How Communication Plays a Role
in the Hybrid Workplace of the Future

by Stephen Mackarel

In business, effective communication is everything. 2020 has flipped the traditional office work-week on its head, with technologies and the cloud coming out as the winners during the lockdown.

In what, almost overnight, became an immediate shift to remote working for companies across the world, the future dynamic for office workers seems to lie within a hybrid (at-home and in-office) workplace model. Employees have had their eyes opened to the time they could save on their work commute, meaning that many are keen to keep their home office in the spare room a permanent fixture. Office rents, which have soared in recent years, have also been re-evaluated by many companies who have realised that productivity was unaffected by remote working.

Covid-19 has been the catalyst for the work landscape of the future and the future of customer engagement. Company communications, both internal and external, have evolved rapidly. Customers expect the ability to contact companies via multiple channels - phone, chat, social media, email, text - and employees expect to be able to communicate internally over multiple channels - phone, IM/chat, collaboration, video calls, video conferencing. Until recently,

only organisations with large capital expenditure budgets and IT resources could deliver on these expectations. Each channel required a different solution and none of these solutions 'talked' to each other. This added to the cost and complexity of doing business.

Now, with cloud Unified Communications as a Service ("UcaaS") and Virtual Contact Centre as a Service ("VCCaaS") these channels are available to companies of all sizes, without the need for capital expenditure or skilled IT resources. These communication solutions provide phone, IM, chat, collaboration, video conferencing, video calls, contact centre functions, reporting and analytics - all on a piece of software that sits on a laptop, pc, tablet, mobile or handset, while charged on a 'per-user, per-month' Software as a Service ("SaaS") model. The only requirement is internet access, and away you go!

UCaaS and VCCaaS now enable companies of all sizes to benefit from secure, future proofed, enterprise grade, fully integrated communications solutions.

This is the future of communication strategies for all companies.

As remote working becomes one of the buzzwords of 2020, hybrid workplaces will become the buzzword of 2021. There are many aspects of company communications that are going to change as remote working becomes more common and that will of course benefit hybrid workplaces.

There are 3 stakeholders in any communication strategy.

Customers expect to be able to choose which channel they can use to communicate with companies; face to face, phone, chat, social media, email, text etc. Customer centric organisations facilitate omnichannel engagement and have a single view of the customer, no matter which channel the customer chooses to engage on. Covid-19 has accelerated the shift to digital channels and companies must adapt, as these methods will be around far after the lockdown lifts.

Companies must measure their Service Level Agreements ("SLAs") on their customer engagement. Effective measurement can only happen on unified communication platforms. These communication solutions must also enhance an organisation's eCommerce strategy.

Employees expect employers to provide multiple channels to communicate internally; phone, chat (IM), collaboration, video meetings, video conferencing, email and face to face. Employees know that long commute times are not just unnecessary, but are a waste of their valuable time, are costly, have a negative impact on their health and negatively impact the environment.

Employees now expect access to multi-channel communication options from anywhere they choose to work from.

Companies must ensure that communication systems are secure, straightforward to use, cost effective and meet the expectations of both the customer and the employee. Covid-19 has forced many organisations to look at the cost of doing business and radically reduce their cost base. Office and property costs are a significant part of the fixed cost base for many organisations. Enabling remote working allows companies to significantly reduce their requirement for expensive city centre office space.

Remote working will be successful when:

- It allows customers to engage seamlessly with companies regardless of where employees are physically located.
- Employees have the same functionality and systems available to them anywhere they choose to work from.
- It reduces costs for companies.
- Companies can measure and report on internal and customer SLAs regardless of the channel, device used or the location of any engagement.

With countries, economies and the whole business world grappling with the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19 and the changing ways of working, companies need remote solutions to help sustain their businesses, reduce costs and drive efficiencies in what is the toughest of times. Companies of all sizes in Ireland are dealing with massive financial, operational and customer relationship management ("CRM") challenges and business managers are having to work out new ways of leading.

A single secure, unified technology solution will drive efficiencies, keep costs down, provide performance metrics and ultimately support enterprise recovery in the new Covid-19 business world.

The future of communications is cloud based and staying ahead of the curve in technologies is vital.

The benefits of remote or hybrid working have never been more important – from better productivity and employee morale to significant cost savings and lessened environmental impact.

Modern technology has made the move to remote working more accessible and these unique, real-world tested systems make it easier than ever to bring your workforce together virtually.

Irish company, workair has been ramping up its services to meet surging demand for distributed and remote working solutions since the Covid-19 outbreak, working with businesses in many sectors including the motor, auctioneering, law, recruitment, travel, financial services, and healthcare industries.

LetsGetChecked, a start-up which sees huge demand for its at home health testing kits, fast-tracked its installation of workair's platform and within 10 days had offices in New York and Ireland up and running. It has enabled other companies challenged by the recent national lockdown restrictions, such as travel agency Hannon Travel, law firm Whitney Moore, HR software company Intelligo, and Eden Recruitment, to continue servicing customers in an innovative, efficient and cost-effective manner. Some of these companies will not rely on bricks and mortar office space in the future but rather a hybrid workplace.

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