



## Productivity of remote workers calls for the right technology

Having the right equipment has always been essential for work; however, as employees increasingly expect to work seamlessly from anywhere, it has become more important than ever to choose the right equipment, especially when it comes to mobile devices.



The trend of remote working has been steadily increasing as ideas around the importance of working in offices versus from home have shifted. According to the Australian government's Productivity Commission, Census data from 2016 suggested that around five per cent of workers worked from home instead of commuting on census day and, in 2019, around eight per cent of employees had a formal work-from-home arrangement and worked a median of one day per week from home.<sup>1</sup>

**In the wake of the global pandemic, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported that 41 per cent of people with a job worked from home at least once per week in February 2021, compared with 24 per cent at least once per week before March 2020.<sup>2</sup>**

Throughout the pandemic, the increasing use of mobile technology has proved that many jobs can be done from any location. Work has increasingly become seen as something you do, not where you go, supported by the fact that 145 million people globally use Microsoft Teams to connect and conduct business remotely. Because of this, 'presence in an office is a proxy for productivity' is becoming an increasingly dated concept. The result is that flexible working has become a key element of the employee value proposition and is contributing significantly to an organisation's ability to attract and retain talent.

Of course, COVID-19 dramatically accelerated the necessity for remote working with 64 per cent of managers and professionals working from home in August 2021.<sup>4</sup> According to the ABS, workers continue to expect remote working in some capacity in the future, with 47 per cent of employed Australians expecting the amount of work from home to remain the same and eight per cent expecting an increase.<sup>5</sup>

1. <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/working-from-home/working-from-home.pdf>

2. <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/year-covid-19-and-australians-work-home-more#:~:text=ABS%20Head%20of%20Household%20Surveys,a%20week%20before%20March%202020.>

3. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2021/07/16/enabling-hybrid-work-with-microsoft-365-and-collaborative-apps/>

4. <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/more-40-cent-australians-worked-home>

5. <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/year-covid-19-and-australians-work-home-more#:~:text=ABS%20Head%20of%20Household%20Surveys,a%20week%20before%20March%202020.>



## Barriers to productive remote working

Despite the growing normality of working remotely, there are several barriers to productivity that remain for enterprises that do not invest enough time, money, or consideration into a remote worker's environment and equipment.

According to the NSW Productivity and Innovation Council, some of the biggest barriers are not just related to emotional concerns like feelings of isolation but are steeped in challenges related to mobile devices and digital connectivity.<sup>6</sup> A survey of 1,000 employees across small and medium-sized businesses found they needed two key supports while working remotely: the right environment; and the right technology. 27 per cent of respondents said they lacked fast and reliable internet access that allowed them to stay connected.<sup>7</sup>

Remote workers can find it difficult to collaborate remotely, for example, whether it be with colleagues or clients, if their work equipment fails to provide a seamless alternative to face-to-face interaction. Without purpose-built technology, such as microphones, cameras and screen resolutions, workers may struggle to participate fully in online collaborative meetings. Substandard equipment means they could fail to receive messages or misinterpret instructions, which may lead to errors in their work or an impact on their productivity. This is also important when it comes to inclusivity and the ability to include employees who work from home in meetings with their in-office colleagues.

Productivity is also significantly impacted by online connectivity issues, low-quality software and hardware, and security. A worker's productivity is guaranteed to be affected if their devices struggle to connect to the internet or cannot access internal corporate systems due to connectivity or unintelligent security.

Simply put, if a mobile device cannot reliably and successfully connect to the internet, access company programs without crashing, or maintain a suitable audio or video connection for collaboration, a remote worker cannot work remotely effectively.

**Working from anywhere is only viable if employees can be as productive from their home offices as they are in the corporate office.**

If their devices are preventing them from working seamlessly, this can have serious ramifications for productivity and, potentially, negative implications for a company's future.

6. <https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Full-Report-NSW-Remote-Working-Insights-Report-1-2020%20%281%29.pdf>

7. <https://www.investment.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/files/IPC/2857779350/NSW-Remote-Working-Insights-November-2021-report.pdf>



## The essential ingredients for maximising remote productivity

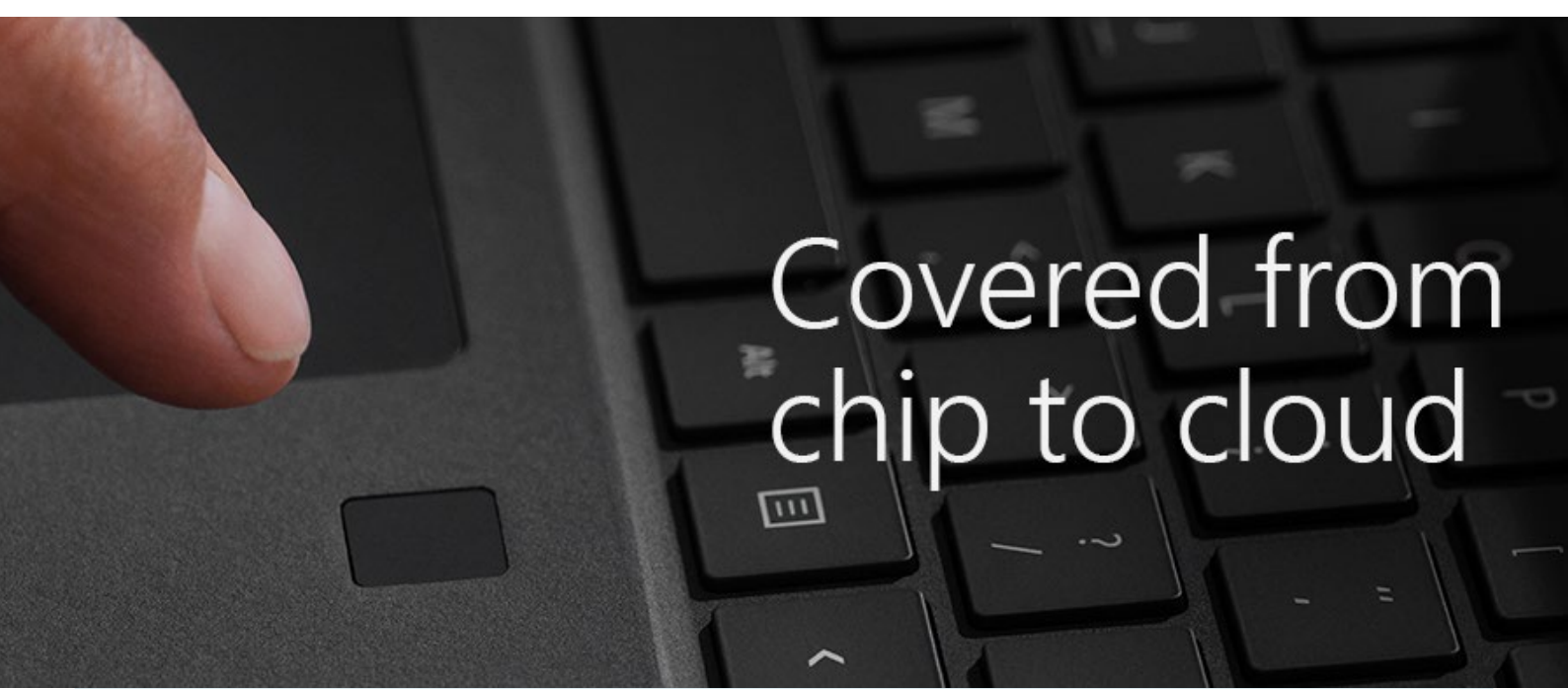
The NSW Productivity and Innovation Council identified the key technology-based barriers to productive remote working as difficulty collaborating remotely, issues with or lack of equipment, connectivity, low-quality software and systems, and cybersecurity.<sup>8</sup> This means that the key to ensuring remote working productivity is addressing these barriers with suitable IT and device solutions. This will require investment in high-grade IT solutions that provide employees with the systems, features, and software necessary to facilitate seamless remote collaboration and support flexible work, which will foster greater productivity and maximise return on investment.

However, arranging suitable IT solutions for remote workers requires more than simply buying a device and expecting positive outcomes. Devices should have user-friendly capabilities such as: long battery life; soft-touch buttons and touch screens; high-speed crash and recovery, and bug reporting; the ability to run multiple applications side-by-side; and the mobility and collaborative benefits of Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365 Enterprise.

The Microsoft Surface is an example of a user-friendly mobile device that can help workers maintain high productivity levels when working from anywhere. The Microsoft Surface contains modern features that directly respond to the needs of remote workers, including a reliable battery, quick login capabilities, remote security features, and a consistently strong wireless connection for online access and remote collaboration.

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8. <https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/Full-Report-NSW-Remote-Working-Insights-Report-1-2020%20%281%29.pdf>



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Surface devices, with the support of Blue Connections, also provide premium software and programming that allow remote working to feel the same as a structured office setting that is heavily supported with high-grade corporate IT infrastructure. These features include Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI), Windows Autopilot and Microsoft Intune to minimise risk. These features, also include cloud-based mobile device management support that helps users configure specific policies to control applications, such as preventing emails from being sent to people outside the organisation or protecting and isolating company data from personal data.

These features also help mobile devices enhance their ability to boot a disk containing large partitions, which is vital for mobile devices that access large company servers or networks with vast amounts of stored files and data.

**Security is also a key feature of Microsoft Surface, with zero trust protection that can effectively prevent malware, phishing and data exfiltration attacks.**

With these services working in the background, remote workers can work without being hindered by glitches, viruses or speed and connectivity issues, all culminating in a safe, productive and highly satisfactory environment.

Blue Connections works with organisations to help provision their workforces with the right devices to maintain productivity even in an increasingly remote work culture.

**To learn more about Microsoft's Surface options and how Blue Connections can help your organisation meet its remote working objectives, contact the team today.**

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