



8x8 Essentials
eBook Series



Open for Business:

Enterprise-Grade Communications for Businesses of Any Size

For smaller businesses, a failed customer or employee interaction could be the last.

Find out what it takes to streamline communications, maintain and grow customer engagement, and save money while doing so.

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Chapter

1

Welcome to the new normal.

Learn more about how to adapt to working virtually in the new normal.

Have it all.

While many thought the sudden changes in how we work and connect with customers might not last, they are here to stay. The rapid change brought on by the pandemic has created two distinct challenges for businesses across the globe: how to stay open for business; and how to continue to support existing customers while recruiting new ones.

The move to work remotely has forced us to rethink not just how we communicate and collaborate, but how we support current customers while attracting new ones, all without physical connection. It isn't easy. Physical colocation breeds trust and helps solve customer problems in real time, generate new demand, and grow the business. Communications with customers were largely in person because that personal touch was key to an evolving relationship. All this has changed.

This change has forced us to recognize the value of communications and collaboration technology, no matter the size or type of business. And having the right technology to provide continuity for communications and collaboration is key to ensuring survival and growth.

“We are all navigating this new normal together. As we lock arms virtually and try to help one another in the ways we can, our vast world suddenly feels a little smaller and a lot more connected. And for that, we are grateful.”

Mike Krieger

Co-founder of Instagram



A single communications solution for your business

Now that we've established the necessity for effective communications, how do you choose the right platform for your business? This decision will define how successful your business will be in adapting to this paradigm shift.

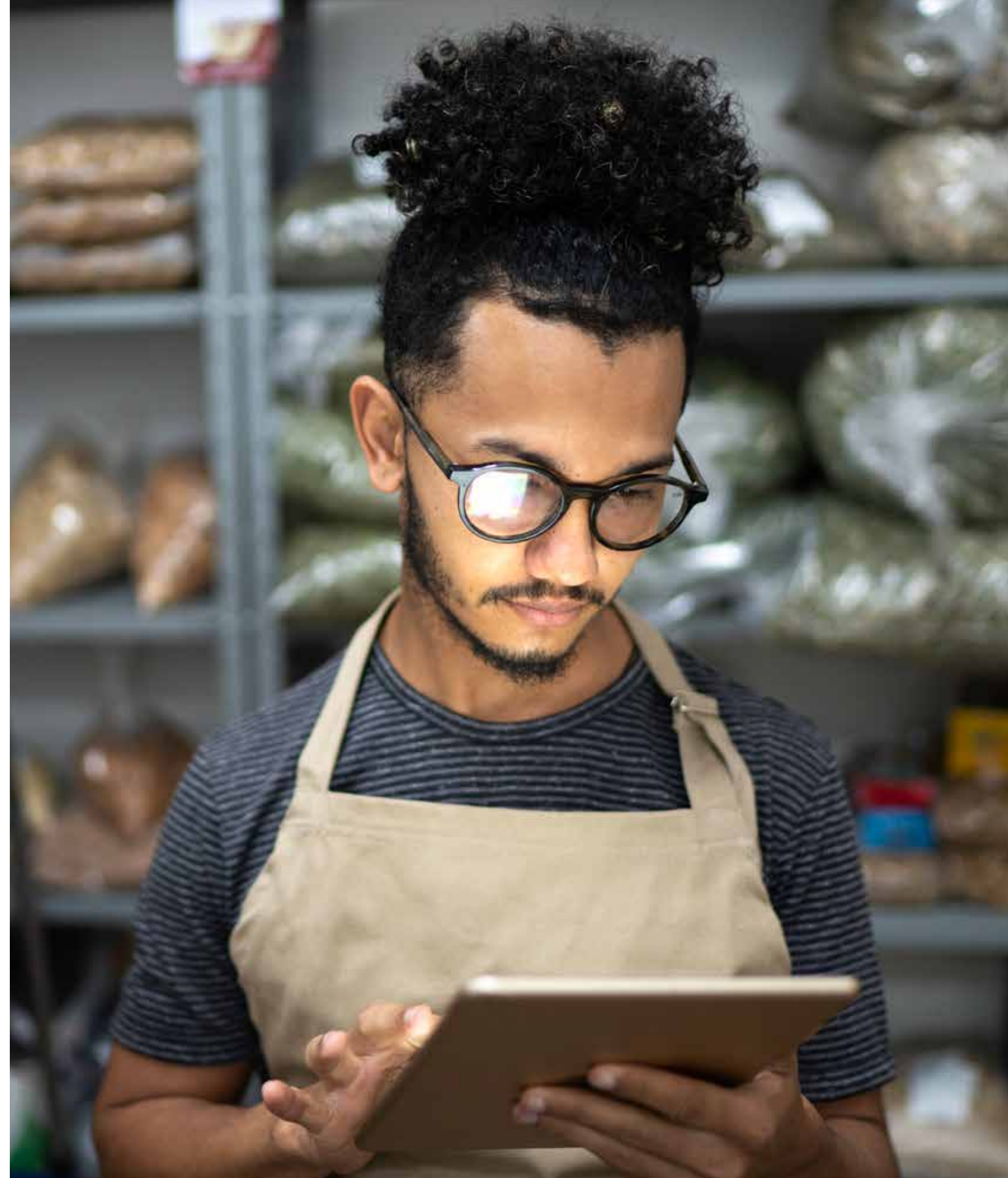
While these trends began prior to the pandemic, they have accelerated significantly since:

- Almost half of all employees believe collaboration, specifically real-time collaboration, enables them to work towards a common goal.
- 83% of companies prior to the pandemic had already expected an increase in remote working, providing flexibility and other benefits for both employees and employers.

In the rush to adapt, you may have been forced to hastily consider and adopt new collaboration technologies. As we settle into the new way of working, is it time to find out if those short-term fixes address your long-term needs?

Using multiple disparate communications platforms comes at significant cost and business impact. While the pick-and-choose approach to calling, messaging and video conferencing applications may seem to offer flexibility and cost savings, maintaining and operating separate applications will have several consequences:

- Employees need to be trained and supported across separate applications with discrete user interfaces and functions.
- Productivity sinks and confusion reigns when employees must switch between applications for internal vs. external communication.
- Supporting multiple applications means maintaining multiple vendor contracts, support arrangements and service level agreements with less bargaining power.



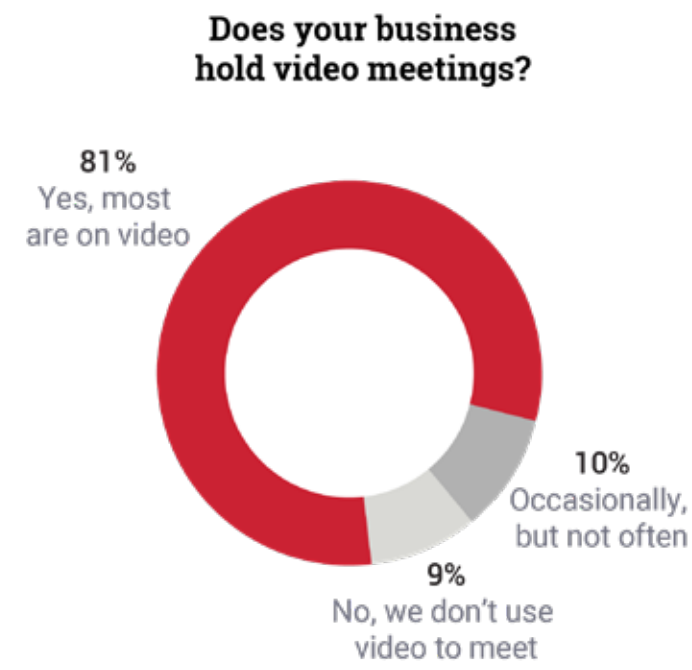
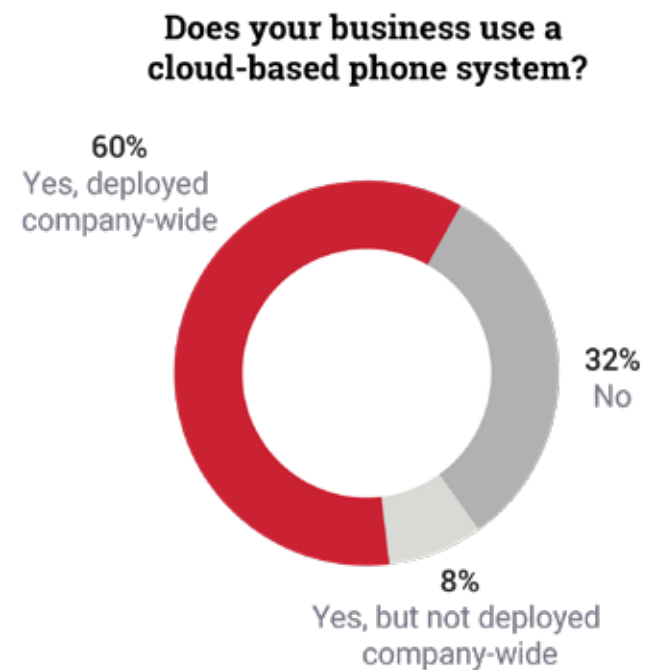
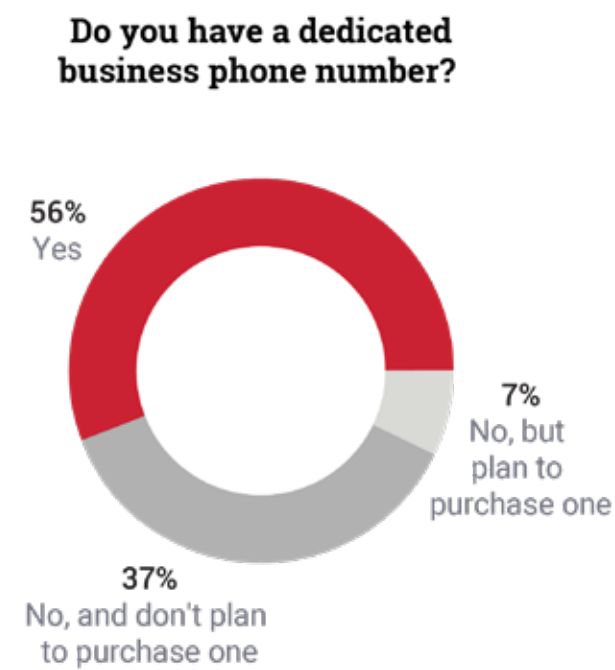
All of this leads to one answer:

You need one solution offering an integrated approach to internal and external communications and collaboration across all channels:

- Chat and SMS
- Calling
- Content sharing
- Video Meetings



8x8 Poll Results



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

Customers are embracing remote engagement. So should your business.

Addressing today's challenges successfully means gaining customer loyalty, breaking down traditional boundaries, and unlocking new opportunities. No longer inhibited by the physical limits of a traditional business model, expanding your customer reach and customer acquisition potential becomes a real and exciting possibility.

But taking advantage of this opportunity means finding a communications platform that allows you to connect with your customers anywhere and anytime. It must be available whenever you and your customers need it, scalable to support growth, up-to-date with consumer-grade user experience, and packaged in one easy-to-use interface for employee collaboration, regardless of location or device. And businesses of any size should expect this combination from a single vendor with a clear cost structure, single service level agreement and accessible support team.

Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

Your employees can be anywhere.

The trend towards remote work was underway well before 2020, and for good reason. Employees have overwhelmingly stated they prefer the flexibility to work from home and most companies have reported increased productivity and employee satisfaction.

But not all workers will continue to work remotely or can, and many small businesses are inherently in-person for employees, customers, or both. Embrace change, put digital customer engagement at the center of business strategy, and deploy a unified communications platform to support it. You will be better prepared to retain and delight your existing customer base, unlock new opportunities outside your traditional boundaries, and broaden your talent pool to hire the best employees regardless of location.





Cheap does not equal low cost.

Third-party costs are a key driver of business decisions. But cheap doesn't always mean low cost. While a contracted price per user from a phone service or online meetings provider may be cheaper than some unified solutions, their hidden costs add up quickly:

- You must maintain contractual arrangements with different vendors
- Disparate service quality and service level agreements can compromise availability and customer experience
- You must rely on separate support teams and availability for each service
- Employees must learn and switch between several apps with different user interfaces, compromising productivity, satisfaction, and time
- Difficulty scaling to meet the needs of your business
- Lack of global reach

Chapter 1 Takeaways

The answer is clear: No matter how large or small your business, an all-in-one cloud communications platform alone can provide the features and benefits your business needs at both a low price and the lowest cost of ownership. With 8x8, that price includes not only the usage license, but everything else you need to allow your employees to collaborate effectively with your customers:

- Global reach and coverage in over 105 countries
- Industry-leading uptime
- All-in-one app with a consistent experience across every device
- The ability to move with context from one channel to another
- Scalability and availability to adjust to your business needs on demand



Chapter

2

How to choose a vendor.

Selecting the right communications should be easy, and we'll show you how.

Welcome back,

In the **last chapter**, we explored working in the new normal and how employee collaboration and customer communication have both rapidly transitioned to virtual-first.

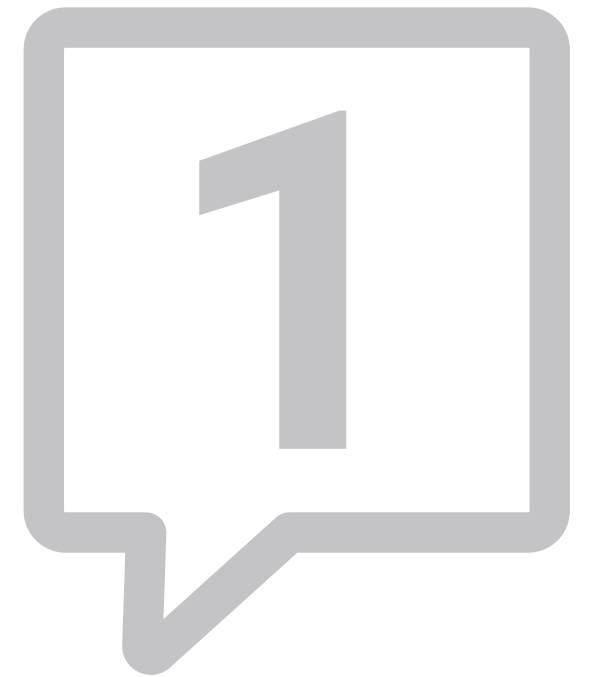
We also determined that an all-in-one communications platform is really the only viable solution to help businesses succeed in this new digital workplace. In this chapter, we'll outline four specific selection criteria you should consider when evaluating communications vendors.

Lock it down.

Security takes many forms for different businesses. In this digital workplace, communications security has elevated importance, but it often takes a backseat to cost.

What do we mean by communications security? There are two primary types of information that must be kept secure and encrypted:

- Data at rest, meaning any information that is stored, such as communications history logs, recordings and other metadata associated with your communications
- Communications in flight (e.g. calls, meetings or chats in progress)



What puts that information at risk? According to this [recent Nemertes report](#), common threats to business communications solutions include:

- Denial-of-service attacks against providers, or against the enterprise that limit the ability of users to connect to cloud services
- Toll fraud attacks that cause unwanted and costly outbound calls, or that route calls across high-cost network providers
- Phishing attacks designed to enable unauthorized log-in to a user's communications applications

These attacks are becoming [alarmingly more common](#), taking advantage of the recent shift toward increased remote-work models.



While employee training and compliance with security best practices is critical in defending against attacks like social engineering, it is incumbent on the communications service provider to develop, manage, and maintain a secure platform. Only then can businesses take the necessary precautions to secure their endpoints and users from any malicious attacks.

Vendors with lax security practices—both internal and in the solutions they provide—put your business' communications at risk. Vendors who implement weak security protocols when encrypting communications traffic or that comply with government agency requests to compromise that security (e.g. by providing a **backdoor**) should not be considered at all if data security is a priority.

8x8 has earned several industry-standard **security and compliance certifications**, encrypts all communications traffic across all channels to and from its endpoints, and secures data at rest in the 8x8 cloud. In fact, 8x8 has worked with standards bodies to evolve and implement industry-first security standards, including its most recent initiative to **provide end-to-end encrypted video meetings**. As a business, you can be confident that 8x8 takes communications security seriously, remains open and transparent about its communications practices, and constantly improves and innovates to lead on security.

“Communication – the human connection – is the key to personal and career success.”

Paul J. Meyer



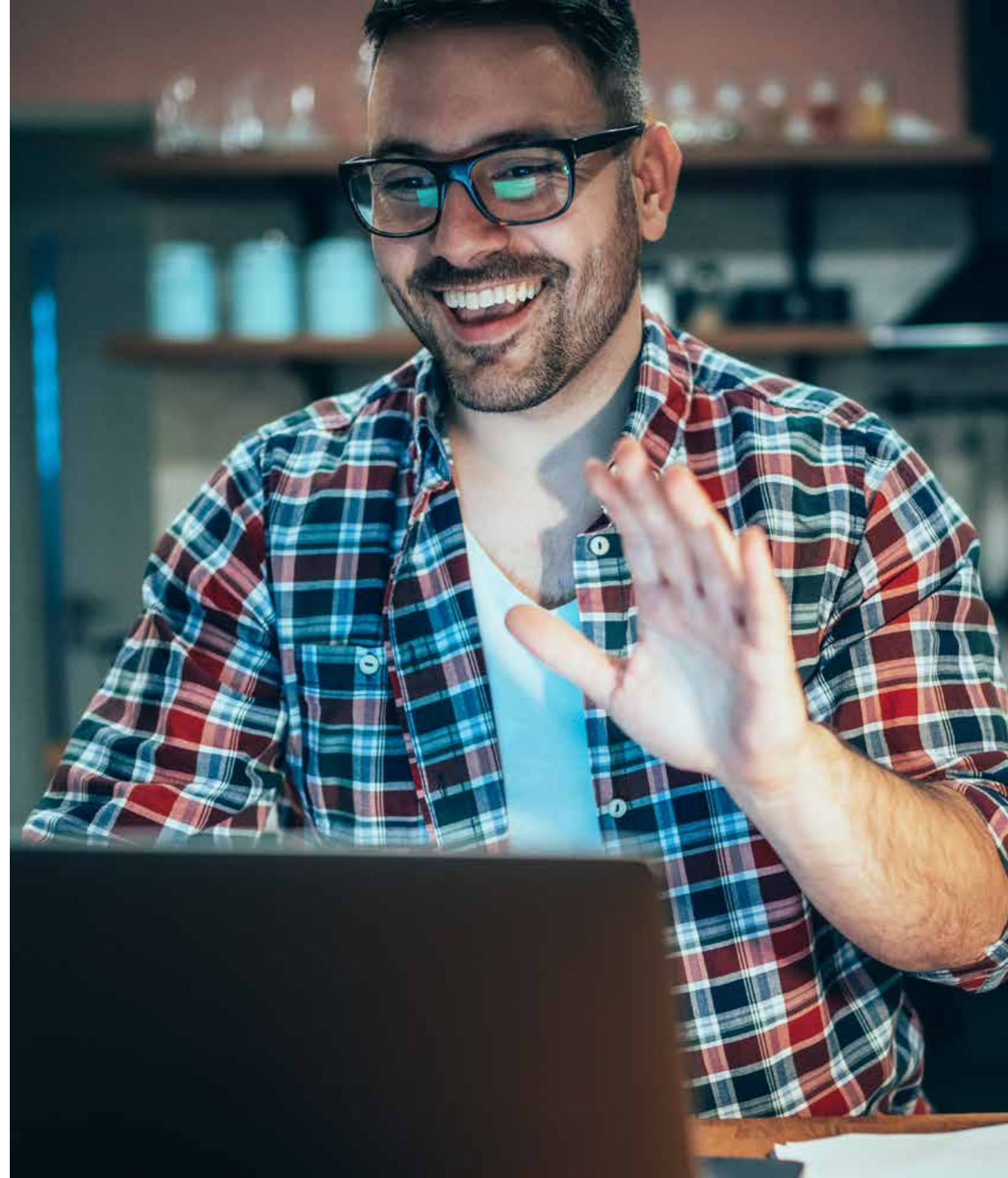
Keep it simple.

Usability is key to adopting any new technology. Gone are the days when users would tolerate a trade-off between sophistication and ease of use.

This is especially true for communications solutions, where a consistent experience across different modes of communication can mean business-changing productivity gains and improvement in collaboration. A [Nemertes report](#) found recently that 63.8% of organizations are already using a team collaboration solution or were planning to. The recent sudden transition to remote working has accelerated this adoption.

A simple, unified user interface is more than a nice-to-have, as it will:

- Facilitate the onboarding of new employees, most if not all of which will be recruited and onboarded remotely
- Make collaborating on different channels and moving amongst channels effortless
- Encourage wide use and adoption by all employees
- Render customer communications with your business effortless





We know adoption is key to employee productivity and happiness. [According to this study](#), employees are more inclined to adopt new technology if they feel it will improve their productivity. Choose a difficult, complicated communications platform and your users will not hesitate to find easier alternatives. And if employees bypass official communications channels, true productivity towards business objectives suffers, and customer satisfaction suffers—not to mention a reporting and accountability nightmare.

The message is simple: Select a solution that makes communications simple. [8x8 Virtual Office](#) provides a consistent, intuitive experience across devices, unifying voice, chat, and video channels. Through Express and X Series, comprehensive analytics can provide you with valuable insights into communications effectiveness and productivity.

Make it powerful.

Many communications vendors focus on a single channel and try to sell their strength in that area. In today's digital workplace, employees and customers switch channels constantly, and they deserve a consistent experience.

In fact, true communications power comes from support for multiple channels and making it easy to move between them.

Making communications easy doesn't necessarily make them better, though. For small businesses, teamwork is key and every customer interaction could be the last. If you don't understand how effective your communications are, you can't make the right decisions to improve productivity, avoid customer churn, and increase profit margin.



Unified analytics across voice, chat, and video communications channels can help:

- Identify opportunities to proactively remedy customer issues based on frequency and type of communications
- Predict, identify, and proactively remedy communications quality issues
- Build a complete picture of customer touchpoints across channels to identify key inflection points and opportunities
- Use speech analysis to determine overall customer mood and key topics being addressed, driving business adjustments and improvements

- Self-troubleshoot employee communications issues like poor headset quality or bandwidth problems to improve connectivity and productivity

8x8 provides **comprehensive analytics** including quality monitoring, speech analytics, and communications history analysis to help your business know more, improve faster, and serve customers more effectively.

“The five essential entrepreneurial skills for success are concentration, discrimination, organization, innovation and communication.”

Michael Faraday

Stay up and running.

You don't need us to tell you how critical communications are to your business. The last thing you need as a small business leader is a customer help line that goes down constantly or a video conferencing tool that hangs up on your employees.

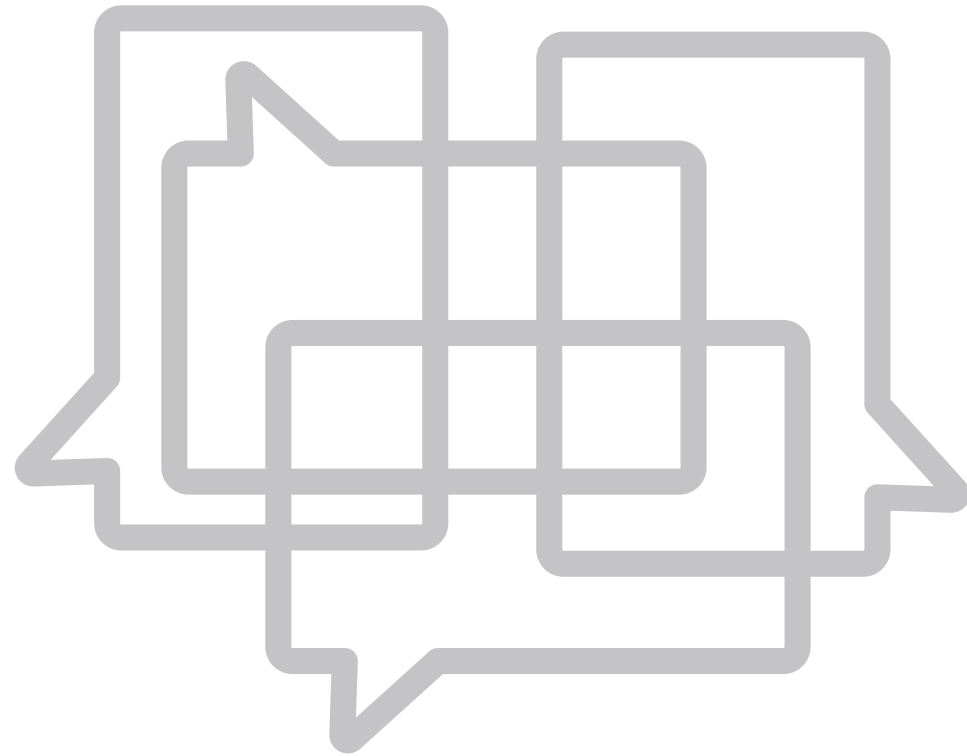
In the previous chapter, we emphasized that the cheapest solution may not always be the best solution. Reliable communications means investing in a highly available and redundant infrastructure that supports the highest quality communications with consistent uptime.



Look for vendors that guarantee their service **with an open and transparent service level agreement** for both communications quality (mean opinion score, or MOS) and uptime, demonstrating that they take availability seriously. This means they are only reactive when issues arise, but proactive in anticipating and resolving potential issues before they impact their customers.

8x8 was **the first communications-as-a-service provider** to offer both a MOS and 99.99% availability service level agreement. 8x8 continues to lead the industry in both quality and availability, with **complete transparency** on the terms of those guarantees. As your employees and customers work and connect virtually, it's critical to ensure uninterrupted communications between them so you can focus on running the business.





Next steps

In this chapter, we reviewed how an all-in-one communications platform can help you stay open for business by allowing your employees to collaborate with each other and your customers to communicate with your business from anywhere.

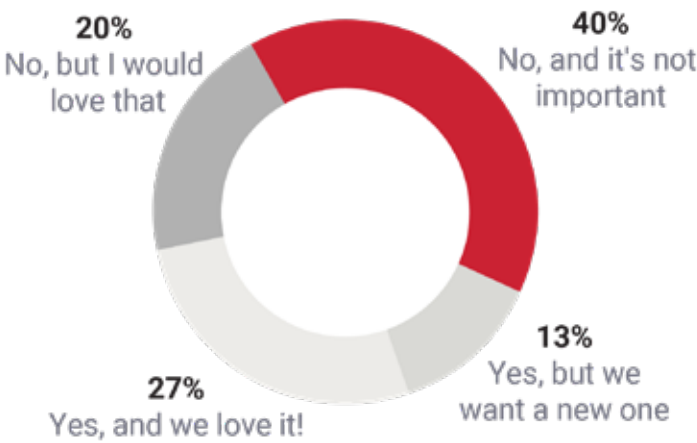
To accomplish this, an all-in-one communications solution must:

- Be secure
- Be simple to use
- Have a rich communications feature set
- Be always up and available

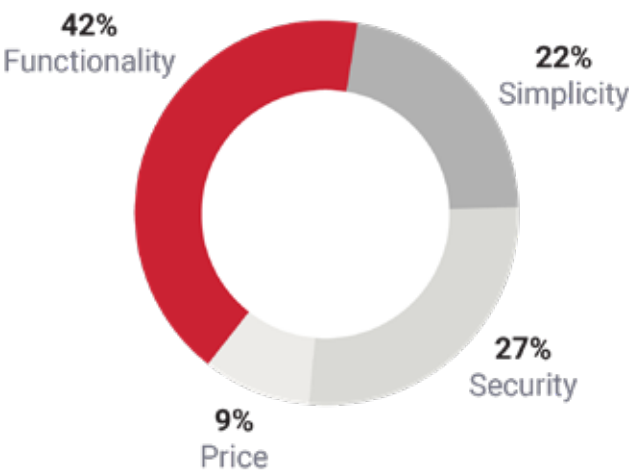
Learn more about 8x8's feature rich and highly available [all-in-one communications solutions](#) and see which one is right for your business.

8x8 Poll Results

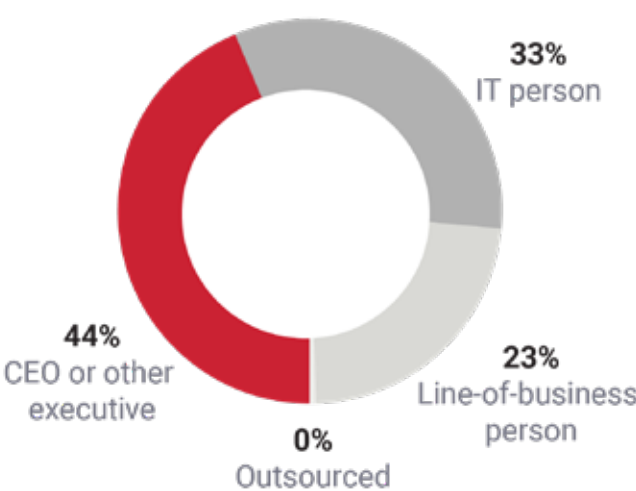
Do you have a single communications vendor? (Video, phone and chat)



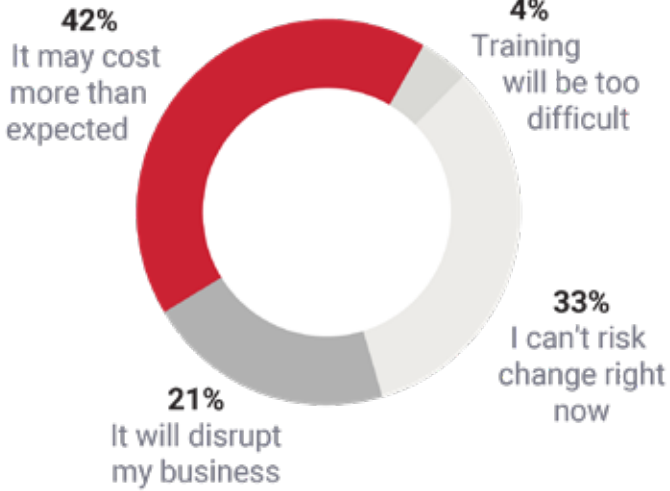
What is your #1 requirement when selecting a communications vendor?



Who in your organization is most responsible for selecting a communications vendor?



What is your biggest concern about selecting a new communications vendor?



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

Chapter

3

Open when the office is closed.

Make your office virtual and stay
open for business.

Set the stage for success

In the first chapter of this series, we explored the new way of working in the new normal and how collaboration amongst employees and with customers has rapidly transitioned to being virtual. Then, in chapter 2, we looked at the key decision criteria for evaluating and purchasing a cloud communications solution.

Now, we're going to take a step back and think about the technique and strategies necessary to make the most from that technology selection.

“The one thing I’ve personally learned is you’ve got to get ahead of the curve, don’t try to deny it or put your head in the sand, and wish for the best. These are the times when a culture and an organization gets tested.”

Kelly Frederickson

CEO of MullenLowe

Communicate with your customers



First and foremost, communicate with your customers. They are also adjusting to doing business virtually, and as we saw in Chapter 2, they are very open to it. But they need to know how they can continue to do business with you.

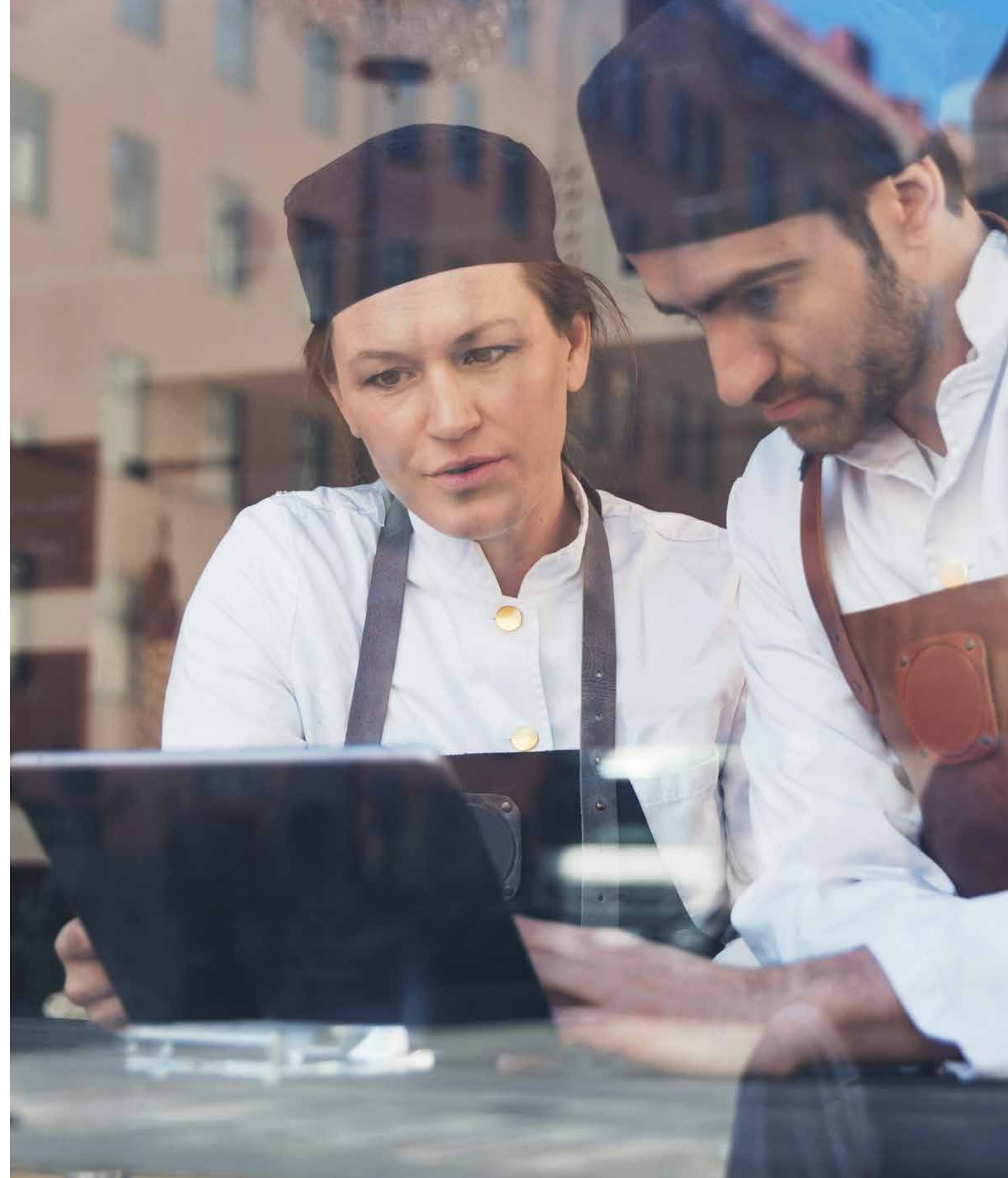
Reaching out to customers to let them know you're open for business and providing them with the updated guidelines on how they can continue to do business with you is now key to sustaining your business. [A recent study from Podium Research](#) shows that customers seeking some form of virtual or contactless option when dealing with businesses has jumped from 13% to 49% in only a few months. And every indication is that this trend will be permanent.

Additionally, the study found that almost 3 in 5 Americans chose to do business with a company for the first time specifically because they offered a virtual or contactless option for delivery of goods and services. It's clear that being proactive about informing customers and prospects about your new way of doing business will result not only in retaining existing customers but also in recruiting new ones.

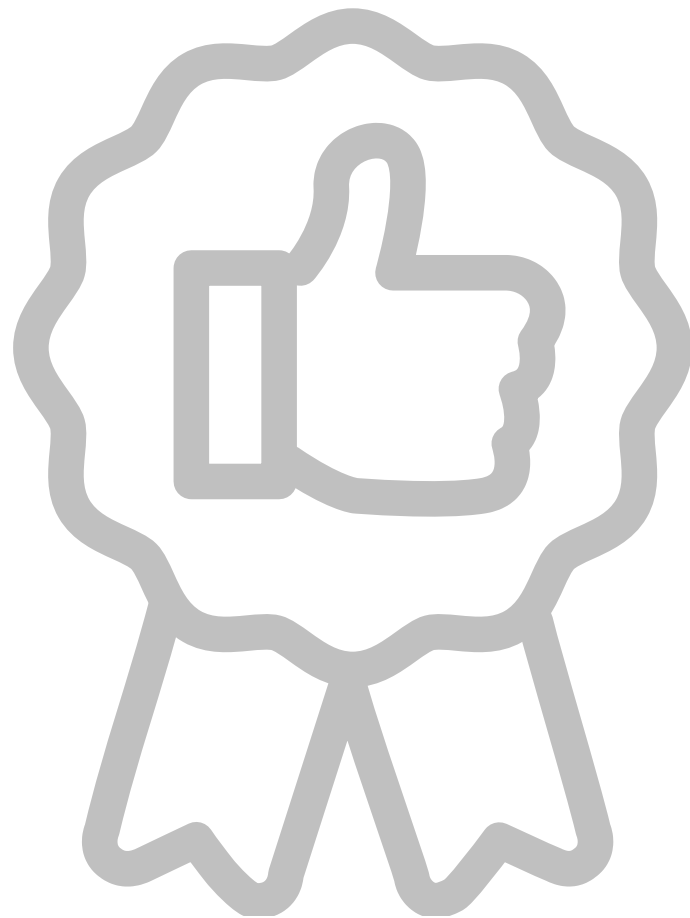
You've spent considerable time and resources transforming your business to a virtual way of working. Leverage it now and use it as a differentiator to grow your business. Having the right all-in-one communications solution will help you proactively communicate and provide your current and new customers with a convenient way to reach you in your new virtual office.

The [Harvard Business Review](#) recommends being proactive and educating your customers about how they can interact with your company.

“Tell them about all changes to your operation, including new hours, facility closures, staff reductions, customer service availability, and ordering options, among others. While you can reference the emergency government regulations that necessitated these changes, it’s far better if you are viewed as being proactive and motivated by your customers’ best interests.”



Implement best practices for your remote employees



Culture is crucial at any time, but it's particularly important in times of crisis. Your business culture is probably being strained and disrupted by the sudden move to a virtual mode of working. It's possible to extend the dynamics that have led to your success thus far, but this requires focus, discipline, and best practices to guide your employees as they work through the transition.



Communicate what matters most in the moment

Your employees' concerns are evolving as each stage of this rapid transition occurs. McKinsey and Company **have outlined a thoughtful approach** for how and what to communicate with employees based on how they are feeling and understanding the challenges they are going through at each stage. Communicate openly and frequently. Be clear about understanding their concerns but also what's needed from them at each stage to help your business change. Prepare them for the challenges and potential rewards that lie ahead by maintaining a strong virtual connection.

2

Provide clear remote working guidelines

Not every employee will feel comfortable with the transition to remote work and collaboration. Many are not prepared for this transition. They may live in a location with multiple distractions, may not have the right connectivity to get their work done, or simply just prefer being in an office where they can physically connect with their colleagues.

Guidelines will vary based on your type of business and what you know about your employees and their individual circumstances. “But don’t just assume that people know how to operate with virtual communications — or are comfortable in that environment,” **Gartner** warns. Employees who may have been accustomed to “reaching across their desk” to collaborate with another employee now need to use calling, chatting, or video meetings to accomplish the same thing. Provide them with regular coaching and clear guidelines on choosing the right channel to communicate based on the nature of the communication.

We recently **compiled some work from home tips** based on experiences working remotely. Importantly, these tips include a call to action to take time away from work to exercise, spend time with family and do something relaxing to rest and recharge.

“But don’t just assume that people know how to operate with virtual communications – or are comfortable in that environment.”

Mary Baker

Gartner, Blog, 9 Tips for Managing Remote Employees



Ensure you have the right technologies in place

The technology you have been using to enable your employees in the office may prove to be functional but inadequate for any type of remote work because the needs and requirements are very different. Putting in place technology best practices ensures that your business can quickly adapt and thrive while operating fully remotely.



Sufficient bandwidth

Internet connectivity is one of those things we take for granted ... until we don't. Many employees do not have the right connectivity and service plans to support full time collaboration and working while other family members are also using the same bandwidth.

According to the latest [OpenVault Broadband Insights Report](#), home broadband consumption trends have accelerated by almost a year in only the last few months, with median usage up 60%. At the same time, the number of subscribers that subscribed to gigabit speed consumption plans jumped by 97%, meaning that many remote workers opted to pay more per month to get the appropriate bandwidth needed to get their work done.

As a business, you need to ensure that your employees have the right bandwidth requirements to meet the needs of fully remote collaboration and work. If you can, provide logistical and financial support they need to be productive. And partner with vendors such as 8x8 that understand what's needed and **clearly document** that can help you put together the right set of bandwidth best practices for your employees.



Capable hardware

Many employees rely on the hardware provided by the companies they work for to get their jobs done, such as personal computers and desk phones. But when they are forced to transition to working remotely, they are likely not able to take that hardware with them, which means they need to rely on the hardware they can procure or purchase separate hardware outright.

Providing minimal hardware guidance and support doesn't have to be expensive. **Setting a stipend** for hardware can provide flexibility to your employees to acquire the minimal hardware needed while not going over an allocated budget. Vendors that offer **multi-device** support through apps for PC desktops as well as Android and iOS mobile devices can help minimize costs while maximizing flexibility on what hardware to choose. This is especially true for communications, which remains critical for your business continuity.



Reliable security

Nothing is more critical these days than security for remote workers. While security policies may be easily enforced in a physical office environment, they can become less effective when working remotely.

Perhaps the most prominent of security concerns for remote employees is social engineering attacks, when a hacker attempts to gain the trust of an employee in exchange for some critical information needed to gain access to your protected information. Employees may not be properly trained in understanding how these attacks are engineered. [JP Morgan Chase provides some important guidance](#) on how social engineering attacks happen and how to take steps to prevent them.

Other common security practices include a strong password and authentication policy, ensuring your employees have implemented sufficient protections against denial of service attacks and other attacks that can compromise the security of their home networks, keep their software and operating systems updated with the latest security updates and avoiding text and email phishing schemes. [Norton compiled](#) a comprehensive security checklist that you can use to ensure your employees are enabled and following the right security practices to eliminate any security risks as they work remotely.

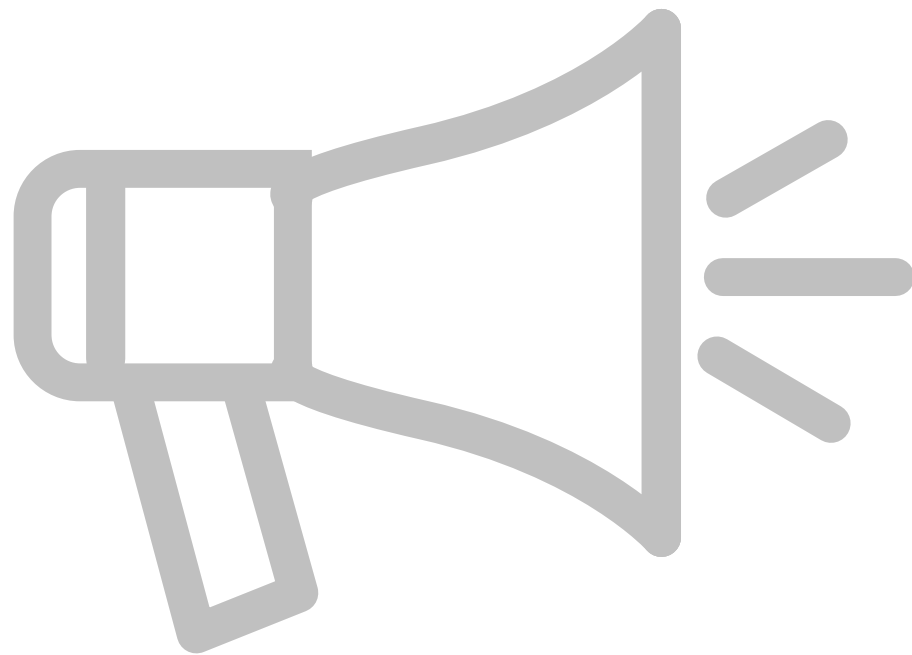


The right software and services

Without the right software and services that support both in office as well as remote working, businesses lose the flexibility to adapt to changes such as sudden shifts to remote working. A proper **cloud communications solution** provides businesses of all sizes with the best option for business continuity by allowing employees to collaborate on any device from any location and with a minimal set of hardware and bandwidth requirements.

In addition to providing the flexibility of collaborating from anywhere, the solution must be secure, provide transparent uptime guarantees and have the ability to scale to meet the demands of a growing business. Only providers that **encrypt** all of your business' communications, whether it be voice, video or chat, offer an **ironclad guarantee of service** so you don't have to worry about missed communications or downtime, and that offer the **ability to scale on demand and globally** can give your business the peace of mind to continue focusing on doing what you do best without worrying about any of the technical details that are not core to your business.

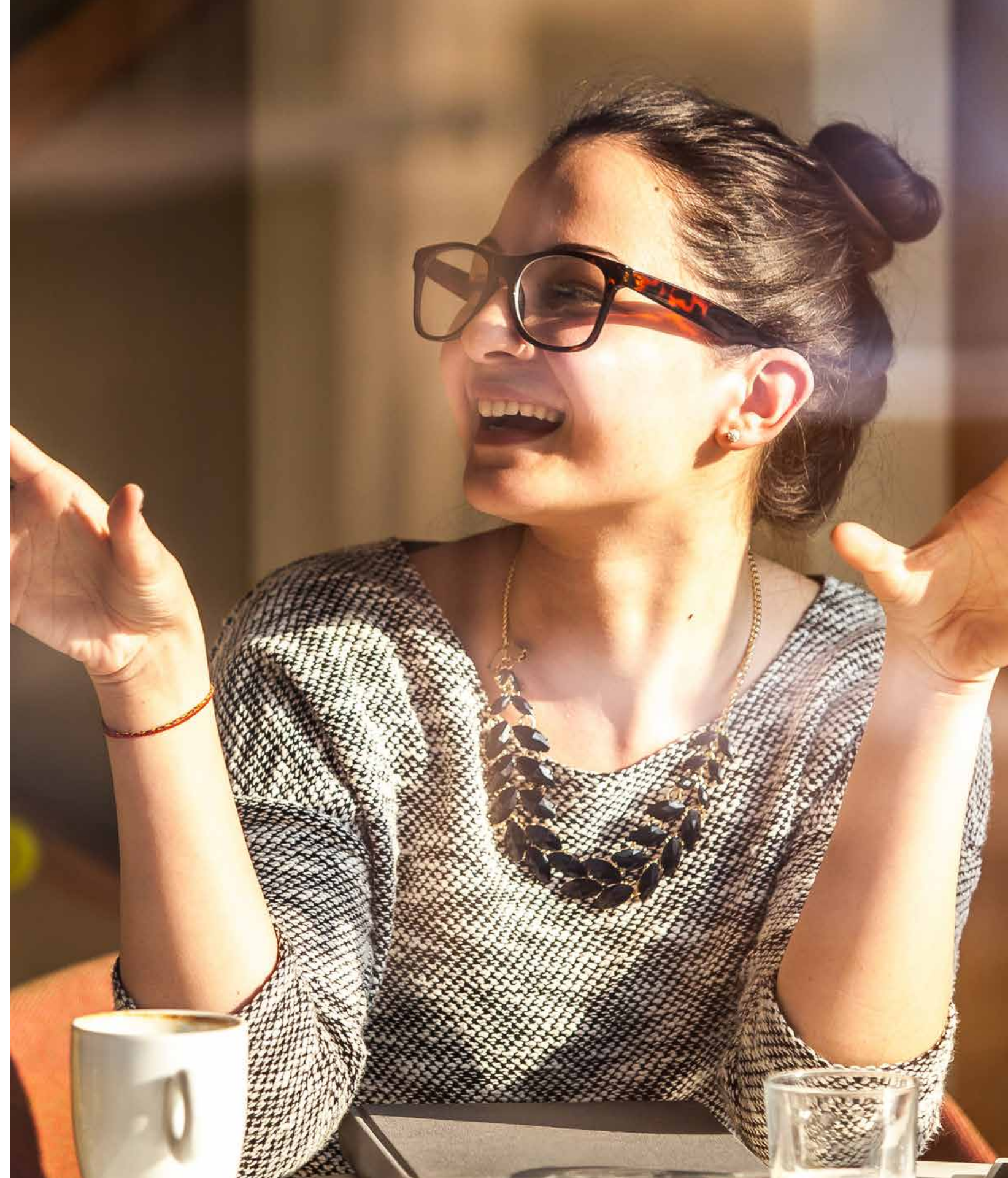
Adopt an aggressive, unified remote communication strategy



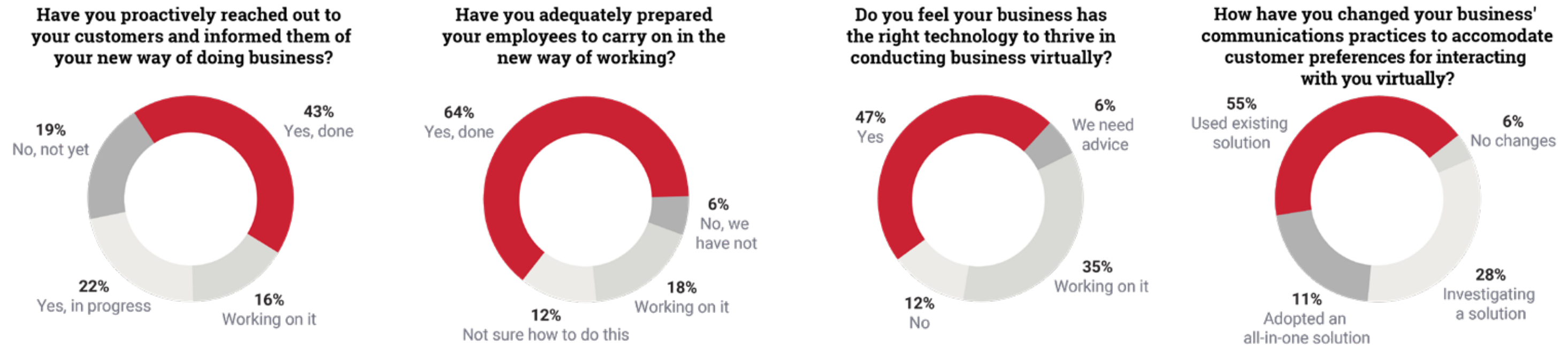
Your customers and your employees have adapted to working remotely. In fact, they demand it. Now you need to capitalize on that with a remote communications strategy that provides the greatest reach to your current customers as well as your prospective customers.

This is only possible by unifying your communications channels, allowing employees to collaborate with each other using their channel of choice and moving between channels effortlessly using a common user experience, from voice to chat to video.

In the same way, your customers should be able to communicate with you however they choose. A unified communications solution allows your business to provide a single business identity to your customers with multiple communications channels to choose from. Whether it's via text, calling or a video meeting, customers should know how to reach you, choose the channel, and switch between channels with ease. Wherever they are and wherever you are. A true virtual office unbound by any physical limitations.



8x8 Poll Results



Sources: Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter

Next Steps

In this chapter, we explored in more detail how you can stay in business and thrive while your physical office is closed.

To accomplish this, you will need to:

- Proactively communicate with your customers
- Implement best practices for your remote employees
- Adopt an aggressive, remote communications strategy

Take a look at our [guidebook](#) for more tips on operating your virtual business.



Chapter

4

Improve productivity.

Learn how you can improve productivity for your virtual employees as well as reducing effort for your customers.

Become a Productivity Professional

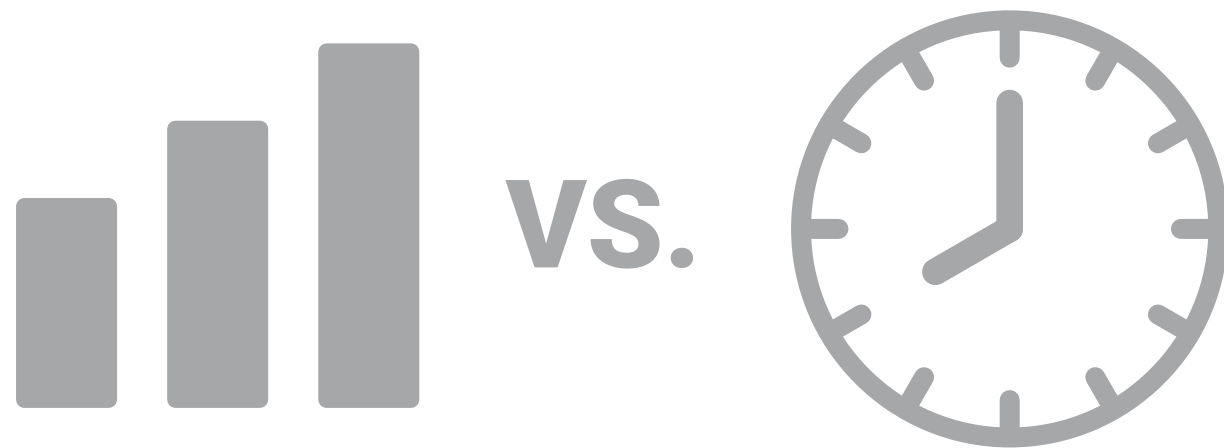
Your business has ramped up and is successfully operating virtually. You're able to continue servicing your existing customers, but you've also widened your customer base and taken on new customers that you never had access to before. And, because you are growing, you are hiring new employees virtually and expanding your talent base to areas that were previously inaccessible by your business.

Business continuity and continued growth mean you need to explore ways to scale your business to take on new customers and keep your costs down. That means working on improvements to productivity as you continue to work from anywhere.

So how do you improve and upscale your remote worker's productivity while simultaneously making it easier than ever for you to engage with your new customers and cultivate new ones? Implementing the following adjustments to your business will make accomplishing all of these goals more manageable than you might think.

Adjustment #1

Learn how to measure and monitor productivity



Before you begin trying to increase productivity and ensure that your employees can meet new demand, it's imperative to understand how to measure and monitor productivity from here on out. These measures have to be simple and objective to ensure the resulting metrics are readily understood and actionable. Without them, it becomes incredibly difficult to understand if changes and adjustments are making a difference.

Effectively managing and improving your business's productivity can provide some serious benefits as well. A recent [Forbes article](#) argues that measuring productivity and managing it during the current crisis comes with a silver lining. "Because it forces companies to deal with the reality of an ongoing work-from-home model and make it sustainable, they gain an intriguing opportunity to unlock dramatic improvement in productivity."

Assessing productivity is complicated, and isn't relegated to work ethic alone. It involves your employees' work habits, what technology they use, your company's organizational structure, and many other factors that work together towards an outcome. Even though there are multiple factors at play you should focus on changing one or two of them, then seeing the results.

The sudden shift to work from home impacts productivity in different ways, and also complicates how it gets measured. Many studies support conclusions that working from home does boost productivity, but the factors associated with this recent and sudden shift to work from home **may contribute to the reverse**. Employees that can work from home now face additional distractions such as children not in school and more activity in the house. And employees that aren't accustomed to or prefer not to work from home may have significant issues adapting to remote work.

“Because it forces companies to deal with the reality of an ongoing work-from-home model and make it sustainable, they gain an intriguing opportunity to unlock dramatic improvement in productivity.”

Peter Bendor-Samuel

Forbes, Manage Productivity With Employees Working From Home

In the rush to get your employees up and running quickly to work remotely, considering the challenges they would face as a result wasn't an option as the critical task at hand was business continuity. Now, understanding how your employees work and what conditions they consider ideal to get work done is the next step in optimizing their productivity over the longer term.

The key to understanding productivity is measuring output, **not hours**. You know how well your employees perform under normal circumstances and know what they can deliver. Changes in output and even the quality of their work can improve, but you may see the reverse trend in some.

Understanding why this is occurring is the first step in helping those employees optimize their work from home environments so that they can get back to being as productive as they were or even more productive.



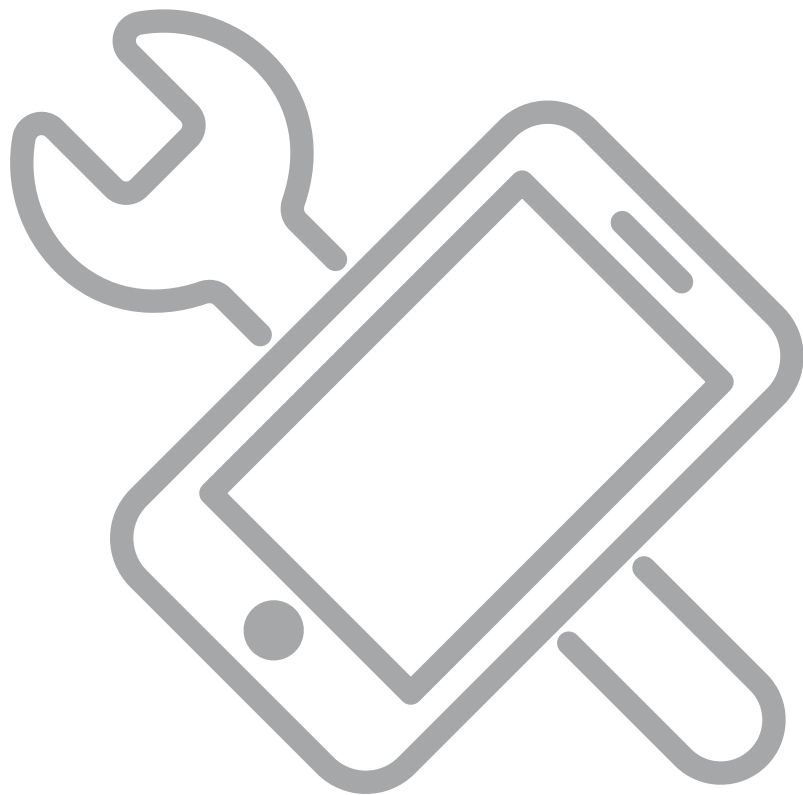


There are legitimate reasons why productivity can take a hit, so taking the right steps to address those reasons is key in helping those employees that need it. Offsetting the costs of a sitter to take care of the kids, investing in updated equipment and providing guidance and maybe financial support to help employees prepare a private office area are some of the steps you can take to help offset specific challenges. Measuring progress after the measures are implemented will also help. Seeing improvements means the changes were useful and helped productivity.

Create regular checkpoints to monitor productivity improvements, and discuss with employees how changes helped or didn't help. Keep looking for ways to make your employees feel more comfortable and less distracted in their work from home environments, allowing them to focus and get their work done.

Adjustment #2

Equip your teams



Yes, there is a reason why this tip or some variation of it has been in almost every chapter so far. Even if you have the most talented and dedicated employees and the best offering, you will create challenges for your employees and your customers if employees lack the right technology and productivity tools to be efficient and effective. Equipping your workforce with the right tools can immediately create a measurable increase in productivity and efficiency across the entire business subsequently facilitates the ability to grow and expand.

The [International Business Times](#) suggests, “If you’ve always worked in-office with employees and run a customer-contact service-based business, it’s very likely that you’ll need to get new equipment and cloud-based tools to help you run your business from home.”

“If you’ve always worked in-office with employees and run a customer-contact service-based business, it’s very likely that you’ll need to get new equipment and cloud-based tools to help you run your business from home.”

International Business Times, Working from home advice for business owners





Making sure your workforce has access to project management tracking applications, an all-in-one communications platform and other productivity tools your employees might need, ensures that your employees, and your business as a whole, can run even more efficiently, regardless of location.

In fact, since the pandemic forced many to begin working from home, MarketWatch **reports** that “U.S. workers were 47% more productive in March and April than in the same two months a year ago through cloud-based business tools, chat applications and email, according to an analysis of 100 million data points from 30,000 Americans by workplace-monitoring company Prodoscore.”

47%

Increase in U.S. worker's productivity in March and April that in the same two months a year ago through cloud-based business tools, chat applications and email.

Sources: Prodoscore, data from 30,000 U.S. workers from March-April 2020

Advanced cloud-based technologies allow businesses and their employees to leverage the same tools when working remotely. Additionally, many of these same technologies can also allow you to make sure your customers are in the loop and generally make communication internally and externally more efficient. This technology is so effective that the absence of it is one of the main issues employees point to when they are unable to reach their productivity targets. A study done by **Ivanti** found that 85% of workers don't have the right tech or resources to take care of their tasks efficiently.

Not only do these technologies allow employees to be more productive in their work, but it also enables your company to engage with and cultivate existing customer relationships which is key for any business. The right communications solutions for internal and external collaboration can have a large positive impact financially. **SHRM** reports that each year, companies with approximately 100 employees lose around \$420,000 yearly due to inefficient communications. Hence the criticality of ensuring your business has the right **all-in-one communications** solution.

Adjustment #3

Digitize your business and streamline processes



The rapid shift to working from home acted as a push to finally get them to move their business online and to make sure that their application stack could seamlessly run in the cloud. By doing this, you are opening up the possibilities to not only improve productivity but also streamline your business processes so that it reduces effort customers need to invest to work with your business and reduces the amount of time employees have to spend on various small tasks throughout the day.

There are many ways to move your business online and streamline your processes through digitizing and moving towards the cloud.

Here are a few tips for streamlining your workflow and business processes:

- Map the current workflow
- Analyze it based on its current state
- Identify areas to focus on improving
- Create a plan to improve a single area
- Implement your plan
- Analyze the new process and compare to the old process to make sure it works

Analyze what your customers and clients really want from you, and how they want to take delivery of the goods and services you offer, while taking your current process into account. Moving your services online can make it easier for customers to do business with you, while simultaneously automating and improving efficiency for your business as a whole in servicing those customers. It also allows your business to scale quickly to meet new demand by extending your business' reach.

A [recent McKinsey Report](#) stresses that digital transformation should be focused on where it brings value to both internal efficiencies as well as reducing friction with your customers. Internally, look at what services and processes that employees must complete that might have digital alternatives. Billing for example is a great starting point when considering what to move online and automate. Moving systems online reduces the amount of work that your employees have to do, and allows them to spend time on more important matters, therefore improving productivity.



Automation of common tasks and workflows is another way to create internal efficiencies while at the same time creating an overall better experience with your customers. While automation for businesses of all sizes has been trending for some time, the trend has been **rapidly accelerated (the term hyperautomation has been used)** out of necessity as customers demand remote and contactless service, It can start with simple processes like automating text and email responses to confirm orders or provide order status. Automation of reservations, orders and even delivery schedules are good follow-ups. Anything that improves employee productivity and removes friction from dealing with customers should be considered for automation. Customers now expect a level of automation but always want the option to reach out to you directly if they need something.

While investing in cloud communications solutions, business process automation solutions and other cloud based technologies may seem like an important up front investment, the returns in terms of increased employee productivity, improved customer satisfaction and the ability to scale your business to meet new demand while containing costs are immeasurable. The benefits far outweigh the upfront costs.

Adjustment #4

Re-assess organizational goals



With all of the sudden changes, it may be time to revisit your organizational goals in light of how your employees will work for the foreseeable future and how your customers are interacting with your business.

While the business environment will remain uncertain for some time, setting updated short, medium and long term goals is imperative to getting employees on the same page and also allows your business to formulate a proper communications plan for your customers. McKinsey recommends a **relaunch roadmap** to help you realign your business goals to help employees focus on what's needed to thrive in the new way of doing business.

A relaunch allows you to frankly reassess everything from your investments in technology to your investments in people. It means taking a closer look at the technologies you've implemented and assessing if they will allow you to meet your new roadmap effectively. It means looking at process automation and deciding how that aligns with the new roadmap. It also means looking at how to better enable your employees to be able to help your business drive towards that new roadmap. A possible outcome is that your business may need to rethink some of its current technology investments and make changes to improve efficiencies around how your employee collaborate together and get work done and how customers interact with your business.

“There will be interruptions, and I don't know when they will occur, and I don't know how deep they will occur. I do know they will occur from time to time, but I also know that we'll come out better on the other end.”

Warren Buffet

CEO of Berkshire Hathaway

Adjustment #5

Set employee and team goals



Another easy way to increase the productivity of your remote workforce that ties into the previous tip is by setting up short and long term goals for individuals and teams. While working from home, one of the biggest challenges that employees face is uncertainty and vagueness within their job. Working remotely makes understanding one's goals and objectives more difficult than working in the office. Setting short and long term goals for employees and teams takes away some of the uncertainty.

Employees and teams can check in on their progress towards each goal, so that not only will they be working towards the goals and feel more confident about their responsibilities, but also you will be aware of progress across the organization and can make sure nothing slips through the cracks. By setting goals and being able to see performance metrics that employees report, your workforce is more motivated to achieve their goals, and it allows them to get a cursory look into the productivity, health, and progress of the business.



It is a useful metric that can be used to identify places in your business that could benefit from adjustments to increase productivity as well. Furthermore, managers could see which specific employees need more support in a certain area, or if there is a problem that needs to be addressed at a higher level.

Making sure that these goals and the business are as transparent as possible allows for increased productivity, accountability, information regarding the health of the business, and key metrics that can be used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the business.

Adjustment #6

Communicate more effectively with your customers



Now more than ever customers are communicating via electronic services or over the phone. Understanding when and why customers are reaching out, then subsequently having the ability to communicate with them effectively and efficiently are key places that can impact the productivity of employees and your business.

It's important to look at every customer interaction and try to analyze it from a high level before moving in. Regardless of whether the interaction is a problem, sales opportunity, or question, drawing connections between every customer interaction and looking for patterns can lead to meaningful insights that can powerfully impact the productivity of customer-facing employees and the efficiency of the entire business.

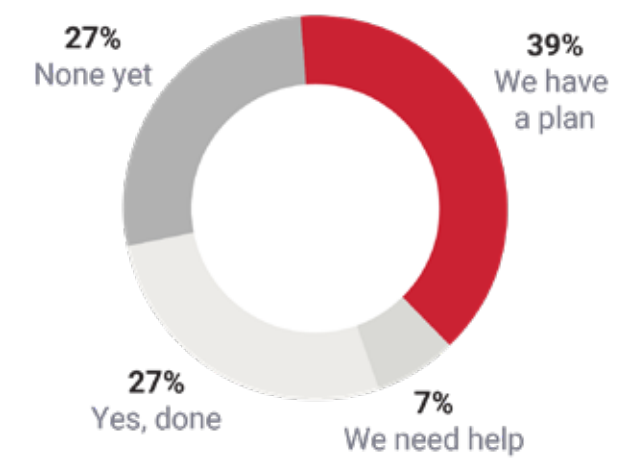


Relating back to the first part about understanding how to measure and monitor productivity, using metrics that take both the big and the smaller picture into account are integral to not just solving problems that arise, but understanding and reacting to why the problem existed in the first place.

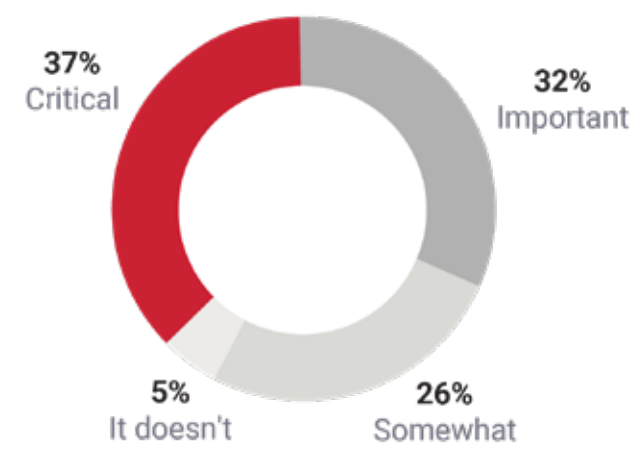
These customer interaction patterns can also lead to possible opportunities that might have recently been presented by the recent work from home mass migration. If you have customers consistently calling asking if you offer X, which you do not, then it might be a good idea to develop or begin offering X. Although this does not necessarily change productivity, new business offerings and markets allow your business to grow and increase revenue, allowing you to invest in more services and software that can improve the productivity of your workforce and the total output of your business.

8x8 Poll Results

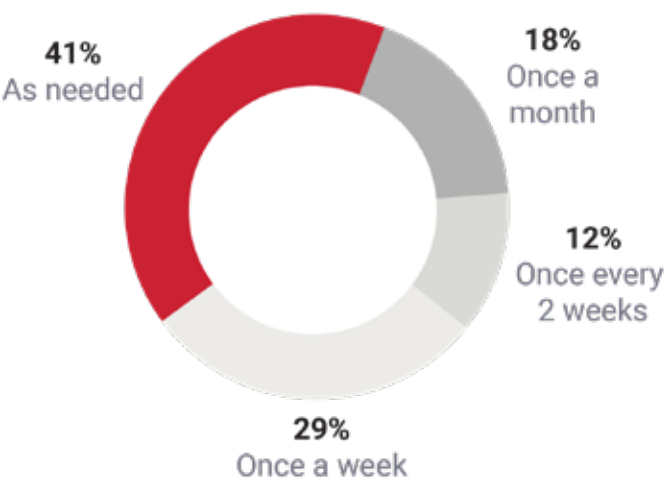
What plans have you put in place to sustain a permanent remote workforce?



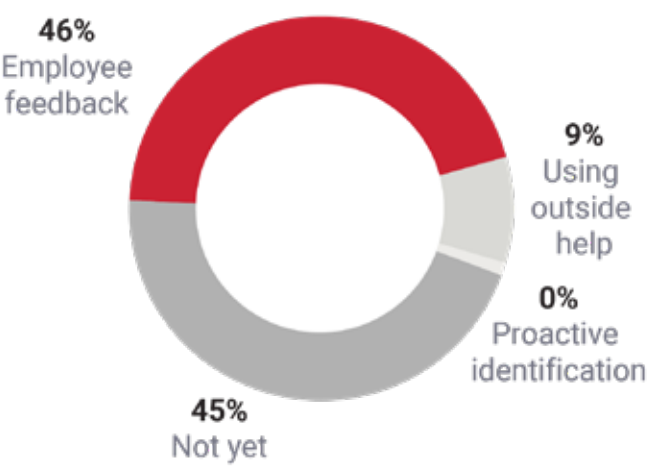
How does an all-in-one communications solution figure in your drive to improve remote work productivity?



How often do you meet with your employees to discuss process improvements and address issues?



How do you regularly review and update remote work practices to help your employees be more productive?



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter



Next Steps

In this chapter, we learned about the different steps you can take to help improve productivity for your business. Productivity improvements include understanding and responding to challenges that employees are facing when working from home, investing in cloud technologies that streamline business processes and investing in automation.



Chapter

5

Build a work-from-anywhere policy.

A successful work-from-anywhere business needs a sound remote working strategy.

The trend towards work-from-anywhere isn't a short term fad borne out of sudden necessity.

It's been trending for years, for a variety of reasons including intolerable commute hours and more flexible working options to support a better work/life balance. Recent events have only accelerated this trend, And all indications are that remote work is here to stay.

That isn't to say that employees won't need to be in a physical office from time to time, or on the road to visit customers or partners. Employees may also need to move from their usual remote working location, temporarily or permanently.

When developing a work-from-anywhere policy, it's important to consider first and foremost that your employees can truly be working from anywhere at any time and they need to be able to get their work done regardless.

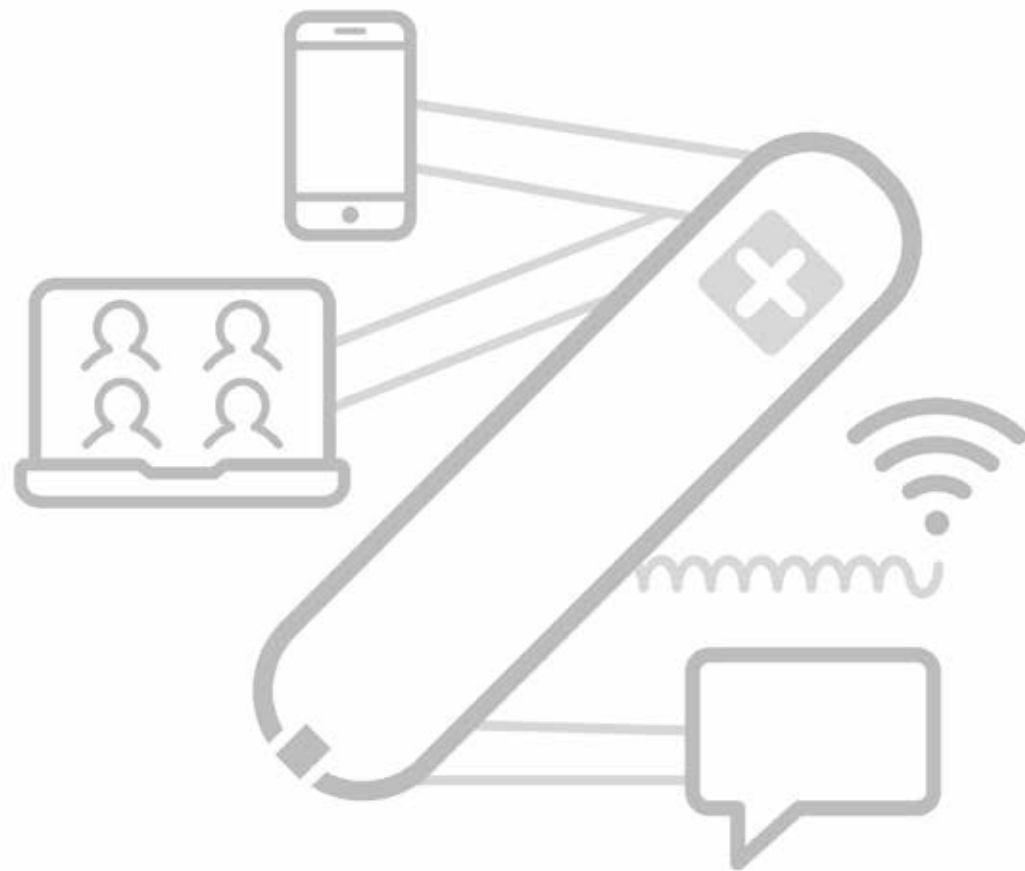
“Telecommuting, one of many forms of work-life flexibility, should no longer be viewed as a nice-to-have, optional perk mostly used by working moms. These common stereotypes don’t match reality – allowing employees to work remotely is a core business strategy today... We need to de-parent, de-gender, and de-age the perception of the flexible worker.”

Cali Williams Yost

Founder and CEO, Flex+Strategy Group



Planning for permanent remote work



As we've explored in previous chapters, the trend towards remote working has been drastically accelerated and, while unplanned, has proven to be largely successful. Generally, employees have become **more productive** with remote working, and there is every indication businesses will need to adapt to remote work for the long haul.

While your business needed to react quickly to the sudden changes brought on by the pandemic and the shelter in place orders, it now needs to explore policies that will ensure it can continue to thrive with a largely permanent remote workforce.

Putting a strategy and policies in place to support ongoing remote work requires rethinking almost every aspect of your business. Here are some of the key considerations every business should be looking at as part of the planning process.

Security.



Security breaches and cyber-attacks are **on the rise** as a larger number of employees work from home. With many businesses not having the time and resources to adequately implement security and proper training with the sudden shift to remote work, many employees have become vulnerable to **ransomware and social engineering attacks**, which in turn has made businesses far more vulnerable.

In a **recent study**, Deloitte suggests that, in addition to helping protect your employees and your business from cyber attacks, 90% of remote workers felt that implementation of proper cyber and data security measures makes them more productive. Proper security measures and training allows remote employees to focus on the work at hand, without the worry and uncertainty of potentially compromising personal and company security.



90%

of remote worker feel that implementation of proper cyber and data security measures makes them more productive.

Morgan Watts, Head of IT at 8x8, has had to do exactly that on a large scale. "While some businesses such as 8x8 have active remote working security procedures in place, many businesses are quickly trying to learn more about what's needed and how to implement proper security policies to protect their employees and their businesses," Morgan said. "The considerations aren't trivial and there needs to be a comprehensive plan that includes both coaching and enforcement."

Morgan has the following recommendations for businesses of any size:

- Provide proper training to employees to help them more easily identify security threats and attacks including phishing attacks and social engineering attacks
- Regularly test employees by sending internally generated emails and messages that resemble a typical cyber attack to see if employees follow the right procedures or take the bait (which provides an additional training opportunity)
- Ensure all employees have security monitoring and anti-virus software installed on their company issued devices

- Ensure that personal devices that connect with and have access to your business' data systems and corporate directory have been properly vetted for use and don't pose a security risk, and can securely access business systems
- Regularly coach and mentor employees on updated security risks and risk prevention

A comprehensive and repeatable security plan that is constantly updated to reflect the latest cyber security and social engineering threats will allow your employees to focus on getting work done safely.

The right hardware

When it comes to hardware, using what was available at the time employees were suddenly transitioned to working from home made perfect sense, even if it was inadequate. At that time, the objective was to get to remote working as quickly as possible with the objective of business continuity, not the best experience.

With remote working becoming more permanent, the focus has shifted to providing the best work quality and experience. Consequently, hardware deemed “good enough” may not be suitable for sustained remote use. For example, while a laptop camera may have worked during the transition to working from home, it may not have the resolution and features normally needed to get work done effectively longer term, requiring an external webcam. An employee that used a desktop computer to get their work done and had to

transition to an older home computer or mobile device as a substitute may find performance and user interface limitations that impact their productivity and necessitate an upgrade.

ZDNet recommends “going big” on the devices your employees will use the most. This means a proper computer that can support all of the applications they use, a good web camera for live meetings and a proper communications device which could be a headset and a mobile device that can support all of the applications and communications services your business needs for day-to-day operations.

The technology choices should take mobility into account, as employees may move around from time to time. So, while some employees may take certain live meetings from their main office using an external USB webcam, those same employees might occasionally use a tablet or laptop camera to take meetings in another location. The less effort this takes, the more productive an employee will be.

Permanently adopt cloud applications.

The pandemic and the sudden transition to remote working at scale has taught us many things, including (very quickly) the limitations of on-premises systems and software. While on-premises systems can support remote working, they were never designed to do that at scale and to the extent we recently experienced. Limitations of those solutions to address **security, data modernization and keeping the costs in check** while scaling up has businesses looking to migrate as quickly as possible to an all-cloud approach.

In the rush to move to a fully remote mode of working, many businesses hastily adopted cloud applications to help them through the process of business continuity and to keep their employees working. What they are realizing is that these

applications can actually improve their overall business while giving them the flexibility to work in an office, or remotely... or both.

Cloud applications allow your business and your employees to truly operate virtually. The cloud itself is virtual and accessible anywhere and at any time. Cloud applications do not require specific infrastructure to run or maintain, can be web-based or require applications that can be run on multiple devices, provide a secure connection between your employees and your company's data and have guaranteed up time to ensure continued availability.



Ubiquitous communications solutions.

At the core of the new way of working remotely is communications. Whether it be communications and collaboration amongst employees or between you and your customers, communications now more than ever are critical to maintaining those strong connections that have made your business successful.

Virtual working and interaction with customers requires a communications solution that can be wherever your employees are and available on demand. A proper communications solution extends your business identity virtually, allowing you to virtualize your office while allowing customers to continue to communicate with you the same way they always have ... wherever you might be working from.

This is where a cloud communications solution such as the one **offered by 8x8** comes in. Cloud communications extends far beyond just an emergency stop gap to quickly enable new remote workers ... it's a long term communications solution for any business. It can enable employees to work wherever they want, whether in the office or remotely.

Ubiquitous also means it can run on any device, and offer the same experience regardless of the device used. Providing the same experience across devices, minimizes learning time and allows a smooth transition from one device to another when engaged in communications..





The right cloud communications solution allows you and your employees to communicate with each other and with your customers on any channel and to move seamlessly amongst channels. It should be effortless to **move any chat or call** to a live meeting when needed and seamlessly continue the conversation live. Without limits.

A solid cloud communications solution should provide business owners and managers with **rich analytics** to help gain insights into how your employees are communicating with each other and to proactively identify any issues and help resolve them before your employee or your customer even notices there is one.

Next Steps

In this chapter, we focused on how to build an effective work-from-anywhere policy and taking the right steps to allow your employees to truly work from anywhere and ensuring your business continues to thrive.

We saw that the key elements of a work-from-anywhere policy include:

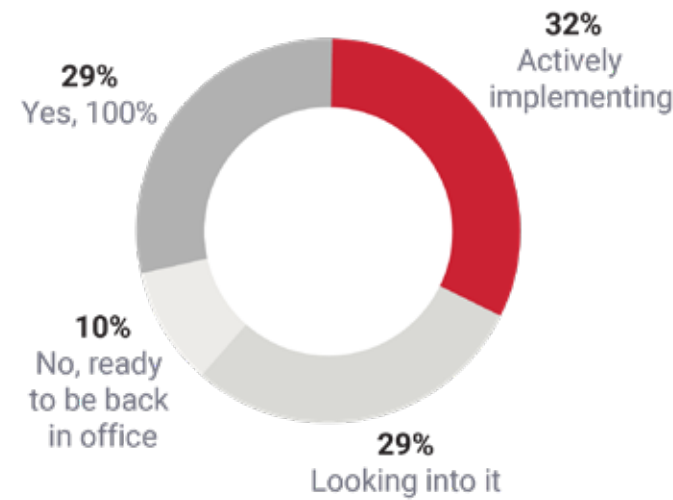
- a plan for permanent remote work for those employees that can and opt to continue working remotely
- making sure your employees have the right hardware such as computers and webcams to help them get their work done effectively from anywhere

- proper security measures and policies to allow employees to operate safely from home or other networks that may not benefit from the same security policies available online
- permanently adopt cloud applications for all employees as a means to allow employees to work from anywhere on any device
- Investing in a ubiquitous communications solution that allows your employees to communicate effortlessly with each other regardless of location and device and with your customers

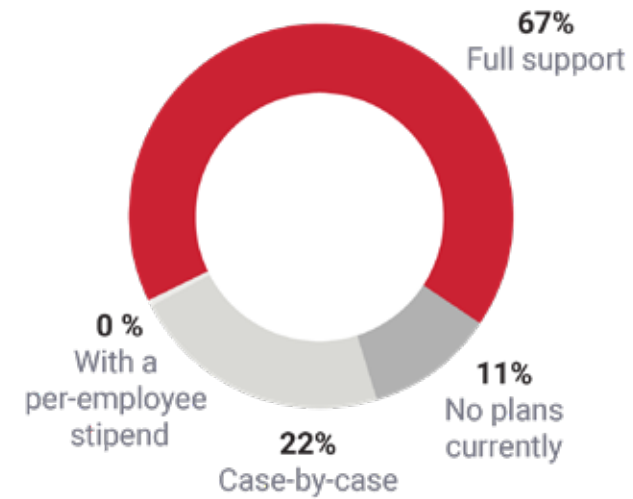
Check out our other chapters to learn more about the steps you can take to ensure your business is equipped to operate from anywhere.

8x8 Poll Results

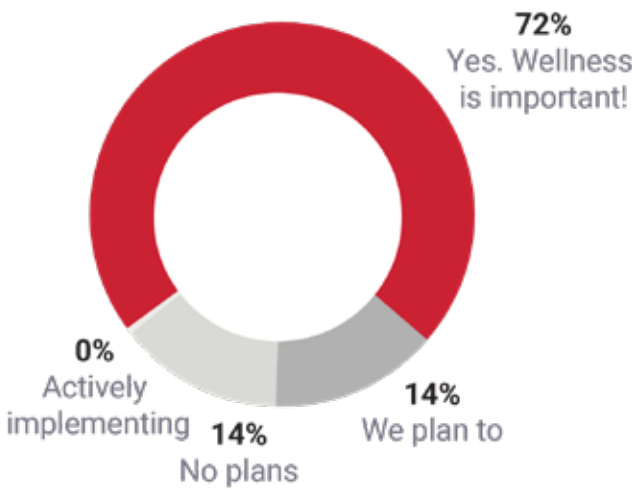
Have you updated your business policies to support longer-term remote working?



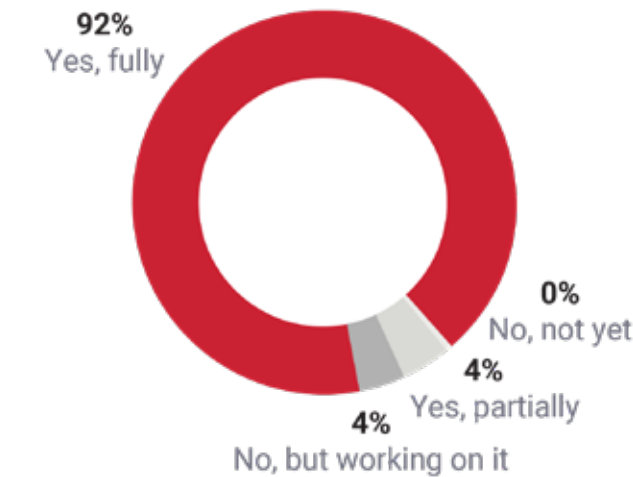
How does your business plan to support employees with remote work?



Have you made provisions for a wellness plan for your employees that are working remotely?



Is your business equipped to allow employees to truly work from anywhere?



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

Chapter

6

Stay nimble.

Learn more about how your business can stay nimble and stay ahead of rapid change.

Your business has made great strides towards adapting to the new way of working and interacting with your customers.

With ongoing uncertainty, you need to stay nimble to be ready for any unforeseen changes.

You may have had to shift rapidly from work-from-office to work-from-anywhere in order to stay open and continue to serve your customers. As we've highlighted in previous chapters, customers are now growing accustomed to interacting with your business remotely and are actively seeking out businesses that offer remote and contactless goods and services.

There is growing consensus that work-from-anywhere is a longer term trend and the office commute will go from the norm to the exception.

How do you more prepare your business for this and optimize to be ready for future sudden change?

Operate from anywhere.

Your business identity no longer needs to be tied to a physical location. Employees don't have to go to work to get work done. Customers don't have to walk into your office to walk away with your products and services.



“The biggest opportunity is that your business does not need to be limited to the immediate geography of where you’re located, meaning you can connect more extensively with customers, partners, and opportunities around the world,”

John Caplan

Forbes.

Beyond the office, your business can now break geographical boundaries. You can reach new customers and expand how and where you do business. And a broader, more diversified customer base both helps you grow and mitigates risk against future sudden changes.

But to empower employees and serve customers anywhere, you need the right cloud solution to bring every communications channel together, and bridge the gap between your business and the world.



Communicate regularly.

You may have gotten by previously with stand-up meetings in the office and chance encounters to keep employees on the same page, but the new reality requires a more resilient, more sustainable approach.

A well articulated communications plan includes regular status meetings to discuss issues, concerns, and feedback loops. It should also include some communications procedures in case of future changes in business circumstances.



For employees, a **chat room** for emergency communications allows them to connect and determine a plan of action. With the right platform, you can instantly promote a chat room discussion to a live meeting. Setting up a standing **ad-hoc dedicated meeting** allows all of your employees to connect live and discuss anything that comes up, allows you to share content and collaborate to come up with next steps to address specific issues or circumstances.

For customers, a proactive communications strategy is equally important. This can include updates via text message and email on how your business is coping and operating in light of certain changes. Customers should know that they can reach out via chat or phone to get updates on your business' availability when

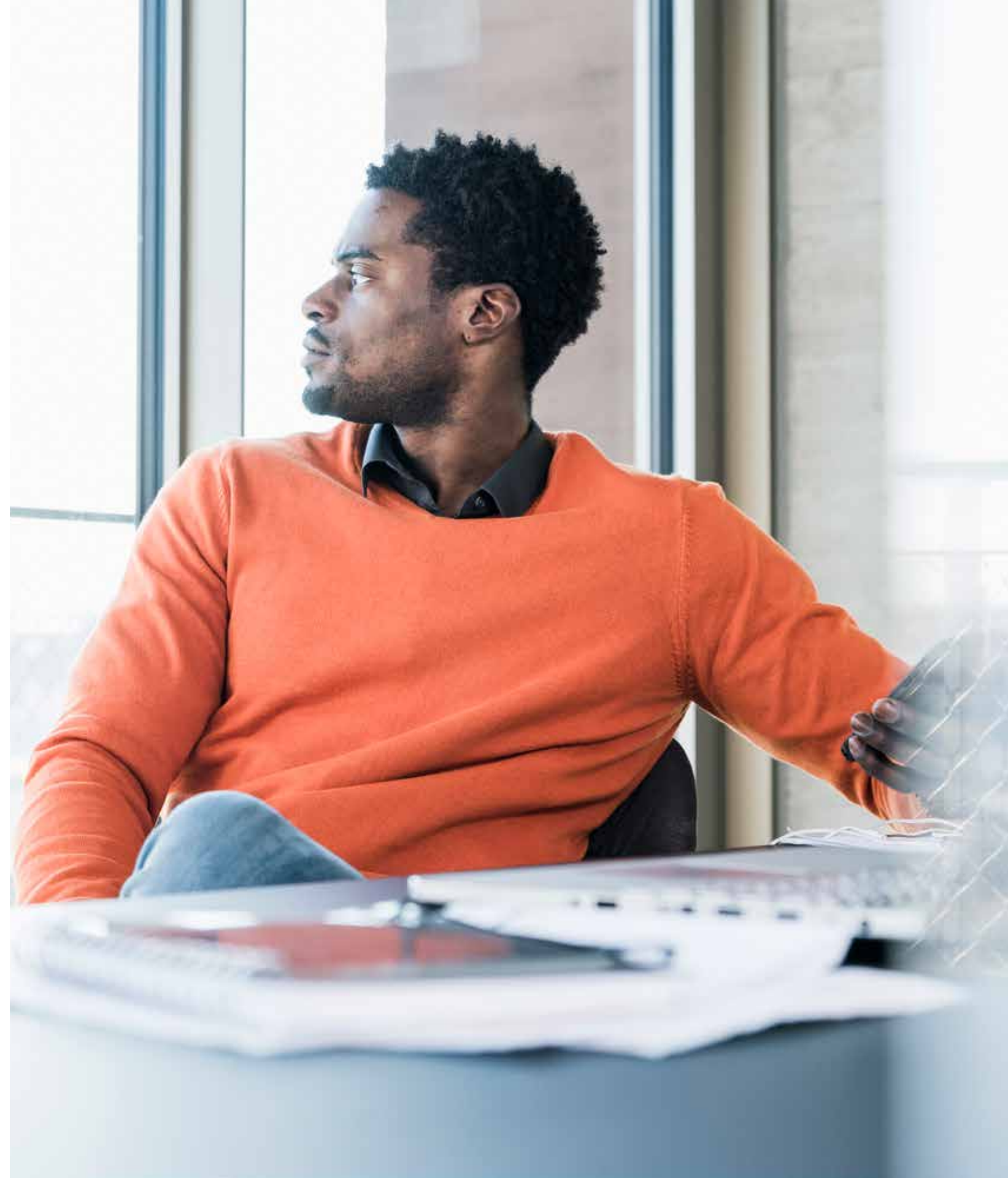
Be resilient.

As a business, you need to be able to overcome many challenges to remain successful as well as to grow. By taking steps to be resilient, you can ensure your business and your employees are prepared to deal with unknown challenges in the future. And this means having a resilient communications and application infrastructure in place.

When it comes to communications services, **not all cloud vendors are created equal**. Just because it's a cloud application does not make it instantly available or reliable. Cloud vendors must assume some risk of their own, backing up their availability promises with a **transparent service level agreement** and availability policy with financial penalties that reflect the losses your business will incur if they are not met.



And resilience does not just mean uptime; it also means guaranteeing quality of service and a **full business continuity** plan when an unforeseen event occurs. A phone communications service can be highly available but offer poor audio quality, for example. True resilience means maintaining the highest quality of service regardless of the disruptions your business may face, ensuring true business continuity.



Prepare for increases in demand.

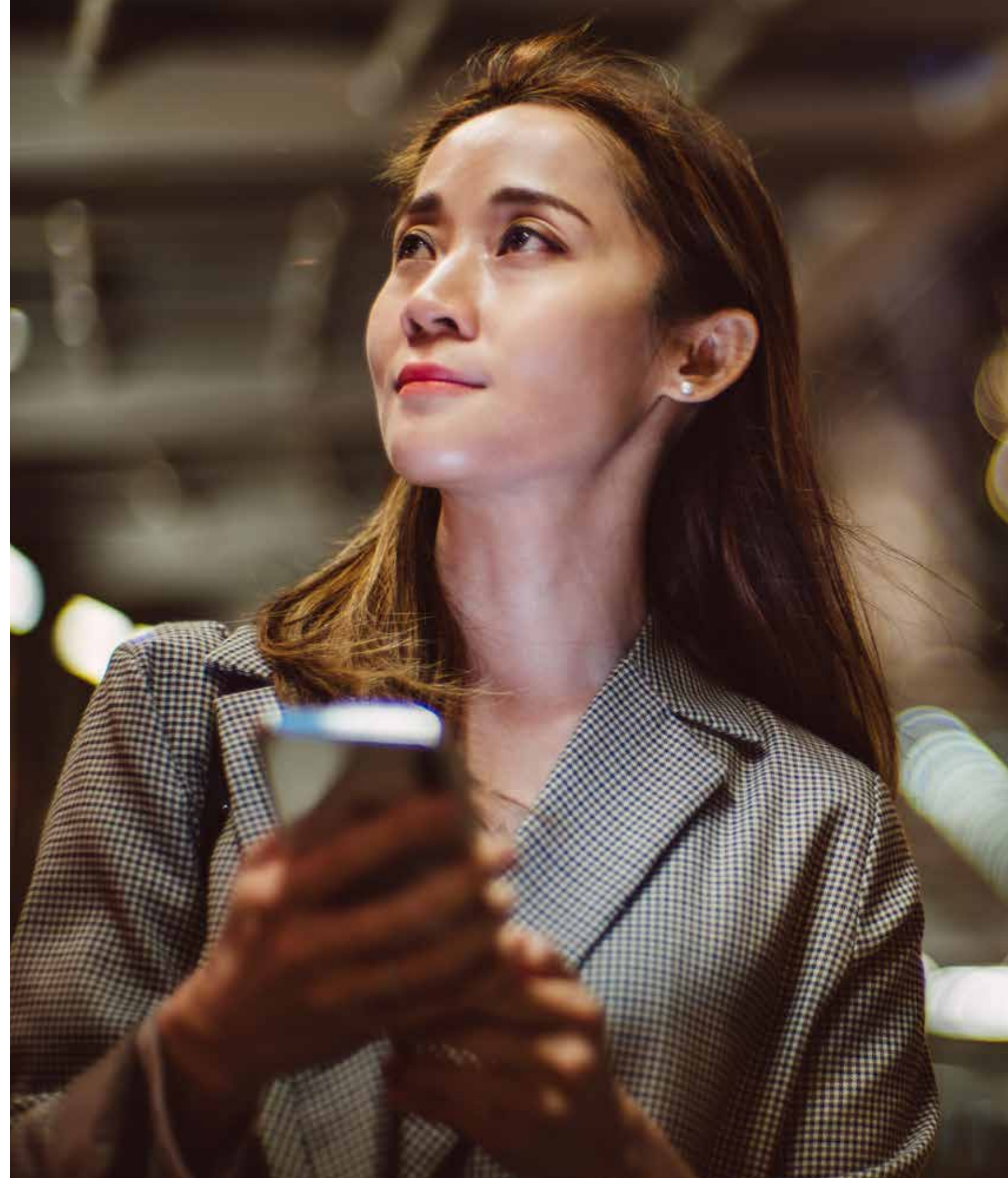


As your business goes virtual, it opens the door to growing your customer base beyond the traditional boundaries of your business. This means optimizing key aspects of your business to be able to accommodate these customers that could be next door... or halfway around the globe.

It's a good problem to have, but can cause significant headaches for businesses that are not prepared. Re-examine the products and services you offer, whether they can be delivered over a larger area and across national boundaries, and make sure you have the right infrastructure in place to handle demand spikes. **Entrepreneur** provides some key considerations when it comes to expanding your business outside of your geographical area especially if you are considering going global.

And in order to serve a large audience, you also need a communications service with national and **global reach**, offering local access and dialing options in the countries in which you operate. This gives your business a local presence anywhere it operates while maintaining a single identity and hub for conducting business.

As your business grows, your applications and communications solutions need to be ready to grow with it. Many vendors claim scalability, so make sure yours guarantees and demonstrates proven on-demand scalability.



Expand your hiring pool.



A traditional hiring model relies largely on hiring local talent to work out of a physical office. But in the work-from-anywhere world, virtual businesses can now recruit talent from far beyond that limited pool.

While this provides your business access to recruit top talent without geographic boundaries, it also helps to have a geographically dispersed team in the event of local or even regional events like natural disasters that may compromise employees' ability to get work done. A geographically dispersed workforce provides better business continuity.

Employees in new locales also offer an opportunity to expand to those markets, maintaining office hours in local time zones and supporting local languages.

Be ready to accommodate these virtual employees and incorporate a **virtual hiring and employee onboarding workflow** into your business practices. Paired with a reliable, global on-demand communications solution, you can be assured of coverage wherever you choose to hire, allowing you to create a comprehensive business continuity plan in the event of any sudden changes or disruptions.



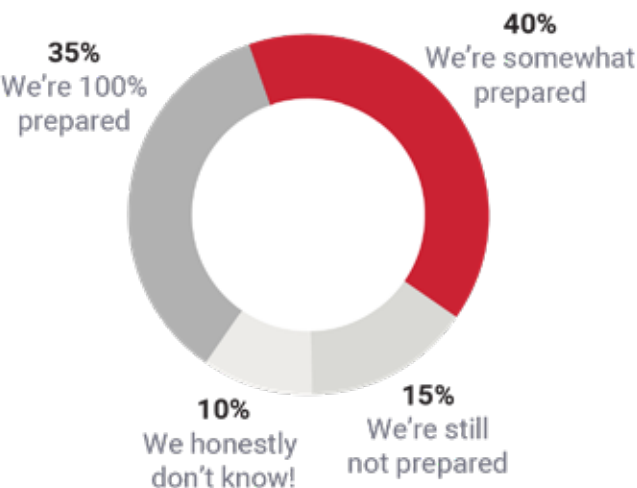
Next Steps

We've seen how business continuity in the face of unforeseen disruptions and sudden change can be handled with updated business practices that support a work from anywhere model. That includes regular and proactive communications amongst employees and with customers, staying resilient, scaling on demand and expanding your employee and customer reach to sustain and diversify your business. And this allows your business to stay nimble.

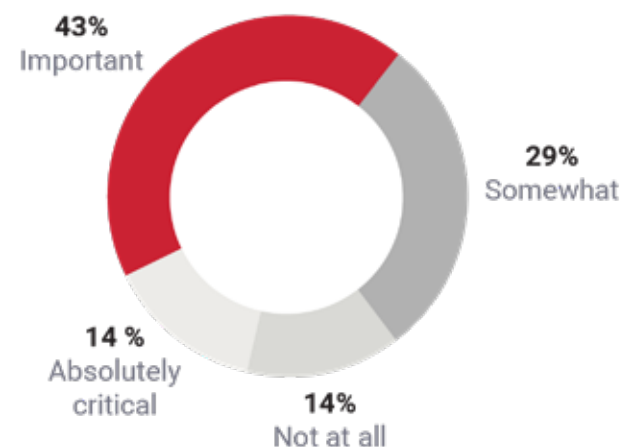
In the next chapter, we'll explore in greater detail how your business can reinvent scalability to better address both uncertainties and rapid growth.

8x8 Poll Results

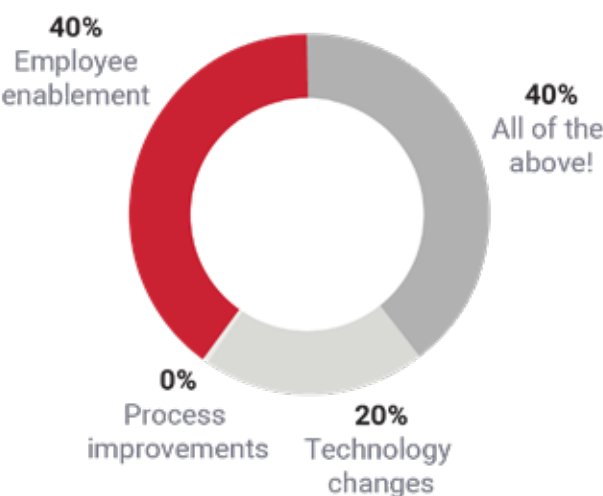
With the new working paradigm, how responsive do you think your business is to sudden changes in business climate?



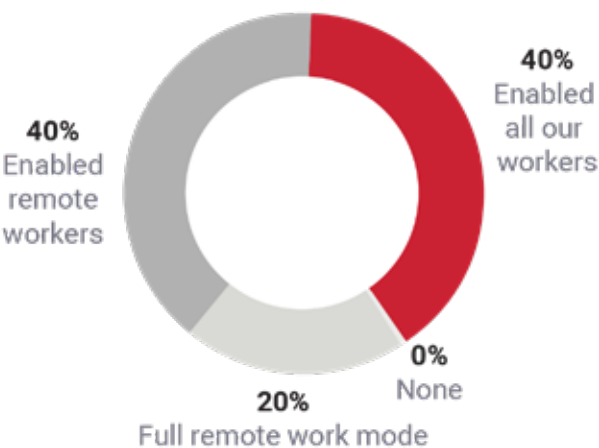
How important are cloud technologies in helping you stay nimble?



What adaptation have you made to your business model to be more responsive to change?



What role did an all-in-one communication solution play in helping your business stay nimble?



7

Chapter

Reinvent scalability.

Your business is becoming an on demand business which means it needs the right technology to scale on demand.

You may not think it's the right time to scale your business, but since you've made the necessary changes to stay open during this time, you have unlocked untouched markets and opportunities for growth.

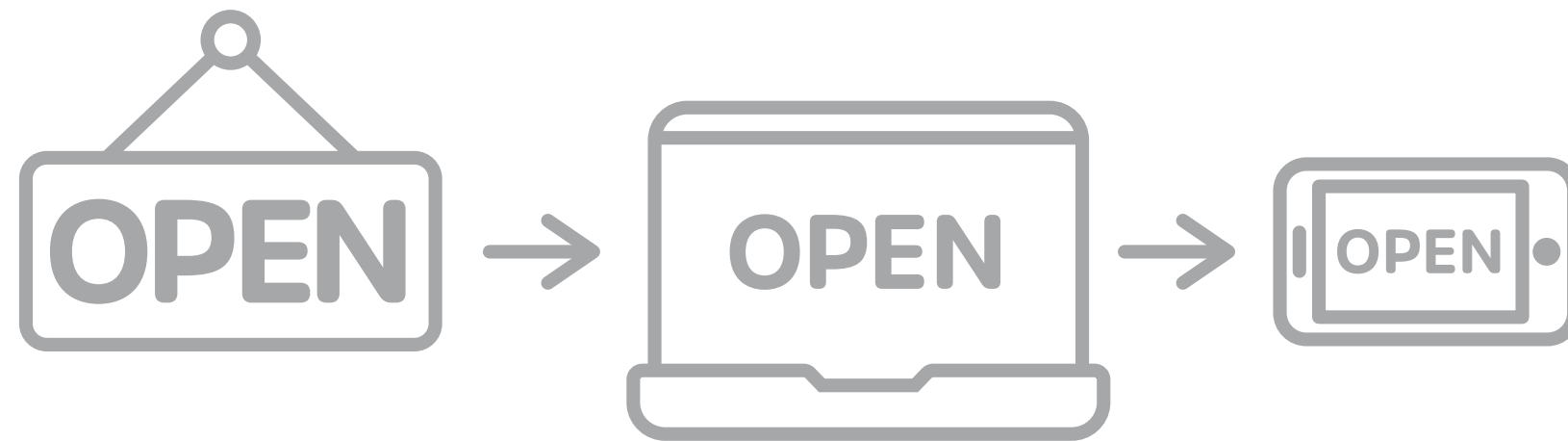
Taking advantage of these without overloading your workforce can be a reality, but you have to make the right moves.

There are many **roadblocks** to scaling your business, including maintaining profitability and hiring new employees. Success lies in navigating these roadblocks with the right combination of technology and technique. For both of those factors, however, there are many options, not all of which will lead to success. We've assembled some guidance based on our customers' experiences that can help you make the right choices and scale effectively.

Adapt and prepare.

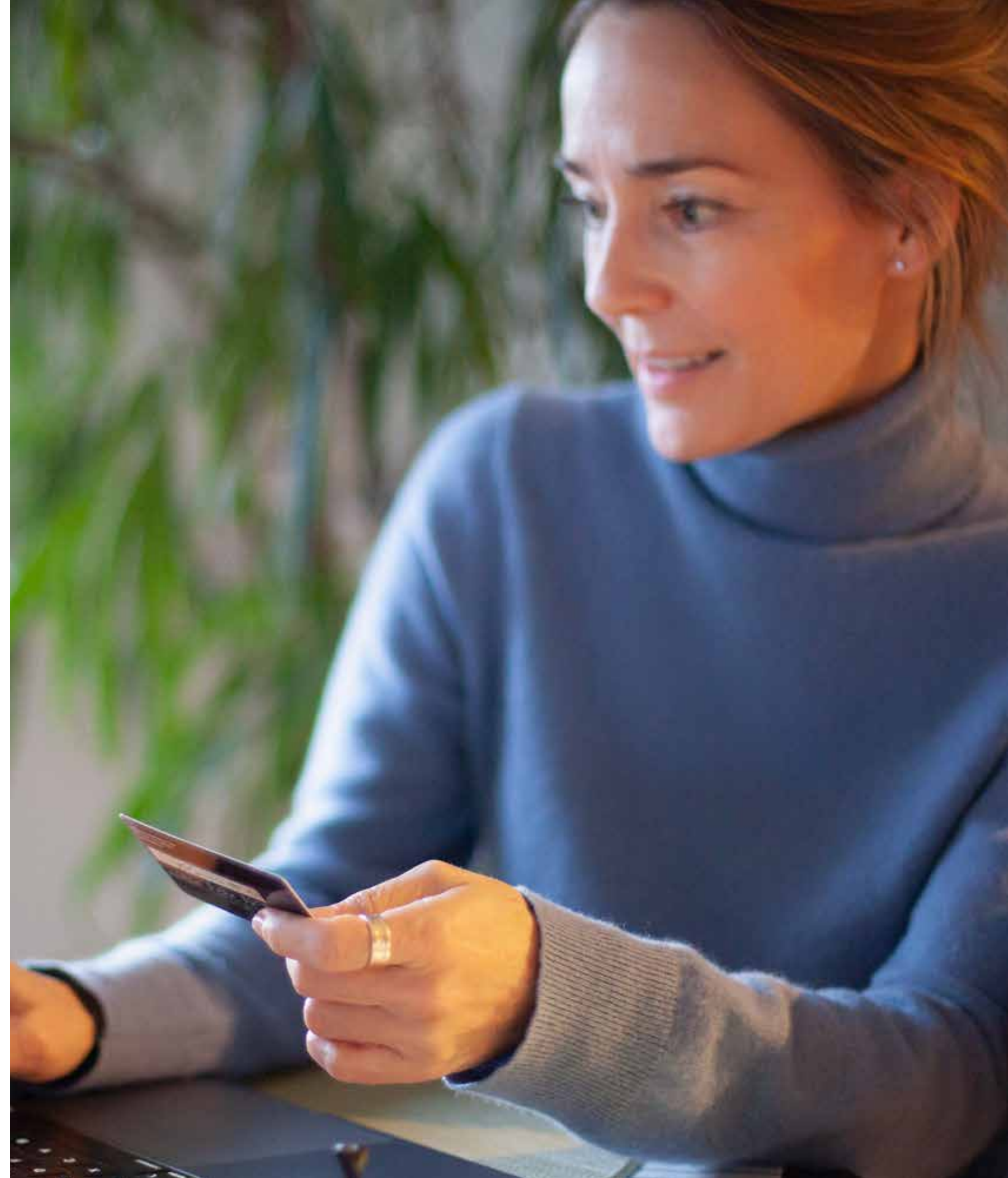
Times have changed, and regardless of your industry, you've probably already adapted to stay open for business and maintain customer loyalty. If you haven't shifted to eCommerce and don't think it's right for your business, you're losing a valuable opportunity and risk falling behind.

Sonja Kotrotsos, the head of EMEA go-to-market for ContentStack, **writes**, "To thrive in today's retail climate, retailers must invest in scalable technologies to help them prepare for unpredictable spikes in online business. This strategy likely includes upgrading to a flexible eCommerce platform that's ready to scale with fast-changing traffic demands. And retailers new to selling online (or selling at a much higher rate than before) must also consider the security implications of shifting to online sales. Malware blockers, firewalls, and security certificates are critical to protecting customer data."



An online storefront is the first step in moving your business online. You don't need to be a tech wizard; there are countless affordable services that make eCommerce sites accessible for every type of business.

Online, your customers are looking for the same products and services as always, just delivered in a new way. And for even the most local businesses, your customers can now come from anywhere. It's up to you to make sure your business is ready for customers and increased demand.

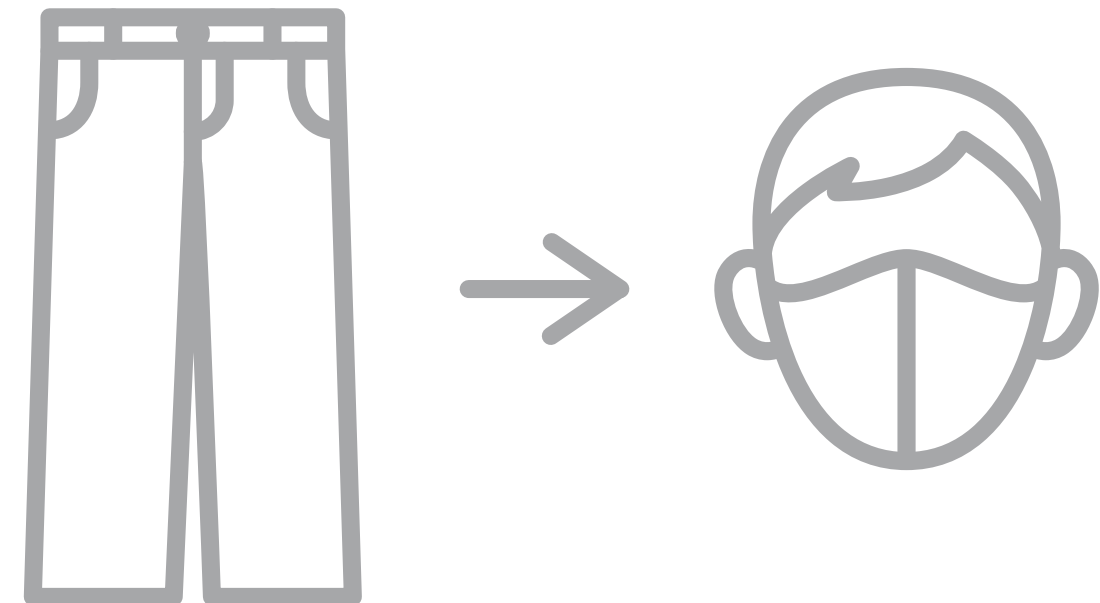


Pivot.

Most businesses move online to sell their existing products or services, but some have taken a different approach: pivoting. You may not be able to drive your sales online with your current offering, but if you keep an ear to the ground and listen to what customers may want right now, you have an opportunity to pivot your business and completely change your target market quickly.

Businesses who successfully pivoted during this time are more common than you might think. **Fabric stores** move to sell materials for online masks, **distillers** turning into hand sanitizer manufacturers, or even **mechanics** moving to build respirators for hospitals around the country.

Pivoting can be easier than you expect, as simple as monetizing an existing process or changing the messaging and delivery of existing products. By doing so, you will both increase your business's social capital with existing customers and expose your business to customers that you might have never had access to.





Improve communication.

With new customers and increased demand for online sales capabilities, effective communication is more critical than ever, and can make the difference between an effective transition and a failed business.

Forbes suggests that business owners should “Take the necessary steps to improve and ease communication with out-of-office workers. Enable all your employees to access and share the resources they need, and control user permissions to boost productivity. Set clear expectations and responsibilities, and you can more or

less negate the obstacles to using remote workers to help your business grow.”

Cloud communications platforms can support this transition, enabling voice, video, chat, and messaging from anywhere. This keeps your business processes internally efficient and maintains stable customer relations with existing or new customers.

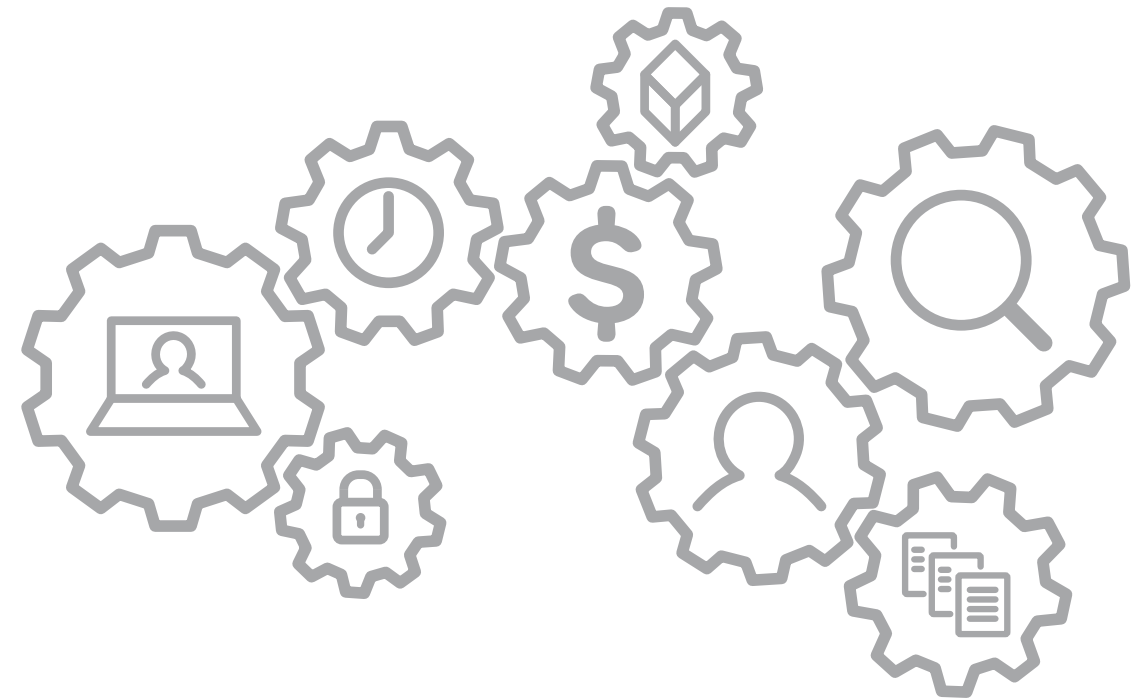
Decouple communications capabilities from physical location, and your business can scale more efficiently regardless of size or location. Without it, communication errors can cost a significant amount of money and be the difference between scaling and failing. 86% of executives and workers cite lack of **collaboration or ineffective communication** for workplace failures, and 97% of the same group believe lack of **alignment within a team** impacts the outcome of a task or project.

Automate your business.

Scaling your business takes many different factors, from increasing your internal efficiency, expanding your companies to reach new customers, and providing new forums where you can conduct your business sales. Automating your processes **increases your internal capability** and allows employees to spend less time working on supplemental tasks to work on more critical tasks.

The first step to automating processes is standardizing; hiring processes, performance reviews, and billing are all perfect areas for standardizing processes. Keeping uniformity across your business increases efficiency and reinforces your brand, among other benefits. Utilizing proper technology makes standardization easy to implement and even easier to use.

The second step is documenting processes that will help your business by putting essential procedures and guidelines in writing—eliminating any possible confusion and guesswork that might arise from scaling your business. Make sure to codify your business structure, branding guidelines, and workflow processes. Eliminating areas in which complications could come from making sure your employees know what's expected and speed up internal workflows allow you to deliver what your customers want even faster.



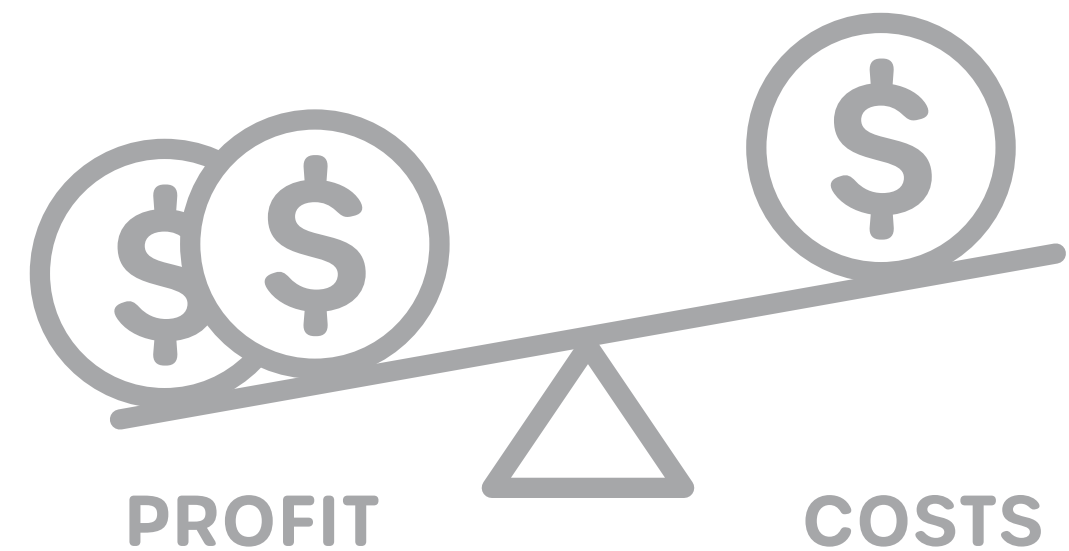


The third and final step of automating your business is investing in the **proper technology**. Payroll, billing, customer support, and social media can all be handled by software and technology. It may seem like a substantial investment, but this technology will pay itself off by saving time and making scaling your business rapid and more accessible than it would be without it. For example, automating your communications can save loads of time for the employees currently handling it; auto-response to texts and voice user interface for customer interaction can reduce overhead, time spent by employees, and increase the quality of customer interactions. Look into each department of your business and determine what processes are time consuming or frequent and straightforward. Assessing where improvements can be made through technology lets your business spend less time on the little things that must be done, and more time getting back to work.

Improve operating leverage.

One problem that your business might face when attempting to scale is operating costs rising as your sales increase, and this issue is exacerbated when conducting your business online. The cost of production or services might be the issue, but a less expected cost increase will come internally. With a typical company, the rise in price might include technical support and customer success teams, professional services, and development operations.

You need to keep these costs down as your sales increase, or your profits could begin to drop just from trying to maintain your business as sales increase. One way to do this is through technology and outsourcing.



Cartegraph is a company that helps local governments with work orders and physical assets. According to **CFODIVE** Cartegraph's CFO, Ben Murray encountered similar problems at his company. Murray has transitioned several back-office systems to help his team do their work quicker and with fewer errors. "We've changed accounting systems, expense systems, and signed up for a sales tax compliance and reporting system," he said. "That's definitely been the key to both efficiency and also better insights and reporting."

Although your business may not match Murray's, there are always systems that can be improved or outsourced. You must assess your expenses grow with increased sales and attempt to improve that ratio of sales to costs as much as possible. Luckily, technology and outsourcing are more affordable and easier to utilize than ever before, so no matter the size of your company, you will be able to take advantage of them.

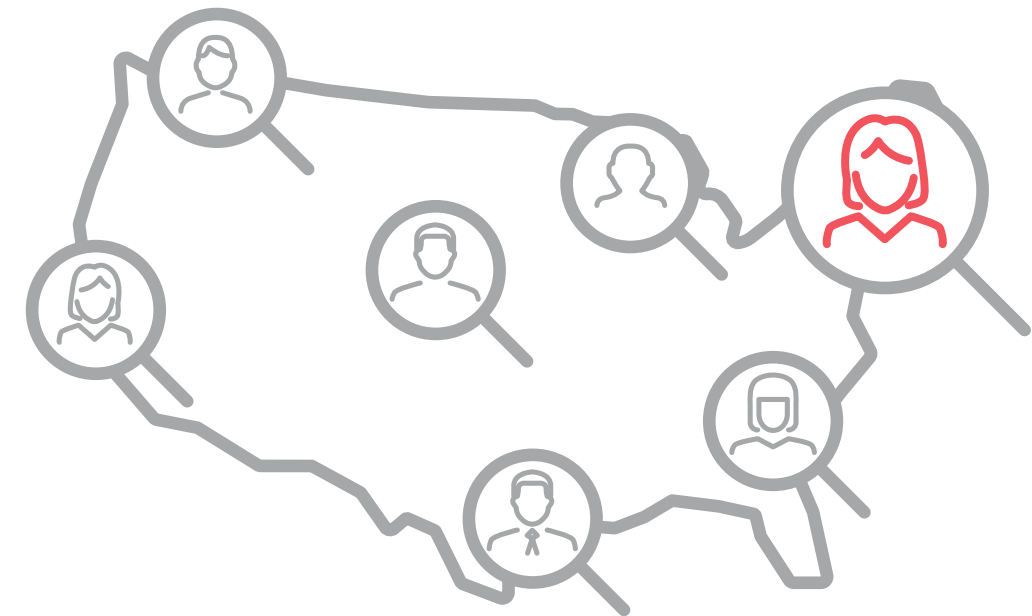


Hire remote.

Businesses around the country are forced to hire remote workers right now, but make sure to look outside of your local area for employees. Many of the critical steps to letting your business not only operate remotely and use every advantage available right now to scale up may be new for your business. But there are tons of professionals currently looking for jobs across the country who do have experience with these steps and more.

Your workforce is already operating remotely, so hiring someone who might be on the other side of the country makes no real difference in how your business works. Employing workers that have experience scaling and implementing the necessary technologies is one of the most significant advantages you can give your business.

If you are unable to hire new employees, try to reach out and see if you can get a consultant that might advise on your business's scaling progress. Any first-hand experience is incredibly valuable, not only to make sure you know what to do but just to make sure you are taking advantage of any opportunities that can improve your business and your workforce as a whole.

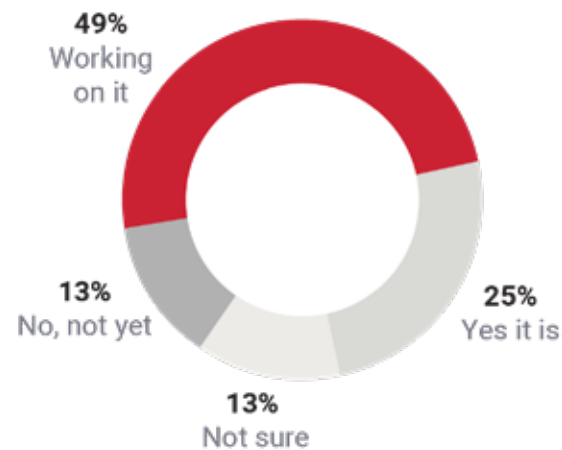


Next Steps

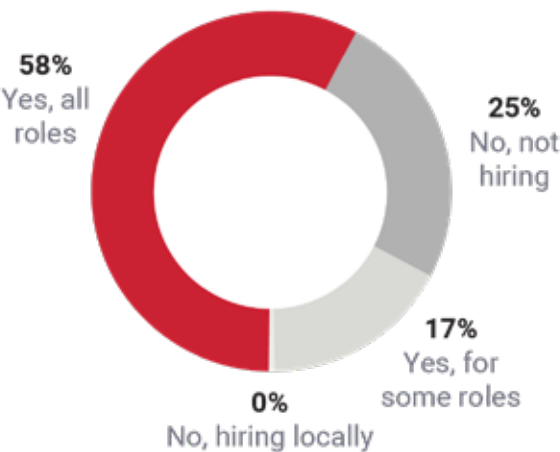
Scaling your business is a complicated endeavor, but the current environment is advantageous when trying to scale businesses of all sizes. Technology improvements, automation, communication, and digitizing your business so that it can utilize the unlimited reach of the internet are just a few ways that your business can deal with the uncertainty of this time and focus on growing your business.

8x8 Poll Results

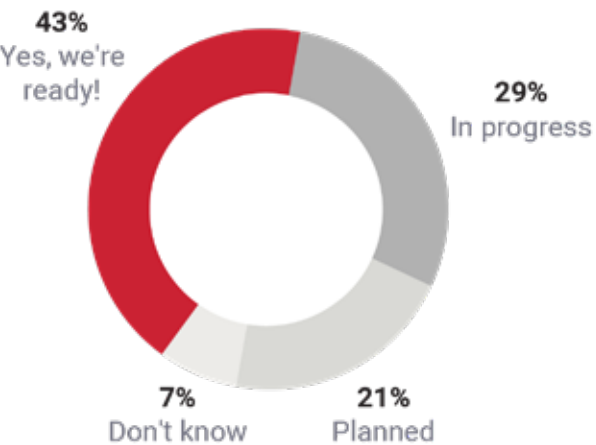
Is your business prepared to quickly scale up to meet new customer demand?



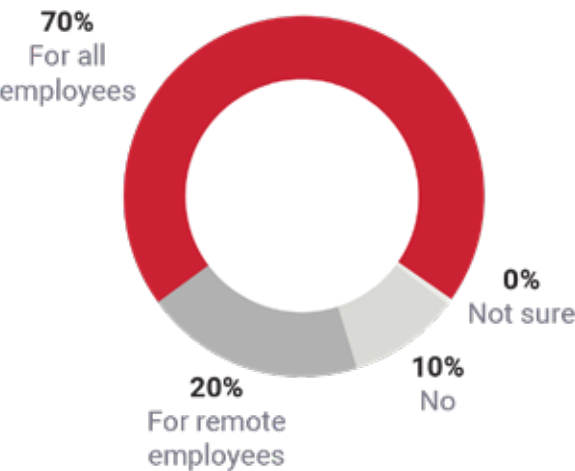
Are you actively recruiting remote employees to respond to the increased demand?



Do you have best practices in place to easily scale up your business?



Does an all-in-one communications solution help you with dynamically growing your business?



Chapter

8

Thrive in uncharted waters.

Learn how your business can
continue to thrive while navigating
these uncharted waters.

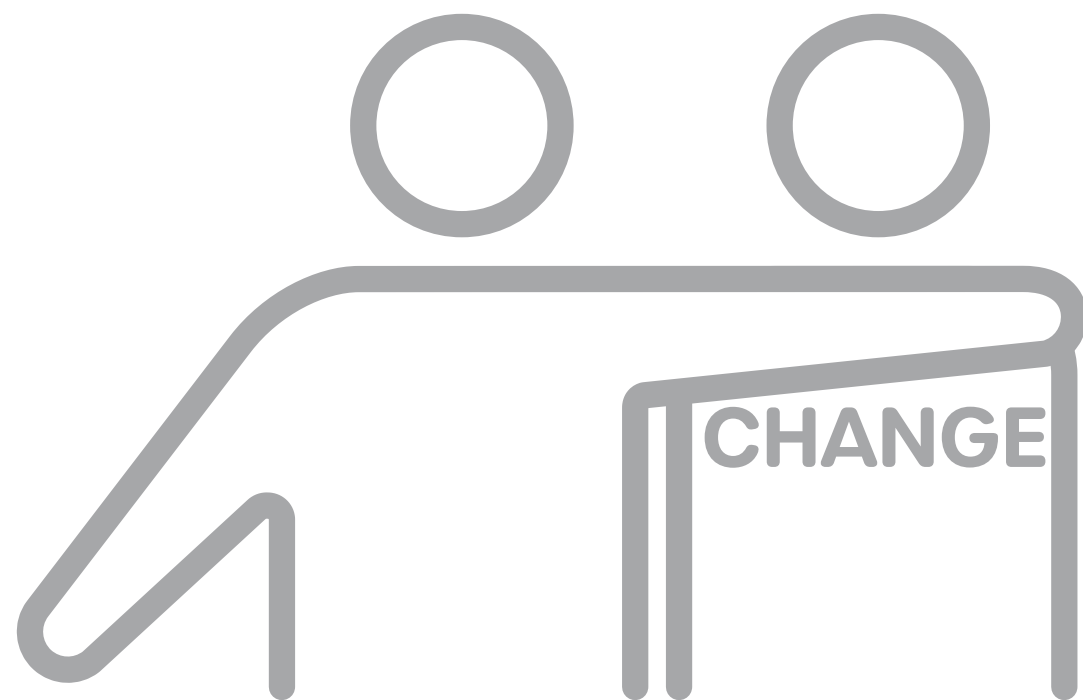
Risk is nothing new to business owners and to those who run businesses. As the saying goes, no risk, no reward.

But what happens when sudden changes occur that impact the business environment you operate in? There is no indication that the current climate will improve in short order. Until there is a reliable vaccine, the economic and social effects of the current pandemic will continue to exist for quite some time. But some of the changes both in terms of how employees will work and how customers will choose to deal with businesses are much longer term and may turn out to be permanent.

Businesses that show a willingness to adapt to change and to confidently navigate uncharted waters are the businesses that will continue to thrive in the new economy. How equipped are you and your business to handle these changes and not only sustain your business but thrive in uncertainty?

“If there’s one thing that’s certain in business, it’s uncertainty.”

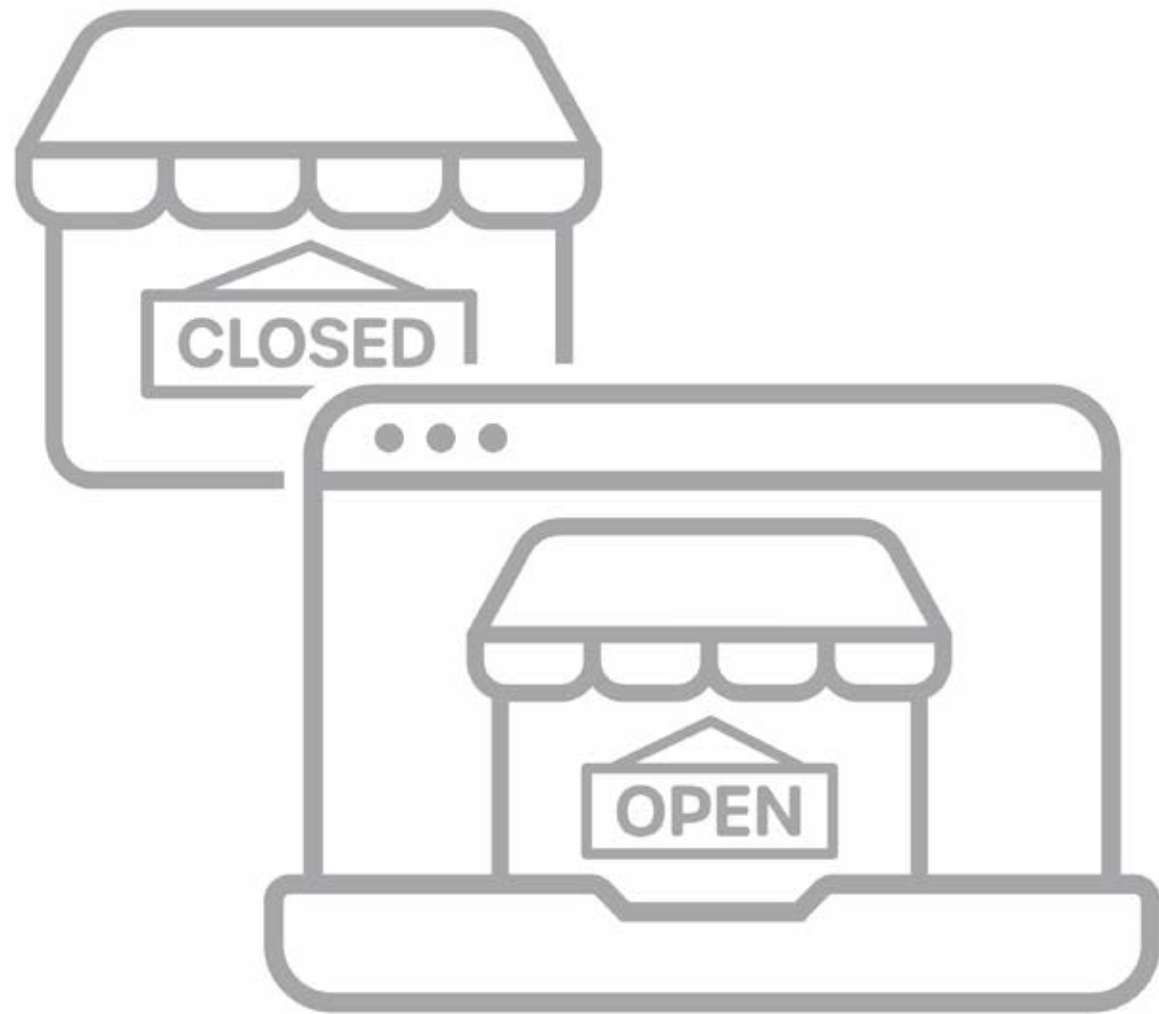
Steven Covey



Embrace change.

Now that we’ve accepted the new reality, it’s time to revisit everything including what products and services you offer to how you deliver those products and services to your customers. It also means revisiting how you plan to communicate with your customers and how they can connect with your business.

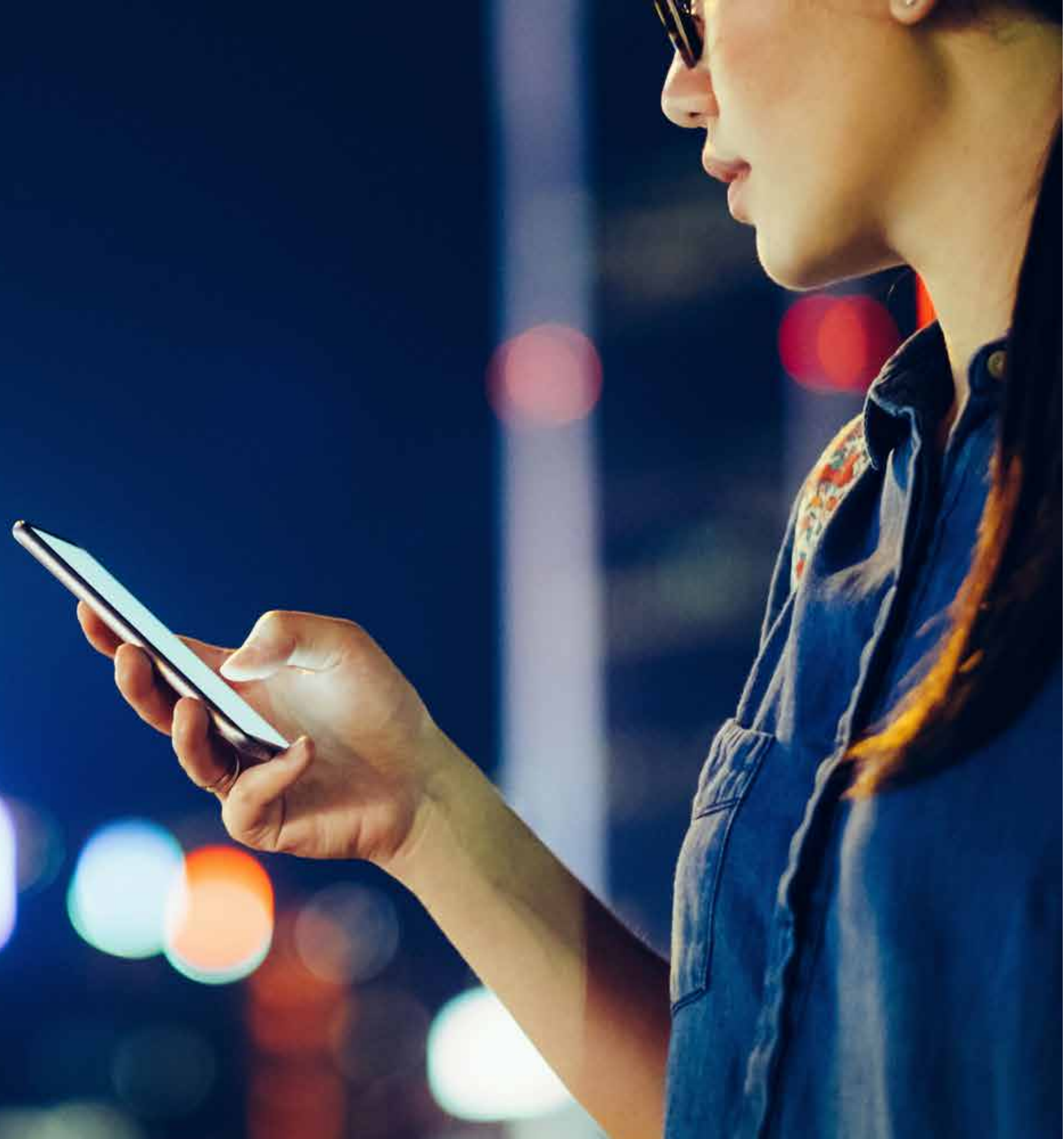
Your business has been accustomed to offering certain goods and services, and doing them well. But as we saw in Chapter 7, the rapid change in customer behavior and expectations coupled with regulated closures and the need to interact more safely has forced many businesses to rethink their business models. And even prompted them to alter what they are offering.



Ruth Stafford Peele coined the phrase “Find a need and fill it”, which was made more widely famous in the movie **Robots** as “See a need, fill a need.” No words were more truly spoken when it comes to business. Businesses exist because the owners or founders had a passion for something and felt that they could share that passion in creating something that customers need. They thrive because they can fill this need better than competitors. They continue to thrive when they recognize that needs can change quickly following an event such as the onset of a pandemic, or evolve over a longer period of time as generations of consumers change ... respond to those evolving needs.

Needs can change in at least three ways:

- The need for the good and/or service you are offering
- How you deliver the service
- Communications preferences with the business providing the service



In many cases, the new products and services may be a derivative of the current products and services the business is offering, such as a **hockey sales and repair** business leveraging the same skills used to repair sports equipment to produce high quality face masks. It needs to change its delivery model to accommodate remote customers, such as delivering **health and wellness instruction** remotely. It means understanding and embracing how your customers want to reach you and communicate with you for anything that they need.

For a business to thrive, it not only needs to understand these changes and when they occur, it needs to embrace them fully. Embracing change means understanding that your customers needs have changed, that these changes are not short term, and that you are enthusiastically willing to make the changes needed to respond to their evolving needs and preferences.

Remain nimble.

Change in itself isn't possible unless your business is nimble. While you pivoted quickly to adapt to the sudden changes that occurred over the last few months, continuing to be able to pivot your business as you navigate uncertainty is critical not only for survival but provides opportunity for growth as well.

Businesses are facing adversity head on and are innovating to address that adversity, not only to survive changes that may have a negative impact on the business climate, but to grow. "Small businesses are really great at staying nimble," says [Laura Huang, associate professor at Harvard Business School](#). "This is something they've been set up to do because they've always had to deal with adversity in some way. The ones that succeed understand that even though they are looking to do new, innovative things, they need to grow where they are planted."



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Laura Huang

Associate Professor, Harvard Business School

Staying nimble means thinking through your current business strategy, and making adjustments quickly or wholesale changes if required, based on need:

- Revive old ideas that may not have seemed viable prior to this but which may actually be needed now.
- Leverage what you know and have and repurposing it, **as this gift wrap company did**, to produce something new that is needed.
- Reposition existing products to serve a new need, as many **medical practices have done** moving from in person consultations to telemedicine.

- Experiment with new ideas, leveraging your experience and what you know, to develop new products to complement your core business, **like these distilleries and breweries that turned to making hand sanitizer** or restaurants that have begun **selling prepared meal kits**.
- Add more delivery options for your customers, including contactless curbside pickup, **no-contact delivery**, touchless order fulfillment and **retail locker pickup**, and contactless service and repair, such as **mobile car mechanics**.

In the end, whether it is innovating by repurposing and repackaging an existing product or service, creating new products or services that come from old ideas or that are derivatives of what your business currently offers and expanding how your customers can get access to these products and services, staying nimble and making the changes quickly will ensure your business can continue to thrive in a world of uncertainty.

Cast a wider employee and customer net.

Hiring remote employees provides businesses with an opportunity to hire the best talent away from the traditional physical boundaries they were accustomed to. With a more geographically dispersed employee base, businesses can provide local touch to out of region and out of country customers with employees that are in the same time zone and that speak the same language.



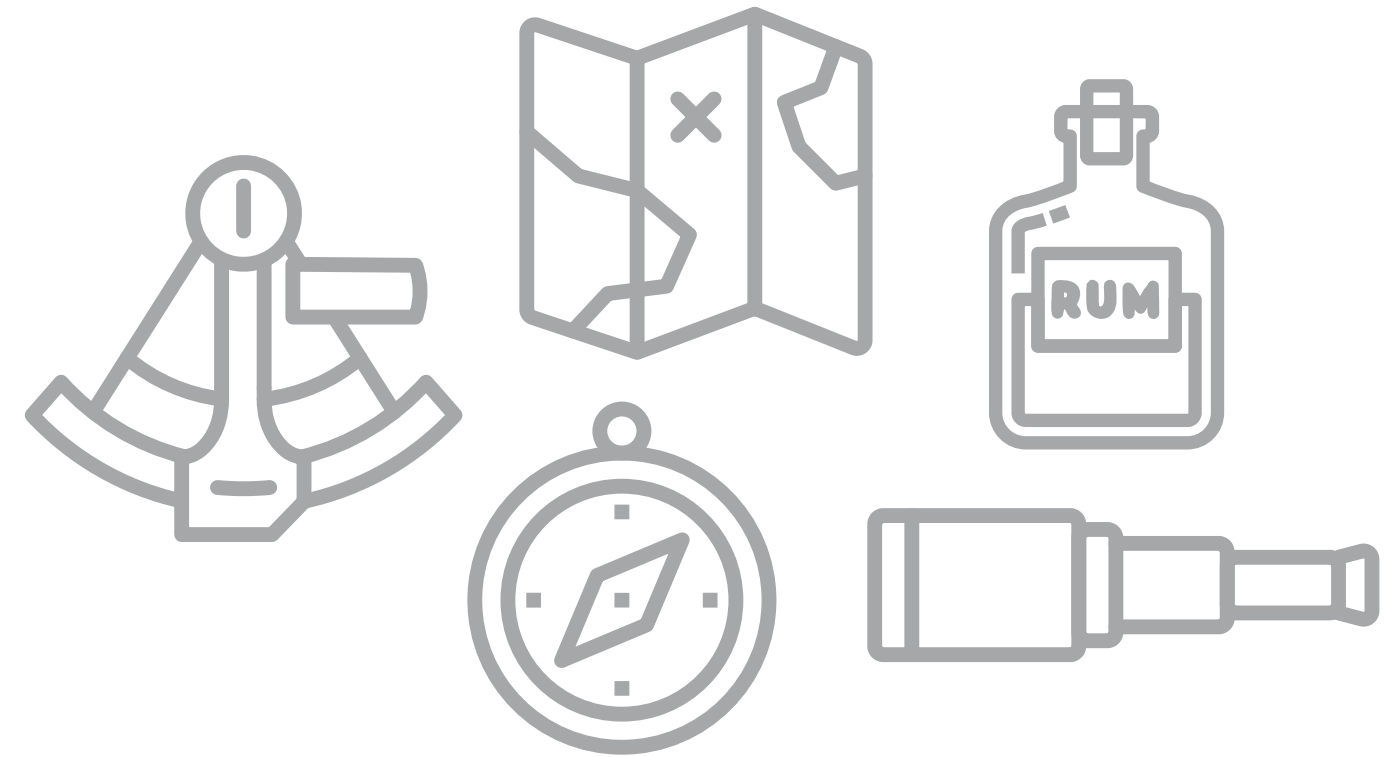
Having employees available in different geographical regions also mitigates risk from sudden changes. Natural disasters such as floods or hurricanes can cause temporary evacuations in the region your business is operating. Having employees available in other regions that are not impacted provides for business continuity as those employees can temporarily handle all communications and potentially any order and service fulfillment. Paired with the **right technology that is resilient** in the face of events that impact one or many regions, your business is assured of continuity from both a technological as well as from a staffing perspective providing little to no interruption of service to your customers.

By the same token, your customers can also be impacted by the same regional events or may live in regions that respond differently to more global events such as a pandemic. Having a geographically dispersed customer base allows you to mitigate any temporary or even longer term reductions in demand due to customers in one or several regions not being able to interact with your business. Customer diversification has **numerous other benefits** beyond disaster mitigation, including mitigating seasonality, diversifying your business' sources of revenue so that it isn't dependent on one or a small group of customers, and amplifying your reach to acquire new customers through a widening base of customer references by word of mouth or through other channels such as social media.

Enable your business with the right technology.

No matter how much you innovate as a business and are prepared to pivot and embrace change, all of this will be difficult to accomplish without the right technologies to support your efforts.

Many businesses that have transitioned to a remote working model have found that the technologies that worked for them in their offices do not work quite as well when office employees are forced to work remotely. This is forcing them to reevaluate their communications solutions. Whereas some businesses have opted to use a cloud communications solution as a temporary stop-gap measure for employees relocated to working from home, it's becoming increasingly clear that these solutions need to be considered for longer term use and across the entire business as a successor to the premise system and its limitations.



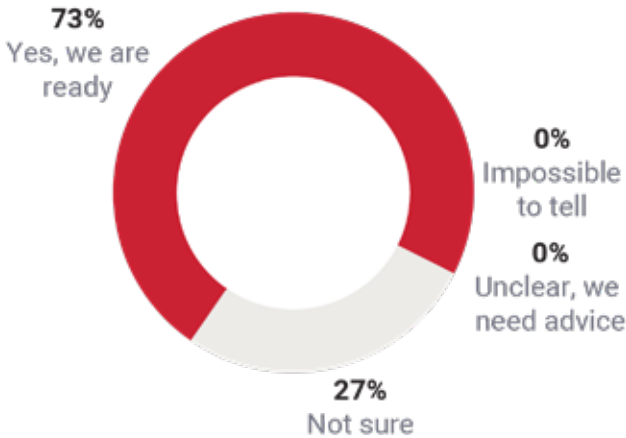
With the longer term trend towards work-from-anywhere, **businesses are embracing cloud communications** to carry their business forward. There are a number of reasons cloud communications are trending in helping business' to remain nimble in an uncertain future:

- A single virtual business identity that does not need to be tied to a physical address, allowing your business to operate from anywhere and allowing customers to connect with you on any channel
- Business continuity regardless of what happens, **with a transparent service level agreement and commitment to quality of service**
- A single solution that allows your business to expand locally, regionally, nationally and **globally** on demand as your needs dictate, allowing your customers to reach you wherever they are and giving you a local presence all over the globe
- A **comprehensive communications and collaboration suite** that allows employees to connect with each other via chat, phone or video and share content on any device using a single interface
- Relieves your business of the burden of managing and maintaining a communications solution, allowing you to focus on keeping your business nimble

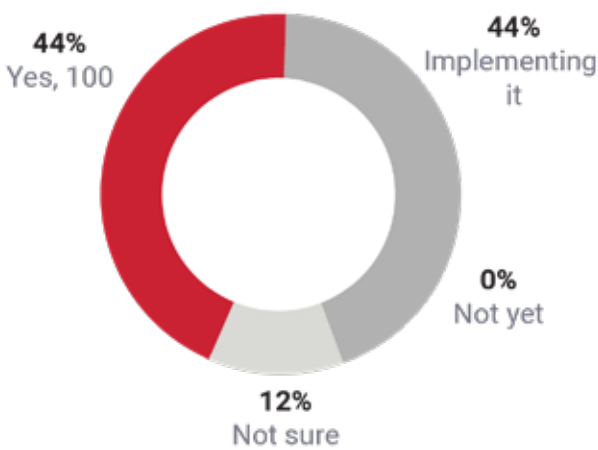
A cloud communications solution follows your business wherever it goes ... even if you choose to physically move its location. Because it is no longer location dependent, giving you and your employees the freedom to work from anywhere and to service your customers from anywhere. Empowering your business to continue being nimble through adversity and to continue innovating and adapting as it navigates uncharted waters.

8x8 Poll Results

Have you adequately prepared your business to chart through and respond to uncertainty in the business climate?



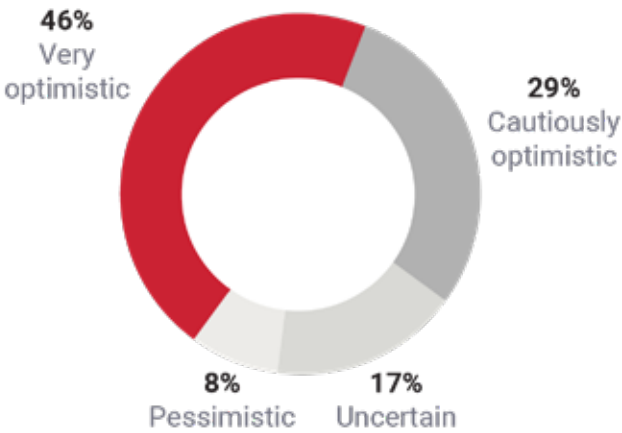
Do you have the technology in place to make quick course corrections as you navigate the new business environment?



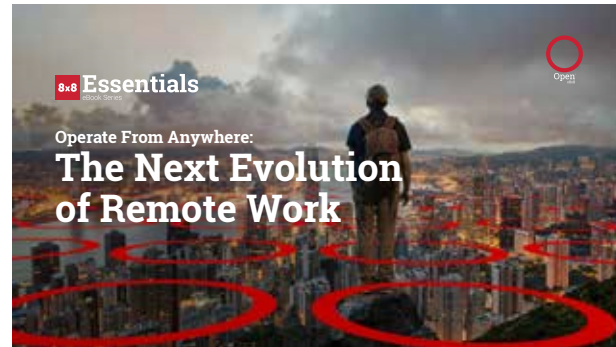
Does having an all-in-one communications solution give you the flexibility to navigate uncertainty?



What are your sentiments for what the future holds?

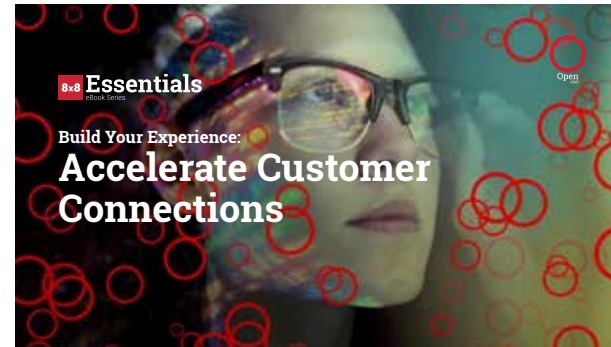


Explore the other titles in our Essentials eBook series.



In 2020, we learned that remote work is no longer a nice-to-have perk – it is an operational pillar that enables employees to serve customers, generate revenue, reduce costs, and innovate at any time from anywhere using any device. This essential 8-week guide will provide you with valuable insights to accelerate your organization's shift to Operate From Anywhere.

[Read the "Operate From Anywhere: The Next Evolution of Remote Work" eBook.](#)



It's time to reimagine how you connect with customers and embrace a digital-first world. This eBook will give you a step-by-step guide to build and customize your customer experience using transformative APIs, SMS, chat apps, and embedded video.

[Read the "Build Your Experience: Accelerate Customer Connections" eBook.](#)



Don't settle for app-switching to bring people and apps together. Learn how to supercharge Teams and other apps with integrated global voice communications capabilities.

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