



AMAZON WEB SERVICES

# Enabling Greater Employee Productivity in the Hybrid Workplace

**A Guide and Assessment for Small and Medium-sized Businesses**

AWS SMB | MAY 2022



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# Introduction

## About This eBook

This eBook provides information to help business-decision makers in small and medium-sized businesses understand how cloud solutions can help remote and hybrid workers maximize productivity and thrive when working remotely.

## You'll Learn:

- How to provide your organization's employees the ability to easily work, collaborate, and communicate securely from any location
- What to consider when implementing permanent remote work solutions
- The advantages of using Amazon Web Services (AWS) for remote work solutions



## CHAPTER 1:

# The Work From Anywhere Model Is Here to Stay

The pandemic was a catalyst for many businesses—from the smallest to the largest enterprises—to quickly implement remote work solutions to enable their employees to stay productive and to get work done in remote settings. For many, remote work has proven to be a real and viable option, not just temporarily, but for the long term. The future of work is hybrid, with 75 percent of remote or knowledge workers saying their expectations for working flexibly have increased, and four out of 10 indicating they may leave their jobs if they're required to return to the office.<sup>1</sup>

Many businesses are permanently implementing remote and hybrid work models as the way forward. For example, IDC predicts that mobile workers will be 60 percent of the total U.S. workforce by 2024.<sup>2</sup> The benefits of allowing employees to split time between working on-site and remotely are becoming clearer:

- More flexibility for your employees
- Greater productivity for your business
- Better service for your customers
- Easier recruitment of top talent from an expanded geographic reach
- Reduced facilities and employee travel expenses
- Improved employee work/life balance

1. Gartner, **"Future of Work Reinvented,"** 2021.

2. IDC, **"U.S. Mobile Worker Population Forecast, 2020-2024,"** 2020.

We're now entering the next phase of remote work, as businesses are combining new and more permanent practices with ones that they're already comfortable with. Remote work is more than just extending greater flexibility to employees. It is an opportunity for you to improve upon how your business fundamentally goes about getting work done by rethinking certain business tools and processes. When enabling a permanent remote workforce, there are challenges that your solutions will need to overcome, including how to:

- **Enable productivity in remote settings:** Organizations must make sure that their workforce stays productive everywhere, on any device. It also needs to be easy for employees to use tools in remote settings where IT resources are less likely to be available.
- **Maintain effective collaboration:** Collaboration is a top IT priority for 96 percent of small businesses<sup>3</sup> because it simplifies and supports productive remote and hybrid work. Businesses that foster intentional collaboration, either in-person or virtually, report 75 percent higher levels of team innovation.<sup>4</sup> Yet without having the proper tools in place, collaboration, innovation, and performance of remote teams suffers.
- **Secure your information:** With remote work comes more locations and devices to secure. There's sensitive data and applications in more places. This can be appealing to unauthorized users who know small and medium businesses don't always have strong security protocols.
- **Provide reliable connectivity:** Secure connectivity is the foundation for productive remote and hybrid employees to work with customers, partners, suppliers, and each other. Unreliable access to applications from any device prevents your employees from doing their jobs efficiently, creates more calls to your limited IT staff, and results in costly downtime.
- **Scale to handle greater loads:** To enable remote work, it's more than just providing devices for your employees to use in remote locations. You must ensure your core business systems can scale quickly to handle greater loads.

3. TechAisle, "**Collaboration is 2nd top IT priority for SMBs and the top IT challenge for upper midmarket firms,**" 2021.

4. Gartner, "**HR Research Shows Organizations are Eroding Employee Performance and Well-Being with Virtualized Office-Centric Design,**" 2021.

**Survey data from PwC shows that executives are recognizing the need to increase investments to make remote work successful. Top areas of increased investment include virtual collaboration tools (72%) and IT infrastructure for secure virtual connectivity (70%).<sup>5</sup>**

5. PwC, *"It's Time to Reimagine Where and How Work Will Get Done,"* 2021.



## CHAPTER 2:

# How the Cloud Can Help

In the quick shift to remote work, many organizations leveraged cloud applications and services to smooth the transition. Cloud provides the on-demand delivery of compute resources, database, storage, applications, and other IT resources via the Internet. Instead of buying, owning, and maintaining your own data center and servers, you get quick access to the resources that you need with pay-as-you-go pricing.

Cloud applications and services such as video conferencing, messaging platforms, cloud storage, and VPNs have provided support for remote workforces, regardless of physical location. Some advantages of using cloud for your remote workforce include:

- **Easier access:** Remote employees can share files, collaborate on projects, and communicate quickly with messaging and video. The cloud provides accessibility of shared content and files at any time and any place from any device.
- **Enhanced security:** Cloud is built on an underlying secure infrastructure, making it secure for remote workers to utilize cloud resources. Data stored in the cloud is at far less risk for incidents such as hardware failures or crashes that can occur on your own site, further strengthening security.

- **More effective collaboration:** The cloud facilitates better collaboration between employees, partners, and customers no matter where they are, through secure file sharing and meeting. And, many of these tools are designed with intuitive interfaces and ease of use that require little help from your IT resources for training and onboarding.
- **Flexible scalability:** Accommodate the needs of more remote workers as you need to with the cloud. If you have a sudden requirement to move your entire workforce to be remote for a fixed period of time, you can do this instantly using the cloud.
- **Reduced operational costs:** Pay for only the services that you use with cloud, and if required, you can bring your own license for a consistent experience for your users. Avoid building out additional infrastructure and buying costly licenses that you may only need during peak demand times.





## CHAPTER 3:

# Assessment: Do You Have a Permanent Remote Work Strategy in Place?

As organizations look ahead, there is an opportunity to evolve remote work models by strengthening the tools and security that remote employees use. To plan for the future, consider these questions to assess where you can make improvements in your remote work tools. **If any of the statements below apply to your company, the cloud can offer you solutions to help.**

We are using different applications for calling, meeting, and collaborating, which doesn't seem efficient.

We don't have all of the tools and processes in place to support a productive remote workforce.

We must ship laptops to remote employees for them to access key files and applications.

We have engineers and designers that can't work with their GPU-intensive applications from home.

We're running a legacy file share system that is not very conducive to easy content collaboration for our distributed remote employees.

There is concern about maintaining control over sensitive company data that could be on our remote employees' devices.

Scaling our VPN is difficult because the number of remote employees that we have fluctuates.

We have a call center, but we're not able to enable our agents to work remotely, and we would like to.

We don't have a plan in place if our call center's call and chat volume outpaces our current contact center's capacity.

Our remote employees aren't always able to connect with our customers in the way that they need to.

We lack a solid business continuity plan.



## CHAPTER 4:

# AWS Solutions for Remote Work

AWS empowers you to quickly, securely, and cost-effectively enable remote work for your employees. To meet the needs of remote employees, AWS delivers cloud services that enable them with secure access to corporate resources from anywhere, ensures corporate content can remain securely in the cloud, provides tools to remotely share and collaborate on documents inside and outside the organization, and delivers a scalable collaboration and meeting solution that enables virtual meetings, calling, and chats from anywhere. Deploy the services that you need tailored to your specific requirements.

## Secure cloud desktops

Providing well-equipped laptops and desktops to remote and mobile workers can be expensive, and securing, managing, and maintaining them is time-consuming. Determining the right number of devices to accommodate changes in user numbers can result in buying too many of them.

Amazon WorkSpaces replaces traditional desktops with a managed, secure cloud remote desktop service for Windows and Linux that gives your remote employees a fast, responsive desktop experience from anywhere, at any time, from any internet connected device. There are several advantages of using Amazon WorkSpaces over traditional desktop deployment methods and

virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solutions. You can instantly scale your cloud desktop deployment up or down to support fluctuating numbers of remote employees. The high costs and management burden of maintaining desktop inventory are eliminated, and there is a better TCO over traditional on-premises VDI systems, which have associated hardware, power, and cooling costs. And, you have added security since data is not stored on end-user devices.

## **Remote communication and collaboration**

True collaboration is more than just video conferencing. It's bringing together all your business activities for continuous teamwork and productivity, no matter where employees are located.

Amazon Chime offers the ability to meet, chat, share content, and place business phone calls from anywhere within an integrated secure application. Teams can work in multiple modes (voice, video, web, messaging) all in a single place. You get the added benefit of pay-as-you-go pricing for enhanced features, with no upfront fees or long-term contracts.

## **Secure remote network access**

Traditional VPNs are intended for use when a majority of the workforce is in the office and most IT services are located on-premises instead of the cloud. Managing traditional client-based VPN solutions has presented scaling and operational challenges which are made worse when unforeseen events create spikes in the bandwidth and connection requirements, causing reduced VPN availability. AWS Client VPN is a managed client-based VPN service that lets your remote employees access any authorized company resources, both within AWS and your on-premises network, without having to install and manage on-premises hardware and provision VPN clients. Scale the VPN up or down as you need, based on peak remote work demands.

## **Secure content collaboration**

Legacy network file shares and on-premises enterprise content management solutions are expensive and complex to maintain. Instead, with Amazon WorkDocs, your employees can engage in content creation and collaboration no matter where they are located. With Amazon WorkDocs your remote teams can collaborate on the files from any device without sending them back and forth.

## **Application streaming service**

As employees continue to work remotely, one way to improve that experience is with application streaming that provides users with instant access to their desktop applications from anywhere. This simplifies application management, improves security, and reduces costs by moving your company's applications from your employees' physical devices to the cloud. With Amazon AppStream 2.0, you can leverage the compute power of AWS and run applications such as CAD, CAM, CAE, 3D modeling, simulation, games, video and photo-editing software, medical imaging, and life sciences applications that normally wouldn't be possible to use remotely on devices because of GPU, CPU, memory, or storage constraints.

## **Virtual contact center**

If you are a business that's considering using a contact center for stronger customer interactions or already has one in place, providing contact center agents with the ability to work remotely has become a requirement. Setting up, configuring, and operating a contact center, even on a small scale, can be complex and costly. Adding new features and optimizing workflows can take a lot of time, and many businesses require multiple solutions to serve the needs of the business, which can add additional complexity.

Amazon Connect is an easy-to-use cloud contact center that helps you provide superior customer service at a lower cost. Since it's built on the cloud, as your small business grows, you can easily grow your contact center and empower agents to work from anywhere. Little technical skill is required to set up a contact center with Amazon Connect, and there is no infrastructure to manage on an ongoing basis. Automate interactions with your customers to reduce the contact rate with your contact center agents by adding the Amazon Lex chatbot as an initial conversational interface.



## CHAPTER 5:

# Why AWS for Remote Work

AWS is helping customers around the world to enable collaboration and secure access to applications and resources to keep businesses going. Reasons why small and medium-sized businesses are partnering with AWS:

- **Security:** Security is the fundamental component of making remote work solutions possible. The AWS Cloud is built to satisfy the most stringent requirements of the world's leading institutions, including global banks and government agencies. You can use this same infrastructure to protect your data, secure your applications, and meet security and compliance standards. While AWS is responsible for safeguarding the AWS infrastructure from vulnerabilities, intrusions, and fraud, you as a customer share in securing your resources by making sure the software, data, and access that sits on top of the AWS infrastructure is secure and in your control.
- **Scalability:** Services can be deployed and used instantly and scale as quickly as possible. Move your employees to a remote model in hours, and provision the resources that you actually need, knowing that you have the ability to scale up or down.
- **Reliability and resiliency:** AWS built its cloud infrastructure and services to be highly resilient and stable. When you are working remotely, you depend on being able to access your IT systems and applications, and any downtime risks loss of productivity. AWS provides the highest-availability cloud to reduce your unplanned downtime and maintain reliable connectivity to your applications and data from anywhere.

- **Cost savings:** With pay-as-you-go pricing options, you can adapt to changing business needs without minimum monthly fees, long-term commitments or upfront license charges which saves you money. For additional cost savings, you can receive discounted rates for reserving a fixed amount of resources that you know you'll use.
- **Performance:** Remote employees, such as engineers and designers, may not have the same powerful workstations at home to run GPU-intensive 3D design and complex engineering workloads. Rather than ship high-performance workstations out to these employees, you can use cloud streaming from AWS, which allows a fast and fluid experience at a fraction of the cost.

## Getting started

Secure your employees wherever they are working and optimize productivity for your business with remote solutions from AWS. To get started, take these next steps:

- **Use self-service resources:** With quick starts and tutorials, you can learn how to use and deploy each solution. Jump right in to get hands-on experience with AWS through the **AWS Free Tier**, which lets you explore products through free trials and offers.
- **Discover third-party applications:** AWS marketplace allows you to extend your remote work capabilities with software applications that are vetted for quality and authorized to work with AWS. You can buy application subscriptions through the AWS Marketplace, making it easier to centrally manage all of your software through a single vendor.
- **Work with a partner:** Select a partner from the Amazon Partner Network (APN) to get projects started quickly, and to help you continuously optimize costs.

As you move forward to accommodate the hybrid workplace, use the cloud as a way to lead the enablement of collaboration, security, and resource access for your remote employees. The cloud not only provides a seamless transition for your employees to work remotely, but also helps you to save on overhead costs such as office space, utilities, and travel. Using a cloud-based infrastructure instead of an on-premises one gives you greater flexibility, scalability, and security, all in a pay-as-you-go model so that you don't have to spend additional dollars to build out for your peak number of remote workers.

**Learn more about how to work securely from anywhere.**