

ENABLING A HYBRID FUTURE:

A guide to setting up
new working practices



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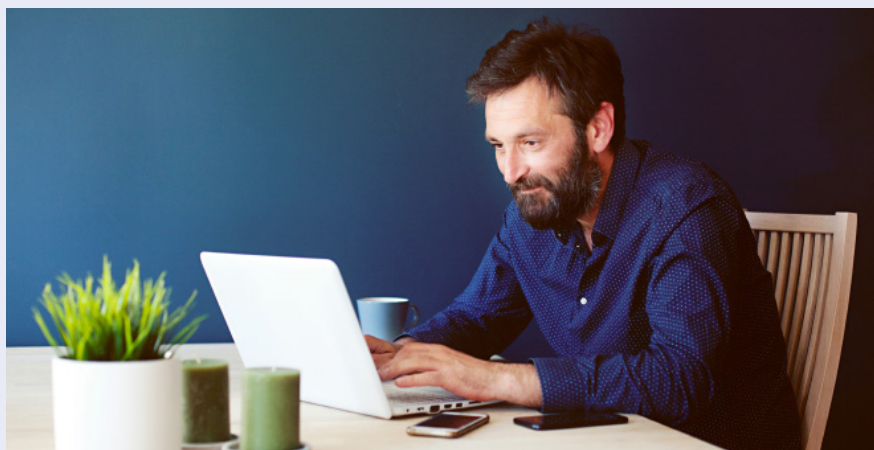


WELCOME



What will 'the new normal' look like? The answer for each organisation is likely to be different. The huge benefit of increasingly sophisticated technology is that organisations now have choices in how they run their operations – they don't need to have everyone in

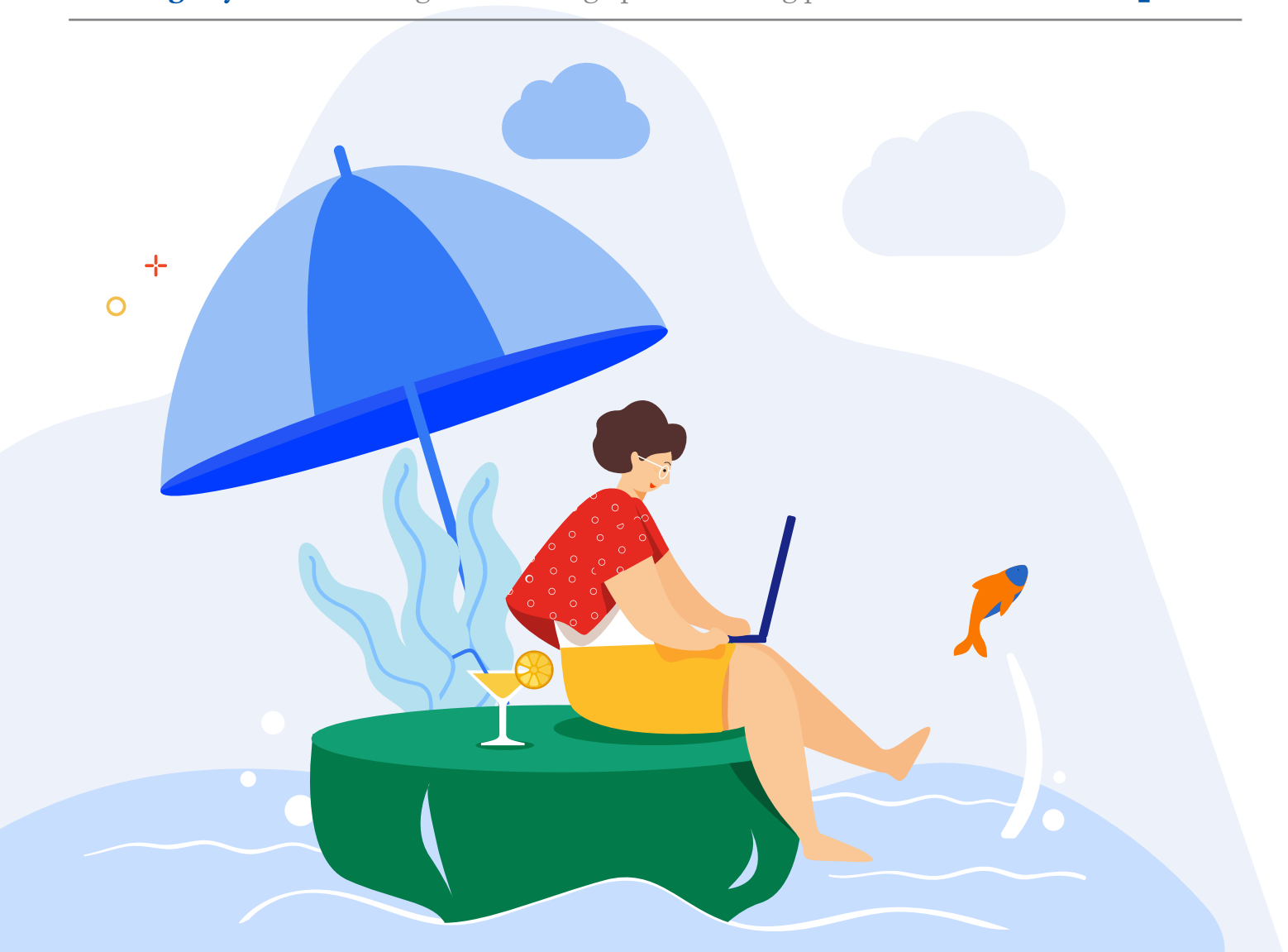
the office 9–5, five days a week just because 'that's how things have always been done'. This whitepaper explores the options available to your organisation going forward, and how you can develop bespoke working practices that work for you.



ABOUT O2 BUSINESS

With greater flexibility and an unrivalled service, O2 helps you stay connected whenever you're doing business. O2 gives your business the coverage, reliability and security it needs to operate effectively. Flexible options include Data Rollover*, which automatically rolls over your excess data to the next month, flexible tariffs, and contract lengths that suit you, from 30 days to 3 years. O2 understands that every business is one of a kind, and therefore provides you with a premium service tailored to your unique business needs.

*Data Rollover: For new or upgrading customers only. Available on selected tariffs of 6GB of data or above, excluding 2GB triple data, 3GB double data and unlimited data tariffs. Up to 100% of unused data from standard monthly data allowance can be rolled over into the following month. Eligible data rolls over for one month only. Any data that cannot be rolled over will expire. Any unused data will not rollover if you decide to change to an alternative tariff. Subject to availability, status, credit check and general terms for business customers apply. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/terms



FLEXIBLE FUTURE

The pros and cons of office working versus remote working have sparked a lot of debate over the last few years and especially over the past few months, with many organisations and employees experiencing remote working for the first time. Some organisations have found it a challenge to adapt to new ways of working, while others have embraced it and realised it can even be better for their business.

While this debate is an important indicator of change, it perhaps misses two crucial points. Firstly, there is no longer a one-size-fits-all approach. Organisations won't be at a disadvantage or seen as outside of the norm if they embrace flexible working arrangements going forward – if anything, it may give them an edge over competitors to offer employees a working life that fits in with the rest of their life. Secondly, the discourse over onsite versus offsite needn't

be so rigid. Employers and employees can find a bespoke solution that works for them, whether that's basing some staff permanently in the office and some from home, or offering employees the option to choose their own way of working.

Flexible working arrangements may be the key to retaining happy and productive staff and attracting new talent. O2 research found that, even before the pandemic, flexible working options were the most important consideration for new staff aside from salary. Reasons for this include a better work-life balance, increased productivity when working from home, the opportunity to live outside of the city, and concerns over the environmental impact of the commute. A 2020 O2 survey published as the UK went into lockdown found that 81% of workers with jobs that can be done from home expect to work remotely at least one day a week after the pandemic.

As well as satisfying employees and empowering them to work in the way they feel is most productive and effective, this flexibility also helps organisations stay agile. Just as those organisations with the capacity to set up remote employees found the transition to working under lockdown more manageable, organisations who continue to support many working practices will be more adaptable and resilient to future disruption.

SUPPORT DIFFERENT HARDWARE NEEDS



One of the big challenges of adopting more flexible working practices is making sure you equip your staff with the right tools for the job, and that you can adapt this if their working arrangements change.

When everyone came into the office all day, every day, and had their own assigned desk, you could get away with a one-size-fits-all approach. But gone are the days where the standard PC setup is enough – we rely on technology for everything from basic communication to complex tasks, so a simple, standardised approach is no longer feasible. If you're truly going to make a flexible, hybrid setup work, you need to think about not only what everyone needs for their different job roles, but what that job role looks like when it's performed onsite, offsite, or a mixture of the two. If your employees will be swapping between working setups, agility is key. This was tested under lockdown, where those companies who had already embraced agility and were using portable devices and cloud-based applications were able to adapt much more quickly than those using a central server and fixed desktop PCs.

So, consider whether some or all of your staff need mobile devices, such as laptops, tablets or smartphones, and how high-performance these need to be. Your video editor, graphic designer or web developer may

need far more performance from his or her enterprise laptop than an admin assistant who mostly sticks to the Microsoft Office suite. The salesperson who spends more time interacting with clients than in front of a computer may need a top-end phone or tablet. Hybrid workers may need devices which can easily and efficiently be plugged into a second screen at the office, whereas those committed to office working might find it easier to stick to a fixed desktop PC.

Of course, managing all of these devices can be tricky. You may want to consider outsourcing device management and look at a Device as a Service (DaaS) model. This means that you can ensure that device lifecycle is managed – so devices are regularly updated and you don't have to worry about paying upfront for the latest models or committing to devices for a long time just to make the most of your investment. As your IT teams are likely to be stretched trying to manage new ways of working and prioritising important things such as innovation, outsourcing some of the more routine management to a trusted provider can free-up valuable time and resources. With O2 Business, for example, you can choose from a range of devices, from cost-effective solutions to the latest releases across mobile and tablets, and laptops – all on flexible contracts and tariffs tailored to your business needs.

EMBRACE CLOUD COLLABORATION

The right hardware is just one piece of the puzzle. It's no good having your employees set up with the best machines if they're using outdated software or low-quality collaboration tools.

One of the biggest challenges for businesses over the past few months has been maintaining a sense of team spirit and collaboration when people aren't physically in the same room. Technology has done wonders to make this possible and the sophistication of video-conferencing tools, in particular, has won over even the biggest remote working sceptics. Maintaining a good level of collaboration when you have some staff working remotely on a permanent basis, however, requires a more thought-out, long-term solution than the occasional video call. Crucially, everyone needs to feel as though they are equal members of the team, no matter their working hours or location.

The best way to ensure that everyone is on the same page is to choose one key platform for internal communication. Ideally, this should be something which allows you to share files and collaborate too, such as Microsoft Teams. As well as offering a much more efficient messaging service than endless emails, Teams gives you reliable, secure video conferencing for individual or team meetings, and live events of up to 10,000 people. A big benefit of this service is that it's also integrated with Microsoft 365 – the cloud-based version of your favourite office apps. This means that staff can carry out a huge portion of their daily work using one platform – whether that's syncing up calendars and holding meetings, discussing projects on messenger, or collaborating on files.





PRIORITISE CONNECTIVITY

What about the network itself? Good connectivity is another business goal that's much easier when everyone is in one place, meaning that businesses must make connectivity a priority when developing more flexible, hybrid models. While many organisations have made do in exceptional circumstances over the past few months – putting up with various levels of temperamental WiFi or broadband – you need a reliable and sustainable solution in the long run. You don't want bad connectivity to stifle productivity, nor do you want individual staff to be at a disadvantage because their internet speed is too slow to join the meeting or even open the document you're all collaborating on.

O2's 2020 The Flexible Future of Work survey found that six in 10 people believe it's very important for employers to prioritise connectivity going forward. When you consider the changing working landscape, providing good connectivity options is no different from providing employees with the right software and hardware for the job. Organisations choosing to commit to a hybrid working setup should be prepared to get involved in any connectivity issues that staff may have,

ensuring employees have a reliable connection at home and on the move. This may mean providing funding for staff to upgrade their home broadband, and ensuring that any mobile devices you supply them with have enough data to handle all the file sharing and video calls they need to carry out their jobs effectively.

To keep your business running efficiently, you'll likely need the flexibility to adapt your data plans and device connectivity to meet business needs. This is where it might be beneficial to look at using one provider with an offering designed specifically for business flexibility. For example, O2 Business offers flexible tariffs (meaning you can scale your data up and down depending on your business needs* and increase or decrease your number of connected devices), automatic data rollover, and flexible contract lengths. O2 Business can also help you with specific connectivity requirements – for example, providing you with devices and data plans if you need to set up a pop-up office quickly. It also comes with the option of Microsoft Business Voice, which enables you to move your landline to VoIP, so it can be accessed from anywhere.

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BE CLEAR IN YOUR OFFERING AND EXPECTATIONS



If you embrace hybrid or remote working as an organisation, you're unlikely to have the same level of face-time with your staff. For instance, if the all-company meeting switches to a video call, you lose some of that natural in-person interaction. It's therefore vital that you put careful consideration into ensuring any part-time or full-time remote staff feel in the loop. This means you must be very clear with all of your staff – remote or onsite – what's on offer in terms of flexible arrangements, what you expect from them, and how you will assess their work.

Make sure staff know exactly what the flexible options available to them are, and how you plan to go about making these work for them and the business. If you offer flexible hours but have expectations around how often employees can work offsite and how much advance notice they should give, make that clear. If you allow remote working but require staff to use only work-issued devices, develop an easy-to-follow, transparent policy for this. For organisations giving workers the option to design their own working arrangements, they must feel empowered to make the right choice for them. This means ensuring that staff feel encouraged and supported when choosing to spend time away from the office. It's no good having flexible arrangements as an option in theory if staff still feel the need for presenteeism or if important meetings are happening onsite without a video conferencing option.

Requiring fixed hours of work is increasingly becoming an outdated model. Does it really matter to your organisation what time your staff clock on or off if they get everything done? This may depend on job roles – your client-facing teams might need to be

online at the same time as customers, but can you allow flexibility in your internal teams? If you are offering flexible hours, it's important that you ensure that the way you measure employee performance and productivity is fair and transparent. Someone's commitment to their job shouldn't necessarily rest on face-time or whether they respond quickly to an email, it should instead be how much they're contributing to concrete business objectives. For example, consistently producing engaging content and hitting deadlines could be the key measure of success for creative teams, regardless of how and when they completed the work. If teams are consistently hitting targets, perhaps it doesn't matter so much about being available in person for every meeting.

Finally, ensure you're communicating with your colleagues on security, too. This must not be an afterthought in the ever-evolving and ever more complex digital world. For maximum protection, adopt a zero-trust approach – which means using strict controls on access and not trusting any users by default. Endpoint security and visibility of all devices are essential, including any devices not issued by the company. Many service providers will include security packages as part of the deal with devices and software. With O2 Business, you can get Sophos security, which helps secure your company data and protect your business from cyber attacks.

In 2020 and beyond, any organisation should be able to run its operations on its own terms. With the right plan in place and technology to support your business requirements, you can create a bespoke solution that works best for your business and staff.