

HOMWORKING



How To: Link Office Locations and Homeworkers

The modern office environment is evolving and expanding all the time and offers more alternative styles of both working and communicating than ever before. Thanks to the technology available to us, we are able to stay connected from multiple locations and even work remotely from home. Processes of working have been made much simpler and greater levels of productivity are being reached. The ease with which we are able to access all we need on shared drives, emails and mobile smartphones makes working from home not just a viable option, but a better one.

Many studies have been done to monitor not only the number of people working from home, but also the benefits and drawbacks of not coming into the office. Positives such as less distractions, an increase in productivity and more flexible hours. Negative points included a test of trustworthiness, too much isolation and the sometimes unavoidable need for an in-person meeting.





Phil Flaxton, the Chief Executive of the organisation behind National Work From Home Day stated:

“The structure of our economy and consequently our workplaces has changed significantly...Such fundamental change towards home-working is recognised by increasing numbers of inspired, and more trusting employers”.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) issued some statistics for UK homeworkers and discovered that:

- In 2017, 1.6 million employees regularly worked from home last year. This is 6.1% of the population.
- The proportions of homeworkers increased with age. 16-19 years olds were the least likely (2%) whilst over 60s were most likely (11%).
- Approximately 200,000 disabled people work from home regularly.

With a predicted increase in the amount of people working from home by 2020, this type of working environment is becoming increasingly sought after. With its benefits for disabled workers also, many companies should consider home working (or ‘remote working’) as an alternative to traditional working structures.

As much as working from home seems to be a growing trend, the drawbacks of the practice cannot be ignored, with the biggest adversary to the home working environment being the complication of the communication process.





How can both employer and employee ensure that the optimal working environment is being consistently achieved?

If a member of the team isn't available via the telephone, efficiency could be stunted where time is spent sending and waiting for emails instead of working. This would be particularly disadvantageous in a job that requires being set multiple tasks in a day, with work that needs to be continuously reviewed or even with a job that requires managing a much larger team.

Ensuring that both employer and employee can be easily contacted requires the best technology to do so. Now somewhat overshadowed by the power of the internet, the telephone remains a vital piece of equipment in any business setting!

An Ofcom study revealed that between the years 2012 and 2017, the time spent on landline calls fell from 103 billion to just 54 billion minutes. **This is more than half!** In comparison, the same study also found that adjacent to this drop, mobile calls rose to 148.6 billion minutes.

Factors such as mobility and accessibility make it easy to understand why mobile telephone calls are increasing in popularity. However, alongside this you also have to consider certain drawbacks. With the freedom of the mobile phone comes a lack of accountability that you don't get with a landline or Cloud Telephony deskphone.

It must be said that using Cloud Telephony to bring homeworkers onboard as extensions of the main office telephone system is simply more professional. Inbound calls can be answered at any location and then transferred or conferenced with any other member of staff, regardless of their physical location. Outbound calls display the main company phone number or the homeworkers



extension telephone number called a DDI. This is far more professional than making calls from a mobile phone number.

Many people still think VoIP telephone calls are second rate and poor quality. Whilst that may have been true 10 years ago when Skype was done with a cheap plug in headsets for your PC over a slow broadband connection, quality is certainly is not an issue today. You may be surprised to know that the reverse is actually true! Our Cloud Telephony has better call quality than traditional telephone systems, plus our latest handsets remove background noise from the call if you are in a loud office or home environment.

By utilising a reliable deskphone connection, you can ensure that your colleague is where they need to be, when you need them to be. An offshoot of this is the renewed sense of confidence in certainty. Dates and times can begin to bleed into out-of-work hours when using a mobile phone. Using Office Extension for homeworkers ensures work and private life are kept separate and within a colleagues set working hours, although we also offer “dual account” handsets which can be an Office Extension and a Home Phone in one device, but operating with totally different telephone numbers on each account.

It is the responsibility of the employer to make sure the homeworker has both the adequate technology and Internet speeds to work effectively. "Busy-Lamps" on your phones let you visually see the status of the office telephones at the other location, ie the homework knows about others in their team, and the team knows about the homeworker. Busy-Lamps can also allow a team of homeworkers can see the status of other homeworkers in their team.

Whilst homeworkers have the luxury of not needing to conform to typical workplace practices, an employee using only their smartphone for communication may find they get distracted by it. Offering a plethora of applications and games, an Ofcom study from 2018 found that people in the UK will check their phones every 12 minutes on average. Communication via a landline could lessen the chance of smartphone distraction and maintain productivity levels.

If we step away from a homeworker setting and head back to a traditional office work environment, an updated phone system is still in the interest of the employer. A report by Randstad has discovered that two thirds (65%) of UK employees still work from a traditional office setting. Therefore, this means connectivity within the office is just as important as it is for people working out of the office. A landline can save costs and streamline the communications process whether this be within different sectors or even inter-office locations.

Traditional depictions of the landline may discourage many from the idea as they imagine themselves tied to their desk. However, modern desk phones possess a great signal and some can even use a Wi-Fi walkabout system. This may come in handy if you operate over a large area. For example, an office complex, factory, school or even an educational campus would benefit from using a phone with Wi-Fi capabilities.



Connectivity and communication are always important in an office environment and therefore it is important to get it right. Keeping up to date and informed will benefit any business in the long run. Creating a stronger team, avoiding misunderstandings and streamlining your process are just some of the positive outcomes beneficial to a business.

Where 123Telecom are providing the underlying Internet connectivity for both the main office and also the homeworker, we can seamlessly link your technology together with a secure Virtual Private Network (VPN). This enables authorised homeworkers can access peripherals and storage/file servers at the main office just as if they were sitting at a desk in the office, as well as any cloud storage the company may be using.

Telephone extensions can be located in different places at no extra cost if you decide to use 123Telecom to replace your business' phone system. The phones don't have to be traditional, either. We can work with modern desk phones, DECT and Wi-Fi walkabout phones, smartphones and PC or Apple Mac softphones. We can also cater to your needs in different locations whether you're in the UK or overseas.

If you currently have anybody who works from home or are a homeworker yourself, get in touch by dropping me a message and see how 123Telecom can bring your office and home securely together for voice telephony and computer networking.

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