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Ensure your team can work as normally
as possible from home



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How to make sure your team can work safely and efficiently from home

As a nation we've already experienced one lockdown and it's looking like we are heading for another in the not-too-distant future. It's likely to be less severe but now is the time to take action.

Last March, business owners and managers made some difficult decisions. This time we have the experience and know-how of what works and what doesn't. We've already had a trial run.

Flexibility and Remote working - Putting plans in place now for how your teams can securely work from home will not only ease the pressure on your people but also allow for careful planning of how to increase security across your IT systems.

Everyone is being affected in some shape or form. From the rule of 6, pub and restaurant restrictions, school and work outbreaks resulting in self isolation. In these difficult situations, your business and staff will need to work smarter. Track and Trace means that without warning, the people in your business could be forced to self-isolate. Preparing for this now means you'll be able to react effectively and professionally without risking your business or anyone's safety.

Cyber-attacks during the last lock down grew exponentially as criminals sought to expose the security flaws created by opening IT networks to allow home working. The more entry points into a network, the more risk you are exposed to. An unprotected home computer makes your corporate IT network highly vulnerable to a cyber-attack.

We have not created this urgent checklist to scaremonger. But to ensure that your business is prepared now for the possibility that your team is not able to come into the office.



Protecting your business from cyber-crime should always be your biggest priority. You've probably got security covered in your office already – all of your computers have anti-virus software; you use a secure VPN and your data is stored away safely.

But if your team starts to work from home, you're widening your exposure to potential threats. And cracks can quickly appear in your business's protection.

When preparing for a potential office shut down, you may need to provide your employees with equipment and infrastructure in order for them to complete their duties from home. When doing this, it's best to take this approach: **If it's not secure, there's no point in having it.**

If an employee requires a computer/laptop, especially if they need access to shared networks or data, it is imperative they do not use a personal laptop.

For security reasons, it is better to provide your employees with a work laptop or computer that they can use strictly for work purposes. This is a great way to immediately minimise risks to your business, especially from ransomware.

Here's a quick overview of what else should be considered:

- Ensure your employees are using approved devices for work purposes only, especially if you use a VPN (Virtual Private Network, which is the safest way to work remotely)
- Educate employees on device use while at home (not using work devices for game downloads etc)
- Ensure all devices have anti-virus software
- Make sure wi-fi passwords are changed before using home wi-fi for business purposes
- Set up multi factor authentication

#1



– Security



#2



Access to data

If your employees need to work from home, it's important that they are able to access everything they need to fulfil their responsibilities.

For smaller companies, it's key to make sure all data is in a location that is accessible to begin with. Because of this, you may need to reconsider how and where you are saving data and files.

We advise ensuring all data and files are kept in one secure location that is regularly backed up. SharePoint, part of Office 365 is a great way to save files and access them safely from different locations and devices.

Another thing to think about is how your employees can access business applications and how your IT support company can access your server remotely.

All of this can seem quite daunting, but here's a really easy way to figure out what your employees need and how to ensure they have it. **For each department in your business, think of all the different applications that are needed and create a list like this:**

System	How do we access?	Who needs access	Actions / Options
Email / Office 365	Online	All team members	Buy laptops for remote working
Documents	Individual devices and Dropbox	Account management team	Ensure all data is migrated over to SharePoint

Once you have done this, you can then create a list for each member of your team:

User	Device	Access Required	Actions
Laura	Laptop and mobile phone app	Just emails and phone	Set up Office 365 Teams
Richard	MacBook	Password manager and emails	Set up password manager

This is a great way to figure out exactly what applications are required, who needs them and how they can get access safely.



If your employees must work from home because of a Coronavirus emergency, the obvious question to ask is: does your team have the equipment they need to work remotely?

With the majority of office devices being desktop, it's important to consider sooner rather than later if you need to buy laptops. Especially, as the advice is to provide employees with safe and secure work laptops, should they need to access shared networks and if your business uses a VPN.

This sort of decision needs to be thought through carefully and made in advance, to ensure that the devices required are available to buy. We are already seeing increased demand for devices, and some supply restrictions due to manufacturing issues in China.

You must also consider telephony systems. If your team requires access to an internal phone system, could Microsoft Teams (in Office 365) be a better way to minimise costs if you are already using Office 365. Or do you need to look at other systems and work phones for employees?

Here's a quick overview of what should be thought about:

- Whether you need to buy work laptops for employees?
- Do your employees have the right internet access at home?
- What telephony systems do your employees require and do they have a suitable telephone device to work from?
- Do your employees require any other additional equipment to fulfil work responsibilities at home?

Some of your employees may find working from home difficult. This is why every effort should be made to ensure your employees have an appropriate workspace at home.

We do not suggest that you go out and buy everyone a desk and a chair. But we do advise that you clarify with your employees what their home working environment is and offer support where it is possible and appropriate. To ensure that they remain as focused at home, as they are in the office.

#3



—
**Home
office
set up**



#4

The pandemic has kickstarted working from home; firms including Fujitsu and Twitter have already announced plans to make remote work a permanent option, even after the pandemic.

A recent experiment by Bloom showed that people working at home are 20% more productive than their counterparts in the office.

This could be a great opportunity to look at your current processes, with the view to improve them regardless of a Coronavirus emergency. Especially if you are part of the Office 365 ecosystem, as there are lots of applications in there that you already have access to and could use.



Here's a quick overview of what should be considered:

- Project management software
- Video conferencing
- Instant messaging / chat
- Reporting and time management
- Office 365 applications including:
 - Teams
 - SharePoint
 - OneNote
 - Planner

Communication, collaboration and management



How can we help?

You may feel like this much preparation is a bit too much, considering the current threat levels to the UK.

However, it is so crucially important to ensure your business can continue operating in the wake of a Coronavirus emergency. The earlier you plan for such an eventuality, the more prepared and protected your business is.

For many of our clients, this type of planning can seem quite daunting. Which is why we can work with you to ensure your business and employees have everything they need to continue working safely and securely.

Don't leave this too long. **Let's talk now and get your business prepared.**



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