# IT'S TIME TO DEVELOP A REMOTE WORK STACK

How to Choose the Right Equipment for Your Remote Workforce



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### INTRODUCTION

In the wake of COVID-19, businesses rapidly shifted to remote work where possible. According to a study done by Pew Research in December 2020, 71% of workers were remote due to virus-related concerns. A Gartner survey supported the idea that remote work is set to continue, with 82% of company leaders expecting that some of their workers will continue to be remote even after the pandemic ends. The latest data backs up that view, with remote job postings on LinkedIn skyrocketing 457% according to the company's most recent analysis.

Whether you're looking for strategies to help fully remote workers optimize their productivity, or you need to develop work-from-home equipment bundles that allow your team to flex with hybrid work, we've got you covered. Read on to learn how to choose the right equipment to support employee success from home.





## **DEVELOP A DEPLOYMENT STRATEGY**

Rapidly adapting to work-from-home environments required making changes on the go. Often, employees were asked to do the best they could with what they had on hand until companies could put top-tier productivity solutions in place. Now, as we pivot to a more intentional approach to remote work, IT teams and business leadership need to consider how to outfit remote work outposts to support employee health, productivity, and connectivity.

Increasingly, companies are exploring how to develop and deploy remote work strategies. When you're onboarding a new employee or expanding your workforce's option to work from home, it can help to proactively explore questions like:

- When you say remote work, where will this employee spend the majority of their time?
- Do they have the office furniture needed, or could selected items improve ergonomics, ability to focus, or other challenges that might arise?



 Are there specific ergonomic or health considerations you can help with, such as providing the right equipment to help minimize back pain or other repetitive stress injuries?



- What core device will the employee use—including a laptop or powerful mobile device—to stay connected?
- Do they have access to a secure, high-bandwidth connection?
- What accessories—including monitors and printers—does the employee need to access to complete their job?

Companies often develop a standard approach to many of these issues, and then have some flexibility to customize based on the unique needs and job roles of individual employees.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A LAPTOP

Not long ago, many employees worked primarily from desktop computers. Laptops were reserved for executives or individuals whose jobs took them on the road, such as sales representatives or field service technicians. Increasingly, laptops act as command central to your employees' productivity suite no matter their role. When employees have access to secure, personalized laptops they have the ability to access critical data, applications, and work streams no matter where they connect from.

Choosing the right laptop for your team involves several decisions. First, will your company support a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy or a choose-your-own-device (CYOD) program that deploys a limited number of company-approved devices? What factors should you consider when selecting laptops?

For help finding the right laptops to fit your team's needs, check out our Laptop Buying Guide.

### **HOW TO CHOOSE A LAPTOP**

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### **Operating System**

There are four major computer operating systems in the market today: Windows, macOS, Chrome OS, and Linux. Many companies support a single system, while others will adapt to dual operating systems. Choosing your OS systematically will ensure compatibility and the means to keep support costs under control.

### **CPU**

How much processing power does your employee need? A DevOps engineer or graphic designer may require significantly more computing power than an administrative assistant or sales rep primarily using their laptop for email and Internet access. Scope usage needs, and then determine which processor is a good fit based on whether the employee is an average user or a power user.

### Storage



Another important factor to consider with laptops is how much random-access memory (RAM) the laptop will have available to hold data. More RAM provides more working memory for your computer and support for bandwidth-intensive programs. While needs vary, the general guideline is 8 gigabytes (GB) of RAM for the average user and 16GB minimum for power users.



## **HOW TO CHOOSE A LAPTOP**

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#### **Ports**



Taking a closer look at the form factor of the laptops you are considering can help you determine whether it will be compatible with existing accessories and third-party attachments and adapt to the workflow employees need. For example, are there ports available for USB cables and a headphone jack for a noise-canceling headset? Both can be an essential part of working from home and provide remote employees more flexibility.

### Webcam

Most laptops today come with a built-in webcam. For employees who work remotely and rely on collaboration software or videoconferencing, the quality of that camera can make an impact on their ability to participate successfully in meetings or represent your brand during events such as webinars and virtual meetings.

### Weight and Body



More broadly, it's helpful to consider the laptop's weight and overall body shape. The lighter a laptop is, the easier it will be to slide into a briefcase to take on the road. There is a wide range of formats available, such as 2-in-1 computers where the screen also can function as a tablet.



## GET A NEW VIEW WITH THE BEST MONITORS

Monitors provide a critical lens to your team's most vital work—and the right monitors can be essential to productivity. One study found that dual monitors can improve productivity by 20–30%. A third can further increase productivity. While the remote work center often focuses on the laptop, monitors provide the window through which your teams see and complete their work.



Monitors can help level up productivity. Take the time to understand what options are on the market and how they can help your workers get more done.

For help finding the right monitors to fit your team's needs, check out our Monitor Buying Guide.

Some options to consider to help remote workers get more done include:

### **Multiple Monitors**



Would your team members' complex tasks require multiple monitors? If so, consider monitors in a variety of sizes and configurations, as well as cable supports and other accessories that keep technology streamlined.

### **Curved Monitors**

Are you hearing about eye strain after long hours on the computer, or simply looking for strategies to prevent it? Curved monitors help reduce eye stress and can be part of an overall plan to reduce eye strain for workers who spend significant amounts of time on computers.

### **Specialty Monitors**

Depending on what issues you're trying to solve, there may be additional options to consider. Wall-mounted monitors are an option for workers in very small spaces. A touchscreen monitor may be the right fit for programmers or individuals whose jobs have a tactile component.



## PRINTERS: MORE FEATURES, LESS HASSLE



Not all work from home can be completed digitally. Some roles may need access to a printer. In fact, <u>Deloitte</u> research suggests that printer sales surged in 2020. The printers needed for a remote employee may be different than the large, multi-function options that are designed to serve a department or even an entire company's needs. Here are some trends in home office printing that can help you find the right model for your needs.

For help finding the right printing solutions to fit your team's needs, check out our <u>Printer Buying Guide</u>.



### **Ink and Laser Printers**

Classic ink and laser printers can be the perfect option for a home office printing situation. They're available at a variety of price points and offer different printing speeds and features that can be customized to an individual's unique requirements. Whether an employee needs occasional printing capabilities or a machine that can keep up with daily high-volume printing.

### **Multi-function Printers**

If your employees need more diverse features for their home office, a multi-function printer (MFP) can help. MFPs also work as copiers, scanners, and even fax machines.

### **Printer Supplies**



Printers require a variety of supplies, including ink, on varying schedules. Keeping these supplies in stock for centralized printers is challenging enough, and stocking them for multiple individual printers only complicates matters. Increasingly, companies are looking at creative solutions—such as managed print services solutions—that can support both inoffice needs and a home office printing fleet.



## ERGONOMICS: DON'T OVERLOOK EMPLOYEE HEALTH

According to a recent study from Ergonomics Help, 40% of employees working remotely during COVID don't even have access to a desk at home. Sixty percent were unable to access equipment from their employer to outfit their home office, while a third of employees reported spending their own money to make working from home more comfortable. If your team is working remotely, it's time to consider whether you're providing the appropriate ergonomics support.

Factors to consider include whether your employees could benefit from access to solutions such as:

- A desk or workstation
- An office chair
- Monitor, keyboard, and mouse
- Additional ergonomic support that may be required, such as tools to adjust the height of a monitor

• The ability to create dedicated channels for specific products or clients



Not sure where to start with your ergonomics planning? Ask employees for suggestions or encourage individual employees to discuss their needs with a manager or the appropriate HR or procurement contact.



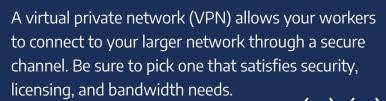


## NETWORKING: FAST, SECURE, AND RELIABLE FROM ANYWHERE

Empowering your remote workforce involves ensuring they have a secure, reliable connection. One study found that cybersecurity professionals feel they are less equipped to deal with emerging threats, with the number of security professionals who identify as being well-prepared plummeting to just 44%. In this same study, 72% of respondents identified remote workers as a critical source of risk. There are several steps you can take to immediately improve your workers' ability to securely connect to your data and applications.



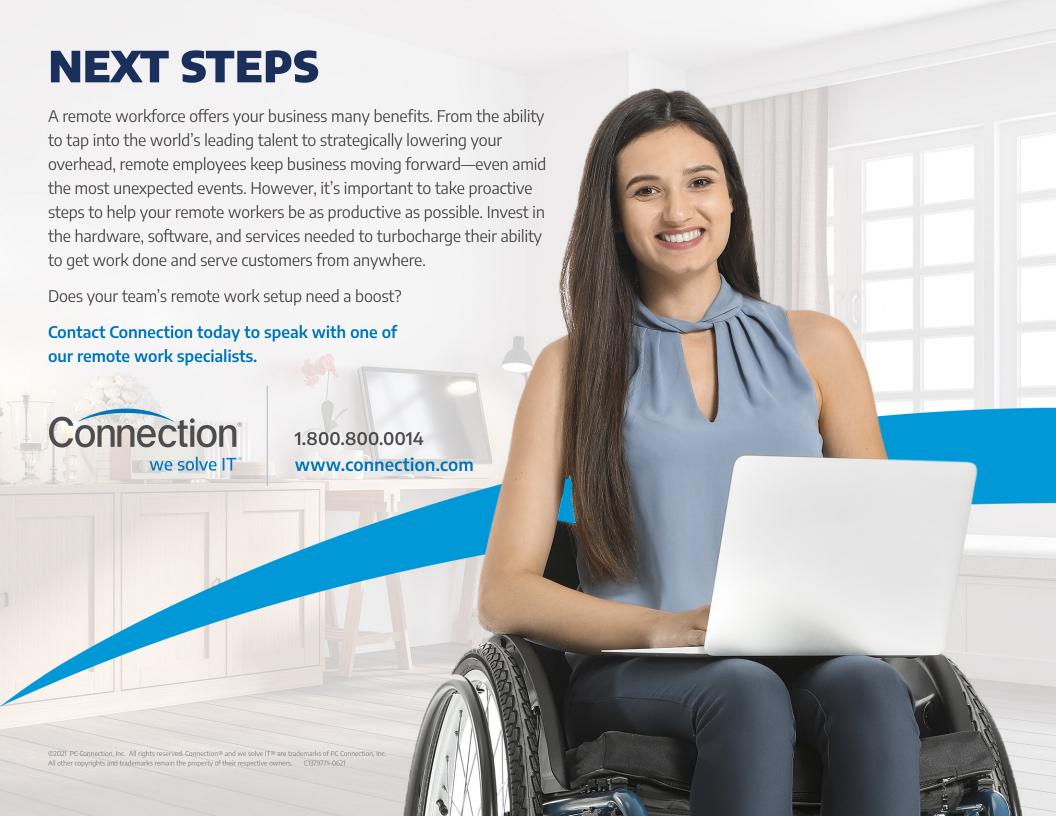
### Implement a VPN



### **Deploy a Router**

Routers designed for remote work can be provisioned and deployed to any remote work location. Options like Cisco Small Business RV Series routers offer VPN technology so your remote workers can connect to your network through a secure pathway. By relying on a standardized router configuration, it's possible to ensure that your team has fast, secure, reliable network access anywhere they work.







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