

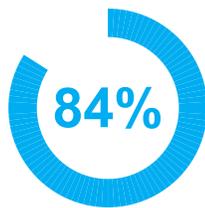
TAKING A USER-CENTRIC APPROACH TO REMOTE MANAGEABILITY

YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE WORKING REMOTELY. YOU'VE EQUIPPED THEM WITH LAPTOPS AND INTERNET CONNECTIONS. BUT ARE THEY TRULY PRODUCTIVE AND ENGAGED?

Early in 2020, offices around the world emptied as organizations were forced into a new work-from-home era. Now, companies such as Facebook, Twitter, REI, and Shopify have announced they'll make working from anywhere the new norm.

Enterprises are even giving remote work C-suite support. "Some tech companies are carving out new jobs for executives to act as advocates for virtual workers and think more broadly about a lasting remote future," the Washington Post reports.

That's a good idea, because our remote-work reality presents companies with new challenges, suggests Chris Park, director of Workplace Experience Services and Technology for Computacenter. In particular, he says, IT leaders need to take a consciously user-centric approach to enabling working from home. Doing so can keep employees productive and engaged. It can also transform remote work from necessity to business enabler.



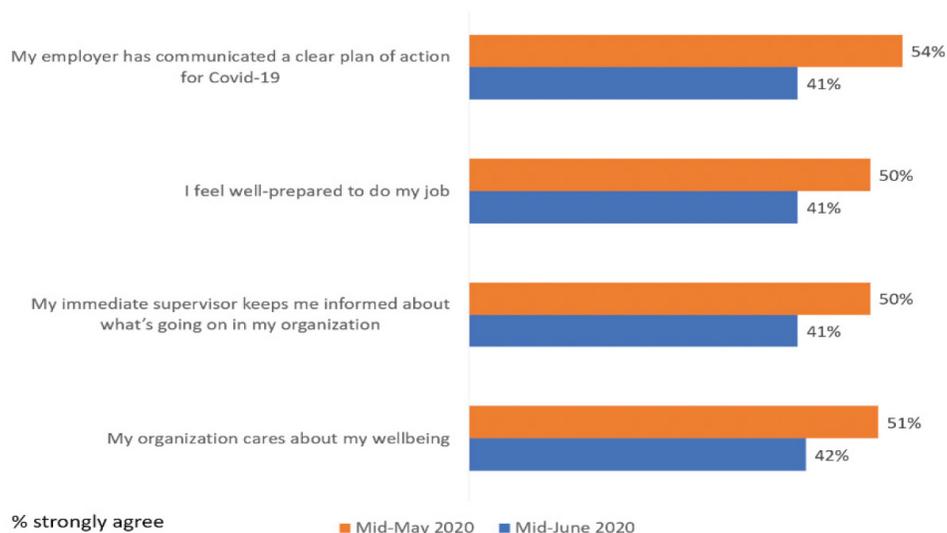
Employees who want to work remotely at least occasionally after they can return to their offices following the Covid-19 crisis²

Source: IBM Study

NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement has long been an HR imperative. Ongoing research by Gallup shows that highly engaged employees are more likely to remain with their organization, attract new customers, and produce substantially better outcomes.

But the Covid-19 crisis is placing employee engagement at risk. Some employees now feel disconnected from the zation and less equipped to do their jobs. [See the Figure.]



The good news is that technology can help – if you deploy it with a people-first perspective. “Technology plays an important role in employee engagement, especially when people are working remotely,” Park says.

Today, remote workers can no longer stop by a colleague’s office for a quick collaboration. But tools such as Microsoft 365, teleconferencing, and whiteboarding software, used effectively, can make your teams feel personally connected.

Start by segmenting your employees into personas based on how they consume technology. “There’s no one-size-fits-all for enabling remote workers,” says Rhett Livengood, director of digital business enabling for Intel, a Computacenter partner.

For instance, your salesforce might need specific sales apps. Engineers might require dual monitors. Executives might want sophisticated presentation capabilities. Once you create personas for different user types, you can give each group the tools that will make it most effective, without wasting time and money on technology people won’t use.

SOFTWARE, SERVICES, SUCCESS

The technology that powers remote engagement begins with the network. Intel, for example, relies on virtual private network (VPN) technology to connect its more than 100,000 employees. But with team members working from home, connectivity became an issue.

“Despite our robust business-continuity planning and cloud readiness, it was a massive task,” says Dan Brunton, systems engineer for Intel. “We had to double our VPN capacity over a single weekend and continue to simultaneously accelerate on-premises support. But by Monday morning, Intel employees around the globe were productively working from home.”

But VPN can have bandwidth issues, especially with videoconferencing. In response, Intel shifted some applications to the cloud for faster access. “We implemented tight cloud security to protect our data while providing a better user experience,” Brunton says.

As at Intel, videoconferencing has become vital to many organizations. That raises the bar on quality and reliability. “Use of videoconferencing has accelerated due to the pandemic,” Livengood says. “That means user expectations for video quality are now much higher. So IT has to meet those expectations.”

Just as important as providing new technology is making sure workers are taking advantage of it. “Monitor the usage of tools to understand how employees are consuming the technology you provide,” Park recommends. “That will help you measure return on investment and fine-tune the hardware and software that enable remote connectivity.”

Remote-support services are equally important. “Employees can no longer just walk up to the support team to get help with their hardware or software,” Park says. “So your Service Desk has to become top-notch, because it’s the only avenue for remote users to resolve issues.”

Give your Service Desk the tools to provide users with the best support experience. For example, VPN issues might previously have accounted for only 10% of service tickets. Today, that number might be 60%. Your support team should be trained and equipped accordingly.

Likewise, Service Desks have traditionally been available only during business hours. “People working at home might need to take the afternoon off for family responsibilities and then work late in the evening,” Brunton points out. “Support may need to change its model to enable productivity and a good user experience at all hours.”

Finally, remote workers need an overall environment that promotes engagement: a quiet space to work, good lighting, a comfortable chair, adequate heat or air-conditioning, a quality headset, and so on. “HR needs to get involved with guidelines on how to work from home effectively,” Livengood says. “IT can help, for example, by embedding into programs reminders to take regular breaks.”

FROM SECLUSION TO TRANSFORMATION

The user-centric approach to remote connectivity is part of a larger trend. "For over 14 years, the Intel vPro® platform was built and designed to support this new remote environment. Allowing IT to help keep employees productive, happy, and healthy," Brunton says.

That effort will continue as some workers return to the office. "Teams might consume technology differently going forward," Livengood anticipates. For example, they might do most of their work from home but come into the office for collaboration. As a result, the office might physically be configured differently, and IT will have to reflect that change.

Ultimately, new ways of working will require a change in mindset for the entire organization – from executive leadership to the lines of business to the IT function. "Managers who have never managed a remote team before will have to learn to do that effectively," Park says.

"There's a similar shift required of the IT team," he continues. "You can't just give your users the same old technology and expect them to be successful. You need to think about technology from the user's perspective, and how it will enable them to do their jobs in a new way. Only then will your remote-enabling tools drive the productivity and engagement you want."

GET IN TOUCH

New ways of working will require a change in mindset for the entire organization – from executive leadership to the lines of business to the IT function. To learn more about taking a user-centric approach to remote manageability, visit us at www.computacenter.com/us.

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1 "Hot New Job Title in a Pandemic: 'Head of Remote Work,'" Washington Post, September 2020

2 "IBM Study: Consumers Remain Unsettled Amidst COVID-19," Dealerscope, July 2020

3 "4 Factors Driving Record-High Employee Engagement in U.S.," Gallup, February 2020

4 "As COVID-19 Continues, Employees Are Feeling Less Prepared," Gallup, July 2020



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