



RETHINKING WORK

Preparing for life in
the new normal

Opinion White Paper





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INTRODUCTION

Your business was already changing fast, as you keep up with workers, the workplace and even work itself going digital. Recent global events have only accelerated this, emphasising the importance of remote working and surfacing the role of new technologies that enhance communication, collaboration and productivity.

As part of an initial response businesses took steps to provide their teams with the tools they needed to remote work effectively, with headsets, microphones and collaboration tools amongst the most urgent requirements.

Now, with an eye on the future, businesses must re-imagine how their people work and the technology they use, assessing the suitability of these tools to maximise value, while ensuring ongoing productivity and user engagement. Unfortunately, there is also the need to consider the chances of pandemic-like events occurring again and business-readiness should this occur.



UNDERSTANDING THE NEW NORMAL

Although much remains unclear in a post-pandemic world, any return to work plan presents significant personal, logistical and technological challenges and a risk that the cycle may have to be repeated. With that, however, comes important opportunities to build on the learnings of an enforced period of remote working during which your users have embraced new routines, adapted to different environments and harnessed the power of new technology.

As such, businesses must begin to analyse the positive experiences of their users, as well as the role played by new tech, to ensure that any benefits are not lost as routines return to something more familiar.



With multiple factors at play, planning for a return will rely on consideration of 4 key areas:

1



WORKFORCE

Understand the roles they perform

Every member of your team has their own preferences, their own behaviours and unique circumstances. How does this influence the way they work?

2



WORKSPACE

An individual user's environment

Wherever your people are looking to work long-term, are the tools that they've been given appropriate for their environment?

3



WORKSTYLE

How your people get work done

How are your users utilising the tools they are given?
What are their preferences and how can you support this?

4



WORKPLACE

Where your business works

Will you be returning to your office environment, and is this ready for users to return to work?



Preparing for life in the new normal



1 - WORKFORCE

Every member of your team is unique

Your business is only as good as your team, and your collective success is driven by not only their skills and attitudes, but their ability to perform at their best.

With the sudden changes to both their work and personal lives, your people have had to adapt quickly, getting to grips with new technology to continue delivering their best work. This has not only helped them respond in the short-term but has changed their preferences and altered expectations for the long-term.

**2.7
billion**

The number of workers, approximately 4/5 of the global workforce, affected by lockdown and stay-at-home restrictions.¹



Circumstance drives change

Remote working is by no means a new concept, but until recently was generally only an accepted practice for people performing specific job roles. Recent events have demonstrated that large numbers of the workforce have not only adjusted to, but thrived while remote working, even those who may never have expected to be experiencing work in this way.



New habits die hard

While home and remote working presents its challenges, there's also several benefits including a more comfortable working environment, a more positive work life balance and a flexible routine. Having experienced these benefits, there will be members of your team that are keen to continue, and with that comes the need for your business to support your people by providing what they require to do this effectively.

Equally, safeguarding your team is also important, which might mean that only small groups of people are able to make a return to the workplace at any given time. As such, understanding which of them are willing and able to continue remote working will help you make the best choices as you phase in your plans.

48%

The percentage of workers expected to continue working remotely, on a part-time basis at least, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.²





2 - WORKSPACE

Work is not just a place

The shift towards laptops, notebooks and other mobile devices sees that your people are increasingly able to take their work with them. They aren't tied to a particular workplace and have the flexibility to switch between locations seamlessly.

As a result, technology has become central to the modern workspace, as you arm your people with a selection of tools to enable them to work from wherever they are. For many, their dependence on new innovations has only expanded as a result of the recent home working experience, with collaboration tools and video conference platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Cisco Webex playing a crucial role in their ability to communicate effectively with their colleagues, partners and customers.

New tech is here to stay

To help users adjust, many businesses have made significant investments in new companion hardware, such as microphones and cameras, but headsets especially, have become must-have peripherals for fledgling remote workers. And while certain job roles such as customer service advisers and call centre operatives are already accustomed to using this technology, many have discovered its value for the first time. As such, there is likely to be a demand from new



users to continue using their headsets for the long-term, whether at home or in the office, as well as a desire from businesses to maximise on these new assets.

Equally, many of your users may now need to work from multiple locations or connect with others who cannot travel. Again, being able to preserve a consistent level of engagement, productivity and experience throughout this upheaval is vital not just to capitalise on investments, but to boost the performance and morale of your team.



Emphasis on engagement

Wherever your people choose to work, they need to be able to maintain focus throughout the day. Unfortunately, the majority of workspaces are littered with possible distractions, whether that's the water-cooler chat with their office colleagues, background noise on a packed commuter train, or inadvertent disruption by another member of their household.

These distractions are a part of working life that we all experience, but minimising their impact as much as possible is the key to helping keep your workers' minds on the task at hand. For example, headsets that use active noise cancelling and acoustic fence technology can preserve the quality of the audio experience for both speaker and listener, cutting out unwanted background noise and presenting a more professional image.

1/3 of workers are always or very often distracted during their working day.³



SUPERTOOL: THE HEADSET

Mastering remote working is all about having the right tools for the job. As the workspace has shifted for many, the headset has emerged as a 'can't-live-without' companion device that users expect to keep using as businesses hash out long-term work plans.





3 - WORKSTYLE

Your people working their way

Whatever the role each member of your team is performing, and wherever they choose to work, they will have their own thoughts and preferences for how best to go about what they do. This is driven by the demands placed on them by their role and typical work environment, but is also guided by individual likes and dislikes. This in turn influences the different tools and technology they use, as well as how they use them.

It's vital, therefore, to provide your users with not just functional technology, but the right technology, with product features and capabilities aligned to the way they want to work as well as their personal taste.

52%

of workers prefer to work from their own dedicated desk.⁴





The right tools for the job













In the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses were placed under significant pressure to provide their users with appropriate technology, but these were often distress purchases driven by availability, with little consideration given to the needs of individual users.

As such, businesses need to evaluate the suitability of their initial purchases, and establish what wider role, if any, they can fill for the long-term. Can this technology be used on a regular basis, or does this need to be replaced by alternative products? If so, how do you make better choices?

Having now experienced remote working and adopted new practices, your users have begun to develop new preferences and habits as part of a revised workstyle based around the needs of their new environment.

Have they embraced a new level of collaboration with their colleagues, are they regularly working away from their desk, and are they using their headsets and other technology for extended periods of time?

All of these considerations, as well as additional preferences over style and design, should inform your device choices, ensuring you provide every user with technology they love and that matches with their own way of working.

CONSIDERATION 	FEATURE 
 Desk-based or a roaming worker?	 Corded, wireless or DECT.
 Intermittent calls or regular use?	 Wearing style, comfort, talk time & hearing protection.
 Connected device?	 Connectivity and platform interoperability.
 Travelling or fixed location?	 Device portability, microphone noise reduction & robustness.
 Busy or private environment?	 Active noise cancelling.



4 - WORKPLACE

Are you ready to open your doors?

As you plan your return to work and consider the possibility of a repeat event, there must be an acceptance that things will not be as they were. Many businesses are already beginning to assess their previous workplace strategies to establish how they can be adjusted to accommodate new practices and meet new requirements.

New policies and protocols will need to be enforced, with consideration given to social distancing, the number of staff on-site and the use of communal office space including meeting rooms and collaboration environments.



Equally, your IT estate has now expanded to include multiple collaboration platforms, as well as additional voice and video solutions. To maximise these investments, you need to establish the role they can play as part of your traditional workspace, and how they can be used to better connect a separated and remote workforce with their office-based colleagues.



PREPARING YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT

To ensure that teams can return safely, you need to make adjustments to the way that you work, and this is guided by the needs and capabilities of your business.

Central to this is your ability to support continued collaboration, and for those who return to the office, meeting rooms set up to assist this will be important. It is highly likely virtual meetings will be used in place of many physical gatherings, questioning whether the technology is in place to enable this.

It's also important to consider the features of your meeting room assets. Is your conference room technology compatible with multiple platforms like Teams and Zoom, and how is this connected? Is the audio quality consistent with a reduced number of meeting room participants, and does the video output deliver an engaging, non-invasive experience?

Equally, for those returning to the office, consideration must be given to the compatibility of new technology with existing systems. For instance, are your headsets compatible with your phone systems, and do they provide a good experience within the busier, highly-demanding office environment?



SUPERTOOL: CONTACT-FREE OPERATION

As well as connectivity considerations, thought must be given to the activation and usage of communal technology.

Regular cleaning of conference phones, screens and cameras is expensive and impractical, so ensuring non-contact operation is crucial to creating a clean environment.

With the latest Poly meeting room technology, you can enable Proximity Join for your users, allowing them to initiate calls and share screens from their own devices, vastly reducing the spread of germs through shared interfaces.



MANAGING AN EXPANDED ESTATE

With your users' new working environments defined, and the appropriate technology in place, management of these devices is the next step to preparing the return to work.

In the initial switch to remote working, little thought was given to the management of devices. Now, however, with new voice and video technology cementing its place as part of your business' IT infrastructure, management of this estate becomes an important consideration, with a huge emphasis based on the actions of your users to maintain their devices.

Just like your other corporate devices, effective management requires the implementation of a suitable platform that allows you to monitor device health, deliver firmware upgrades as well as gain insights into their usage. This is critical to smooth ongoing operation, maintaining user experience and guiding future technology acquisition.



SUPERTOOL: HEADSET ANALYTICS AND MANAGEMENT

Poly Manager Pro (PMP) makes headsets work harder and smarter, for your users and your business.

Using centralised software, streamline the adoption of new platforms like Office 365, detect user issues before they're reported and patch estate-wide devices at a click of a button.





POLY: YOUR PERFECT BACK TO WORK PARTNER

With companion technologies set to play such a big role in your new workspace strategy, being able to access the right hardware for both users and your modified office environment is one of the most important decisions a business can make in the interests of short-term necessity and long-term continuity planning.

Poly's enviable heritage in audio and visual technology and communication solutions means they offer a complete range of innovative products across every area of your estate including headsets, handsets, speakers, cameras and management platforms.

Their uncompromising designs suit every need, mode of connectivity and performance demand, and importantly are devices your people love to use. Together they are set to enhance the workspace not just for the new normal, but whatever work life looks like beyond.

Sources

¹ COVID-19 causes devastating losses in working hours and employment. (International Labour Organisation, 07/04/2020). ² Future of Work Trends Post-COVID-19. (Gartner for HR, 2020). ³ All your employees are distracted. The realities of today's open office and what you can do about it. (Poly, 2020). ⁴ What workers want: Europe. (Savills, 2019).





PREPARE FOR THE NEW NORMAL WITH SERVIUM AND POLY

As a long-standing Poly partner, we're perfectly placed to help you overcome your unique back to work challenges. Together, we harmonise your existing tools and technology with the latest Poly products and solutions to create the perfect environment, capturing the audio visual opportunities created by your new experiences to deliver greater value for your business, and help you get the very best out of people and technology.

If you'd like to learn more about the latest Poly solutions, and how we can assist your return to work strategy, please contact your Account Manager, email us at hello@servium.com or speak to one of the team on **+44 (0)303 334 3000**.

ABOUT SERVIUM

Servium is dedicated to creating great IT experiences - we seek to win the hearts and minds of IT strategy-makers, professionals and users. Our attitude is that no challenge is too big, no detail too small. We tackle both the ordinary and the extraordinary with the same focus and originality of thought that ensures solutions make a difference. It means we're one partner ready to assemble all the technology and know-how every medium to large organisation relies on. Matched by straight-talking, real-world experience and amazing service, our customers enjoy exceptional value; the product of the best innovation, latest thinking and a thriving ecosystem of technical experts.

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