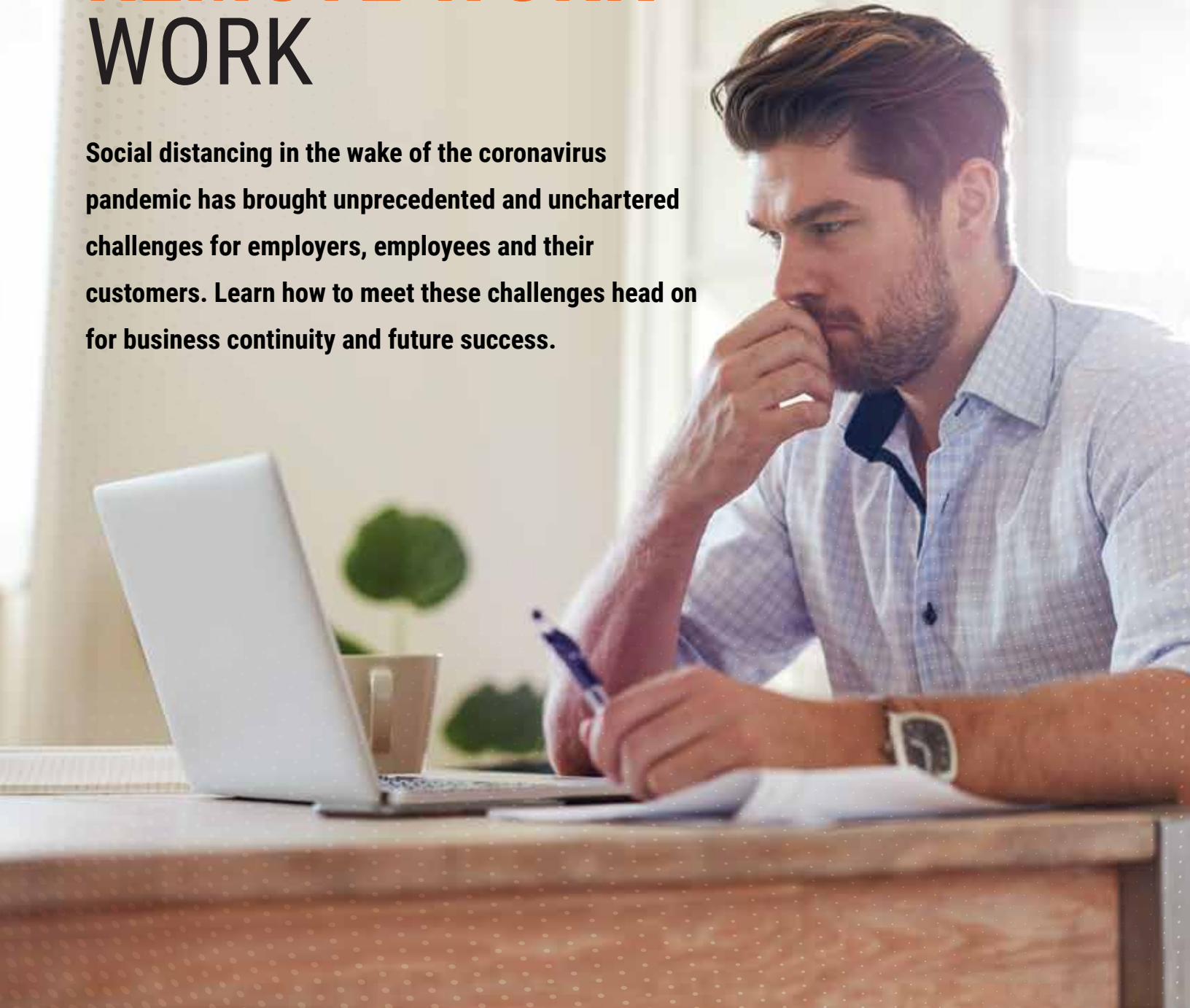# HOW TO MAKE
REMOTE WORK
WORK

Social distancing in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic has brought unprecedented and unchartered challenges for employers, employees and their customers. Learn how to meet these challenges head on for business continuity and future success.

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Overview:
Business Unusual

Businesses across all industries have been hit hard by the global COVID-19 pandemic with temporary closures and employee furloughs, layoffs and shift reductions increasingly taking place each day. Companies from restaurant operators to hoteliers, retailers and entertainment firms have let workers go to ratchet down operations while many other businesses are adopting remote work. Employees are working from home—practicing social distancing to stay safe, help contain the spread of the virus, and keep operations going and meet customer needs.

There are several measures and best practices you can implement to make remote work successful for your business, which we will discuss in this white paper, including:

- Remote Work: A Cultural Shift
- Going from Cube to Home
  - Leadership's Role
  - Get the Right Tech, Tools and More Into the Hands of Employees
  - Employer Tech Checklist
  - Additional Considerations for Employers
  - Tips for Employees to Work Remotely
  - Employee Tech Checklist

We will also cover leveraging digital platforms to communicate and engage clients during this challenging time.

Remote Work:
A Cultural Shift

For businesses without a remote work policy as well as for those that may have a limited policy to accommodate staff members with long driving commutes, making the shift to an all-hands-on-deck approach that requires most if not all employees to work from home is a tough transition. Making remote work a success takes cultural change that nurtures an away-from-the-office environment and goes beyond just the immediate requirements that the coronavirus emergency necessitates. It's not only about providing your staff with the right communication and collaboration technology and tools to get the work done but also about instilling new work practices designed for remote work.

Making the Leap from Cube to Home

Leadership's Role

Communicate regularly with your remote staff using video conferencing to help mitigate feelings of isolation. Also, create both a phone number and email address where staff members can communicate their concerns about the company, working at home and even the status of the virus.

Set clear expectations and a sense of individual accountability while respecting your staff's time. Convey confidence in your messaging that as a team and individually the work will get done. Avoid micromanaging and understand that not every ping, email, and phone call is urgent and requires an immediate response.

Ensure that an efficient, structured and standardized employee communication program is in place. Provide all employees with an outline of the various communication and collaboration channels available and the function of each. Employees should have a written list of accessible resources to accomplish their job along with standardized proto-cols for each department, team, project, etc. and how they function together to move the work forward.

Get the Right Tech, Tools and More Into the Hands of Employees

Business continuity involves ensuring remote workers have the right technology, tools, and more to do their jobs. In some cases, for example, you may already employ platforms for communication, collaboration, productivity tracking, customer engagement, etc. while in other cases you may have to boost your efforts and invest in additional technology. Following is what your employees need to work efficiently remotely:
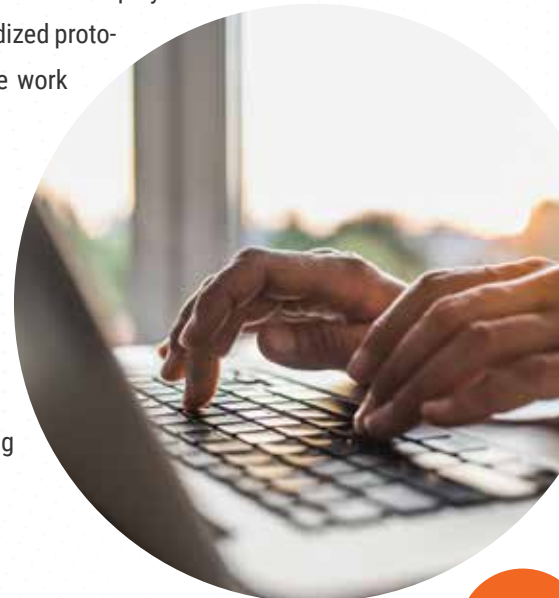
- High-speed Internet at home
- Sufficient bandwidth to access the company's virtual private network (VPN); make sure staff must log-in using robust password protection, as hackers will leverage this time to access open environments
- Office phone transfer to a designated mobile phone to receive company and client calls (if possible)
- Earphones with a built-in microphone to participate in calls with clarity and less distraction from outside noises
- Computer hardware, software, a desk, an ergonomic chair, good lighting
- Video-conferencing tools such as Zoom, Go to Meeting, Cisco Webex, Skype, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams
- Workplace management tools such as Slack, Trello, and Asana for arranging and assigning tasks, tracking wider project progress, and building workflows for repeated jobs and chats
- Document/file-sharing software such as Google Drive, Box.com, DropBox, Egnyte for employees to share files more easily (especially large files)
- Collaboration tools to schedule online meetings and brainstorming sessions via a project management tool or via Microsoft 365 and Google Suite

Anticipate problems; ramp up staffing in your information technology department to handle the likely surge of calls for assistance. Make sure to document steps remote employees should take if they do encounter difficulties so you can easily replicate and share tips and tricks that you discover along the way.

It's also critical you update best practices in technology utilization to reflect remote work in order to adequately protect against network security and data breaches. For example, advise your staff on emerging threats tied to the coronavirus, including new phishing attacks and attempts to steal VPN credentials. Make sure all remote workers lock their computers when they're not being used. Implement two-factor authentication using smart cards or security keys.

EMPLOYER TECH CHECKLIST FOR REMOTE WORKING

		YES	NO
1	Can all employees reach email and share file?	☐	☐
2	Can all employees VPN into the office network (if applicable)?	☐	☐
3	Do employees have the bandwidth to work at home?	☐	☐
4	Do you have sufficient software licenses for employees to work at home?	☐	☐
5	Do all devices used remotely have the latest version of their operating software, security software and applications?	☐	☐
6	Is there documentation on the systems your employees are using at home, including firewalls, routers, security, etc.?	☐	☐
7	Is there documentation on all equipment and peripherals that employees have taken home to use for the duration to ensure no hardware, printers, shredders, etc. will go missing or be unaccounted for?	☐	☐
8	Are all employees receiving phone calls to their home or cell phones?	☐	☐
9	Can they dial out through the company phone system to mask their personal numbers?	☐	☐
10	Are the e-Faxes being delivered?	☐	☐
11	Are you creating back-ups of your servers so your staff can keep working when extra traffic makes your primary servers go down?	☐	☐
12	If you have any company-sensitive documents, have you instructed employees on how to properly dispose of such paperwork while at home?	☐	☐

Additional Considerations for Employers

Other important considerations to address when having a remote workforce include:

- The cost of additional equipment for employees to work from home
- Potential changes to employee contracts and to your employee manual
- Client notifications of any changes in operations, billings and other procedures
- Any potential insurance changes to existing policies with remote workers (for example, Workers Compensation statutes vary by state; different exposures may exist with employees working across state lines—be sure you have coverage)

Tips for Employees to Work Remotely

Employees already accustomed to working remotely have an established routine that works for them. Yet for many employees the transition from the office to home may not be easy as one may think…at least not at first. Following are some recommendations to share with your employees to create an optimal work environment.

- Establish a designated workspace with your computer and all the tools you need to work efficiently. If you have a spare room, use it. If this isn't an option, carve out a space in the living room, dining room or family room that will work for you.
- Let your family know this is your "office" and to respect your space and the time you will be working. If you have kids who are also at home due to school closures, this is more challenging but it's important to establish rules so you don't feel pulled in many different directions.
- Reduce distractions like the television.
- Dress as if you're going to the office. This doesn't mean you need to wear a suit but take the time to look and feel good so you truly feel you are in work mode. Be aware of what you are wearing or what is visible behind you (e.g., artwork or photos of a personal nature) when participating in videoconferences.
- Structure your day, following your typical work hours. Make sure management, colleagues and clients know when you are available.
- Make a list of what you need to get done just as you would when in the office and schedule your tasks.
- Take breaks just as you would if you were in the office—for lunch, to exercise, or to spend some time with the kids, for example.
- Get up and move around so that you don't start experiencing back issues and other problems. You won't be going to meetings, or dropping by a colleague's cubicle or office, so it's important that you are mobile. Stretch, walk around the block, do some yoga.
- Communicate and collaborate with your colleagues often; if you are in a management position keep in contact with your staff to ensure that they are adjusting to their new work environment. Take the time to connect socially on-line as well, which is particularly important when everyone is feeling isolated.
- Be responsive to both your colleagues and clients just as you would be at the office.
- Shut down at the appropriate time…don't work 24/7 because you're at home.

EMPLOYEE TECH CHECKLIST FOR REMOTE WORKING

		YES	NO
1	Can your laptop connect to the VPN?	☐	☐
2	Can your laptop reach files on the server? Can you open files?	☐	☐
3	Can you open email on your laptop?	☐	☐
4	When placing a call to your office phone number, does it connect to the desired location (ex: mobile phone)?	☐	☐
5	If you place an eFax, does it appear to go through? Do you receive a confirmation from the eFax provider?	☐	☐

Leverage Digital Platforms to Stay Connected with Clients

As increasingly more people work remotely, in place of face-to-face client meetings, events and conferences, it's critical you continue to remain connected with your clients. Depending on the location, individuals are self-isolated or quarantined and spending even more time on their computers and mobile phones, digesting tons of information in the process. Boost your client communication and engagement by leveraging the following:

- Email funnels/campaigns to keep your brand in front of your customers and prospects on a regular basis, providing information relevant to their needs
- Blogging on timely topics posted on your website and social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook)
- E-newsletter which can include your latest blog articles with links to your website and additional top-of-mind features to help drive site traffic

Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has caused a shift in the way we work almost overnight with a virtual workforce as the new normal—for now. It's important to have a disaster plan in place and to provide clear direction and communication to make remote working successful. Companies may find down the road, when we're able to get back to business as usual, that remote work will gain even more traction as an option for employers and employees.

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