

The Workspace of the Future

Adapting and securing your business
to the new normal of remote and
home working.

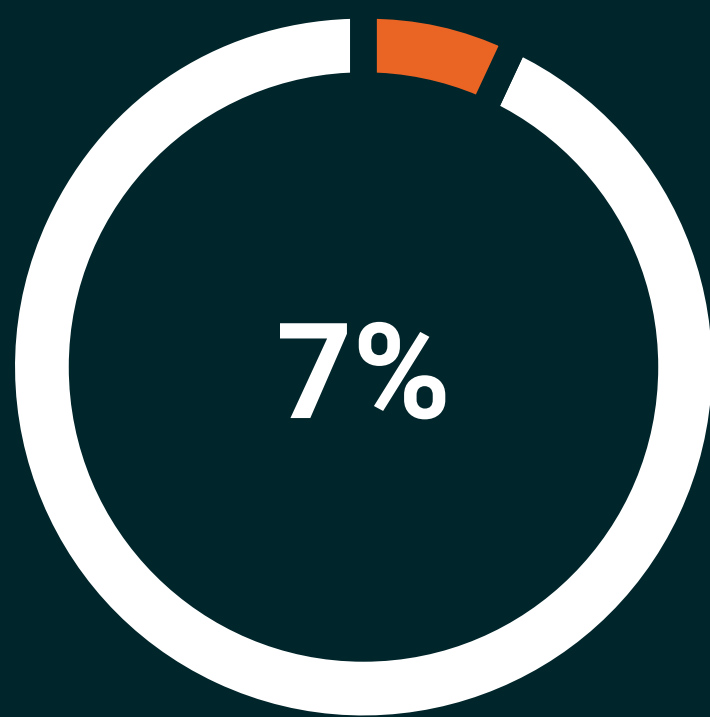
The office (r)evolution

During the first two decades of this century, the typical office slowly transitioned from an environment where workers were confined to cubicles and managers to offices into a far more open plan space. In recent years whilst some organisations have encouraged limited remote working, fundamentally, there has been little change to the way we worked; the majority of workers were 'confined' to their primary office workspace.

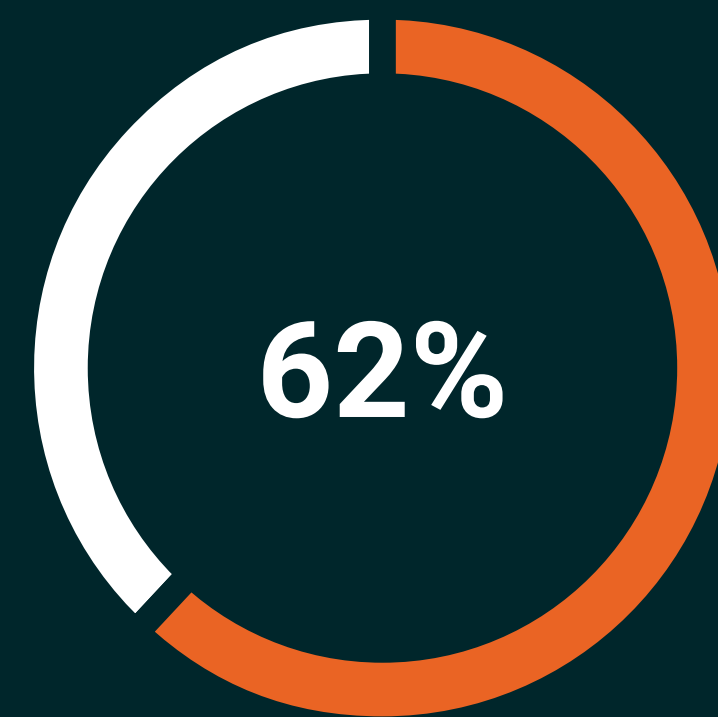
During the first few months of 2020, however, the entire concept of where people work has undergone a revolution. Almost every business has had to face an unexpected, and sudden, "Work from Home" challenge. This has necessitated a transformation in attitudes to remote working, but even more, a rapid adoption of collaborative services like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Cisco Webex, Dropbox – amongst others.

The future of work

Where and how your employees work is changing.
Your workforce can no longer be bound to a primary workplace.



7% of workers had access to teleworking
pre-COVID-19



62% of workers are working from home
during COVID-19

The question of productivity

From most he unplanned remote working experiment has been successful with workers – where remote work is possible - been able to continue work to a greater or lesser extent. Further, and maybe unexpectedly, the consensus is that productivity was not been impacted by the move to remote working during the first phases COVID-19 pandemic, with only a 1% reduction in productivity.¹

Perhaps most surprisingly this has been the case even when workers have less than ideal working conditions.

- For families this has not only were both parents at home – perhaps both working remotely – but their children were also home consuming bandwidth with their own school video conferencing and collaboration tools. Some families have even had to share computers.
- Most remote workers have had to adapt as best they can, sharing WiFi, broadband and even the kitchen table.

COVID-19 has only had a 1% reduction on work productivity...

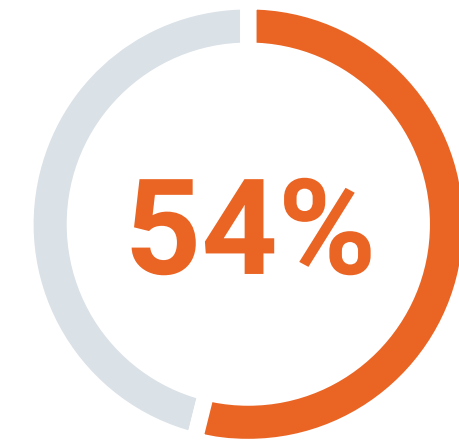
Unfortunately, this productivity has often come as a result of employees, who feel they should be online and available as much as possible, working longer days and weekends, interrupting home lives and increasing stress.



Only 35% have a dedicated home office, making working conditions more difficult



On average those working from home are racking up an extra 28 hours of monthly overtime since lockdown began. It equates to nearly four days' work²



54% of parents found it difficult balancing household demands while working from home³

With the transition to remote working set to last far longer than the event that precipitated it, organisations need a long-term solution to ensure ongoing productivity.

“There’s definitely been some issues because there are multiple people remotely working here, and we’ve had some Wi-Fi issues.”

'37% of IT leaders said that employees didn't have the right tools to be able to work when the transition to remote work was first made.'

Are there any more points of concern?

So, while employers have managed the rapid transition to remote working across their organisations, longer term issues such as security and quality of service (QoS) remain a concern. Remote working compounds any security concern that would apply to employees working in the office.

- Are they accessing confidential or sensitive information?
- Do they have access to internal corporate apps or their company's cloud-based SaaS apps?
- Are bad actors able to compromise their Wi-Fi or Internet connections to steal credentials or other corporate information?

In short, the security controls that are in place within the organisation, are often not adequate when employees work remotely.

Security

In reality, whilst technologies such as VPNs have long been the go-to answer to securing the connections between remote workers and the enterprise, they often fall short of the demands of today's worker. VPNs provide a secure point-to-point connection between the user's device and the corporate network, but don't provide direct access to any cloud-based apps or other assets. Further, access on VPNs is limited to a single device per connection, giving a very different experience to the office worker.



84%

of remote users lose access to applications at least once a week, and 11% said it happens daily⁵, whilst over 1 in 10 employees had their video calls hacked while working remotely⁶.

Quality

The VPN's most significant shortcoming, however, is that it doesn't provide adequate QoS controls. Business use of - often limited- WiFi and Broadband has to contend with other users, such as classroom videos. This is further complicated by the fact that business QoS needs are not uniform.

- Call centre staff have higher QoS requirements perhaps than a typical office worker – and they may even be using zero client virtual desktops.
- Some workers may depend on high video quality, whilst others need secure access to large files.

Management

Company IT teams very rarely manage home networks. Instead, they're handled by the employee. Networking issues can affect employees' access to applications and the performance of services. To continue providing remote workers IT teams to have the ability manage the infrastructure performance and security of those users.



Supporting a remote workforce is far more complicated than making sure employees have laptops and internet.

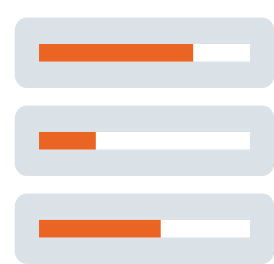
The SD-WAN solution

Now, however, organisations and technology vendors are developing solutions that provide secure remote worker solutions that can deliver improved user experience.

Software-defined WAN (SD-WAN) provides a much smarter, more efficient WAN model. This relatively new technology provides flexible, scalable and secure connectivity that's crucial for managing access between sites - branch offices, retail stores, manufacturing plants - and cloud and data centres.

Remote worker traffic, however, is typically must routed to the data centre. The most recent transformation is taking SD-WAN to the next level with secure solutions that are ideally suited for small branches or home offices.

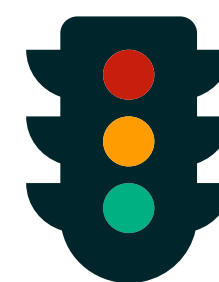
The benefits of basing remote worker technology on SD-WAN are extensive...



Centralised policy control and management



Security



Real-time intelligent traffic forwarding



Application performance



Scalability



Stability through multiple connections (4G backup)

‘Ultimately, for companies looking to deliver an ‘office like’ environment to users working remotely an SD-WAN based solution can deliver on all the technology requirements.’

Who benefits



CxO or Business owner

Highly available

LTE backup connectivity provides bullet-proof access to corporate network with fast connectivity.

Multi-layered security

Verify, enable secure access and defend remote workers at anytime from anywhere.

Centrally managed:

Extensive insights at the edge for better performance and troubleshooting



Financial Services Executive

Application optimisation

Manage latency and bandwidth-sensitive data applications to optimise key applications.

Segmentation

Traffic is segmented from the device to ensure corporate security and access policies adhered to.

Multiple devices

Easily connect multiple wireless or wired devices to corporate network for a full office like experience.



Call Centre remote worker

Application access

Enhanced cloud and on-premise app experience via WAN optimisation and Cloud OnRamp.

Management

Centralised operations enables simplified provisioning and management at scale.

Network performance

Key applications prioritised to provide high performing user-experience.



Pop up or small branch

Role based segmentation

User traffic is segmented from the device to ensure corporate security and access policies adhered to.

Consistent WiFi access

Extend corporate WiFi and security with user authentication.

Highly secure

Secure access, advanced cloud security and threat protection for remote workforce against threats.

How SD-WAN transforms the performance and security of remote workers

The early adoption of SD-WAN was focused on IT teams seeking cost-reductions, but that's changing. The transformation operational flexibility and centralised control of SD-WAN based services have more recently become the driving factors – hence the wide adoption of the technology in organisations with a distributed workforce. And this is more important than ever in enabling organisations to enable and secure the remote workforce.

Fast to deploy: The devices need no pre-configuring, transforming the speed and simplicity of rollout, enabling remote workers to be rapidly brought onboard at scale.

Plug and Play: Users can simply connect the router to their existing broadband device to get secure access to the corporate network, just like being office based.

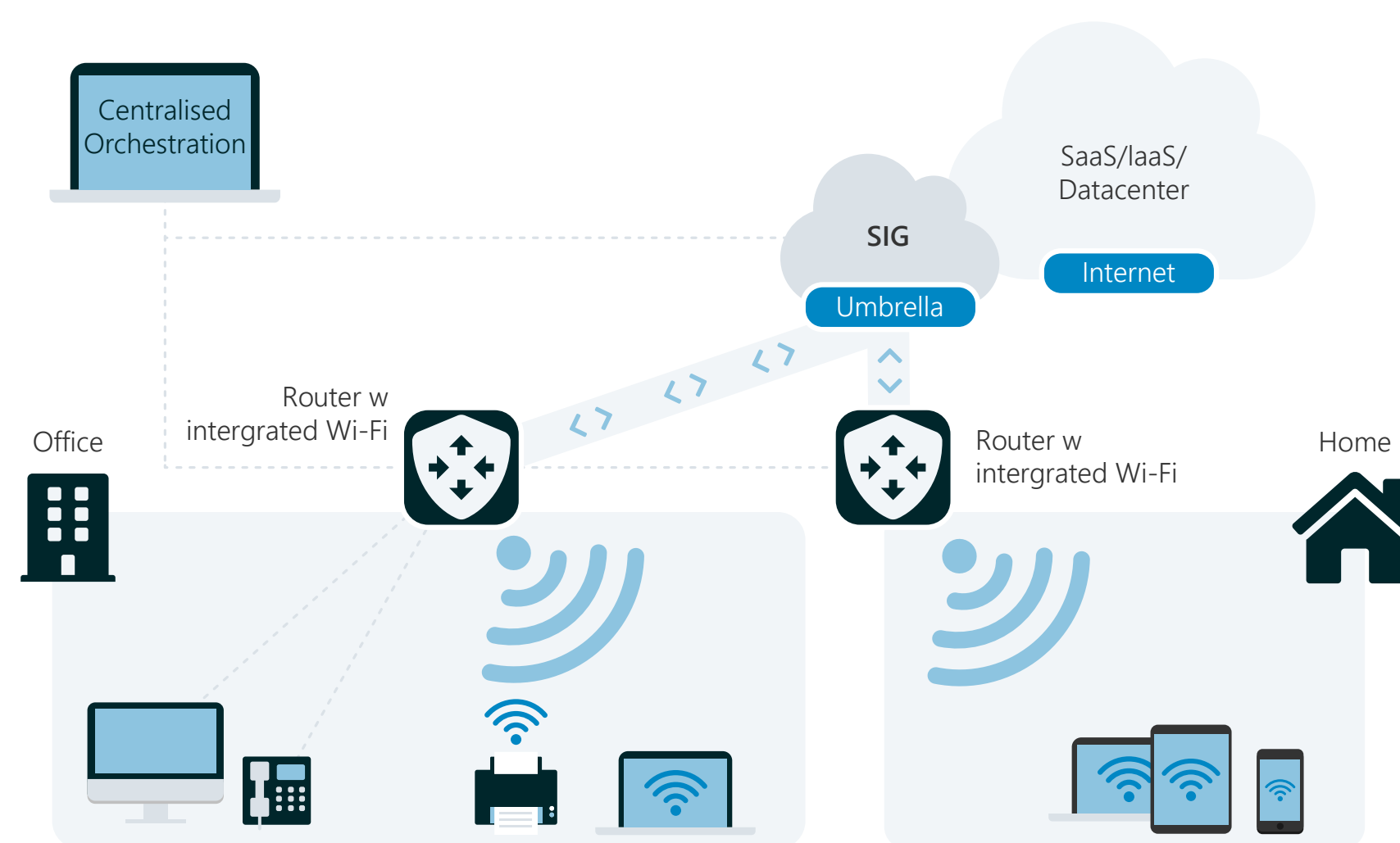
Centralised Control: As soon as the device is connected to the internet, the IT team takes on the provisioning, setup, and management of each device remotely.

Zero touch onboarding: Users can easily connect any of their devices to the corporate network, either with wired devices directly to the routers ports, or using the built in WiFi with corporate SSIDs.

Automated Optimisation: Once connected, traffic to corporate or SaaS application is optimised through the network based on its quality of service requirements.

Resilient Connectivity: To ensure high availability (as needed) router can use a built in 4G/LTE capability to provide an alternative, seamless data path in the event of the broadband failure.

Built in Security: DNS-layer security protect remote workers from advanced threats and detect their compromised devices.



Conclusion

The way we work is changing. The rapid transition to a world of remote working has shown that productivity can be maintained wherever employees are based, at least in the short term.

Productivity is, however, just one measure of the effectiveness of remote worker solutions. Enabling a true 'office like' environment whilst working remotely, or from a small branch, has to be the goal of any organisation.

Emerging SD-WAN based remote solutions provide workers with the security, resilience and application performance that have traditionally been the preserve of the office environment. They may even make employees more productive than before and improve their work / life balance.

What's more such solutions can be delivered and managed for just the price of a cup of coffee a day.

Sources

- 1 <https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252485414/Remote-working-set-to-remain-but-so-do-management-challenges>
- 2 <https://www.cityam.com/remote-working-is-causing-employees-to-feel-overworked/>
- 3 <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/07/08/future-work-good-challenging-unknown/>
- 4 <https://bdaily.co.uk/articles/2020/07/01/research-remote-working-and-the-impact-on-it-effectiveness>
- 5 <https://www.networkworld.com/article/3566292/idc-covid-19-hits-sd-wan-data-center-gear-enterprise-impact-varies.html>
- 6 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2020/06/19/is-working-remote-a-blessing-or-burden-weighing-the-pros-and-cons/#1d15f7f740a9>



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