



---

*White Paper*

# *Next Generation Working Practices*

## *Next Generation telecoms makes flexible working a reality*

It may seem hard to believe today, but barely ten years ago many organisations were still in the process of working out how – or whether – to bring email into their office. Fax still ruled the world. And home working was limited to the brave few who had a ‘blisteringly quick’ 56kbps modem for dial-up access to the office.

Since then, of course, we’ve seen the mass adoption of high-speed communications. These have been enabled (or in some cases been driven by) new operational models such as flexible working. After initial head-scratching by employers – would staff perform as well at the kitchen table as they did in the structured environment of the office? – the take-up of flexible working has been phenomenal. Managers have been delighted to see improved performance and profitability; and employees have been quick to seize the benefits to their work-life balance.

So it’s no surprise that major UK employers such as Lloyds TSB<sup>1</sup>, IBM<sup>2</sup> and GlaxoSmithKline<sup>3</sup> have all made flexible working a part of their culture. This successful transformation has included taking a strategic approach from the start, asking themselves questions such as:

- IT implications – do you need to deploy new applications or technologies. How would these integrate with your existing infrastructure and systems? How could you support remote working? And what’s the ROI?
- Security – how do you make your data available to the people who need it, without leaving it exposed? Not to mention ensuring you can continue to meet legal and data protection requirements.
- Teamwork – the success of a team depends on its ability to work as a collaborative unit. Can your staff continue to work together effectively, if they’re not all in the same office or building?

### *Good news for your employees, great news for your business*

It's not just your employees that stand to gain from flexible working, your business does too, in several ways:

#### **Reducing facilities costs**

Leasing and maintaining office space is one of the biggest expenses an organisation faces. However, flexible and remote working offers an opportunity to reduce this cost, as less office space is needed (provided it's managed correctly). For example, encouraging hot-desking, rather than permanent workstations, or asking people to work from home one day a week.

#### **Attracting and retaining the right people**

Your business is only as good as the people it employs. But recruitment can be both time-consuming and costly. In fact, research suggests it can cost as much as £8,200 to replace an average employee, rising to £12,000 for senior managers<sup>4</sup>.

So by making your organisation a more attractive place to work, you'll attract a higher calibre of candidate, more easily. There's no doubt that good work/life balance is an important consideration when it comes to a new job these days – and flexible working can help you swing this in your favour.

#### **Making 'dead-time' a thing of the past**

According to a recent report, the average UK employee spends 54 minutes commuting, with 10 per cent enduring more than two hours travelling to and from work every day<sup>5</sup>. And that doesn't include time spent travelling between meetings during the working day itself.

Turn this 'dead-time' into time your staff can use productively, and you'll have a much happier workforce on your hands. Firstly, as a way of cutting through work tasks (during working hours) but also by giving staff more personal time on their way to and from work. All of which adds up to less stress, happier employees and better news for your business all round.

#### **Better public services too**

It's not just the private sector where flexible working can help to drive up efficiency – it applies to the public sector too. For example, by enabling citizens to reach staff irrespective of their location, they can get answers to queries faster. And by helping staff take council services directly into the local community, they can improve relationships with residents.

### *The solutions behind the strategy*

Today's new Next Generation Networks (NGNs) are a huge leap forward in enabling remote and flexible working. Previously, individuals had to use fragmented applications and services. Data connections were of somewhat variable speed and quality to say the least, while access to file servers was limited, with reduced visibility of where colleagues were or how to talk to them.

Now, converged networks mean data, voice and internet traffic can be carried simultaneously over the same high capacity telecoms service. So you're all set to fully exploit developments in communications technologies.

For example, IP Multimedia solutions – running on a converged network – are capable of keeping large numbers of remote and flexible workers in touch and up to date. With advanced IP voice and video communication, it's possible to keep everyone connected wherever they're working.

- Audio and video conferencing reduces the need for travelling between meetings.
- Instant Messaging enables people to get fast answers to simple questions.
- Enabling file transfers during teleconferences helps boost collaboration further.
- Presence indicators help to locate colleagues – and determine the best way to contact them at any given moment (by phone, email or Instant Message). Which helps to avoid leaving messages, which may not then be picked up until it's too late.

With a NGN underpinning your IT, you can also embrace Distributed Computing. Put simply, this means no longer needing to position your servers close to your workers. Instead, you can centralise servers while your people are free to work wherever they work best. Be that in a call centre in Asia, in an office down the road or opting to work from home.

Your telecoms provider is key in this move towards flexible working – providing not only the platforms and services to enable this change, but also the thinking and attitude to match. And that's exactly where Virgin Media Business is uniquely positioned to help.

At last, you can have a high-speed network that reaches everyone. Working with a telecoms company that offers you an NGN, means your ideas are no longer limited by the telecoms technology you have access to.

1 [http://www.lloydstsb.com/about\\_itsb/equality\\_and\\_diversity\\_page.asp#worklifebalance](http://www.lloydstsb.com/about_itsb/equality_and_diversity_page.asp#worklifebalance)

2 <http://www-05.ibm.com/employment/uk/graduates/life.html>

3 <http://www.gsk.com/responsibility/our-people/health-and-wellbeing-programmes.htm>

4 The 2006 CID Labour Turnover Survey.

[http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/recruitment/general/\\_recruitment\\_summary](http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/recruitment/general/_recruitment_summary)

5 Source: 'The UK Commute: Healthy or Hazardous?' RAC report.



*Find out how we can help you embrace Next Generation working practices such as flexible working. Just give us a call on 0800 052 0845 or visit [www.virginmediabusiness.co.uk](http://www.virginmediabusiness.co.uk)*