



# Remote Teams Whitepaper

## SALES ENABLEMENT TOOL

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# Remote Teams WhitePaper

6 Things Every CTO Must Know About  
Future Proofing Communications

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# Executive Summary

The events of early 2020 have changed the world, and the workplace. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an unprecedented, and necessary, shift to work-from-home. In response, many organizations were forced to rapidly adapt, adopt new tools, and invest in capex heavy location agnostic devices, technology and user management solutions. The implementation of these **impromptu solutions introduced substantial new security risks, and user management challenges**, placing unanticipated strain on IT, administrators and HR.

The shift to mass work-from-home happened rapidly, and caught many companies unprepared; however, **the shift to remote work is here to stay**, requiring IT and business leaders to consider their strategy for managing a geographically dispersed workforce going forward. IT and **business leaders must move beyond the initial rush to support remote workers**, and focus on planning for a hybrid workforce in 2021 and beyond.

Leveraging state-of-the-art collaboration tools that are cloud-based keeps employees engaged, and allows for efficient communication; without sacrificing integration with existing applications which drives significant corporate benefits such as cost reduction, improved manageability, and an optimized end-user experience

**Reevaluate your organization's current tools through a solutions audit, in which the following should be considered;**

- **Overlapping functionality** segregates communication channels which decreases worker efficiency and negatively impacts IT's ability to effectively support the organization.
- **Replace unsecure & scattered personal communication tools** with all-inclusive enterprise ready solutions that provide video conferencing and additional collaboration applications including voice and team messaging. This will support employee engagement, avoid sensitive corporate information being gathered and conveyed on personal platforms, as well as support end user management.
- **Location agnostic software** will be essential in maintaining a remote workforce, as applications adopted for individual business units, or specific workgroups, often place the management and security outside of IT's control.
- **Tool integration** should have the ability to seamlessly integrate with a mix of existing on-premises platforms and cloud-based capabilities, but be flexible in network, device, and location requirements to guarantee the newly implemented solutions won't become obsolete with another industry changing event.

# Disjointed Communication Tools & the Resulting Industry Challenges

The concept of the workplace has evolved an unparalleled pace, with people working in the office, at home, at a coffee shop, and everywhere in between. As organizations scrambled to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and keep its workers safe, many implemented a disjointed set of collaboration tools with the assumption it would only be for the short term; however, the world of work has been forever changed. The study, titled "[From Immediate Responses to Planning for the Reimagined Workplace](#)," found **77% of respondents expect that the number of employees, working primarily from home (at least three days a week), will increase post-pandemic.** Prior to the pandemic, respondents said that less than 10 percent of their workforce primarily worked from home.

The dramatic shift to work-from-home has resulted in IT and business leaders rapidly obtaining new collaboration applications including video conferencing and team collaboration to address management and productivity needs. The speed of workforce transformation has often resulted in organizations adopting the solutions quickly, with new applications procured by individual workgroups, or users in an ad-hoc fashion, which were outside of IT's control and without IT's input.

In many cases, adoption was without regard for how applications integrate with each other, with other business applications, or with existing enterprise communications platforms such as VOIP systems, **nor the repercussions of long term cost, security or user management concerns.**

More than 52% of participants in Nemertes' Visual Communications and Collaboration: 2020-21 Research Study say they are increasing IT spending to support their work-from-home environment, with **primary application investment areas being video conferencing and additional collaboration applications including team messaging.** (See Figure 1.)

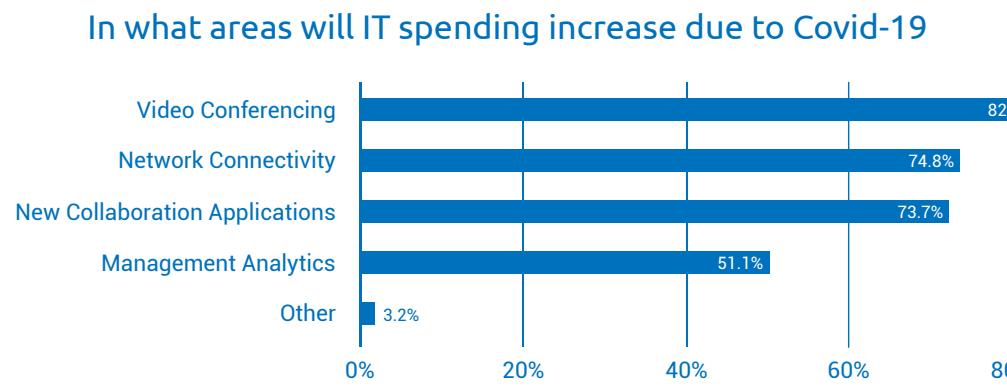


Figure 1



## The Home Is the New Office

With the shift to work-from-home shows no sign of abating (See Figure 2). Organization are now faced with the task of reassessing their temporary fixes in exchange for solutions that will future proof their communication strategy, ensure long-term interoperability, integration with current and future tools, end user management and high-end security. **With 83% of employees rely on using technology for collaboration**, in most cases these new investments will be in cloud-based platforms, that offer the potential for rapid deployment, global availability, scalability, predictable costs, and high reliability.

Of the organizations that are anticipating a post-pandemic workplace, 57% will embrace a hybrid workplace that incorporate a variety of strategies;

- All employees will continue working from home full-time
- All employees will work-from-home part-time, and in office part-time
- Chosen employees will work-from-home full-time, with others working in office full-time

## Overlapping Functionality

Using **multiple chat or meeting apps**, or non-integrated apps that require switching between user interfaces, **hinders effective collaboration due to segregated communication channels**, overlapping functionality and a lack of integration into existing communications platforms.

The impact on workers, is the inability to conduct their communications tasks from within the scope of the applications they frequently use. **Employees now spend about 50% more time engaged in collaborative work**. Consider a sales person, wasting up to 50% of their time navigating between their account screen to make a call or start a chat, rather than initiating all communications from within their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) interface.

## Tool Integration Concerns

The rapid addition of new collaboration capabilities in a haphazardly manner, has resulted in organizations once again needing to evaluate their communication tools. Lacking a consolidated set of applications, integration into other business process platforms or Customer Relationship Management Software's (CRM's) may cause issues. Applications and tools which were implemented in the initial rush to support remote workers, were adopted out of an immediate need & with the intention to reassess at a later date. That later date is now, with **almost 65% of organizations say that the pandemic is increasing their shift to cloud-based applications**.

Long-term communication should require the ability to integrate with existing on-premises platforms and cloud-based capabilities, but have **network, device and location flexible requirements to guarantee the newly implemented solutions won't become obsolete with another industry changing event**.

Nemertes' 2020 global study of 460 organizations found that:

91%

Now allow for work-from-home.  
Up from 63% prior to the pandemic

72%

Of employees are now home-based.  
Up from 34% before February 2020.

75%

Of customer-facing contact center agents now work remotely.  
Up from 59% before the pandemic.

Figure 2

# Unintended Consequences of Short-Term Communication Tools

## Solution Debt & Rising Communication Costs

Among organizations with the highest ROI for their collaboration investments (in terms of demonstrable cost savings, revenue gains, and/or productivity improvements), **94.3% are increasing spend on video conferencing and 88.6% are purchasing new collaboration applications** (See Figure 3). What this means for organizations, is now is the time to address the solution debt accumulated from the initial shift to work-from-home in early 2020.

Organizations that fail to prioritize remote working and team collaboration tools will not realize the following benefits;

- Improved collaboration up to 70%
- Facilitate increased productivity by up to 30%
- Decrease in operational cost by 12%
- Increase in employee efficiency 29%

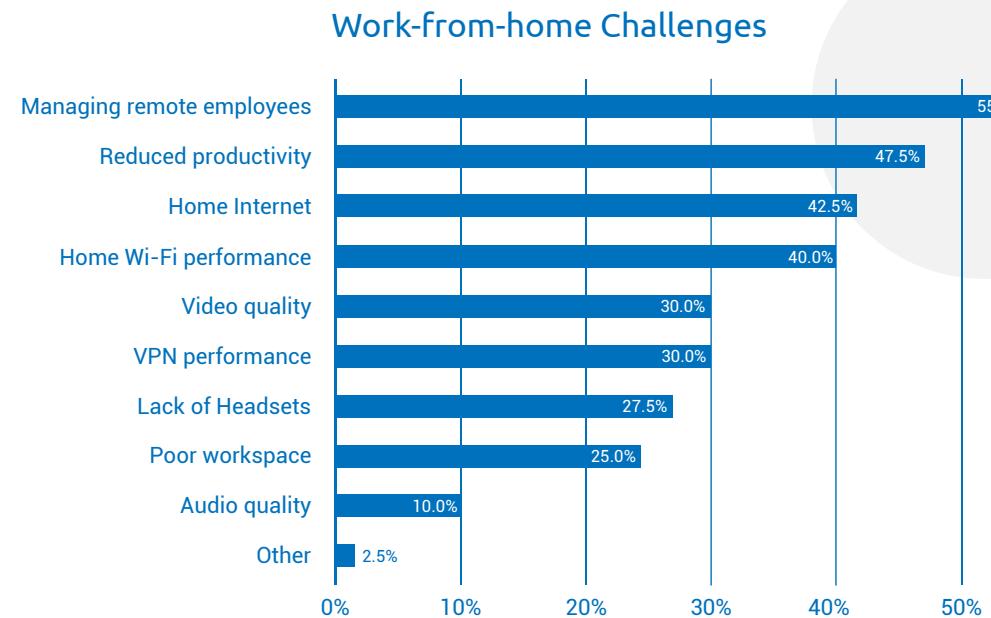


Figure 3



## Managing Employee Engagement & Preventing Isolation

For organizations that relied heavily on in-person communications, the abrupt shift to working from home left employees struggling to stay engaged, and to maintain (let alone exceed) in-person productivity, or hold ad-hoc conversations to address tasks, problems, and opportunities. This has led to the sense of isolation and loss of comradery that comes from the removal of in-person engagement, with **80% of US employees feel stressed due to ineffective company communication**.

IT leaders participating in Nemertes research studies say that their **biggest challenge in supporting work-from-home has been in managing remote workers, with almost 48% of companies indicating a substantial reduction in productivity**.

In comparison, organizations with modern collaboration tools such as team messaging and video conferencing, enabled virtual workers to communicate, engage, connect more effectively than those using only traditional collaboration staples like phone systems, audio conference bridges, and email.

## Unsecure Private or Personal Communication Tools

Where previously, personal or private communication tools may have been permissible, as IT could manage and monitor on the corporate network; **it is now imperative employees are shifted to all-encompassing enterprise communications & collaboration solutions** that provides IT end user management, carrier grade security, and troubleshooting capabilities.

Risks of using personal communication platforms include the following;

- The transmission, and potential distribution, of private and sensitive company data
- Personal communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Viber, and Hangouts, are known to collect user data
- At-home networks were not intended to provide the bandwidth, or security, required for enterprise level communications
- Restricts IT from supporting the end users
- Prevents the organization from being able to evaluate electronic communication Code of Conduct complaints or concerns

## Protecting Capex Investments, Without Limiting Solutions Growth

In order to secure a unified user experience, while protecting existing investments, requires a long-term communication strategy that extends what organizations already has into a seamless modern collaboration environment. Today, more than **30% of organizations operate hybrid strategies** that include a mix of on-premise and cloud platforms.

In most cases on-premises platforms, such as IP PBXs, are partially or fully depreciated, meaning replacing them with a brand new cloud-based platform isn't economically feasible. Or, organizations desire to continue to operate self-hosted platforms to ensure performance and security (See Figure 4).

Unfortunately, operating a mix of on-premises and disjointed cloud applications creates the following challenges:

- **IT must administer multiple, separate platforms**, often with different user credentials and security management capabilities
- **Users must determine the right application to use for each given need**, and will find it confusing to navigate between different apps to accomplish tasks
- **Integrating multiple collaboration applications** with other business platforms, such as CRM, ERP, or HR, is cumbersome

### Why organizations choose self-hosted communication platforms

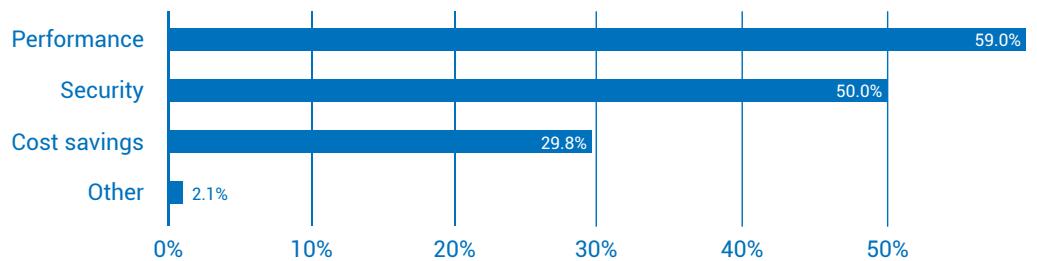


Figure 4



# Moving Beyond the Initial Rush to Support Remote Workers

## Mindful Communication Tool Adoption

Among organizations with the highest ROI for their collaboration investments (in terms of demonstrable cost savings, revenue gains, and/or productivity improvements), 94.3% are increasing spend on video conferencing and 88.6% are purchasing new collaboration applications (See Figure 3). What this means for organizations, is now is the time to address the solution debt accumulated from the initial shift to work-from-home in early 2020.

## Embrace Remote Working Policies

Moving forward, 70.7% of companies plan to continue having agents work-from-home. This will forever change the workplace for knowledge workers. Nemertes research reveals key applications and technologies to manage remote works will include video and team collaboration, with the biggest drivers for keeping workers at home include the following:

- 57% improvement on worker's quality of life
- 46% increased company preparedness for future disasters
- 36% better for the environment, supporting organizational environmental efforts

Beyond the anticipated benefits of work-from-home workers, such as facility cost savings, remote working often alleviates in-office conditions such as natural disasters, bad weather, traffic jams, which still enhancing employee convenience and employee morale. Fully operational communication systems assist in holding onto top talents in companies by up to 450%.

In addition, organizations that support remote workers will be able to leverage skilled remote workers on a global scale, who prefer hybrid work environments that provide newly prioritized flexibility. Many knowledge workers don't want to return to pre-pandemic workplaces.

Nemertes study found the top five sought after key capabilities included:



End-to-end  
encryption  
(41.1%)



Video and audio  
conferencing  
(40.4%)



Low cost  
(36.3%)



On-premises  
option  
(32.6%)



Message export  
(24.4%)



## How to Approach Single vs. Multi-Vendor Solutions

Achieving the unified user experience goal is possible through a variety of approaches.

Organizations may integrate an existing calling platform with additional vendors that provide video conference, voice, and team collaboration (See Figure 5).

**The single-vendor approach may not be viable for large organizations that operate multiple existing platforms.** For example, a large enterprise that has grown through merger and acquisition, and still operates separate IP PBX's, may not find it cost effective to rapidly replace all of its telephony infrastructure. Moving to a single-vendor solution means a rip and replace of one or more existing calling platforms, an approach that is likely not economically viable.

Alternatively, an organization can **deploy cloud-based meeting and team collaboration solutions that natively integrates with their existing phone systems**, providing users with a unified client, while still preserving existing phone system investments. The use of a cloud-based solution ensures access to rapidly emerging features that improve remote worker collaboration.



Single Vendor



Multi Vendor

Figure 5

# Buyers Guide: 6 Things a CTO Must Know to Future Proof Their Communications Solutions

- 1. Security:** The use of non-corporate communication tools exposes organizations to network risks, the distribution and collection of company sensitive information and inhibits IT from providing end user support.
- 2. Overlapping Application Functionality:** Segregated communication channels hinders effective collaboration, decreases worker efficiency, and increased operational costs.
- 3. IT Support:** Disjointed communication and collaboration tools adopted for individual business units, or specific workgroups, often place the management and security outside of IT's control.
- 4. End User Management:** Corporate tools must tools allow IT, HR and admins to remotely deploy, provision, and manage users. Not only limited to provide permissions, adding, removing, and suspending users as needed.
- 5. Location Agnostic Tools:** Remote tools are essential in maintaining a remote workforce. Organizations and employees don't want to return to pre-pandemic workplaces.
- 6. Future Proofing:** Applications with flexible network, device, and location requirements guarantee that newly implemented solutions won't become obsolete with another industry changing event.

## USE CASE

< INSERT YOUR COMPANY  
LINK TO PAGE/DATASHEET >

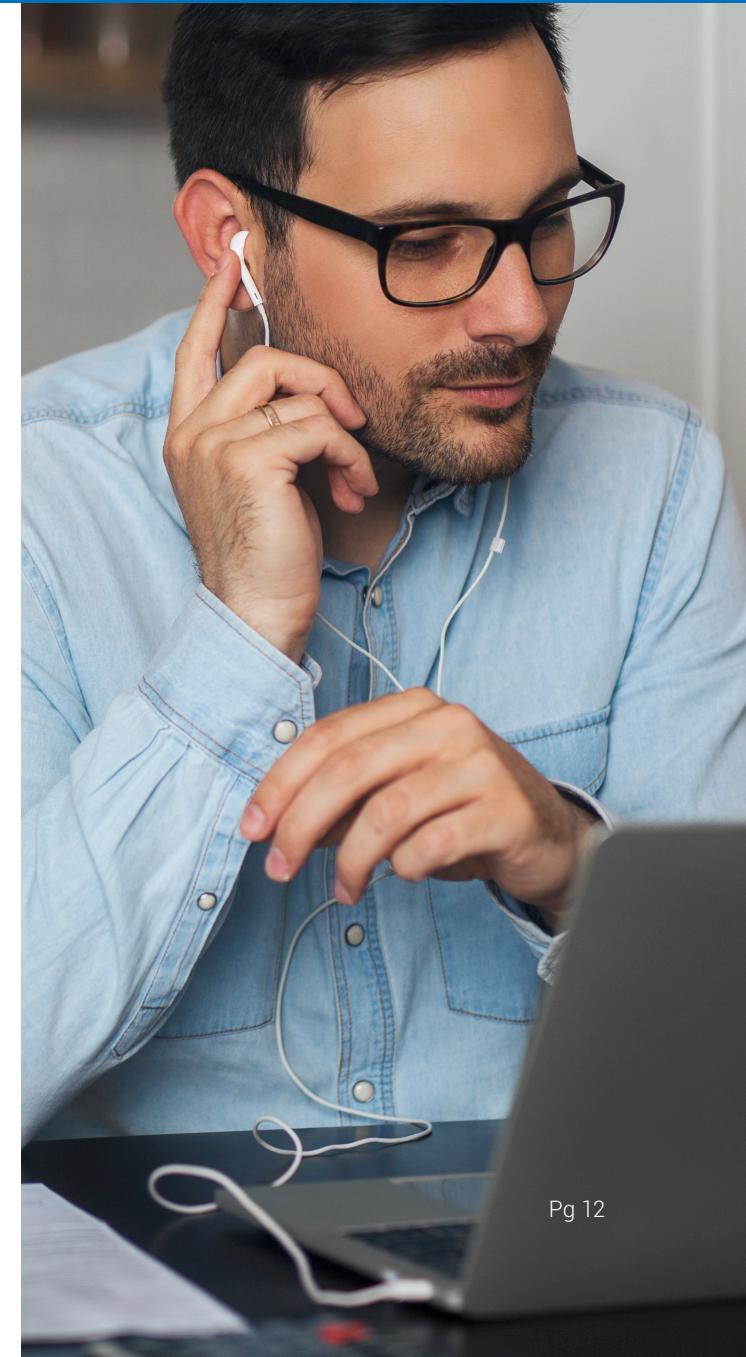


## Recommendations: Equipping the Product Remote Workforce

As IT and business leaders move beyond the initial rush to support remote work, and the often haphazard patchwork of systems implemented to meet the needs of the crisis, they must aim to most efficiently enable remote teams to communicate and collaborate, no matter their location or existing solutions stack.

Reevaluate your organization's current tools through a solutions audit, in which the following should be evaluated;

- 1. Evaluate applications** being used to provide voice calling, video-enabled meeting, and team messaging, especially those that may have been quickly procured by lines of business or individual users to meet short term needs.
- 2. Prioritize solutions that provide an integrated user experience**, and also allow for easy integration with business applications, workflow processes and encourage rapid adoption by end users. All-inclusive enterprise ready solutions that provide video conferencing, team messaging and additional collaboration will support employee engagement, encourage productivity, reduce isolation and support end user management.
- 3. Assess integration capabilities** with existing on-premises & cloud-based platforms, while taking into consideration the interoperability and integration requirements of introducing future capabilities, such as video conferencing and integrated messaging.



## Who do we work with?

<INSERT DETAILS ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMER BASE/WHO YOU SERVICE>

## Want to get started on deploying a remote work solution UC solution?

<INSERT YOUR COMPANY SALES FORM HYPERLINK>

<INSERT YOUR COMPANY LOGO TO CO-BRAND>



## Questions Business Leaders Should Be Asking

### Application Evaluation Questions:

- Is IT able to support end users while maintaining network integrity and security?
- Are communication channels segregated due to overlapping functionality?
- Are communication costs snowballing as a result of business units, or individual work groups, adopting applications that are not suitable company wide?

### Integrated User Experience Questions:

- Are remote-workers utilizing personal communication platforms that can compromise the integrity of company sensitive information?
- Are remote-workers utilizing personal communication platforms that restricts IT from supporting the end user and maintaining corporate security standards?
- Are the current communication & collaboration solutions location agnostic, in support of a remote workforce?

### Assess Integration Capabilities Questions:

- How can you leverage your current platforms, while allowing for the ability to easily scale to adapt to seasonal needs, headcount or rapid industry changes?
- What solutions provide network and device flexibility, therefore protecting the organizations initial capex heavy investment?
- What is your organizations long-term strategy to address remote working, and does the current suite of communication tools provide holistic collaboration that will future-proof your organization against another industry disruptive event?

Nemertes, "Visual Communications and Collaboration Research Study: 2020-21", Nemertes, June 2020

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