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The Workplace of 2021

By Adam Berti

The big question of 2021 (or maybe 2022 with recent vaccine delays) is what will the return to the workplace look like? We need to consider this now when we

make decisions about spending capital and investing in IT infrastructure.

Advances in technology have made working from outside the office a possibility for many. COVID upended our work setup and fast-tracked changes that organizations would not have otherwise tried. I believe that now it is time to evaluate these changes in communication and collaboration, and ask, which of these are changes permanent?

I spoke about this on a webinar way back in 2020 (which feels like eons ago), amidst the upheaval when we were still adjusting ourselves with short-term work from home setups. There was such a demand for laptops that we heard stories of shipments being blocked at the USA / Canada border, and we saw a run on monitors and other peripherals for home office setups. The result was organizations purchased whatever they could get, and often the proper tools were not implemented. It doesn't have to be this way with careful planning.

The next challenge for organizations lies in evaluating long-term policies around work location. There's a healthy balance between working from home and the office or as BBC concluded that the future of work might be hybrid. We need to look at what PriceWaterHouse Coopers (now PWC) did with articling students in the early 2000s to accommodate more staff than an available workspace. As a firm, they were in a similar situation to what many organizations are considering today. They had hundreds of

students articling, with only a given percentage in the office at any time, while the rest were at client sites completing audits. Users all had their OWN laptops and were assigned a generic desk or physical position at the office for the day. The only personal space they had in the office was an assigned locker. This is known as hoteling.

The idea here is simple and straight forward. The workspaces at the office are complete with monitors, keyboards, and other peripherals, but no computer. Employees are issued laptops, and simply book into a workspace when they need to be in the office. With this setup, a current office that has space for 15 employees could easily handle an additional 3 employees if everyone worked from home one day a week. In a lot of organizations, the need for personalized space and storage has substantially diminished. If your business has undergone a digital transformation and has minimal reliance on paper, it is easy to implement this hoteling setup. Think back and visualize your office. How many of the drawers and cupboards around you are filled with documents and items you haven't touched in years? setting.

The physical infrastructure of monitors and desks is easy to tackle. What requires more thought and careful consideration are policies and best practices about working outside the office. It starts with clear expectations around work hours and availability. A parent with young kids might enjoy the opportunity to pick up their kids from school in the afternoon. Is it permissible to take a 1-2 hour break mid-afternoon and catch up on the work later? The key here is to institute policies around meetings, work hours, virtual etiquette, computer security, use of personal devices, etc. These are all the decisions that will dictate how your company frames the work-from-home setup.

The biggest question I get from decision-makers is usually around **WHY allow remote work? Or How to introduce a hybrid model of collaborating in an organization?**

Today's younger generations (myself included in that list) are not solely motivated by the salary of a job and may look at other things like work-life balance when deciding where to work, or whether to accept a job offer. This ability to partially work from home might be the deciding factor to get that star employee to work for you.

Cont'd pg. 4



You NEVER See It Coming! But Once It Hits, Everyone Says, “I Wish I Would Have ...”



Confidence Is Key: How To Self-Promote For Greater Success

We often don't like to talk about ourselves. But there are many times when it is important to talk about yourself and to convey your accomplishments. Maybe you're applying for a new position within your organization, you're trying to establish a partnership with another company or you want to expand your professional network. Either way, here are a few ways to self-promote without sounding like a brag.

Lean Into Your Expertise. Call on your experience. If someone is dealing with an issue you're familiar with, walk them through it. Or take on the role of mentor with others in your organization or community.

Be Receptive To Feedback. This is how we grow. Listen to what people have to say and respond by taking action. Make adjustments as they make sense. When you receive positive feedback, accept it graciously.

Emphasize “Together.” Don't make things just about you. Share credit when it deserves to be shared. Be a supportive and motivational voice. Uplift others.

Forbes, Nov. 23, 2020

A year ago, no one could have predicted that countless businesses would shift to a remote work model. The pandemic hit hard and fast, and small businesses had to think on their toes. Many had only a few weeks to adapt. It was stressful and extremely challenging.

Looking back on it, many SMBs wish they'd had a plan in place that would have made things easier. When the pandemic hit in February/March 2020, SMBs had to absorb the huge cost of getting their employees up and running off-site. Not only was it costly, but it also took a lot of coordination and on-the-fly planning. This meant things slipped through the cracks, including cyber security.

As they say, hindsight is 20/20. You may wish you had a plan in place or had more time, but you didn't. A vast majority didn't. However, you can still plan for the future! While you never know when disaster is going to strike, you CAN be prepared for it. Whether that disaster is a pandemic, flood, fire or even hardware failure, there are steps you can implement today that will put you in a better place tomorrow. Here's how to get started.

PUT YOUR PLAN INTO WRITING

First and foremost, you should have a standard operating procedure to call on should something go wrong. For example, in early 2020, many SMBs didn't have a security plan in place, let alone a remote work security plan. They had to make it up as they went, which just added to the challenges they were already experiencing.

To get over this challenge, work with an experienced IT services company or managed services provider (MSP) to put together a plan. This plan should include a cybersecurity protocol. It should define what malware software employees should be using, what number they should call for 24/7 support, who to contact when they receive suspicious emails, how to identify suspicious emails and so on.

More than that, it should outline exactly what needs to happen when disaster strikes. Pandemic? Here's how we operate. Fire? Here's what you need to know. Hardware failure? Call this number immediately. The list goes on, and it can be pretty extensive. This, again, is why it's so important to work with an MSP. They've already put together plans for other SMBs, and they know where to start when they customize a plan with you. *Cont'd pg. 4*



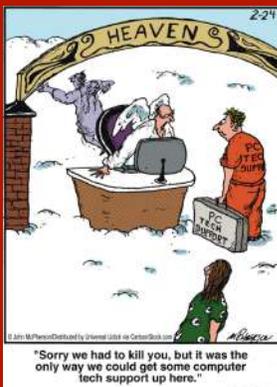
Production Vs. Connection – The Ailment and The Cure

3 Ways To Protect Your Data During COVID-19

1. Manage Your Passwords. You've heard it before, and you'll hear it again – one of the best ways to keep intruders out of your data is to lock it behind strong passwords that are updated every 60 to 90 days. Use passwords that are a mix of letters, numbers and special characters. Make passwords long and confusing.

2. Secure All Data. Who are you sharing your data with? Do former employees still have access? What about former clients? Take time to see who has permission to access your network and data. While you're at it, clean up old or useless data that may be just taking up space. When you know what data you're saving – and who has permission to access that data – you can better protect it.

3. Adopt Best Practices. When was the last time your team received IT security training? Never? Five years ago? It's time to get back on it. Train your team on the latest cyber security threats and how to handle them. Then, adopt best practices so your team knows what to do when they receive a phishing email or there's a threat to your network. Inc., Nov. 20, 2020



David Pierce spent the first 30 years of his career in the corporate world. As a CPA, he spent a decade with Deloitte and PwC, and another 20 years in a C-level post in regional banking. He also launched one of the first stand-alone online banks in the US. As an entrepreneur, he eventually said goodbye to the corporate world and started his own consulting firm, and became a Four Decisions Certified Gazelles International Coach and a Petra Coach.

Recently, I had what we like to call an “aha moment” while listening to a sermon one Sunday. The minister made the observation that our society as a whole has swung to the extreme side of *productivity* at the expense of our *connections*. It hit me that this is one of the greatest ailments we see as coaches with our member companies and leaders, especially as of late.

Culture, Appreciation & Connection

We know the best-performing companies are those that devote significant effort to creating a culture that their team members *want* to be a part of. And where does that culture come from? People crave appreciation in the workplace – and we're talking sincere, heartfelt appreciation, not the casual “pat on the back” or quick “thanks” in passing. *Real* appreciation only occurs if there is a *real* connection between people. Connection is valuing the other person more

than yourself or having an “others first” mindset. It takes effort, vulnerability and emotion. True culture cannot exist without both of these key elements.

The Ailment

Unfortunately, in our “all about me” culture, connections tend to be shallow and unemotional. It's not what can I do for you, it's what can you do for me. As a society and in business, we have become so laser-focused on overachievement and beating the competition that our connections receive little attention. Especially today, when companies are striving to get back on their feet, push out new offerings and make up for lost time from the pandemic, connections are starving due to the demands of winning.

But At What Cost?

There have never been higher instances of job discontentment, disconnected families, depression, suicide and overall lack of joy. Our extreme focus on production and achievement has come at a huge cost to society. Extremes at either end of the pendulum never end well.

So, Now What?

Back to our coaching perspective, I think we have it right when we help our companies focus on culture by viewing their team members as human beings and not just a means to productivity. In addition, we all know that you cannot truly separate the business side from the personal side and that you have to be equally intentional in both areas to create the life you want, which involves real connections to who and what we love.

It's time to swing the pendulum back, ease off the production pedal and give more attention to treating each other with compassion and putting others first. It may seem strange, but the companies that have done this well typically outperform on the production side too, because connection is a great motivator for betterment – both personally and professionally.

Gee, maybe there's really something to the old Golden Rule thing.

Featured Item: ParcSlope

Chance Miller - 9TO5MAC.COM

Popular Apple accessory maker TwelveSouth has announced its latest product for MacBook and iPad users.

The new ParcSlope is an ergonomic stand designed with an 18-degree typing and sketching angle. It will be available directly from Apple via the Apple Online Store as well as Apple retail stores.

The new TwelveSouth ParcSlope is the latest addition to the company's growing line of accessories for iPhone, iPad, and Mac. The company has previously teamed up with Apple to sell things like the Curve Stand for MacBook, the BookArc, and the HiRise Adjustable Stand.

The company touts that the 18-degree angle makes the ParcSlope perfect for typing with a MacBook or sketching and creating with an iPad. The 18-degree angle also has ergonomic benefits, helping you look directly ahead at your MacBook's display rather than looking down. It also places your MacBook at the perfect angle for Zoom and FaceTime video calls, TwelveSouth says.

Keeping with TwelveSouth's design history, the ParcSlope features a single-piece all-metal design that pairs perfectly with Apple products. It comes in a space gray colour shade and features rubber stoppers on the top to hold your iPad or MacBook in place while you use it.

ParcSlope is a dual-purpose stand that elevates MacBook screens and angles iPads for more comfort and productivity. With ParcSlope, MacBook users enjoy better ergonomics and increased airflow for a cooler, quieter MacBook. iPad users will love the feel of the 18-degree sketching/typing angle ParcSlope creates. Precision curves, special ridges and built-in cable management make this sleek metal stand a must-have for MacBook and iPad users.

The new TwelveSouth ParcSlope will be available from the Apple Online Store and Apple retail stores soon, but you can get it today from TwelveSouth directly for \$59.99.



INVEST IN SECURITY AND BACKUPS

While every business should have network security already in place, the reality is that many don't. There are a ton of reasons why (cost concerns, lack of time, lack of resources, etc.), but those reasons why aren't going to stop a cyber-attack. Hackers don't care that you didn't have time to put malware protection on your PCs; they just want money and to wreak havoc.

When you have IT security in place, including firewall protection, malware software, strong passwords and a company-wide IT security policy, you put your business and all your employees in a much better place. **All of this** should be in place for both on-site employees and remote workers. With more people working from home going into 2021, having reliable IT security in place is more important than ever before.

On top of that, you should have secure backups in place. Investing in cloud storage is a great way to go. That way, if anything happens on-site or to your primary data storage, you have backups you can rely on to restore lost or inaccessible data. Plus, having a solid cloud storage option gives remote employees ready access to any data they might need while at home or on the go.

WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

Some SMBs have the time, money and resources to invest in on-site IT personnel, but most don't. It is a big investment. This is where partnering with an experienced IT services firm can really pay off. You may have employees in-office or you may have a team working remotely – or you may have a mix of both. You need support that can take care of everyone in your organization while taking care of the data security of the business itself. This is where your IT partner comes into play. They are someone you can rely on 24/7 and someone who will be there for you during a pandemic or any other disaster.

The Workplace of 2021 continued....

Other companies have seen increased productivity when working from home as there are less distracting to focus on a task and complete it. A recent study by PwC Canada revealed that 35% of the Canadian workforce says that their productivity has increased, while LinkedIn reflected upon the statistics in Canada pointing out that the concerns around productivity and achieving more are slowly subsiding among the workforce.

The list of reasons *why* goes on. You can hire a few more staff without having to expand or move your office. It can encourage people who might not be feeling well to work from home that day and keep the flu out of the workplace. Perhaps you can even expand into a new market with a 100% virtual presence?

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of organizations to try different working policies and operational procedures within their company. With vaccinations being rolled out, It's now time for you to evaluate what worked, what didn't work and implement long term plans for a return to work.