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# Remote Working Essentials

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# Talk to your IT Team

Without today's technology, remote work would be impossible. That's why it's important to involve your IT team as early as possible. They'll be able to ensure all preparations are made so your applications will work and your files will be accessible and secure. It's not always a simple case of picking up your laptop and going home. By working with your IT experts to create a transition plan, you will keep your staff productive and connected.

It's likely that even if your office is empty, you'll have critical IT infrastructure humming away in the office. In many cases, your remote work will rely on this infrastructure. Your IT team should continue to monitor and maintain these systems remotely so it's still there when you return.

*The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a rapid and **dramatic shift** in the way we work - and possibly a permanent one.*

*For those of us lucky enough to be able to work remotely, adjusting to a new working dynamic can be a challenge. Some people, and some companies, make the shift easily. For others, it can be an unsettling and disruptive transition.*

# Choose the right tools

Think email and a phone is all you need to have a productive remote team? From a software perspective, the sky is the limit! Chat tools, video conferencing, collaborative document sharing, task management, and project management tools are all key to remote productivity.

Don't underestimate the importance of hardware. Hunching over a laptop screen at the kitchen table is a recipe for back aches. A large screen, standalone keyboard, and a comfortable chair will make all the difference.

You'll probably make good use of video conferencing, so here's a great but affordable tip: **a laptop's built-in microphone can sound terrible - a cheap headset can produce much better results**.
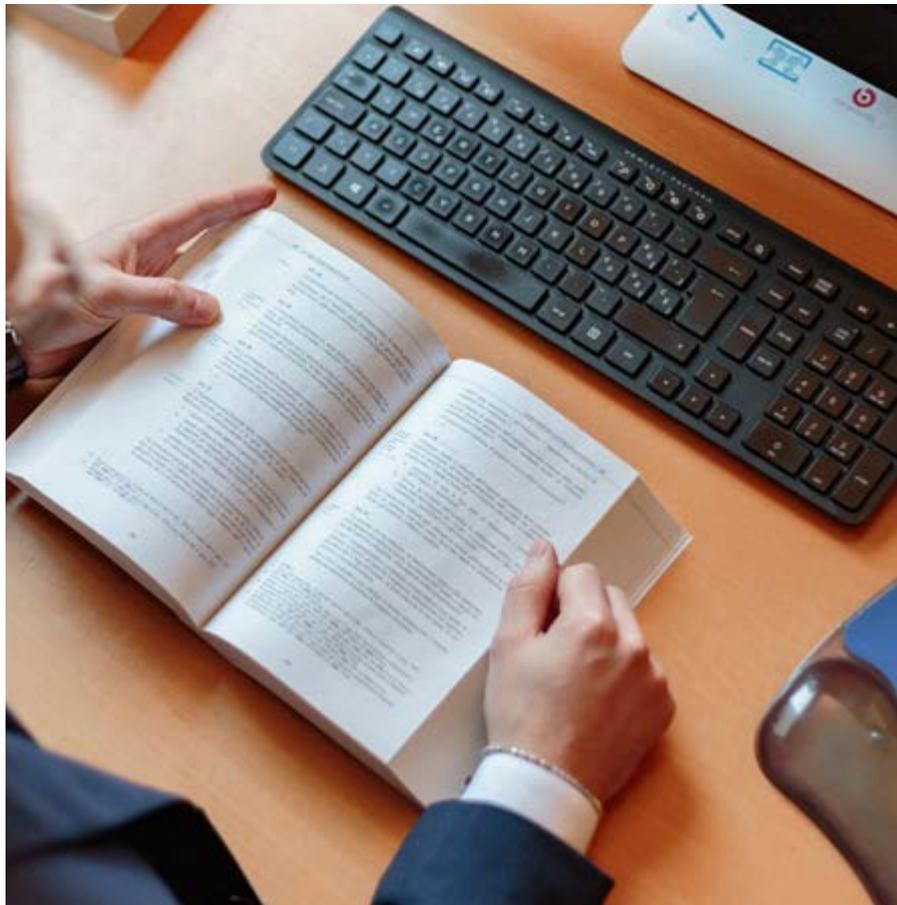
# Have good security in place

In the rush to move everyone out of the office, it's easy to forget about security. The last thing you need is a security breach during a global pandemic. Make sure you've considered:

- When working remotely, are your devices still protected by your security systems or firewall?
- Are your staff adequately trained in good security practices?
- Do you have two factor authentication to prevent unauthorised access?
- Are your portable devices encrypted to reduce risks if they are lost or stolen?
- Do your staff use secure passwords on their home wireless network?
- Is there a convenient, secure way to access your important files?

This is a complex topic and your security depends on many factors, so talk to your IT team or provider.

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*Unfortunately, many organisations view IT security as an afterthought. Almost **60% of companies** worldwide have **experienced some kind of cyber-attack or security incident**.*

# Embrace change

Rethink your habits, your own methods, and the processes throughout your business. It's not always possible to simply replicate what you already do when working remotely. You might need to replace your staff meeting with a video conference. Do you like to ask quick questions in the break room? Move to chat software. Perhaps you like to draw on a white-board to illustrate a point - now you can do it electronically. Do your documents require a physical signature? A timely investment in new business software will be worthwhile. Are you receiving a lot of snail mail? Contact your clients or suppliers and request a switch to emails.

You may find that these updated processes work so well, you'll keep them when you're back in the office.

# Share knowledge with your team

In many organisations, especially smaller ones, important functions are carried out by just one person. If any one person becomes sick, will it have a major impact on your operations?

Now is the time to document those processes and train people on how to follow them. Hopefully it doesn't happen, but your business shouldn't grind to a halt because one person is unwell. Take the time to sit down and identify at least three core functions that wouldn't happen without you. At the very least, write down the steps for others to follow.

# Stay in touch and enjoy it

Some of the best things about working life are chatting with colleagues over a coffee or joking around over lunch. Working remotely doesn't mean this has to stop.

Why not try setting up a daily morning "coffee" meeting by video conference? Or you could have food delivered to your team and virtually eat together. It might help keep your team sane, too.

# Remote work checklist

This year has been a challenging time for all businesses but we can embrace the new normal. If you're fortunate enough to be able to continue working remotely or from your office, we hope these tips will help with being flexible.

**Involve your IT resources early** to help make the transition easy.

**Choose appropriate and easy-to-use software tools** for chat, video conferencing, and collaboration.

**You'll probably be doing lots of video calls** - get a headset for an inexpensive but massive improvement!

**Be mindful of security** and pandemic-related scams.

**Lean in to the change.** Now is a good time to update your old processes.

**Make sure your organisation can survive if a few key people are unwell.**

**Maintain the social bonds -** Friday drinks can work over video conference too.

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