The New Workplace Reality

TPX

REDEFINING "THE OFFICE"

"Work" is no longer a place we go, but an activity we do. Gone are the days when most workers commute to a corporate office and share a communal space every day. With globalization, working 9 to 5 hasn't been a reality for many years. Now thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, many corporate teams are working from home full time – a trend that's expected to continue long after the outbreak is contained.

A Gallup survey[1] found remote work hit a high point of 70% in April 2020 and steadily leveled off to 56% in January 2021 as COVID-19 lockdowns lifted and companies began transitioning to hybrid work environments with workers operating both at home and in the office.

Remote work is here to stay. When pandemic restrictions end, a majority (82%) of companies plan to allow employees to work remotely at least some of the time while nearly half (42%) plan to adopt full-time remote work on a permanent basis, according to a recent Gartner survey[2].

To be successful in this virtual environment, employees need the ability to:

- Take calls, answer emails and attend meetings outside of "traditional" business hours and locations
- Reach their colleagues, partners and clients regardless of where they are or what device they're using
- Achieve work-life integration that boosts their productivity while minimizing any extra time spent in the corporate office

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

With the commoditization of products and services, businesses must differentiate their solutions with creativity and innovation. As a result, knowledge workers – people who think for a living – have been growing in number. These workers spend their time analyzing information, developing new products, or ensuring better customer experiences.

Knowledge workers thrive in a flexible, open environment that lets them collaborate internally and externally, sharing information across geographic and organizational boundaries.

A study of knowledge workers[3] by Harvard Business Review conducted in 2020 after the onset of the pandemic was compared to a similar study carried out in 2013. The study found that during lockdown:

- Workers focused more on work that matters, spending on average 12% less time in large meetings and 9% more time interacting with customers and external partners.

- Workers took control over their own schedules and were more productive, completing 50% more activities that they *chose* to do compared to half as many that they were *asked* to do.

- Work is viewed as more worthwhile, with the number of tasks rated as tiresome dropping from 27% to 12% and the number of tasks readily offloaded decreasing from 41% to 27%.

To capitalize on these positive trends in productivity and work sentiment, knowledge workers need to be able to quickly reach out to the person or team within the organization that has the information they need, or their projects will stall, or they'll be forced to duplicate efforts of coworkers.

That's where **communications-enabled business processes** come in. By using communications tools to make business processes faster and more efficient, businesses can improve accuracy, decrease bottlenecks and lower total costs.

> ## "WORK" IS NO LONGER A PLACE WE GO, BUT AN ACTIVITY WE DO.
>
> **A SURVEY OF MORE THAN 4,000 U.S. WORKERS FOUND THAT 23% WANT TO CONTINUE WORKING REMOTELY.** [1]

ON THE MOVE WITH BYOD

Thanks to the rapid rise in business use of smartphones and tablets, almost all knowledge workers today could be considered "mobile" employees. But the level of "mobility" varies a great deal. An outside sales rep who is traveling to meet with prospects is using her smartphone almost exclusively so she doesn't miss any sales calls while on the road. In contrast, an operations team member might use PC-based applications and desk phones most of the time and smartphones when walking around campus or after hours.

Although nearly 75% of organizations supply at least some of their employees with smartphones or tablets, it's rare for a company to provide mobile devices for all workers. Increasingly, employees are relying on their personal smartphones and tablets for business mobility during the typical workday.

"Bring Your Own Device," or BYOD, is a growing practice that helps workers stay productive and in contact with their colleagues and customers. That said, it also blurs the line between work and home.

"Mobility" is often mistaken for "availability," but in today's always-on business world, the ability to "turn off" is key for work-life balance. Businesses need to set policies and provide the tools that will enable workers to communicate and collaborate securely —without sharing their personal mobile numbers and being expected to answer around the clock.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MILLENIALS

The Millennial generation (people born between 1981-1996) have become the largest generation in the U.S. labor force[4], according to a 2018 study by Pew Research Center. This group makes up 35% of workers today.

While Millennials have always known a business world with flexible working options, it's a newer concept for previous generations — Baby Boomers (1946-1964) and Generation X'ers (1965-1980) — but it's a model that older generations are fully embracing. (In fact, data show Generation X is just as digitally savvy as Millenials![5])

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And businesses are the beneficiaries. Since these older workers bring a significant "tribal" knowledge 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 age or experience. Organizations need the right mix of communications tools to support their work habits and methods. If the tools are full featured but straightforward, anyone can use them effectively.

BUILD A MODERN WORKPLACE WITH UC&C

Unified Communication and Collaboration (UC&C) tools support today's mobile and distributed 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 since at least 70%[7] of communicating attitude and feelings comes from non-verbal cues.

- **Instant Messaging & Presence (IM&P)**: See whether a colleague is available for a chat before instant messaging or inviting them to a call.

- **Collaboration services**: A virtual, always-on meeting room space for ad-hoc or planned meetings enables colleagues to share information and collaborate using any combination of group chat, voice and video conferencing, desktop and application sharing, and file sharing.

- **Unified messaging**: Mobile users need access to emails, voicemail 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.

GENERATION X IS AS DIGITALLY SAVVY AS MILLENIALS.[5]

THE BOTTOM LINE

So, what do these workforce trends mean for your business?

First, your communications no longer are limited to emails that are ignored or phone calls sent to voicemail. UC&C enables employees to choose the communications tools that work best for the situation at hand, giving your team more control, improving productivity and job satisfaction

Plus, enabling a remote workforce can reduce costs for employers on average by $11,000 per employee[6]. This means significant savings and greater margins for businesses that make the transition away from a premises-only work environment.
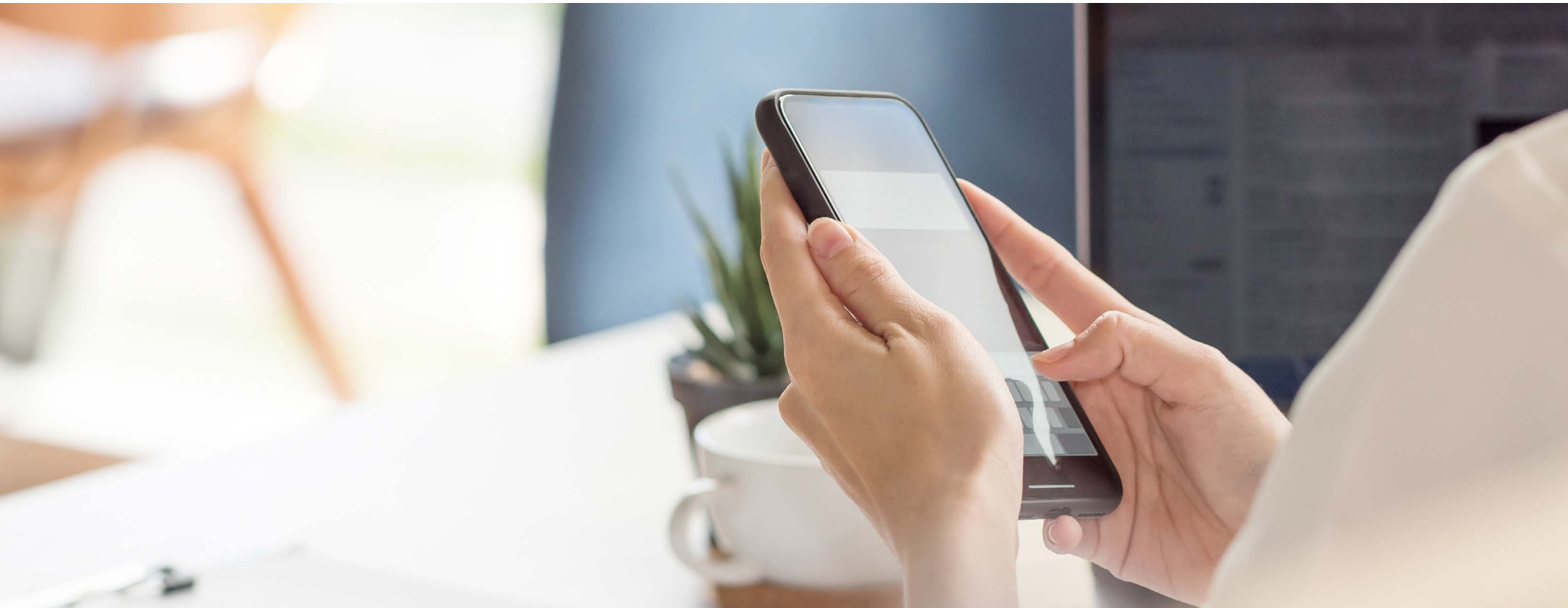
IT'S A DIGITAL REVOLUTION!

Today's employees want to tear down the traditional structures and policies that have ruled workdays for decades — and employers not only are accommodating but also advocating the change. That's because they know that when employees have the tools to communicate and collaborate anywhere, anytime and from any device, they'll be happier and more productive. What's more, the business gains new efficiencies and is no longer constrained by geography and time zones. From the corporate office to the home office, UC&C is creating new ways for businesses to thrive.

SOURCE

1. https://news.gallup.com/poll/329501/majority-workers-continue-punch-virtually.aspx

2. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-07-14-gartner-survey-reveals-82-percent-of-company-leaders-plan-to-allow-employees-to-work-remotely-some-of-the-time

3. https://hbr.org/2020/08/research-knowledge-workers-are-more-productive-from-home

4. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/

5. https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/11/generation-x--not-millennials--is-changing-the-nature-of-work.html

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

7. https://youth-time.eu/to-talk-or-not-to-talk-that-is-the-question-at-least-70-percent-of-communication-is-non-verbal/

YOUR COMMUNICATIONS ARE NO LONGER LIMITED TO EMAILS THAT ARE IGNORED OR PHONE CALLS SENT TO VOICEMAIL.

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