



Optimizing People, Processes, and Technology in a Remote-First World

A Guide to Remote Workers



The Landscape of Remote Work Today

While the plausibility of remote work has been clear for at least [a half-century](#), the COVID-19 pandemic launched the world into a new era — one in which remote work is not only a possibility, but a necessity.

Research reveals that [close to 70% of the United States' workforce](#) was working remotely as of June 2020 and that [88% of the European Union's workforce](#) was working remotely as of April 2020. Many suspect that these figures are unlikely to drop anytime soon. A PWC study found that [83% of U.S. office workers](#) want to work from home at least one day per week, and more than half of employers anticipate that most of their workers will do so long after the pandemic subsides.

Whether temporary or permanent, the shift to remote work has presented both a number of ongoing challenges and a number of opportunities for businesses. Generally speaking, these can be mapped across three key domains: people, processes, and technology.



People



Processes



Technology

To achieve business success during the pandemic and beyond, organizational leaders must proactively address the challenges presented by these circumstances while capitalizing on the valuable opportunities they have to improve the wellbeing of their employees and their businesses.



People

Empowering Employees to Be Their Best

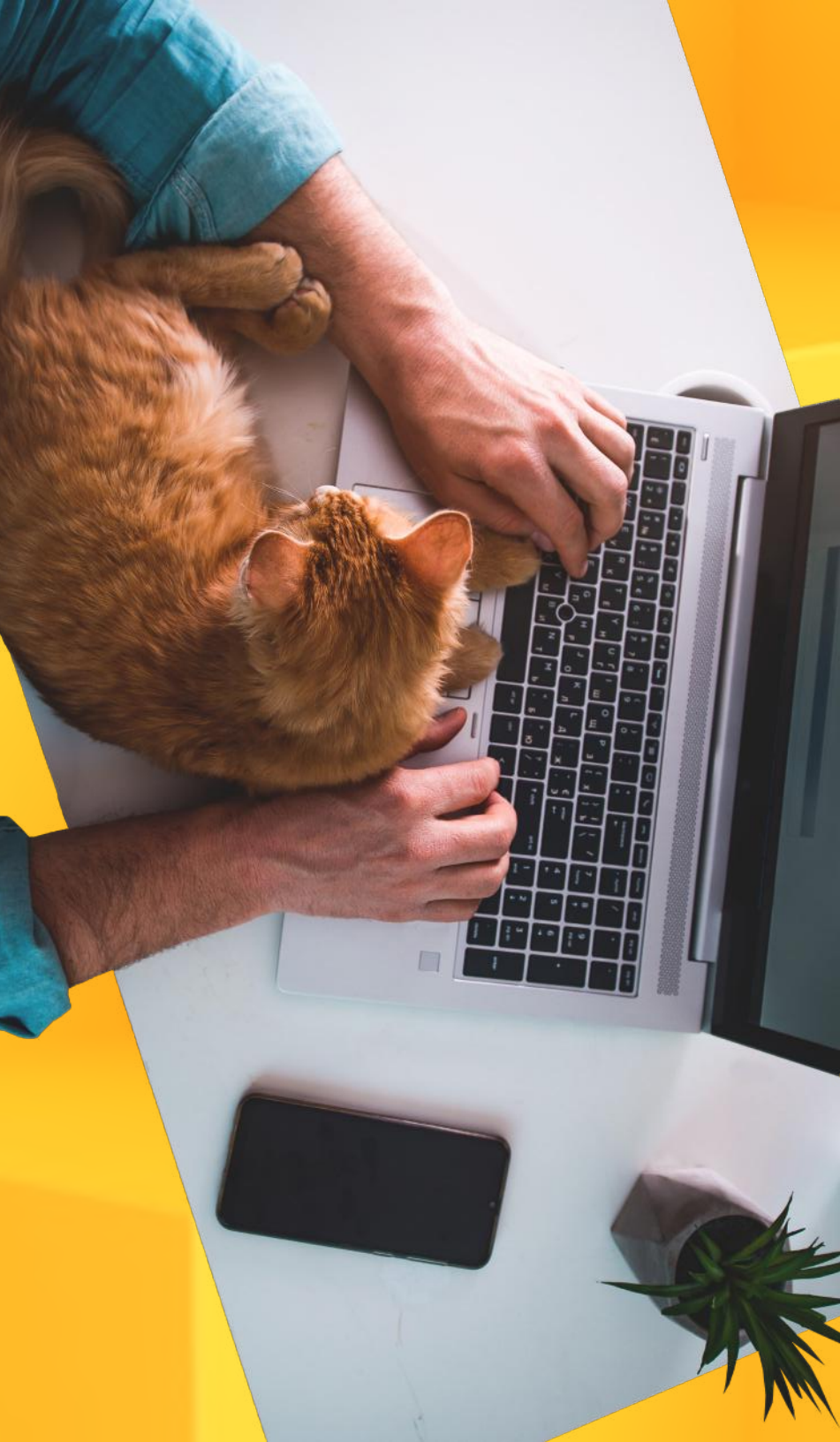
One of the key challenges of remote work is maintaining — and continuing to cultivate — a strong company culture. Not only must leaders and employees make a concerted effort to socialize, collaborate, and demonstrate company values, but the organization must also have a technological infrastructure that enables seamless connection.

However, technology is just one part of the equation. Equally important in supporting a flourishing company culture is attending to the psychological wellbeing of employees. Research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that by April 2020 — mere weeks into the global crisis — **14% of people** were experiencing high levels of psychological distress, compared to just 4% prior to the pandemic. While it is too early to determine the long-term psychological effects of the pandemic, many people may be facing issues such as depression and anxiety.



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And although **psychologists assert** that “[very] few people understand how resilient they really are,” and that, “[in] most disasters, the vast majority of people do well,” it’s important that employers consider how to further support employee wellbeing during this time. This may entail offering mental health resources or introducing more flexible time-off policies.

Remote work also poses a slew of new hurdles to effective management. Distributed teams can feel disjointed, and it’s critical to ensure that all employees are receiving adequate support and oversight. Instead of siloing responsibilities in accordance with traditional management approaches, organizations should encourage their human resources (HR) department to collaborate with leadership and mid-level managers to provide targeted support to employees. For instance, as a result of lacking regular facetime with colleagues or feedback sessions with managers, employees working from home are likely to benefit from displays of appreciation. Showing gratitude to employees for all they do also supports business success: employees who feel appreciated are, on average, **50% more productive**. Employees at all levels can support both individual and organizational success by going out of their way to recognize colleagues for their wins and offering regular encouragement and feedback.

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Processes

Enabling Improved Productivity and Better Communication



There are a number of operational benefits created by remote work. Without commuting, employees save time and money: as of September, the cumulative effect of Americans' reduced commuting amounted to **\$90 billion saved**. And it's not just employees who are saving. Employers enjoy reduced overhead due to money saved on office space — IBM saved **\$50 million in real estate costs** by allowing employees to work remotely — furniture and equipment, and perks such as compensated lunches and onsite events.

What's more, regaining lost commuting hours often translates directly into increased productivity. A two-year study found that the added productivity of working outside a traditional office equates to **an additional full day's worth of work** each week. In short, in many cases, remote work increases operational efficiency.

Still, most organizations are encountering a number of operational and process-related hurdles as a result of the shift to remote work. Communication is a central concern. Without in-office check-ins and face-to-face meetings, organizations are limited to digital means of communication such as instant messaging, emailing, voice calling, and video conferencing.

A recent study by Spike found that **77% of people** still prefer email to instant messaging, calling, video conferencing, or other means of communication in the workplace. And since employees tend to respond via the same means by which they were contacted, this means that emailing — and its unique pitfalls — continues to dominate corporate communications. Emailing is more likely to cause miscommunication, as it does away with important contextual clues such as tone of voice and body language — the latter of which is no small loss, as close to **93% of communication effectiveness** is determined by nonverbal cues. Organizations of all shapes and sizes would do well to encourage employees

to “change the channel” in order to facilitate more effective and meaningful communication. When an employee receives an email request that is unclear, they should consider calling or video chatting with the sender instead of responding with clarifying questions via email. By utilizing methods of communication that enable visual and aural interaction, employees are able to work more efficiently, maintain important relationships, and more effectively uphold company culture.

As Barbara Larson, a professor of management at Northeastern University in Boston who studies remote work, **suggests**, “Ask [your manager] if they don't mind having a 10-minute call to kick off the day and wrap up the day. Oftentimes, managers just haven't thought of it.”





But it's not just internal communication that benefits from more interactive means of communication. While chatbots and automated voice systems dominate the customer service landscape, at the end of the day, **more than half of customers** still want to speak to a human being. Improving customer satisfaction and retention begins with delivering a positive customer experience. Organizations that enable customers and agents to connect seamlessly via phone or video conferencing set themselves up for success.

Standardizing processes that optimize productivity and communication in a remote workforce hinges on leaders' willingness and ability to invest in their teams. Managers, organizational leaders, and HR professionals must remain deeply engaged and take a proactive approach to ensuring every team member is receiving adequate support in the form of appropriate resources, ongoing training, personalized management, and professional development.

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Technology

Future-Proofing the Business

When the initial wave of the pandemic arrived, businesses everywhere experienced a kind of collective panic. Under imminent pressure to shift to a remote model of working, companies quickly outfitted employees with laptops or home desktop computers and scrambled to replace legacy systems with cloud-based alternatives. Ultimately, the pandemic lowered barriers to technological adoption, as companies were forced to adapt out of necessity rather than evolve at their own pace.

Since then, panic has largely subsided and businesses have settled into new routines. However, many organizations are now realizing that they implemented new technologies haphazardly or selected tools that, while popular, may not be the best fit for their needs. Selecting best-fit — rather than simply convenient or popular — tools involves not only considering an organization's unique requirements, but also the common challenges of remote work. For instance, without conference rooms and whiteboards, collaboration has become especially difficult. Instead of selecting generic tools that market themselves as “collaborative,” decision-makers must evaluate exactly what kind of collaboration is required and what capabilities will facilitate it.

As another example, [more than seven out of ten executives](#) report they are worried about continuity and productivity during the pandemic. Many of these leaders recognize that activity is not synonymous with true productivity. Encouraging greater productivity requires decision-makers to evaluate a potential technology's ability to empower employees to stay focused and work efficiently.

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Another major concern is measuring key performance metrics, which requires reliable, accurate data sets. Typically, these data sets are obtained through integrated data systems that maintain valuable, up-to-date information and generate real-time updates. Cloud-based tools that render data in user-friendly dashboards are likely to continue gaining traction, as these solutions empower organizations to stay abreast of key insights that can inform their decision-making.

Today, organizations are coming to terms with the fact that the pandemic — and remote work more broadly — is unlikely to disappear anytime soon. In the meantime, they have time to future-proof their business by carefully evaluating their existing technological infrastructures, assessing their needs, and identifying their desired future state. With this information in hand, companies can determine required changes, establish timelines, and design roadmaps for implementation.

Align People, Processes, and Technology with Natterbox

In a remote-first world, organizations of all shapes and sizes are rethinking how to manage their people, processes, and technology. Their most apparent needs include improving communication, collaboration, and productivity, which can be achieved by supporting people, streamlining processes, and selecting best-fit technology solutions.

A CTI solution may be the first step in effectively meeting many of these needs. A CRM-integrated voice system enables individuals to collaborate and communicate seamlessly, eliminates laborious manual processes, and provides unmatched visibility into key data insights.

A voice solution that is embedded and managed directly in Salesforce, Natterbox enables organizations to establish an “anytime, anywhere” digital workplace. Natterbox automatically captures over 60 data points for every call and presents valuable insights in user-friendly dashboards. Natterbox enables simple, effective communication, streamlines operations, empowers organizations to easily track key performance metrics, and ensures customers always receive best-in-class service.



About Natterbox

Founded in 2010, Natterbox is a premier Salesforce voice solution. By pairing extensive technical expertise and a foundational commitment to long-term partnerships with an innovative end-to-end voice solution embedded directly in Salesforce, we empower companies to have better, more aligned business conversations. We have helped over 600 organizations including Fruit of the Loom, GE, and Groupon improve customer service, enhance sales productivity, and engage in data-driven decision-making. Natterbox has offices in London, Chicago, and Sydney, and is available on the Salesforce AppExchange.

