Working Smart, **Working Safe.**

How companies are using technology to successfully manage remote and hybrid work styles

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Introduction

Like state and local governments all over the U.S., companies of all sizes are wrestling with how to best transition from the shutdown. While the number of issues to grapple with is extraordinary, **this eBook focuses on one:**

> How can technology help companies with new or existing remote workers **optimize performance and employee engagement?**

Ricoh recently surveyed 50 customers to better understand and appreciate the challenges companies are facing as they transition from lockdown. While these companies vary widely in industry and size, the survey revealed several common themes.

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The challenge of right-sizing

in a rapidly changing economic environment

Companies must reassess their work models, real estate commitments and technologies within the context of reduced expenses and a tougher business climate. Those that are new to remote work are quickly learning to appreciate the cost savings, but also experiencing the complexities.

Key issues include:

1. **Sustaining employee engagement**
2. **Supporting communication and collaboration**
3. **Security and privacy**

Suggested Solutions

Digital Mail

Working remotely doesn't have to mean being out of touch. Digital mail transcribes physical mail directly to your employees' email accounts.

Digital File Conversion

Turn paper documents into usable digital formats that you can access anytime, anywhere with off-site conversion services.

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Taking a staggered approach
to bringing people back

Virtually all of the customers we spoke to have kept some portion of their workforce at home in response to the shutdown, with only those deemed essential to day-to-day operations remaining on-site. While percentages varied based on industry and economic impact, all are adopting a phased approach to returning that includes ongoing WFH (work from home) options. Return dates are soft, pending local government guidelines and recommendations.

Suggested Solutions

Workplace Capacity and Management Analytics
Manage office resources as your on-premise workforce shifts up or down to accommodate new WFH policies.

Desk and Room Scheduling and Booking
Help maintain social distancing while avoiding meeting and resource conflicts with online scheduling and booking.

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Increasing remote work options

Seventy-one percent of the companies we surveyed have either announced or are planning to implement new WFH policies that, in most cases, will be extended to all employees able to work off-premise. All respondents said they are looking into the requirements involved, including equipment; tracking, collaboration and connection tools; security and privacy; workflow automation; and above all, employee well-being.

Suggested Solutions

Remote Support Desk
Working anywhere, anytime will require trained support around the clock as downtime impacts both productivity and employee engagement.

Secure Remote Access
Remote work places additional burdens on security as threats still need to be minimized while access is extended.

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The Shift

71%
of survey respondents
allowing WFH policies
to continue post-COVID

but only...

3.6%
of the U.S. workforce
worked remotely at least
half the time previously[1]

The rapid rise and
new reality of remote work

With so many companies reevaluating remote work, it's worth taking a quick look at the broader landscape to understand where to prioritize. According to Global Workplace Analytics, only 3.6% of the U.S. workforce worked remotely at least half the time[1]. It's fair to say that number increased substantially following state-mandated office closures. Whether CEOs were actively considering digital transformation or not, all those who could implement digitally enabled remote work have now experienced its potential… and its risks.

With the loosening of state restrictions, it is imperative for business leaders to decide what to keep and what to jettison. "Lack of visibility," the most common reason for management's resistance to remote work, has largely given way as employees proved capable of adapting responsibly. The savings to both employee and employer are impressive.

Will working from home become the new normal? Possibly for some. But most organizations, like those surveyed, will adopt or have already adopted either a structured or informal hybrid that combines office and home time on either a scheduled or flexible basis.

Source: https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics [1]

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Regardless of how much of your workforce you plan to keep at home,
we recommend the following:

Create or augment your unified
cloud communication platform

Enable employees, customers and vendors to communicate and collaborate seamlessly regardless of location – closing the "visibility gap" and providing version control between remote, office, and contracted workers as well as their managers.
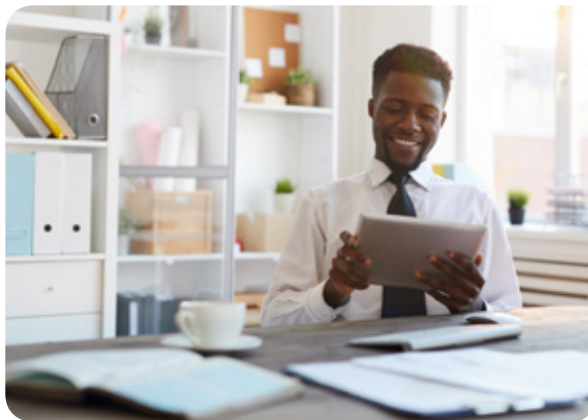
Implement or expand your
process automation

Effectively managing information and content from a variety of locations requires centralization, security, privacy and database management. These can be daunting for employees who are used to managing files locally on their desktops. However, working remotely has likely introduced many of them to the benefits, including improved access, automatic backups and version control.

Update or enhance your
security and privacy measures

Data breaches and leaks have been a consistent threat to businesses and individuals for quite some time. Add remote locations and personal devices to the mix, and the challenges rise exponentially. Security is no longer limited to protecting storage and emails. It's about both protecting and enabling access to data.

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Improve, facilitate and
accelerate transition

For the foreseeable future, COVID-19 will change the way we work, including the ways we interact with one another and how we protect ourselves and our information. Technology has many roles to play.

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1. Putting health and safety first

Now that shared surfaces have become danger zones, technologies that can reduce the number of and/or reliance on them should be considered. Where elimination is unfeasible, surfaces should be antimicrobial and/or able to withstand repeated cleaning and disinfecting.

Sound a bit alarmist? Prior to the outbreak, the country was already aging, and the pool of skilled labor was diminishing. Those trends have not changed. With a global pandemic added to the equation, providing a safe environment is now essential to retention and recruitment.

While it is difficult to predict any post-pandemic legislation, smart companies won't wait. **They will be proactive and start to address a range of issues:**

- **Creating a safe work environment, including**
  - Space
  - Sanitation – onsite screening
  - Flexibility
- **Behavioral changes**
  - "6 foot social distancing" rules
  - Rethinking shared resources – workstations, multifunction printers, etc.
  - Conservation – reducing travel
  - Collaboration – repurposing office space
- **Automation**
  - Closing the digital divide
  - Streamlining processes
- **Disaster preparedness**
  - Off-site backups
  - Company emergency policies

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2. Accelerating digital transformation

Loss of visibility in remote work environments is real and needs to be managed. Work stored on personal devices or in file cabinets creates silos within silos, chipping away at productivity and employee engagement. Many companies that have recently had employees work at home, some for the first time, have experienced frustration and challenges, along with declines in productivity.

In these circumstances, automated workflows, security and retrieval systems are no longer optional. Without them, using manual processes to manage a company's information and content quickly becomes onerous, disruptive and error-prone. By contrast, adopting the right technology, workflows and processes can be genuinely rewarding for the organization and positive to the employee, while improving decision-making across the board.

Start small and apply the basics of change management: Obtain executive sponsorship, set measurable goals, and manage what you can measure. Data is the oil that keeps the organizational engine turning. Gather it, share it across the organization, analyze it and apply what you learn. Help transform your vendors or use them to help you transform.

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3. Facilitating remote work

Our research shows that companies are handling the "end of lockdown" in a variety of ways. Most are opting for a phased return, leading with "essential workers." This can pose a danger to culture and future performance. Employees left to work at home can feel undervalued, especially if working at home is not adequately supported.

This raises several challenges:

- Do employees have the right secured tools? How do they receive their packages and mail? Does connectivity measure up? Connection and collaboration are the key drivers.

- Are formal security protocols in place to monitor, measure and ultimately manage the damage when a breach occurs? This includes regular education and testing.

- Can you automate routine processes, storage and tracking? Working from home should not add levels of difficulty.

- Is your communication ongoing and consistent from all levels to keep everyone aligned and engaged? Support your company's culture by over-communicating. Humans are social animals and most are not wired to work alone.

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About Ricoh

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services enabling individuals to work smarter.

We help businesses of any shape and size connect their workforce by enabling teams to work remotely and keep business running as normal, even at times of disruption. Ricoh's end-to-end remote working solutions can be deployed quickly, securely and at a scale to meet your business needs.

With 80 years' experience developing the technology that shapes how people work, Ricoh is the ideal partner to support your business with remote working solutions. Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group operates in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2019, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,013 billion yen (approx. 18.1 billion USD).

Our Solutions

- Smart office design tools keep employees and visitors safe, ensuring continued collaboration and productivity
- Remote workplace solutions connect your employees and keep your business running
- Process automation boosts productivity and empowers remote working
- Infrastructure and cloud solutions decentralize mission-critical business processes and systems

For more information, contact your Ricoh Sales Representative.

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