WHITE PAPER

The New Workplace Reality

TPX

REDEFINING "THE OFFICE"

"Work" is no longer a place we go, but an activity that we do. Gone are the days when the vast majority of employees made the daily commute to a corporate office, sharing a communal space on a regular basis. Thanks to globalization, working 9 to 5 hasn't been most employees' reality for many years. But now those same workers — who used to arrive early or stay late at the office to get all their work done — are pushing the boundaries of where, when, and how they work.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, remote workers don't spend so much time in their home offices that they lose all their social skills and never see the light of day; nor are they all "road warriors" dashing from the plane to an Uber to the hotel. Today's remote workers are more likely to spend part of their time in the office and the rest of it juggling work and home life. In fact, according to the Census Bureau[1], the average remote worker is a 49-year-old college graduate who works for a company of more than 100 employees and earns $58,000 a year. That sounds like it could be just about anybody you know, doesn't it?

A 2017 Gallup survey[2] had two noteworthy findings: not only are more employees working remotely than ever before, but they're also doing so more often. The survey of over 15,000 American workers found that 43% have worked off-site at some point in the last year. The figure is even higher — up to 61% — in industries that are more conducive to working remotely, such as finance, real estate, IT, and media. The survey also found a shift in the amount of time employees spend working remotely: the number of employees working remotely less than 1 day a week dropped, while those who work remotely 4 to 5 days a week increased by about the same amount. Needless to say, remote working is here to stay.
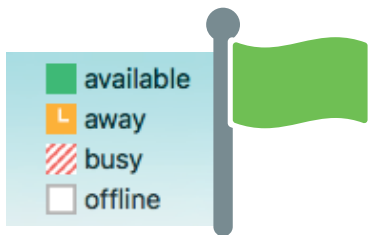
To be successful in this virtual environment, employees need the ability to take calls, answer email, and participate in meetings outside of "traditional" business hours and locations. They need to be able to reach their colleagues, partners, and clients regardless of where they are or what type of device they are using. And they insist on a form of work-life integration that boosts their productivity while minimizing any extra time spent in the corporate office.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

With the commoditization of everything from production to basic services, businesses must differentiate themselves on creativity and innovation. As a result, a growing number of employees are **knowledge workers** — people who think for a living. Knowledge workers could be spending their time analyzing information, developing new products, or ensuring a better customer experience.

Knowledge workers thrive in a flexible, open environment that lets them collaborate both internally and externally, sharing information across geographic and organizational boundaries. In fact, a study of knowledge workers[3] found that information sharing is a

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key indicator of productivity for this type of employee. When the business has a deep-seated culture of information sharing, the whole organization turns in to a substantial knowledge base that every employee can benefit from.

To take advantage of this innate corporate memory, knowledge workers need a way to quickly reach out to the person or team within the organization that has the information they need. If knowledge workers can't reach those sources of information, their projects will be stalled or they'll be forced to duplicate efforts that have already been completed. This concept is at the very heart of what's called **communications-enabled business processes** — which is a mouthful for sure, but it essentially means you're using communications tools to make a business process faster and more efficient. And of course, "faster and more efficient" translates into improved accuracy, decreased bottlenecks, and lower total costs for the business.

ON THE MOVE WITH BYOD

Thanks to the rapid rise of businesses using smartphones and tablets, almost all knowledge workers today could be considered "mobile" employees. But these employees' ideas of mobility often vary. For example, your outside sales team likely has a strong preference for using smartphones, while your operations team might prefer to use a combination of mobile devices, PC-based applications, and desk phones.

It's also important to note that use of a mobile device is not always the same as availability. We've all seen someone look at their cell phone just to reject or ignore an inbound call. In today's "always-on" business world, the ability to turn mobility *off* is also important to an employee who's trying to achieve work-life balance. This variation amongst users demonstrates the importance of carefully considering your organization's options for mobility. Although up to 75% of organizations supply

at least some of their employees with smartphones and/or tablets, it's the rare company that provides mobile devices for *all* its workers. Increasingly, employees are relying on their personal smartphones and tablets to conduct business during the typical workday. We call this "Bring Your Own Device," or BYOD.

BYOD helps employees stay productive and in ready contact with their key colleagues and customers. But to be truly successful, they need the business to provide them with the tools to communicate and collaborate securely — all without sharing their personal mobile numbers and opening themselves up to being called at all hours of the day.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MILLENNIALS

The young Millennial generation (people born from the early 1980s to about 2000) is quickly becoming a growing force in the workplace. This cohort makes up one-third of workers today, a figure that will jump to three-quarters by 2025.

It's often assumed that Millennials' natural preference for mobile devices and applications has driven the change in the way we all work today. However, a survey from PwC[4] yielded interesting data that would prove otherwise: Millennial workers actually have the same preferences for remote working as their older colleagues. It just so happens that the communications tools required to work remotely became commonplace around the same time that the Millennials entered the workforce.

While Millennials have always known a business world with flexible working options, it's a newer concept for the Baby Boomers and Gen X'ers — but it's a concept that these older generations are fully embracing. In fact, Generation X uses collaboration tools more than anyone else![5] And 34% of workers over the age of 64 would like to work remotely.[6] Since

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these older workers bring a great amount of "tribal" knowledge built up from years of experience, their collaboration with the younger generation is tremendously valuable.

The lesson learned? Enabling collaboration and mobility is the key to satisfaction and staff retention for *all* employees, regardless of their age or experience. Organizations need to have the right mix of communications tools to support their work habits and methods. If the tools are simple but robust, *anyone* can use them effectively.

BUILD A MODERN WORKPLACE WITH UC&C

Unified Communication and Collaboration (UC&C) tools support today's mobile and dispersed workforce and enable them to collaborate as easily as if they were in the same room. Features vary by provider, but typically include:

- **Voice and video calling:** Voice calling services are commonplace, but why use video? It adds depth to the conversation. Did you know that 93% of communicating attitude and feelings comes from non-verbal cues?
- **Instant Messaging & Presence (IM&P):** Make it easy for users to see whether a colleague is available for a chat, then instantly send a message.
- **Collaboration services:** A virtual, always-on meeting room space for ad-hoc or planned meetings. Colleagues can share information and collaborate using any combination of group chat, voice and video conferencing, desktop and application sharing, and file sending.
- **Unified messaging:** Mobile users need access to emails, voicemails, and texts in the format that works best for them, depending on where they are and what they're doing. Unified mailbox, notifications, and user-defined call routing increase user productivity.
- **Mobility:** Specialized apps extend UC&C functionality from the desk phone to the smartphone.

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So what does all this *really* mean for your business? Your communications no longer have to start with emails that get ignored, or phone calls that end up as voicemail messages. UC&C enables the employee to choose the communications tool that works best for the situation at hand. It also gives that employee more control over how they receive communications from others, whether that's from a mobile device or from an automated business process application.

IT'S A DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Today's employees are pressing their employers to break down the historical structures and policies that have influenced their workdays — and their employers are accommodating. When employees have the tools to communicate and collaborate from anywhere in the world, they'll be happier and more productive. What's more, the business gains new efficiencies and will no longer be constrained by the challenges of geography and time zones. From the corporate office to the home office, UC&C is creating new ways for businesses to thrive.

[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/08/your-money/when-working-in-your-pajamas-is-more-productive.html

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/us/remote-workers-work-from-home.html?mcubz=0

[3] http://www.advanced-workplace.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/AWA-6-factors-of-knowledge-worker-productivity-2.pdf … https://www.serraview.com/how-do-you-measure-knowledge-worker-productivity/

[4] https://www.forbes.com/sites/kaytiezimmerman/2016/10/13/do-millennials-prefer-working-from-home-more-than-baby-boomers-and-gen-x/#4ff284442070

[5] https://www.varinsights.com/doc/new-data-on-how-remote-workers-communicate-0001

[6] https://remote.co/10-stats-about-remote-work/

ABOUT TPX

TPx is the premier managed services carrier that delivers comprehensive communications solutions to 75,000 business locations nationwide. Businesses nationwide trust TPx to manage their mission-critical network services. TPx's award-winning, enterprise-grade unified communications, managed IT, and network connectivity services empower companies to unleash productivity by streamlining processes, proactively monitoring systems, and staying current with rapidly-changing technology. TPx backs its services with a zealous commitment to Customer Care, including a network uptime guarantee and 24/7/365 live-answer technical support.

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