may be dealing with life interrupting work. If a child runs behind your colleague's video camera or a dog barks, it's okay.



Take lunch breaks, stretch, go for a walk, exercise. It's important to stay healthy.

6. [Remote Work Statistics: Shifting Norms and Expectations](#), FlexJobs, February 13, 2020
 7. [Global Workspace Survey](#), IWG, 2019

Do I really need all these security products?

Small businesses can't afford to overlook security. You can securely connect remote workers and devices with Cisco Meraki® and Meraki Go™ for a fast, safe, and reliable network that you manage with a cloud-based app. On or off the network, small businesses can take advantage of Cisco security technology so they can work from any device, at any time, from any location. If there is one area where you shouldn't compromise, or try to make do, it's in security.

- Cisco Duo helps protect sensitive data by verifying the identity of users, devices, and applications with secure two-factor authentication.
- Cisco AnyConnect® Secure Mobility Client secures endpoint access to the network so employees can work from any device, at any time, in any location.
- Cisco Umbrella™ provides the first line of defense against threats to protect users everywhere with flexible, fast, and effective cloud-delivered security.
- Cisco AMP for Endpoints detects and blocks malware and viruses across employee devices.

How do I manage remote employees if I can't see what they're doing?

Managing remote employees is different, but some remote teams actually report feeling closer to their co-workers than when they worked in the same building. To foster teamwork, try:

- Scheduling regular 1:1 calls and team calls to ensure everyone feels heard
- Building trust with more casual “happy hours” or “water cooler calls”
- Establishing rules of engagement: set up defined (written) procedures and policies so everyone knows how to do what they need to do
- Having an agenda and assigning action items in meetings
- Conducting virtual training classes to help everyone get up to speed on the new ways of working

How can I scale as I add more employees?

Solutions that scale are important as more employees work remotely and your IT needs increase, decrease, or change. Cloud-based products are especially useful in this situation because they simplify installation and management without the need for a large IT staff.

That's why so many businesses trust our Cisco Meraki network switches, security appliances, and wireless access points. You can securely connect remote workers and devices with Cisco Meraki and Meraki Go for a fast, safe, and reliable network. Everything runs in the cloud, and you can easily manage the entire network from one dashboard (that is, an intuitive mobile app).

The Meraki Teleworker solution is a Cisco Meraki solution you can use to securely connect remote workers and devices. It offers a client VPN with multiple authentication options that's supported on all operating systems.



A few final thoughts

Every small business is different, and you should take the time to carefully assess the needs of your organization. Be sure to communicate with employees and get their input about how they work and what they need to be productive. When you're ready, we can guide you on the approaches and options that make sense for your specific business requirements. We will work with you to help you connect, compute, and collaborate securely, so you can focus on what matters most—growing your business.