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Oh... 2020 😩

This year was supposed to be so good.

It was almost a metaphor... 20/20 vision. Seeing things clearly. Going for gold.

But it all came crashing down almost as soon as it began.

Perhaps it was a metaphor, but not the one we first imagined. Now we can see clearly the changes we need to be better.

But enough with the deep thinking.

We are where we are. And this year has already seen us change the way we do almost everything. From visiting friends and family, to shopping, and even the way we work.

While some of those changes have been more difficult than others, many businesses have found that working from home can genuinely be a viable option.

And it's only now we're approaching the final quarter of the year we can plan for how our teams will be working in the future.

September seems the perfect time for this. It's the beginning of a new academic year. And now it's the fresh start in the office (or from home) for many of us.

- How will your business be dealing with these new working patterns?
- Will everyone be back as they were?
- Will some of your people be working remotely, either full or part time?

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Your new set-up should be effortless. It should be smooth. You shouldn't have to think about it and you certainly shouldn't notice that things have changed... again.

So, after you've considered your workplace policy on face masks, when you've constructed any partitions and a one-way system around the place, you need to think practically about the tech side of things.

Here we're going to set out a list of things you need to consider, apps to utilise, and policies to implement. Because if your new normal isn't easy, you're doing it wrong.

At this stage

YOU'VE PROBABLY ALREADY WORKED OUT WHO WILL BE BACK, WHO WILL BECOME A REMOTE WORKER, AND WHO WILL DO A BIT OF BOTH

It's possible that people will be feeling a little nervous at the prospect of coming back to the workplace, so it's likely that more people will fall into the latter category, at least initially. And it's these ones that you need to think about in most detail.

Consider how they will be working:

- Will they have a work-issued device to use at home and a computer in the office?

- Will they bring a laptop back and forth?

- Or perhaps they'll use a personal device at home and a work device in the office?

Whatever you decide security should be at the forefront of your mind.

Are all of the devices updated with the latest versions of operating systems, applications, and security? Is remote access working as it should be? Is back-up performing successfully every day?

Where devices are being brought back and forth from home to office, do you have a procedure in place should a device be lost or stolen? Are you able to remotely restrict access to data? Who will take responsibility for ensuring the procedure is followed?

If you haven't already considered these things, now's the time. You can react to issues so much more quickly when there's a plan in place for how to handle them.

Make sure all of your people know the plan - even if it won't affect them.

There's nothing that will demotivate someone faster than feeling disconnected.

During lockdown, you may have relied on apps like Zoom or Skype to keep channels of communication open, and to make sure meetings still went ahead (and were productive). If that worked for you then, keep it up now. It's great for keeping engagement high, but even if everyone is now in the office, it's a good way to comply with distancing regulations.

We also highly recommend Microsoft Teams. It's an amazing tool for keeping on top of projects, sharing documents, connecting with colleagues, and planning ahead (there really is so much in Teams).

If your business hasn't tried it, now is a good time. Add the whole team and they can chat over instant messages, video calls, voice calls, and email.

They can share and edit documents, @ Mention each other in messages, and post updates.

It's like a productive form of social media. And because of that, it's relatively easy to get your team on-board with using it.

While we're talking about your people, **REMEMBER THOSE REMOTE AND PARTLY-REMOTE WORKERS WILL STILL NEED REGULAR CONTACT WITH THEIR TEAM AND MANAGER**

Now is also a great opportunity
TO REVIEW YOUR IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Work with your IT service provider to look at how well you're set up for your new ways of working.

It's possible that when lockdown happened, some of the IT changes made were done on a temporary basis. More for speed than for longevity.

However, if you're now looking at permanent home working for some or all, it's possible that things still need to be adjusted.

Think about how your VPN (Virtual Private Network – to allow your people to login to the network from home) is performing. Does it suit your needs or would a different one be better now that you know your actual requirements?

How about your devices? Do they suit the needs of each employee's role? Many businesses handed out old company laptops in March, just to allow home working. And that was great for then. But if some people are home working permanently, it's now time to see if a different device would help them to do their job better.

Again, speak to your IT service provider to find out what recommendations they can make. They should be able to advise on and source the most appropriate devices, and work within your budget.

Getting into semi-permanent flexible working arrangements shouldn't be a huge upheaval.

In a perfect world, your people should be able to walk back in, sit at their desk and get going. Possibly after a little back-to-work chatter.

The only changes you should notice are those put in place to ensure social distancing. If things aren't running smoothly with your devices, network, or phones, you haven't got the right system in place.

Cliché alert
BUT THIS REALLY IS THE TIME TO SETTLE IN FOR THE "NEW NORMAL"

ENVOLVE
TECHNICAL
SOLUTIONS

If you could use advice on getting your office ready for the big return to work, we'd love to help. **GET IN TOUCH TODAY TO FIND OUT HOW WE CAN MAKE YOU MORE PRODUCTIVE.**

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