

In association with:



Understanding...

Gaining a competitive advantage with flexible working

How unleashing the power of your
people can help you get ahead



Contents

03 Gaining a competitive advantage with flexible working

04 Getting the most from the UK Workforce

PART 1

06 Working flexibly, wherever you are

08 Some myths about flexible working

12 Implementing flexible working

16 Practical guidance from BT Business

20 Getting started

22 Flexible working

PART 2

24 Working from home

26 Getting started

30 Getting the technology right

34 Management tips for home workers

36 Being responsible

PART 3

38 Getting advice

40 Glossary of technical terms

Understanding...

Gaining a competitive advantage with flexible working

Welcome to “**Understanding...Gaining a competitive advantage with flexible working**”, one of our series of advisory publications designed to help small and medium-sized businesses discover how to get more from their IT and communications systems.

In this guide we aim to demystify key topics by:

- Explaining the basic concepts so you can see how they apply to your business
- Outlining key opportunities and benefits so you can see what is possible
- Advising on the best approach to move forward, helping you to make the right decisions for your business and avoid common pitfalls
- Helping you save time and money and simplifying the way you approach flexible working to unlock the commercial potential of your business

For further advice about technology and what it can do for your business, to access case studies and articles or to download copies of the other ‘Understanding....’ guides, go to BT Business Insight, a unique online resource for small businesses, at www.bt.com/insight

Guidance is also available from Growing Business, the UK’s leading magazine for entrepreneurs. Go to www.growingbusiness.co.uk

To find out more about services that support women in business, see everywoman at www.everywoman.com

For information on starting and growing a business from home visit Enterprise Nation at www.enterprisenation.com

Getting the most from the UK Workforce

Flexible working is moving to the centre of the economic, social and environmental agenda as employers try to marry the efficiency of their business with the growing demands from employees for a better work-life balance.

The approach in fact, is gaining ground right across the UK business spectrum. A BT Business report* discovered 74 per cent of UK companies now claim to offer their staff some form of flexible working. Sixty five per cent cite increased motivations and 50 per cent improved productivity as benefits.

Larger organisations and companies are also embracing the idea of extending the practice and the organisations who support BT's annual Small Business Week have a wealth of experience in this area. BT and everywoman, for example, have a tremendous track record in managing flexible working policies and helping businesses operate at anytime from anywhere. However, it can apply to any business or organisation, from large multinational companies and the public sector right down to small business and the self-employed.

The approach is also being hailed as a weapon in the fight against climate change as it reduces the need to commute to the workplace, meaning a reduction in carbon emissions and a fall in energy consumption. With growing pressure from society, government and customers for businesses to act in an environmentally responsible way, flexible working is a great first step.

The flexible working concept is clearly not going to disappear from the political arena either. From April 2009, all employees with children under the age of 16 have the legal right to request flexible working. The Government estimates the extended right will lead to more than a quarter of a million employees changing their working hours, while many will choose to spend more time working from home. This is not something for businesses to be scared of but it will require some careful planning.



* IT Skills for Flexible Working report, commissioned by BT Business and carried out by The Centre for Future Studies, February 2008.

Working flexibly, wherever you are

What is flexible working?

The term flexible working has been around a long time and it has many connotations. People may associate it with shift working or flexitime, and other organisational solutions favoured by businesses with large workforces.

The concept ranges from 'flexitime', where an employee can choose how weekly or annual hours are worked through 'flexihours', where a staff member is allowed to come in and leave earlier or later, to 'flexiworking' which enables employees to work overtime and then take time off in lieu. Another approach to this is 'condensed hours' where an employee works the week's hours in just four days, taking the fifth day off.

These days, however, flexible working is an approach based on the principle that distance or the lack of a fixed location are no longer barriers to conducting business. It also recognises the increasing demands on employees' time and provides new tools to help them manage their working day more effectively and with better results.

Flexible working enables your employees to work effectively without having to go into the office all day, every day. Recent BT research suggests that by 2010, more than 50 million Europeans will spend some time working remotely, instead of at their usual workplace.

Thanks to innovative technologies, such as high-speed broadband, Wi-Fi hotspots and personal organisers, people can access information at anytime from anywhere, thus enabling them to work from home and on the move. Whether it is phone calls, emails, enquiries from customers, voicemails from colleagues, discussion papers, the latest price list or bid document, you can get the information you need, wherever and whenever you need it. This gives employees more control of their lives and work and, at the same time, can deliver both cost and efficiency benefits to the organisation.

As well as improving productivity, flexible working can also cut road congestion and overcrowding on public transport, reducing travel time and making it a less stressful part of the day for everyone.

It can also improve customer service and help you respond to issues as they arise. An adaptable approach gives you the opportunity to react to circumstances and changing priorities quickly and effectively and reduce dependence on office space with its attendant extra costs. The ability to function flexibly also ensures you can continue to work in the event of emergencies or security threats.

Flexible working can

- Enable employees to work remotely, improving their efficiency and productivity.
- Improve service to customers and help you respond to issues as they arise.
- Enable you to react to circumstances and new priorities quickly and effectively.
- Help to reduce your dependence on office space and reduce staff churn.
- Keep your people in the loop and working as part of your team.
- Help ensure your business can continue to do its work despite emergencies and security threats.

Some myths about flexible working

'It's only for big companies'

Not anymore. Flexible working is about using technologies to help get the best from your people and this is just as important for the smaller business. A recent survey by YouGov for BT Business found that 59 per cent of small business directors felt that their organisations were just as able as larger companies to implement new ways of working. And in a recent BCC survey it was found that 62.3 per cent of small businesses offered flexible working patterns, 70 per cent noted an improvement in employee relations and over 50 per cent noted an improvement in productivity.

'If the internet goes down, so does my business'

It doesn't need to be like that as employees haven't got to rely on a single connection. In the (increasingly unlikely given the excellent reliability of the better business broadband packages available) event of any minor connectivity disruption, there's always a mobile phone, a laptop or a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) that can make a connection to keep you in touch. If you choose the right technology provider you will also receive dedicated business support.

'It's too expensive to set up'

It needn't be. You can start with a relatively small investment in the things that will make the most immediate impact and add more services as you choose. Bringing all your communications together over a converged network can reduce the overall cost of your communications and drive your business productivity.

Workers will waste less time travelling to and from work, and can be more productive in their day-to-day jobs; through flexible working, staff enjoy gaining more control over how and when they work. The business benefits for employers can include higher staff morale and lower employee churn.

'If staff can access our files from outside, so can hackers'

Basic security measures such as firewalls and anti-virus software can deny hackers access to your data and systems whether you are working in the workplace, at home or on the road. Using a Virtual Private Network extends the security protection of your office network to any location, allowing access only to authorised staff.

'If I can't see my staff, they'll do less work'

A lot of entrepreneurs worry about this but the key to solving this problem is to have in place key performance indicators which enable you to measure productivity objectively. Time spent in the office isn't necessarily all productive so don't be tempted to judge based on this alone. A target met at home is better than one missed at work. Also, allowing staff greater flexibility over managing their time and granting them easy access to instant communications helps them respond more quickly.

'If I'm not in the office, people won't think I'm working'

If an individual's contribution is measurable then this shouldn't be a problem. Collaborative tools and 'always-on' technology not only enable staff to work as effectively on the road as in the office, but can also actually make it easier for organisations to monitor their business effectiveness.

'Home workers will feel isolated'

It's a possibility, depending on the personality of the individual, but regular online meetings and other day-to-day working links can effectively deal with this. A 'touchdown' space gives remote workers a 'home' in the office and reminds everyone that the team includes people who aren't always there face-to-face.

'Flexible working is really just for parents with young children who need to combine work with family responsibilities – it's not relevant to everyone'

The demand for flexible working from men and women and from customers is increasing rapidly. Individuals increasingly want more say in when and where they work and customers are expecting services and products to be available at times when they want them.

More and more people are demanding control over the way they work and a life outside of the office. People are also realising that jobs don't always have to come at the expense of time with their family, learning a new skill outside of work or being packed like sardines onto a rush hour train.

CASE STUDY

How everywoman attracts and recruits a flexible workforce

As a small growing business, everywoman currently have ten full time employees and two members of staff that work part-time. Their offices are set up for, and are of a size that can comfortably accommodate twelve. This works well as they are not spending any additional revenue on unnecessary office space. However, at various times of the year, they do need to bring in temporary staff. Because key members of the team can all work remotely this doesn't cause problems – it simply saves money. There have been times when they have had 20 employees on the payroll. If they had needed to pay for office space to accommodate this year round, the rent would have cost an additional £30,000+ a year.

More importantly, being able to offer flexible working has enabled everywoman to recruit some very talented women who, without the ability to work from home, would not be willing to commute into the City every day to work in their office. Since these team members are also key sales and client relationship managers, they often travel to see existing and prospective clients located across the country. This flexible workforce is in touch by email and phone when they are on the road, and as a result the organisation has succeeded in maintaining productivity.

As they grow, everywoman are clear that they need to hire smart, talented people and it is unreasonable to think that the best person for the job is going to live within easy commute of the main office. Addressing this challenge, by offering flexible working, has given them the competitive edge. The business has been able to hire top talent regardless of where they live.



Implementing flexible working

In a complex, innovative and fast-changing marketplace, there are many choices open to businesses to help them work flexibly. You can use any of the individual technologies and devices simply by purchasing whichever meets your immediate needs. You will get the basic features and services you're looking for – ensuring you can make calls or receive emails on the move from day one.

But you may also encounter some real disadvantages with this approach. It can be unreliable, lack the quality one would expect to use for a business exchange and generally offer no dedicated support. For example, when you try to make new devices work together and link with your existing systems and services. Or when you realise the sheer number of contracts you have to cope with or the payments, warranties maintenance agreements, and different online and telephone service contact points that you now need to set up and administer.

When deciding to adopt flexible working practices, businesses should look at their fundamental requirements and what's important to them. In today's market, there are many best of breed reputable companies who deliver tried and tested services to help meet the needs of businesses.

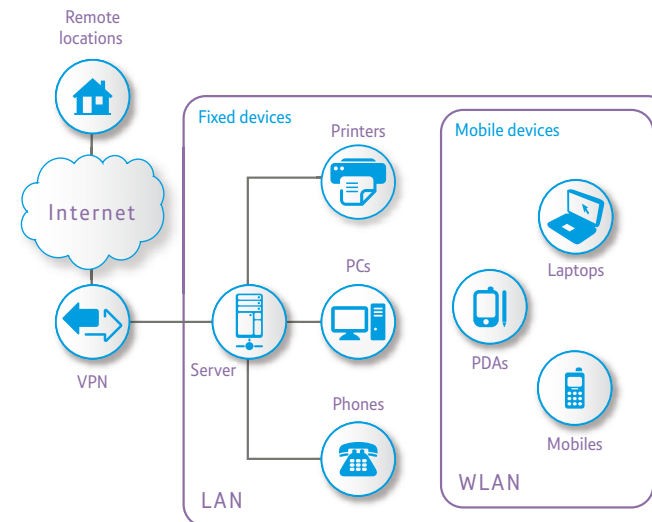


Working with a converged network

The key to getting the best from any set of flexible working tools is to use them over a single, integrated network – a converged network. With a converged network, you don't need a separate infrastructure and processes to support each device or technology – everything is based on Internet Protocol (IP), the technology at the heart of the internet.

By setting up a Local Area Network (LAN) at your workplace, you can ensure all your fixed and mobile voice and data communications systems and devices work together securely and in new ways that will help you improve efficiency, reduce costs and improve your customer service.

Installing a Virtual Private Network (VPN) extends the boundaries of your office network and gives flexible workers access to the same information and services they would have if they were physically in the office. VPNs provide excellent protection against unauthorized users and keep your people more effectively in touch from home.



CASE STUDY

Company manages explosive growth with converged communication system

I-PAYE is an employment management company for freelance contract staff that has seen outstanding success. Turnover of £3.4 million in its first trading year was impressive enough, but this grew to a massive £23 million in the following 12 months, making I-PAYE one of the UK's fastest growing companies. However, as a result of this fast growth and success, the company has faced some difficult challenges.

In little over a year from launch in March 2005, I-PAYE moved from a home-based office, to accommodation in a small cottage, and then to a large Victorian house. But by September 2006 they needed to move again, this time to a purpose built unit on a local business park. In its new premises, the company needed communications that would serve the business for the foreseeable future and a single supplier responsible for the whole job.

I-PAYE Finance Director Shaun McGrail, explains: **"BT proposed a Cisco based solution and we were confident that it would do the best job. It also backed its offer with an attractive flexible leasing arrangement."**

A CONVERGED SOLUTION

BT provided a converged solution centred on the Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express (UCME) platform, operating over a BT provided structured cabling infrastructure. It all runs on an integrated services router and switch set-up, supporting Internet Protocol (IP) connectivity of both voice and data networks, and eliminating the need for separate power supplies.

The system supports voice network connectivity, with diverse call routing into the building and software that provides voicemail, auto attendant capability and optional Interactive Voice Response (IVR)

sessions. It supports 12 personal and five general mailboxes with over 100 hours of message storage, while on the data side 8Mps internet access is provided by BT Business Broadband service.

User training for all 25 employees and more in-depth administrator training for two selected I-PAYE staff members was included in the package. I-PAYE also chose a 24x7 maintenance service from BT with four-hour on-site response.

Continuity of service during the move was absolutely critical. **"BT started the new installation in December 2006 and everything was ready at the end of January 2007,"** recalls Shaun McGrail. **"During the weekend of the move there were a couple of small teething problems but BT was on to them right away. Everything was working perfectly on Monday when we re-opened for business."**

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The Cisco communication system has provided I-PAYE with a firm platform on which to continue to expand its business. Shaun McGrail says: **"It's easy to use, does everything we need and more, has been very reliable, and offers good investment protection."**

The solution will enable I-PAYE to operate in a flexible fashion with people collaborating from home or while on the move. It is also highly scalable, which means it is capable of expansion either to meet growth at the existing site or to provide service at remote sites.

Shaun McGrail concludes: **"The BT/Cisco solution will enable us to transform our business and help to sustain the high levels of customer service that are so important for us to continue to grow."**

Using mobile devices

Mobile technology such as mobile phones, smartphones, and mobile broadband means you can take your office anywhere, connecting to any network, anytime. Mobile technology allows users to become more productive, agile and responsive to customers' needs by enabling them to stay connected where and when they need to. Remote working is more than just working from home. It's working whenever and wherever you are, and with it comes greater efficiency, greater customer service, and ultimately a greater work-life balance for employees.

There are a range of different technologies which can be deployed. The mobile phone is ubiquitous, but smartphones have been a more recent addition to workers' lives, with devices like the Blackberry or BT Office Anywhere providing real-time email access and, in the case of Windows Mobile devices, on-the-fly document editing. Broadband internet has made huge advances in recent years, with prices falling, and speeds increasing. So called 'dongles' and data cards can be used alongside Wi-Fi internet access at various sites across the UK, including city centres, hotels and coffee shops. These technologies involve nothing more complicated than plugging the device into the side of a laptop, or entering a Wi-Fi voucher code. All enable your laptop to operate in exactly the same way as your desktop office computer, so effectively your office moves with you.

Internet access on the go

Wireless broadband, also known as Wi-Fi, is a technology that allows users to access the internet at broadband speeds, without needing to be plugged into a phone point. Provided that a user has a wirelessly-enabled device such as a laptop, phone or personal digital assistant (PDA), they can get online at one of their Wi-Fi providers' hotspots. There are many thousands of hotspots around the world at convenient locations such as hotels, cafés, railway stations and airports.

The benefit is that employees can stay productive and responsive to customers, even when away from the office. And the fact that Wi-Fi operates at broadband speeds means working in a Wi-Fi hotspot can be just as easy and effective as working from the office.

An exciting recent development is the emergence of 'Wireless Cities'. Whole swathes of metropolitan areas are being transformed into Wi-Fi zones. So wherever your employees are within these zones – visiting a client, parked in their car, or even gathering their thoughts on a park bench – they can get online at broadband speeds and stay productive.

Practical guidance

These scenarios illustrate some of the management and technology issues you will need to consider in implementing new and more flexible ways of working.

Flexible working from home

Full or part-time working from home can have clear advantages for home employees, allowing them to balance work and family responsibilities. Businesses also benefit from a noticeable improvement in the productivity of individuals.

In the home, a broadband connection enables occasional or full-time home workers to access the internet using a PC and also log on to your company network and systems, in order to access email and other information.

A broadband connection can also allow the individual to make voice calls over the internet (VoIP), often at reduced rates. Note that consumer-grade VoIP services are often not right for business. They can be unreliable, lack the quality one would expect to use in a business exchange and generally offer no dedicated support.

For more information on working from home, see part two of this guide.



Flexible working on the road

Advances in internet and mobile connectivity mean people can use a laptop computer, a sophisticated mobile phone or personal digital assistant (PDA) to send and receive emails and other messages from home or on the road. 3G mobile services offer speeds broadly equivalent to a broadband connection. The need to maintain security means care should be taken to protect sensitive information when using a public wireless hotspot or a private wireless connection.

Flexible working in the workplace

Installing a Local Area Network (LAN) links all your phones, computers and other devices at a site or office together using IP technology to replace separate voice and data networks. A LAN increases the use you can make of your workplace. No longer dependent on hard-wired connections, you can move phones, computers, printers and people where you need them, when you need to. With a LAN, moves, changes and additions are easy to manage and configurable from a single PC.

Adding wireless connectivity to your LAN (WLAN) takes it all a step further, giving you the ultimate in flexible use of your accommodation. No part of your premises need be out of touch or out of reach.

There can be downsides for both home workers and people frequently on the road – they can grow distant from the organisation. It is a good idea to ensure regular opportunities for outworkers to visit the workplace to meet up with colleagues. A 'touchdown' area with a network connection and access to a phone and other services can provide a proper base and help people feel more part of the team.

CASE STUDY

Musical chairs hits the right note as marketing agency introduces flexible working

Caseworks is a marketing services agency operating primarily in the IT and financial services industries. The company produces marketing and sales collateral including text and video case studies, brochures, sales toolkits and web content. Caseworks directly employs 17 people, of whom nine are business-and-technically-expert journalists. In addition, it co-operates with bilingual correspondents abroad, bringing the total team to around 30. Caseworks also works with a small stable of partner agencies to provide a one-stop-shop for design, web and video services.

Growing existing clients and customer wins has brought the challenge of managing growth, with the company quickly outgrowing its existing accommodation.

Caseworks chairman Tony Linsell, explains: **“Rather than incur the upheaval and additional real estate costs of moving, we decided to look at a virtual business model. Home working was one solution but our people benefit from daily face-to-face interaction, so that would not be the total answer.”**

However, Caseworks was not organised to manage the industrial strength IT

implications of adopting a virtual business model, especially as it does not employ dedicated IT staff.

Caseworks knew that an IP-based solution would be necessary, with design and support being outsourced. The hard part was deciding upon the organisational model.

Caseworks managing director Phil Lumb says: **“Teamwork is essential to maintain a sharp focus on customers’ needs. We decided on rostered home working for six of our principal journalists, enabled by hot desking in our offices in Essex. This way our people can work from home for several days each week, but still enjoy the social benefits of the office.”**

Caseworks felt only BT could develop a Cisco IP-based solution delivered as a managed service with a small business in mind. BT suggested a detailed project plan that offered the phased approach Caseworks wanted.

Tony says: **“BT took all the worry away in terms of designing and integrating the solution that would be completely compatible with our existing Cisco local area network (LAN).**

With the BT Remote Diagnostic Service we would have peace of mind, with BT able to remotely investigate and swiftly resolve any problems.”

With a designated BT project manager coordinating everything from design and configuration to installation and training, BT engineers replaced the company’s ageing PBX with an IP Telephony solution from Cisco Systems’ Unified Communications portfolio in just two days with no business disruption.

There was no need to re-programme the system for hot desking as people moving between desks simply plugged their IP Phones (or laptop with soft phone) into the nearest LAN outlet. The remote working solution followed. Cisco IP VPN Client software on each remote worker’s computer created secure internet connections back to the office LAN using ADSL broadband. Security was provided by the enterprise-class firewall in the Cisco 2800 Series ISR. Access to the company’s data and business applications was provided and the office IP Telephony system was extended into people’s homes.

RESULTS

Caseworks gave the go-ahead for the new solution only after a detailed cost/benefit analysis. The capital cost of moving offices would have been £10,000 with an increase in current account costs of £24,000 per annum.

However, Tony says: **“On a current account cash basis alone our annual return on investment is 53 per cent, compared with moving office, plus we saved £5,000 in capital expenditure,”** The company also expects productivity improvements.

While the financial benefits of the new solution were important, the true significance of its converged solution lies elsewhere, enabling the business to the next level. **“The business has grown by building long-term relationships with clients who value our consistently high quality and the support we provide,”** concludes Phil. **“Those standards can only be maintained by attracting and retaining high calibre people, so helping them to improve their work life balance is crucial.”**

Getting started

Ten things to consider

Venturing into the unknown can be daunting but there are ten key factors every business should consider in planning how best to adopt and thrive through new flexible working practices.

1. The starting point

Take a look at what happens now in your business and where you need to make improvements. Do customers complain about how long it takes to get a response? Are our key people out of reach when they're out of the office? Can you access company files and information when you need them? Listing the real problems you need to address is the best place to start.

2. Looking ahead

What are your objectives for the coming year? Are you growing and adding new customers and new services? Where do you most need to reduce overheads and costs, yet still deliver improved performance? Try to assess how your communications needs will change.

3. Seeing what's in the market

There are new devices and services launched every day, so it will help your purchasing decisions if you have a broad awareness of the different functions and features of devices. A quick call to BT will give you a good idea of the services and functions that the latest laptops, mobiles, dongles and PDAs can deliver.

4. Buying the right equipment

Cutting corners can be counterproductive. Staff become used to a certain standard in terms of computer spec and software and may already be using a mobile phone or PDA at work. As far as possible, keep things the same for the whole organisation – the value of easy operability far outweighs any savings made using cut-down versions of software and services.

5. Planning for the culture change

Flexible working requires adjustments all round. People working remotely face the greatest change and will have some 'domestic' factors to resolve. Office-based staff need to be reminded that though the others are not present, they are working, productive members of the team.

6. Getting the right help

It may be time for a fresh view of your communications needs. Find a reliable supplier who can advise you on a full range of converged systems and services. They should have a proven track record and a broad portfolio of products and services. Such a supplier can help you to pilot new technologies so you get best value from full implementation.

7. Checking your security

On the one hand, access to certain kinds of company, customer and employee information is restricted by law and commercial necessity. On the other, companies need to be open, informative and helpful to staff, customers and investors are increasingly transparent about transactions. Security is all about authentication and blocking unauthorised access to networks, information and services and requires expert attention from your supplier.

8. Keeping it all going

Remote workers depend on constant and reliable connections and devices, so make sure you provide appropriate maintenance, repair and support services. Maintenance can be a major headache if each device and piece of equipment, every package and service is supported independently. Your supplier may be able to offer an all-in contract.

9. Keeping an eye on the costs

With guidance from the right supplier, you should have a clear idea of the potential costs and overall cost savings that may result from your adoption of flexible working. Have a regular review of costs and performance with your supplier – opportunities to reduce costs and improve services may become apparent from examining actual usage.

10. Being confident

Although new products and services are launched daily, the fundamental IP technologies behind the flexible working revolution are all tried and tested. As technical standards become widely adopted, different manufacturers' products and services can work together more successfully. Your supplier will help you plan a cost effective way to utilise the latest technologies to benefit your business.

Flexible working

According to a YouGov survey, directors of the UK's smaller businesses increasingly recognize that flexible working policies can positively help their organisations, with 65 per cent citing staff motivation and 50 per cent increased productivity as key reasons to adopt them.

In recruitment terms, younger workers prefer flexible working and would consider trading pay level in order to gain more flexibility. Some 70 per cent of graduate job seekers are actively looking for the chance to work flexibly and, at the other end of the age spectrum, flexible working can help you retain the insight and experience of longer-serving employees.

Unleash the power of your people

BT Business works with over a million small businesses and has helped countless companies adopt the elements of flexible working that will truly benefit their business, either as additions to existing services or as a step towards developing a converged network for total voice and data communications, now and in the future.

We have the experience and understanding, and offer a wide range of services and equipment from the world's leading manufacturers and suppliers. We help businesses devise and implement a flexible working policy tailored to their company's needs. Our maintenance, repair and support services give the reassurance and the response you require with a single contact point and contract to make administration simple.

For more information on how we can help a business review existing voice and data infrastructure and services and illustrate the benefits a business could gain from adopting flexible working, go to <http://www.bt.com/insight>

CASE STUDY

Technology helps PM Squared to shape up from home

Home working used to mean taking reams of paper and files home, and only being in touch with the office by telephone and fax. But in today's broadband world, home workers can be virtually in the office and access the same systems and documents as they can from their desks.

This is what Stephen Brooks, founder of conference and event management firm, PM Squared wanted to achieve. He knew effective communication facilities would be critical to success. As a first step he chose BT Business Total Broadband, BT Business Email and BT Backup.

Stephen had originally planned to take an internet and business email service from a third party IT company. **"I looked at what BT had to offer,"** he says, **"and it was easy and more cost effective to manage myself rather than paying a third party to do it for me."**

A year on, PM Squared was a firmly established, growing company and opted for a range of new BT services to help that growth. Stephen Brooks explains the rationale: **"Like many organisations today, PM Squared is largely a virtual company. That means we not only need to be highly flexible and resilient, but also able to operate and respond proactively without incurring the overhead of a big central office."**

BT Office Anywhere ensures that Stephen Brooks has access to all the information he needs whether he is in his home office, delivering a project on site, or picking up his children from school. It means that, when

things are quieter, he needn't wait in front of his office PC for emails. BT Office Anywhere is a hand-held device that provides him with real-time access to emails, contacts and calendar. **"I can be out and about executing projects or winning new business without worrying I will miss a client call, so the solution gives me an improved work life balance with greater flexibility,"** says Stephen.

PM Squared have also benefited from BT PC Backup, which automatically copies business critical data to a secure off-site storage facility every day to protect the company against loss and are embracing the BT Business Broadband service, which will support both internet access and business telephony. This will be complemented by BT OneBillPlus, which combines the company's telephony, broadband, email, BT Backup and BT Office Anywhere spend on one monthly bill.

By sourcing all its communications from one supplier in this way, PM Squared realises significant savings in time and money. The services are designed to be scalable, giving the company a platform for future growth. Stephen concludes: **"I'm also planning to use free BT Tradespace as a marketing and networking tool. Overall, BT gives me a reliable and cost effective service that enables me to be more professional and it's great to have a partner that helps me realise the potential of technology and supports my business growth in this way."**

Working from home

Why should you work from home?

Working from home used to be a complicated affair – whether you were a home-based business or a home worker for a large company, it could involve large amounts of paper, boxes and files, not always having the correct information to hand and difficulties with customers and colleagues contacting you.

That's no longer the case. In today's internet and mobile-enabled world, home-based workers and companies can operate as though they are in an office, access the information they need, use same types of systems and services as large companies, and collaborate regardless of location.

Basing yourself at home is not only a great way to start a business, but is also a great way to grow your company – by offering employees the opportunity to work from home, on a part or full-time basis.

Home working can help cut the amount of office space required by companies resulting in lower energy consumption and lower carbon emissions. It also means that carbon emissions generated by people travelling to work are cut.

Avoiding one average road commute per week for a year in an average petrol car would save around 120kg of carbon dioxide. If every small business in the UK supported the equivalent of one employee working from home for just one day a week for a year, small business could collectively save 516 million kgs of carbon dioxide.

Increased home working also has the potential to cut the worst peak traffic by up to 10 per cent within five years; a reduction that would save 14.5 billion miles a year. This equates to 17 million cars foregoing a trip from Lands End to John O'Groats.

Home working is also an excellent tool for enriching and enlivening local communities with more time and money being spent in your area. And those spending more time in their homes, can also devote more time to their families and friends.

The benefits of working from home

At a time when office space is at a premium for companies, home working eliminates the costly overheads of renting or buying property. We're also in an age where we are increasingly conscious of our effects on the environment. Working from home can also avoid the pollution – not to mention the stress and discomfort – of the daily commute.

But being home-based is more than that. It also means you can work when and where it suits you – without being constrained by nine-to-five or time zones – creating a better work-life balance, and greater productivity for the business.

Providing you approach it in the right way in terms of time management and equipment, a home office can support a business that works around you – whilst enabling a potentially unlimited reach and scope.



Getting started

1. The right accommodation

Your home office should be just that – an office at home. The most productive workers are those who identify areas in their homes away from potential distractions.

Putting a laptop and phone on your kitchen table and expecting to be productive may lead to disappointment. In order to work effectively, make sure you have a dedicated working space so you can close the door at the end of the working day.

2. Set up your home office properly

The first and most important consideration for any company should be around communications. As a home-based worker or business, you need to be contactable during the working day via a range of media, including telephone and email.

Critical requirements usually include a landline, mobile and internet connection as the basics to allow you to easily keep in touch with clients and colleagues.

A good, secure broadband connection is vital. Not only does it provide home-based workers with high-speed surfing capabilities and faster email, it also opens up a range of tools making the life of a home or remote worker easier. These include collaboration and business administration tools, as well as a link to servers or networks.

Many of these tools, such as an additional Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) line, security software, collaboration tools and support are available for free or included as a standard part of good business broadband packages.

3. Control your work-life balance

A better work-life balance is the primary reason people set up a business or work from home^{***}. Working from home is a great opportunity to be as flexible as you need. Instead of being constrained by conventional work hours, you can choose when you're most productive or when is the best for your contacts. Liaising with a client in California, for example, is no longer a problem as work hours are entirely yours to choose.

Working from home also allows you to work around your lifestyle. If you decide not to keep traditional hours, you should take steps to keep track of how much work you're doing. This can work well for you if you are clear about the parameters, when you start and stop work, and how it fits with the other aspects of your life.

4. Keep in touch

Just as working from home presents significant opportunities, it can also throw up some challenges. One of the most significant can be the lack of direct contact with people – whether customers, partners and colleagues – so make a conscious effort to maintain regular contact with those important to you as you would if you were in the office. You can do this using a range of technologies from telephone, conference calls, instant messenger (IM), email and collaboration tools that allow you to share work and dialogue.

^{***} Home Business Report, compiled by Home Nation, October 2007



Protecting your business and electronic data

Your business needs to be secure online and have a reliable support and backup service if things go wrong.

With hundreds of thousands of viruses having been identified and more being created every day, it is essential to have the best protection you can and to keep that protection up-to-date, so that customer and company information is safe at all times.

Just like an office-based business or employee, you need to make sure that you at least have anti-virus and firewall software installed on your machines and that your wireless network is password protected.

Security tools for business can seem costly, time consuming to manage and complex to use. However, for smaller businesses and home-based workers, there is a range of alternatives to help.

If you choose the right business broadband services, you can benefit from comprehensive security packages. In addition, on-demand or Software as a Service (SaaS) security software that can be downloaded over the internet, paid for on a monthly subscription and updates automatically processed, also keeps your systems safe with a minimum investment in terms of time and money.

Backup is also a major consideration for anyone working from home. Larger businesses generally have procedures in place, but backup often comes down the list of priorities for smaller and home-based businesses.

For a minimum charge, starting at around £5 per month, automated remote services allow you to set backup to happen automatically on a daily basis. These remote backup services securely transfer a copy of your data over the internet and hold it on protected servers, so you can easily recover your files should disaster strike – whether flood, fire or computer failure for example.



Getting the technology right

1. Business-grade support at home

Broadband opens up the opportunity for business-grade remote support, which allows specialist IT consultants, when authorised by you, to securely access and repair your computer over a broadband connection, whether it be something as simple as resetting a password or as complex as reconfiguring an entire system. As a result, there are real benefits for those based at home:

➤ Configuration and setup

Remote support takes the hassle out of setup and configuration, ensuring that the systems are set up by an expert from the start, saving you time and ensuring a seamless transition.

➤ Remote support

Remote support ensures that you can run the high-performance hardware and software your business needs, without the worry of what happens if things go wrong.

➤ Flexible solutions

Remote support is an efficient, flexible solution that helps you keep your PCs and software running.



CASE STUDY

Broadband is the real deal for The Pure Package

For The Pure Package, a company delivering nutritional ready meals made from the freshest and most natural ingredients, to their customers' doors, a rapidly growing client list in the fast-paced City of London market meant it needed a range of reliable IT services to help it expand. But these are not just any ready meals.

Customers want instant gratification, explains Jennifer Irvine, founder of The Pure Package: **"They want the information now. They'll call us up with a load of complicated questions. If we send them a brochure it's going to take a couple of days to arrive."** Also Jennifer adds that paper brochures are expensive to print, quickly out of date, and bad for the environment.

Providing the information immediately can mean the difference between customers buying and not, so The Pure Package came to BT for a straightforward and user-friendly solution.

The BT Business Total Broadband package provided a complete solution to fit The Pure Package's needs. All the services Jennifer wanted – internet telephone calls, email accessible from anywhere in the world, antivirus software, website hosting, wireless networking and a 24-hour helpline – are bundled with the broadband helping to save The Pure Package money. **"Plus,"** recalls Jennifer, **"it was really easy to get going."**

The built-in wireless service allows Jennifer and her staff to use the internet throughout the offices and kitchen without hazardous cables, and the email system

has had an unexpected benefit. Jennifer says: **"It's a really good backup because let's say you lost all your computers at the office, you can relocate and immediately be able to get into your emails again. That has actually happened to us, but our customers never noticed because we were able to restore so fast!"**

Web hosting has allowed The Pure Package to meet potential customers' expectations, as Jennifer explains: **"They can look at our website immediately and we can discuss it over the telephone with them; it's fantastic. We use it literally like a brochure, and the wonderful thing is that when we do something fabulous and new, instead of a print run we just make some tweaks to the website and voilà! It's done."** It has also cut down on paper costs and waste.

Jennifer adds: **"The service generally works. But when things didn't quite happen for me I called the helpdesk. I was quite shocked because a human being, someone who seemed to get a kick out of helping me, answered the phone. They were extremely helpful and really nice about it, and they didn't make me feel stupid."**

The Pure Package's technological development has been so successful that Jennifer is planning to start using the bundled BT Office Communicator software soon. She concludes: **"It'll be wonderful for our therapists who speak to our clients over the phone; the idea that we could actually see the customers as well would be fantastic."**

2. Software at your service

Software as a Service (SaaS) is a business buzz phrase at the moment, and is used to describe a wide range of different types of software and applications that are hosted, maintained and upgraded by a third party company and delivered to users over the internet or 'on-demand'.

SaaS applications are ideal for home-based businesses and workers as they allow you to use the latest business-grade software developed specifically to meet your needs free or on a subscription basis, removing the need for upfront capital investment in terms of hardware and software, as well as upgrade costs.

It also means that you no longer need to manage and support critical business applications in-house, as that is taken care of by the company supplying the service. Areas where SaaS applications could help you are:

↳ Email and collaboration

SaaS offers even the smallest home-based company a choice of options, ranging from free basic email access as an inclusive part of the business broadband package to tools that offer the ability to share information and services, such as company-wide calendars, address books and folders.

Online tools, which are often free, also offer added functions, such as calendars, forums and Instant Messenger (IM) services, as well as backup, because files are stored on secure remote servers in multiple locations.

3. Managing your cost base

Perhaps the most critical factor in launching, growing and running a successful business from home is managing and controlling costs. Salaries, expenses, equipment, utilities, taxes and business rates all need to be controlled and forecast.

Accounting packages do not need to be expensive and difficult to install, maintain and upgrade. In addition, staff expenses and benefits software can be integrated into the wider financial system and easily updated by finance staff or employees themselves.

There is excellent, value-for-money software available which can help you assess and manage all of your costs in the same way a large company might.

Web-based accounting and admin tools, delivered as SaaS, are a great way for a business to get access to the kind of software previously reserved only for larger organisations. From self-service expense filing and absentee notification to a full-blown integrated accounting package, SaaS is able to cut installation time and cost by delivering ready-made applications instantly and securely over the Web. There are also no upgrade costs, as hardware, software licence and maintenance are included in the monthly subscription.

If you choose the right providers, they will supply landline, mobile and broadband in one simple package with one bill.

Making calls over the internet can also help reduce costs, with packages including capped price calls to mobiles and inclusive local and national calls, and offers a cost-effective, sometimes free, way to get an additional line for your business. It also has a range of other benefits for home-based businesses and people working from home.

VoIP numbers are non-geographic, which means that you can choose to have a business number with a different area code, for example, London, Manchester or Edinburgh, irrespective of where you are actually based. This means that you can have a point of presence where you choose, without the cost of an office.

In addition, VoIP also offers advanced phone features such as voicemail, call forwarding, online phone directories and automatic call forwarding to your mobile, which can be administered online.

Management tips for home workers

From April 2009, all employees with children under the age of 16 will have the legal right to request flexible working. The Government estimates the extended right will lead to more than a quarter of a million employees changing their working hours, while many will choose to spend more time working from home. This is not something for businesses to be scared of, after all BT has made a huge success of employing remote workers, but it will require some careful planning.

Recent advances in technology have made the kit required to work effectively at home accessible and inexpensive. Even initial concerns about the communication challenge of how to manage and interact with colleagues that are in different locations can be easily overcome with the right advice and approach.

Good communication skills are more acutely required than in an environment where ad hoc face-to-face meetings can be easily accommodated. There are also wider challenges such as ensuring home workers feel a sense of belonging to their wider business team and don't feel isolated. Some managers will also need to adjust to the business reality presented by home working and foster a working culture that rewards business outputs rather than measuring performance on inputs or hours spent in the office alone. Unfortunately some managers promote a culture of 'presenteeism' which can make home workers feel they are mistrusted or overlooked for opportunities.

BT Business has recently produced the Remote Manager's Toolkit, a comprehensive and practical toolkit for managers written in conjunction with the Centre for Future Studies and a panel of flexible working experts. The guide is also useful reading for home workers collaborating with office based colleagues. To download the guide, or to learn more about remote workers in a BT Business web seminar, go to

<http://www.insight.bt.com/events/Managing-remote-workers>

You can also learn a great deal by sharing tips and experiences on flexible working with other remote managers and workers. One option is to join an online community of like-minded business such as the Flexible Working community on www.bttradespace.com



Being responsible

Entrepreneurs have always been aware of the financial contribution they make to the economy in terms of job creation, driving innovation and boosting gross domestic product (GDP). But increasingly, they also wish to add a further ethical dimension through what is known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

CSR can be demonstrated in many ways, including reducing poverty, addressing skills shortages, improving the work-life balance that a company's staff experience. Businesses also want to reduce their negative environmental impact and/or to provide products and services which reduce pollution and waste. Entrepreneurs are also aware that policy makers, their customers and clients and their own staff are now demanding more than just economic and financial benefits from business.

The requirement to demonstrate environmentally responsible business practices is increasingly being enshrined in the tendering process. Companies whose behaviour falls short are being excluded at the outset so green business practices can help save money and help win business. A Henley Centre Headlight Vision study into sustainable buying behaviours conducted in 2007 found that 26% of respondents would boycott firms that damage the environment – up from only 9% in 2001.

You may already be doing your bit to help cut back on transport congestion and carbon emissions by avoiding the daily commute through practices such as home or flexible working. This is popular with businesses as it can potentially provide a better work-life balance for your staff as well as reducing your overheads. But you can extend your environmental credentials in the home by reducing your energy consumption, too.

The next step in greening your operations is to calculate your carbon 'footprint', so that you can gain an understanding of how much carbon dioxide your business activities create – and reduce your energy consumption. BT's carbon calculator uses data from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to help determine your individual carbon footprint. It is available at <http://www.btplc.com/ClimateChange/CarbonCalculator>

BT BEST, BT's Business Environmental Self-Assessment Tool, is designed to help all small businesses understand their environmental impact and take simple steps to become a greener, more sustainable company.

Go to www.bt.com/btbest



The environmental outlook of your business can help to attract and retain staff as well as winning new customers – and small steps taken by a large number of small businesses can make a big impact.

Technology is pivotal to enhancing your CSR credentials. Audio and web conferencing as well as emailing cuts down on journeys, and shutting down computers and other electrical equipment can also benefit the environment. Leaving a PC monitor on all night wastes enough energy to microwave six dinners, according to the Carbon Trust.

There is online software which allows you to store documents electronically, cutting down on paper use. These workspaces are like virtual meeting rooms, allowing colleagues to access information relating to any given project in one place. Technology is also available which allows electronic signatures to be used, meaning documents do not need to be printed, again saving on paper. Using recycled paper and packaging can also help you to reduce your carbon footprint.



Getting advice

The world of British business is changing. Hundreds of thousands of new businesses start every year, many from home. However, going it alone is as much about finding the right help as it is about relying on your own knowledge.

It's important SMEs get the right support from the outset. The good news is, there is a range of expert support and information out there to ensure home workers get off on the right foot.

BT Business Insight (www.bt.com/insight), Enterprise Nation (www.enterprisenation.com), everywoman (<http://www.everywoman.com>) and Growing Business (www.growingbusiness.co.uk) are four places where start-up businesses can get advice. The websites provide small businesses with information and advice about how technology and services can help them succeed.



Choosing the right approach

There are many ways of selecting suitable equipment and suppliers. A good supplier will address a number of issues to provide you with an effective solution:

- **Is it fit for purpose?** Products and services need to be tough enough for business use and fully supported. Consumer versions, though sometimes cheaper, often don't offer the flexibility or reliability upon which you depend.
- **Does it offer value for money?** You need to look at what's included in the packages you're considering as a home worker. Things to look at are, do they include an additional VoIP line, security software, hosted email, collaboration tools and Webspaces?
- **Is it secure?** You need to be able to monitor and control access to your computer and files to protect customer and company information and to prevent fraud and abuse.
- **Is it fast enough?** Speed, whether broadband or computer processing speed, is important for most businesses, so it's worth looking at what you get in detail.
- **Will it support growth?** If you plan to grow, it's important you have access to upgrades, extensions, conferencing services and new applications to achieve maximum success.

Glossary of technical terms

BlackBerry – a popular brand of PDA.

Dongle – a small device that plugs into your computer to give you instant broadband connection, no matter where you are.

DSL – Digital Subscriber Line; a broadband connection over an ordinary telephone line.

Firewall – hardware or software that blocks unauthorized access to a network or router.

Hotspot – a location offering wireless broadband connections.

IP – Internet Protocol; the standards, rules and processes that enable voice and data to be transmitted over networks.

LAN – Local Area Network; the wired connections and equipment that make up a site or office communications system.

Laptop – a portable PC.

Office Anywhere – a mobile device that gives you real-time access to your emails, contacts and calendar, and the option of unlimited VoIP calls to UK landlines when you're out and about.

PC – a desktop Personal Computer.

PDA – Personal Digital Assistant; a portable, handheld device for receiving and sending voice, video and data messages.

Router – a device that enables data to be sent and received at broadband speeds over an ordinary telephone line.

VoIP – Voice over Internet Protocol services use a broadband connection to carry telephony services.

VPN – a Virtual Private Network extend an organisation's network to outlying office or home locations.

Wireless or Wi-Fi – Broadband connection without the wires Wi-Fi has become very popular because once you have a base station, any number of desktop or laptop computers can be connected to your broadband service without the need for any cables or installing extra phone lines.

WLAN – a Wireless Local Area Network enables wireless voice and data connections within a site or office.



Offices worldwide

The services described in this publication are subject to availability and may be modified from time to time. Services and equipment are provided subject to British Telecommunications plc's respective standard conditions of contract. Nothing in this publication forms any part of any contract.

© British Telecommunications plc 2009
Registered office: 81 Newgate Street, London. EC1A 7AJ
Registered in England No. 1800000.

Printed in England.

PHME 56688/06/09

