



NTT

**Distributed working: staying safe, secure,
and connected in the new world of work**

Introduction

2020 has not turned out the way anyone expected.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a fundamental shift in the way we live and work. And it's set to continue. The world of work is being re-worked.

Across every industry and in every country, people have been working remotely. In most cases, they are yet to be re-integrated into their former, physical workplaces. In some instances, they may have returned, but to a changed environment with new rules and restrictions. They may also be going in less often, may see less people when they do, and there may be more empty spaces around them.

The evolution of technology and the dynamic demands of people mean that the challenges ahead will be about more than simply re-integrating people into the workplace. It will involve re-imagining what we mean by the workplace: where it is, what it looks like, and how it will work, and for who.

Already we are seeing the emergence of something new: hybrid working. It's a blended approach – one that sees individuals combine remote working and office-based working.

Using work-from-anywhere as a cornerstone, organizations can create a strategy they can build on, plan out and deliver. It's a growing acceptance and understanding that - simply put - work is something you do, not just somewhere you go.

Successful solutions will be built using modern communication and collaboration tools; cloud-based and secure by design to safely connect people and organizations. These tools provide the foundations of a connected future and are a key factor for successful business transformation.

Furthermore, they help foster a sense of inclusion, trust and purpose which leads to higher levels of productivity and greater overall effectiveness. Although we may have to work remotely and in isolation, with the right communication and collaboration tools in place, there is no need to work alone.

In this guide we consider key aspects that will help your organization create a safe, secure, connected working environment – one that will not only support your business continuity, but the workplace of the future.

A look at lockdown

When lockdowns were first introduced, organizations had to adapt – and fast. Not least when it came to ensuring that their people could continue to work effectively and productively with each other and the outside world.

A seamless transition

Those with robust business continuity planning – and either the right technology already in place, or an ability to deploy rapid response solutions – have been best positioned to adapt. Equipped with a unified communications and collaboration platform, these organizations have been able to rely on a complete, secure, and controlled ecosystem that enabled work to carry on.

From audio calls to video meetings, personal chat to team messaging, file sharing and collaboration, integrated apps and more – employee location made no difference. A seamless transition from office to home was possible.

Those who were some way along their transformation journey toward modern collaboration were quick to ramp up their efforts. Many were able to roll out solutions to greater numbers of staff, to wider teams and user groups, or roll-out further services for greater productivity and agility.

How we've helped our clients with Covid-19

Securing remote working

Our business continuity planning has in many senses underpinned that of our clients. We've been working with clients ever since the health crisis first became apparent. In March and April 2020, we enabled more than 500,000 remote workers, ensuring they had the communication and collaboration tools they needed. In addition, we installed more than 150,000 VPN connections, helping to ensure secure data transmission. With an increased need to communicate with stakeholders, we played a fundamental role in connecting businesses with their audiences and enabled an increase in conference usage of more than 300% in March 2020 alone.

Digital events

With the restrictions on travel, and the need for social distancing, we've been able to support clients with their increased demand for online and virtual events. These have provided essential alternatives to in-person events that would have otherwise been cancelled or postponed. Our virtual solutions have ensured that industry conferences and trade shows, all-company presentations, senior management briefings, and many other physical events have been able to find a new home online. Between March and May 2020, we managed an average of 145 events a day around the world.





Using workarounds

But not all businesses were able to achieve the same seamless continuity. Their traditional on-premise telephone systems weren't built for this kind of situation. Issuing new smartphones or asking employees to use their own may have solved some problems with outgoing calls, but left customers and clients struggling as inbound calls went unanswered - and contact center and switchboard functions weren't available.

Many employees were able to connect with each other using email and had access through VPN to shared directories, but for many other needs used workarounds, often without IT approval, and without being fully aware - or concerned - about potential security risks. Whether it was video meeting platforms or file sharing sites, whatever was needed was used, with Shadow IT coming to the fore. The use of unauthorized messaging groups to keep in touch or share documents also flourished, again often using services beyond approved company channels.

Connected? Yes. Secure? Probably not. It was hardly ideal but for many individuals and organizations working on the fly, good enough seemed just that, good enough. In an emergency, any means will do.

“In one survey during lockdown, **35%** of workers said their companies hadn't provided the **right technologies for them to work from home**. **42%** said they didn't have the proper training to use remote collaboration tools like **videoconferencing or Microsoft Teams**. And **38%** didn't feel their company had the **right security to support the business and clients in these circumstances**.”





Still on the journey

These two examples illustrate different ends of the continuum. Those organizations that were aware and prepared, and those that were quite the opposite.

Yet, there is an interesting and extensive middle ground too. Those organizations where business change programs and potential transformation projects were viewed as important but low priority. The best practice changes needed and even the best next steps were known, but not actioned.

A common example might be the replacement of a 'traditional' on-premises telephone system with a secure cloud-calling service. Cloud-based telephony has many benefits – far less-expensive calls, no need to maintain, repair or upgrade physical hardware, consolidation of suppliers - but crucial to the pandemic and the dispersal of staff is the ability with cloud calling to make and take calls on any device, from any location.

Another scenario is the onboarding process and change management programs to ensure that unified communications platforms will be successfully adopted, with vital governance and controls in place. Without proper implementation and understanding, these turn-key solutions won't be fully-used, key benefits go unrealized, and worse still, you can have a chaotic system, poorly-used, and without controls to secure confidential information from being accessed or shared.



Four common mistakes when launching a Cloud Communications solution and how to avoid them

More and more companies are embracing cloud communications in an effort to:

- Deliver improved customer experiences
- Work smarter, work virtually, work anywhere
- Reduce communication delays
- Reduce risks
- Shift costs from CapEx to OpEx

But without proper planning, it's likely you'll make mistakes when selecting, implementing and maintaining a cloud communications solution.

[Learn more](#)





No room for error

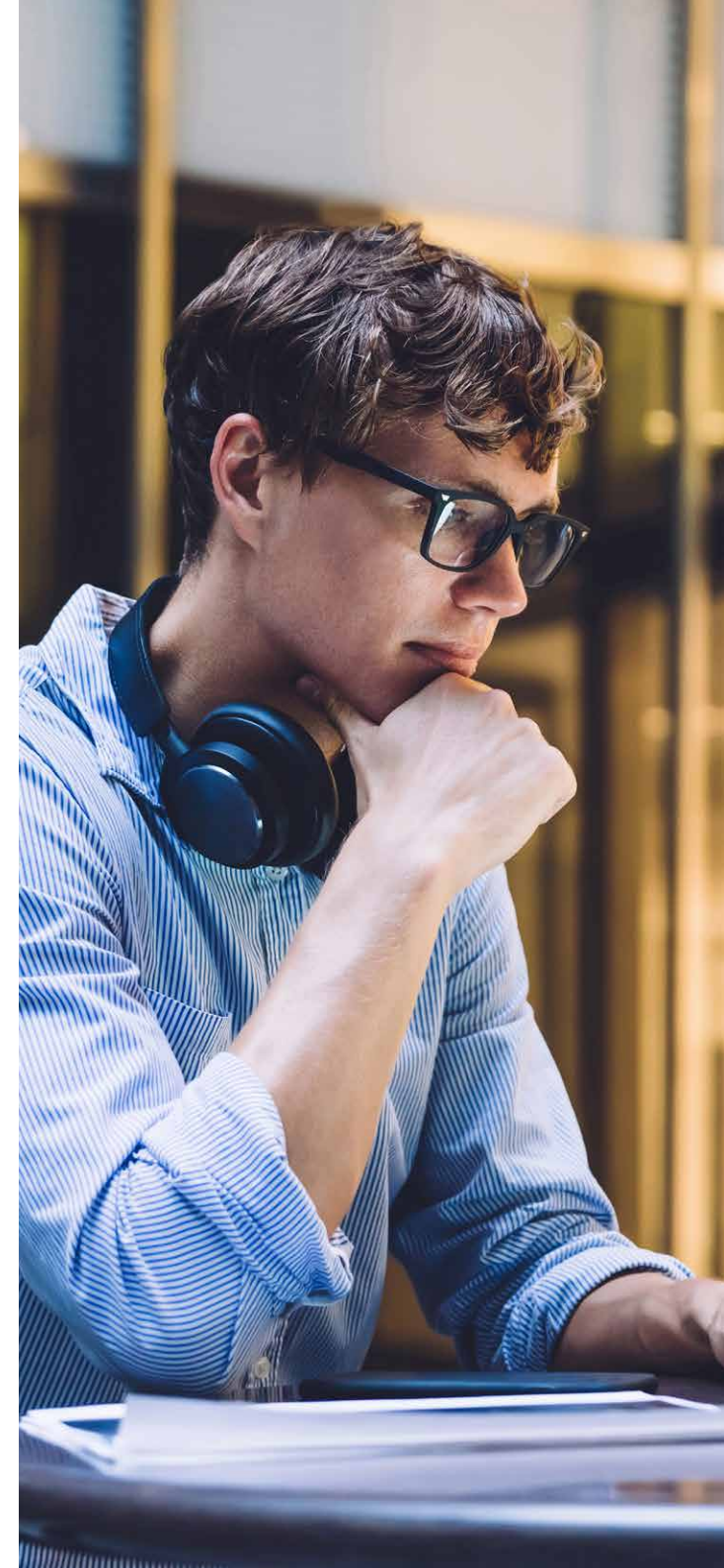
It wasn't just working with colleagues in the regular workplace that became untenable. In person events became impossible too and, once travel restrictions came into force, trade shows and conferences were cancelled or postponed. Organizers began to look for viable alternative ways to bring their communities of interest together. They looked to take things online and very quickly digital events became the de facto way to connect people. These events may lack the real-life, in-person experience, but they provide continuity, community, and connection. These events, offering video presentations, Q&As, break-out rooms, exhibition space, as well as social and networking opportunities, have proven to be lifeline for organizations of all sizes and seem certain to continue to do so.

The versatility of these events has seen them provide a valuable service within organizations too. From town-hall and all-hands gatherings, to sales conferences, company away-days, as well as analyst and investor briefings, virtual events have come into their own.

At a time when everyone is using video meetings for everyday one to one and team calls, it's been no surprise that when there are showpiece events, with little or no room for error and a need for flawless presentation, secure connections, and every last detail taken care of, that many organizations have looked beyond the self-serve options and enlisted white-glove support to take their events to the next level and guarantee their success.

“Analysts are predicting unprecedented growth in virtual events. The global market size was valued at USD 77.98 billion in 2019 and is expected to **grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 23.2% from 2020 to 2027.”**

[Global Virtual Events Market Size, Industry Report, 2020-2027](#)





Making it a priority

Many organizations have realized that their business continuity planning needs to be reviewed, revised, and acted on. And to avoid being caught short in the future they are now accelerating their business transformation programs.

Every enterprise is however on its own journey and has its own needs, timescales, and resources. These can vary considerably, but with expert help can be assessed, prioritized, and addressed – and ensure a secure, connected way of working across the organization.

“The most effective leaders are thinking not just about the immediate crisis but about **how their choices will position their companies** in the future.”

Heidrick & Struggles



Looking ahead

From the employee perspective

The changes we've seen have affected people's lives in a variety of ways. Most people who have switched to remote working have been glad to have cut commuting time and effort from their days. Many have been happy working from home and relished the chance to manage their time, their home-life commitments, and interests, and use collaborative tools to stay productive and focused. Several months in however, many people crave a return to the office. They miss the professional and social interactions, and have had enough of working from home, with days full of distractions and domestic demands. For some, it's been difficult to maintain a balance as work life and home life have been blurred.

That's not to say that it's all been good, or all been bad; everyone has had their own experience. But a new consensus seems to be emerging – that the future may consist of a new hybrid way of working. One where people who were typically in the office five-days a week can now adopt a new blend; some days in the office, and some from home. Of course, the individual mix will likely vary according to the role, the needs of the organization, and individual circumstances. For human resources teams it offers new challenges but also exciting opportunities including the ability to retain employees who need a more flexible working pattern, and to recruit from a wider geographical area.

Accelerate modern collaboration

And why not? After all, the tools and technology are there to allow communication, collaboration, and optimum ways of working. Equipping employees with powerful and intuitive tools will help them to feel connected and engaged, even from a distance, and improve their contribution to the business. These collaborative platforms bring people together when they can't be together or choose not to be. They also allow people to have more time in their day to be more productive, to be more focused, and to be happier with a new balance of remote and on-site in-office working.

As lockdowns ease, the adjustment won't be about how to work at home, but about how to return to the office and adapt to new ways of working. Although it will be familiar, it may not be quite as it was before.

“48% of employees will likely work remotely at least part of the time after COVID-19.”

Gartner

9 Future of Work Trends Post COVID-19, June 2020



The changing workplace

In some regions, remote working may remain the norm for a while to come. However, most organizations are planning for a return to the workplace. But it won't be the same as it was. Social distancing measures will include guidelines and rules governing health, hygiene, and safety. For those looking forward to mingling, and meeting with colleagues again, there may be less people in the workplace on any given day or allowed to be in the same room for an on-site meeting. You may find that only a certain number of your immediate team members are allowed to attend the workplace at any given time.

Imperfect as it may be, it should however be viewed as a positive step in the right direction – as an achievement and the first stage in the return to the workplace. A future hybrid approach will allow those remote and those in the office to work together in harmony, and with the right collaboration and communication platforms, the overall experience can be seamless.



Next-generation meeting spaces

Workplaces themselves are also changing to meet the new way of working. Where previously, there may have been enough desks and chairs to match the headcount, this may not be the case in the future. It won't have escaped the board's attention that if there are less people attending the premises in person at any one time, then there may be need for less office space. We may see remote-working accelerating as organizations re-think how they use their physical premises. They could become less like daily destinations, dutifully commuted to, and more like 'hubs' where regular rather than routine attendance is the norm.

Certainly, social distancing will be a factor when considering and reconfiguring available spaces. Desk layouts and meeting rooms may need to be repurposed, with people density in mind.

The efficient use of space is likely to see a rise in next-generation meeting spaces. These provide the means to optimize available space and achieve safety and privacy. Designed with specific use-cases in mind, they can offer different-sized workspaces, including huddle areas and one-person pods, each equipped to make meetings and calls more effective and collaborative.

But what about other facets and facilities? How else can the modern workplace provide secure, connected ways to work – and enhance the employee experience, as well as that of on-site visitors?

“26% of of employers believe homeworking during lockdown has increased productivity or efficiency. Further, the expectation is that the proportion of staff working from home all the time will rise to 22% post-pandemic, compared with 9% previously.”

[CIPD survey of 1,046 HR professionals, reported by BBC, July 2020](#)



The connected workplace

Just as your workforce benefits from being connected, your workplace can do too. And it's a connected workplace that will drive the workplace of the future. Technology that 'talks' to each other and automates responses and helps operations and facilities managers to deliver an enhanced working environment thanks to data-driven insights.

Enhanced safety and security are cases in point: the connected workplace uses access control and IPTV to provide emergency protocols and people accountability. This will be increasingly important as, say, a variable cast of workers come and go each day. Accurate records of who is and isn't in the workplace will be essential.

Sustainability targets will also be easier to achieve with the connected workplace, thanks to insights gleaned from measures of energy and water consumption. Beyond this, integration with building management systems (BMS) will allow great control over heating, air conditioning and elevator usage.

There will also be a far greater focus on healthy buildings, with a range of measures – of ambient temperature and humidity, of carbon dioxide, noise, and light, even of volatile organic compounds that may be present – providing actionable insights that can support the wellbeing of employees and visitors.

These capabilities can be powerful as part of the narrative when attracting and retaining talent. They will also meet the needs of a hybrid workforce. Those who at times work remotely but who come to the workplace 'talent-hub' to connect, will be assured they can work in comfort in a healthy environment, and be productive with others.

“Over the next several years, the greatest source of competitive advantage for 30% of organizations will come from the workforce’s ability to creatively exploit emerging technologies.”

Gartner
Top Technologies and Trends Driving the Digital
Workplace report, March 2019

The Intelligent Workplace promises much more, but at its essence, it's all about providing an optimized environment. It can improve the employee experience by providing a secure, modern workplace and allows people to gather and work together efficiently, productively, and safely.



Distributed – but together

However the pandemic plays out, the new world of work will look very different than it used to. Yet, as lockdowns begin to ease in some regions, there is a gradual return to the workplace. Despite this, distributed workforces are likely to play a major part in the new normal. With the work-from-anywhere approach likely to continue, there will be a growing need for cloud-based solutions that can support effective communication and collaboration.

Whether at home or the office, or elsewhere, employees need to be able to work seamlessly across devices and work securely achieving high levels of productivity and performance.

- Does your business have the right collaboration tools to work productively?
- Can your distributed workforce work in a virtual environment in a seamless and intuitive way?
- Can employees make and take calls from anywhere and provide a quality customer experience?
- How can you ensure your systems are secure and you're in step with regulatory and compliance requirements?
- How will you communicate and deliver online events to your internal and external audiences?

If you cannot answer these questions positively or do not have a clear answer, then reach out to the Cloud Communications division of NTT Ltd.

We believe that human connection can be remote and secure.

We can create a secure remote working environment to support your business continuity. And in doing so we enable a more flexible future, so that the way you communicate and collaborate is seamless and secure.

Together or apart, our solutions unite people, no matter where they are. Your people are our priority too. We empower your workforce to keep them securely and seamlessly connected. If you're looking to ensure your organization is safe, secure, and connected in the new world of distributed working, then get in touch.

Together we do great things

Keeping you safe, secure, and connected – the Cloud Communications division of NTT Ltd.

Contact us:

For full details on our Unified Communications, Digital Events and Cloud Voice offerings or other Modern Workplace solutions, please contact us:

UK:

[Contact us](#)

[Learn More](#)

Americas:

[Contact us](#)

[Learn More](#)

Asia Pacific:

[Contact us](#)

[Learn More](#)



Unified Communications and Collaboration

A unified communications and collaboration platform will provide the hub for distributed working success. Instead of disparate tools and technologies, you bring everything for the modern workplace into one place. Messaging, calls, video, file sharing, calendars, meetings, productivity, apps, and collaborative work, these are within the one integrated platform, and available on any device. Instead of your employees needing to hop from one tool to another, they can work more efficiently, and effectively, individually, and collectively.

Implementing such a solution is about far more than enabling it for your workforce. Whether we help you launch across hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of employees, it needs to be precisely orchestrated. Adoption and change management programs are essential, as is getting to grips with governance to ensure security, controlled access, and compliance. Correctly launched, managed, and integrated with apps and features to suit your teams, your platform will drive productivity and communication throughout your organization.

[Learn More](#)



Cloud Voice

When your employees all went home, did your phone system stay behind? You can divert the switchboard or direct lines to personal phones, but it's hardly a resilient, effective solution. What about outgoing calls and call groups? What about interactive menus, transferring calls, and contact center capabilities? Or other vital features such as call recordings and compliance? It's time to move your voice to the cloud.

A cloud-based PBX can wholly replace ageing telephony hardware and be integrated into collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex. And when that physical hardware disappears, so do the costs of upgrades and maintenance. In its place is a cloud-based system, one that allows you to consolidate disparate systems in different regions, secure local and service numbers, and make huge cost savings.

Cloud Voice supports your business continuity and liberates your telephony. Employees can make or take calls on any device – laptop, desktop, tablet, or smartphone – meaning just one number they can use, wherever they work, and one solution for everyone.

[Learn More](#)



Digital Events

The new way of working doesn't just affect home and office. It also affects the world of in-person events. Since lockdowns were imposed and travel bans introduced, physical events everywhere have been postponed and cancelled – and found a new home online. Our range of digital events services enable conferences, trade shows, and events of all types to re-invent themselves. Our holistic approach encompasses everything needed to make digital events a success, with end-to-end planning and event delivery, ensuring community, continuity, and much-needed connection.

No matter how things develop with the pandemic, digital events are to stay, having allowed organizers to reach new audiences, attendees to make better use of their time, and reduce budgets. There's certainly never been more need for employers to strengthen their connection with distributed workforces. From all-hands calls to annual gatherings and other stakeholder events, digital events bring people together. They can also scale up and host many thousands of attendees for one-to-many broadcasts, roundtables, and virtual trade shows, complete with breakout rooms, exhibition areas and networking areas. Even far apart, digital events bring people together.

[Learn More](#)

Related reading

Visit [our blog](#) to read more about our solutions and to sign-up for new articles

Unified Communications



Why transformative change depends on successful change management

The pandemic means that businesses everywhere are being forced into a period of transformational change...

[Learn more](#)

Cloud Voice



"What exactly is Cloud Voice?" Your FAQs answered

If your organization hasn't yet switched to Cloud Voice, it could well be just a matter of time...

[Learn more](#)

Digital Events



Ten ways virtual events are better than in-person events

So many in-person conferences, trade shows, and company gatherings have been cancelled or postponed...

[Learn more](#)

The future of work



The tech that is helping businesses adapt to the new normal

Gradually, we will all have to return to our regular work routine and simultaneously battle the ongoing pandemic...

[Learn more](#)



The future of work: enterprise lessons from COVID-19

If there's one thing businesses have learned from the pandemic, it's the need to be agile...

[Learn more](#)



Moving voice to the cloud? Insist on expert-led telephony design to reduce your TCO

Now, you may not have telephony design high on your list of priorities...

[Learn more](#)



Ten top tips to help you create a successful virtual event for your organization

The ongoing global pandemic will mean yet more face-to-face events...

[Learn more](#)



What will the workplace look like in the 'new normal'?

The move towards new digital ways of working has long been underway. But many organizations stumble...

[Learn more](#)



NTT