Modern communications for a distributed workforce

Is your organisation prepared for the 'new normal'?

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Why now is the time to prioritise your communication tools

The recent pandemic and the resulting lockdown conditions have led to a more distributed workforce than ever before, in both the UK and on a global scale, impacting a range of business operations in the short to medium term.

Some industries have been more affected than others, with businesses operating a traditional office setup now forced to distribute their workforce, and in some cases, operating with all staff working from home.

A dispersed workforce can present a range of challenges across communications and how the business operates - but can also offer a wealth of opportunity. The last few years have seen the creation and adoption of improved collaboration technologies across businesses, allowing flexibility and improving productivity amongst more employees than ever before - a progression that had been underway well before the COVID-19 outbreak took hold.

The businesses best prepared for changing (and often unexpected) conditions will have a technology roadmap and remote working policies in place, built for a modern workforce and this should be a top priority for companies large and small as we navigate the next few months ahead (and the 'new normal' we are likely to face).

Are you prepared to distribute your workforce longer term?

Millennials now make up 50 percent of today's workforce, and by 2025, this will be 75 percent according to the Brooking's Institute. Millennials are collaborative by nature, and this is changing the way business is done. The modern workforce is no longer tied to a 9-5 schedule and instead expects to be able to work on-the-go, with their personal choice of mobile device and applications. Whilst the pandemic has impacted business operations, it has in some way exacerbated the benefits to working more flexibly.

While this represents a challenge for businesses from a technology standpoint, it can offer the opportunity for employees to gain a work-life integration that allows them to manage their family and personal obligations with their work duties. This naturally boosts levels of productivity while minimising any extra time spent in (or commuting to) the office.

With many companies now reviewing their return to work policies (and some suggesting remote working is here to stay for the remainder of this year), businesses need to review what 'business as usual' now means and how best to adapt to a new way of working.
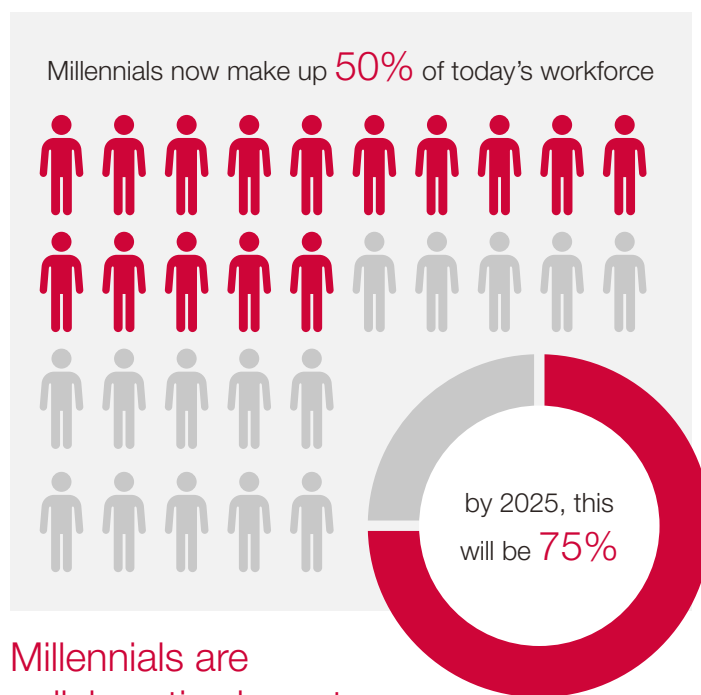
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How businesses must adapt their technology roadmap to prosper

To be successful in a new working environment, often away from the office, businesses must be able to provide their employees with corporate data and applications, advanced communications tools, collaboration spaces, as well as the ability to interact with colleagues and customers on any device and any network.

From a customer standpoint, their perception of your business can be made or broken by their ability to interact with you. Uncertainty caused by the pandemic has led to a rise in demand for information from companies in many key sectors.

As such, unprecedented levels of demand across call centres and hotlines will naturally have had an impact on 'business as usual' policies - meaning lines are at capacity and the service is stretched. For staff members working from home, there is the added complexity of fielding or taking calls with limited bandwidth or infrastructure in place.

Throw in the risk of additional privacy and cyber security concerns, and remote working may feel like an impossible task - but it doesn't have to be this way. In order to optimise your business technology roadmap to achieve success, you should consider:

Resilience: Probably the most important item for a business telephony solution is how the service is designed to cope with potential outages. Your service should be able to cope with natural disasters or network failures with call routing to alternative locations or devices, to avoid any business downtime.

Flexibility: The best telephony solutions enable you to add or remove users quickly, without disrupting the service. New features and upgrades should also be rapidly deployed automatically.

Cost: Is there required hardware or a hidden cost within the contracts? Are there any hidden exit clauses built into your commercials? What is included in your minutes bundle and are the out of bundle rates competitive?

User experience: Can your system be used fully on a number of devices, including desktops, laptops and mobiles - or are your users still tethered to a 'hard' desk phone? Can they communicate across channels with colleagues from anywhere?

Productivity: As well as traditional telephony, does your system include collaboration tools such as conferencing, instant messaging and presence settings?

Mobility: Will your solution operate on either iOS or Android? Is it suitable for a number of device ownership models, for example, BYOD – Bring Your Own Device?

Maintenance: Is the system easy to manage and maintain, 24/7? Does the solution support in-built diagnostics to allow quick resolution of any potential issues?

Compliance: In some industries, in particular, Financial Services, MIFID II compliant call recording is a business obligation. Is call recording available for calls on desk phones, desktops and mobiles?

Security: Does your service include necessary levels of encryption and cyber security to protect data handled by your business?

▊ Why Hosted Telephony should be a core part of your strategy

Hosted Telephony is quickly becoming the top priority for many businesses when future-proofing their business telecoms. Cloud-based business phone systems offer support to those looking to maintain direct connectivity for employees outside of an office location - perfect for a distributed workforce.

For starters, hosted communications do not require dedicated hardware in the server room or IT office anymore, because the entire system runs in the Cloud. Traditional 'hard phones' such as desk phones are not even required, as hosted solutions can offer telephony direct to a computer, tablet or smartphone, which is ideal for those moving between locations. As there is no physical hardware to install, and the products run through the Cloud, they can be deployed and upgraded quickly and remotely, meaning businesses are not paying for elements they do not need.

Another important benefit of a hosted solution is that it no longer offers just voice or traditional telephony, but has been transformed to offer a range of Unified Communications (UC) capabilities, all designed to keep the business running at maximum productivity:

Professional support: Call groups, barge, transfer and pickup tools, auto-attendant, customised messaging including welcome and hold music.

Multiple communications channels: Voice, instant messaging and presence settings giving a multi-channel approach hosted on a single, intuitive platform.

Collaboration tools: Voice and video conferencing tools, desktop and application sharing all for maximum efficiency in workstream collaboration across PC and mobile (iOS and Android).

Compliance: Call recording at a network level, with 256bit encrypted storage at geographically diverse data centres, for up to seven years, suitable for FCA regulated businesses.

Dashboard analytics: Real-time analytics reported for all endpoints within the business infrastructure, including graphical extension summaries, call detail records and MOS score details.

Guaranteed call quality: Comprehensive service level agreements offering guaranteed call quality and service delivery, with a single point of contact.

Utilising hosted communications, businesses can adapt their working models to a 'new normal', allowing geographically diverse teams to build and maintain business operations wherever they are, quickly, easily and with minimal disruption.

At Adam Phones, we work with several of the leading vendors in Gartner's Magic Quadrant, renowned for high levels of call quality and service delivery on a global scale. We are in a position to independently and impartially consult you on which solution most closely aligns to the objectives and requirements of your business.

Whether you are looking for planning support, provisioning or full end-to-end service, our team will manage your onboarding and implementation, ensuring you gain updates and new features immediately. From upscaling your service as required, to connecting multiple sites easily and cost effectively, Adam Phones will remain as your central point of contact - giving you back the time to concentrate on the important things.

With Hosted Telephony as part of a future proofing toolkit, businesses can embrace the opportunities that lie ahead with remote working, whilst continuing to support and adapt to customer requirements, remaining competitive, and most importantly, remaining connected.

To find out more about the benefits of Hosted Telephony and how Adam Phones can support your business needs as we adapt to a new normal, call us on **0800 123000** or visit our website to **find out more**.

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About Adam Phones

With over 30 years' experience creating bespoke, high performance mobile and fixed line connectivity solutions for some of the most demanding businesses in the world, our multi award-winning service is trusted by organisations that include FTSE 100 and Fortune 500 companies, as well as a wealth of industries including Financial Services, Government, Broadcasting, Aerospace, Hospitality, Legal and more.

Adam Phones has delivered secure mobile and fixed line call recording solutions to FCA regulated companies for over seven years, supporting over 35 percent of London's alternative investment markets with award winning implementation and support of MiFID II compliance. We continue to build solutions that can help your business meet both regulatory and internal compliance practices across mobile and fixed line services.

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