



EMBRACE AND EMBED HYBRID WORKING

How to harness the cloud
for new ways of working



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Hybrid working is here to stay

The pandemic has made planning ahead difficult. But we can all be sure about one thing. Hybrid working is going to remain part of our working lives from now on.

When the pandemic first hit, it was all about survival. But the challenge for UK organisations has moved on from rapidly adopting new technology for short-term fixes. Now it's time to take control, lead the change, and make sure the technology works for you, your people, your customers and communities.

Many challenges still remain of course. But there are huge opportunities for organisations that get it right.

Continuing the pace of change could translate into a £236 billion annual boost to GDP by 2040, according to a [recent study](#) we carried out with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr). Now is the time to embed positive innovation that will not only impact individuals and organisations but also transform our whole economy – and in turn our society – for the better.

Hybrid working is a case in point.

Public sector organisations say they have increased spend on collaboration tools by 15%, and on IT equipment by 9.9%. In large enterprises, the spend is even higher, with an 18.5% increase on collaboration tools and a 13.8% spend increase on cloud services.

But it's important to make those investments count, with a range of options available for everyone. After all, one colleague's joy at working from home is another's pain at permanently living in the office.

The pandemic led many to equate flexibility with home working. But the truth behind creating a successful, agile working policy is far more nuanced.



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Embedding hybrid working

As we adapt to whatever the pandemic throws at us, it's clear that industries and organisations across the UK still have a lot to learn about hybrid working and the technology.

Amid all the hype around flexible jobs, you know that just simply providing laptops and four-day weeks is not enough.

You need to think strategically about your organisation's long term future: consider the technologies you will adopt, how you will implement them and how you can make sure they all work together.

It's not just about solving today's hybrid working challenges – it's about making sure you're set up to overcome any more changes in years to come.

The answer lies in ensuring your organisation is always connected and ready to adapt, quickly and painlessly, no matter what happens today or in future.

But you also need to protect your data as more people work remotely, all while empowering people to do their jobs wherever they happen to be.

All of this is possible right now thanks to one thing: the cloud – more on this later!

So how do you navigate from here to there and achieve all of the above? How do you make sure you're not repeating the mistakes of others? What comes next?

We've created this guide to answer these questions and more, helping you make the right digital changes today so your organisation is ready to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Read on to find out more.

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The importance of a modern infrastructure

Many organisations are finding the move to cloud to be a challenging one. [Recent research](#) has shown that 90% are experiencing difficulties when migrating to the cloud, with 43% citing the complexity of migration.

To solve the challenges, organisations should start by thinking about their infrastructure, taking three key factors into account.

Firstly, ensuring that the foundations are in place, with enough bandwidth and a good network, optimised with solutions such as SD-WAN technology that can help to address the complexity, by prioritizing traffic to and across cloud service providers.

Secondly, adding in security as an overlay solution, reaching out to end users wherever they happen to be working.

And thirdly, introducing the collaboration and communications tools that remote and hybrid workers need to be able to work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

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CONNECT | PROTECT | EMPOWER

Three little words to live by in a hybrid working world.

We've talked about embedding the new way of working. So how do you do that in a way that works for you, your customers and your employees, not just now but in years to come?

We believe the answer lies in three simple words:

Connect, Protect, Empower.

CONNECT

Keep your staff connected to the people and tools they need at all times, with a fast, reliable network that lets you scale or make changes whenever and however you want.

PROTECT

Treat connectivity and security as one and the same, reducing the risk of human error and giving you less admin, less hassle and more control.

EMPOWER

Put the right tools in people's hands wherever they happen to be, empowering them to do their job in a way that works for you, them and the customers they serve.



If you can achieve all three of these, your organisation has the best chance of making hybrid working a success.

Read on to find how you can make that happen.

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EMBRACING HYBRID WORKING: CONNECTED

**Be confident
about moving
to the cloud, at
your own pace**

Before the pandemic hit, only 30% of people in the UK had ever once worked from home. The first lockdown turned this on its head overnight.

Suddenly 70% of professionals were classed as homeworkers. And 49% of the entire UK workforce was working remotely – up from just 6% pre-Covid.

It soon became apparent that all this upheaval was a good thing. The Cebr research shows that hybrid working led to a 3.4% increase in productivity, a 3.6% increase in employee satisfaction and a 4.9% increase in customer satisfaction.

The rush to cloud apps put unprecedented strain on legacy infrastructure. So the task now is to make sure that the technology and infrastructure can cope with the increased demands of hybrid working.

Some organisations have held back from fully moving to the cloud, and need support on their journey. Others have blazed a trail into the cloud, and are offering new services for customers, citizens or patients. Yet there are still challenges, as the infrastructures they are putting in place are increasingly complex.

What it all boils down to is that each organisation has embarked on its own, unique journey to move to the cloud. Whatever point you have reached, you need to choose a trusted partner who can help with procurement, management and support to deliver tailored connectivity for your organisation.

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Getting the basics right

Without the right network across your organisation, even the best collaboration or insight tech for boosting productivity and performance will not do its job.

Think back to the pre-pandemic world. A lot of the networks that organisations use haven't really changed much since the nineties. But the world of work has changed utterly.

With so much data and content to host, process and deliver, it's no wonder that those 30-year-old networks are falling down.

Organisations need to ensure that the foundations are in place, with a good underlay that provides enough bandwidth for all their users, as well as considering the right type of network for their employees.

Because when your network performs well, your employees work well too. Whether they're serving customers, citizens or patients. They'll be more productive and more engaged.

Like many organisations across the UK, Wolverhampton City Council had virtually no time to react. But its previous investment in connectivity meant its staff were among the lucky ones.

Wolverhampton's Head of ICT Jai Ghai says: "We had to scale things up overnight. Thankfully we had already been investing in the infrastructure.

"Staff had to work from anywhere and everywhere. They didn't have to be desk bound any more. We had to mobilise so they didn't feel alienated working from home.

"In just one week we went from 300 Microsoft Teams users to more than 4,200. In ordinary times we wouldn't have rolled it out that way... this is now the new normal."¹

Failing to improve the quality of your network infrastructure will hold back progress and expose you to as-yet unknown challenges ahead. Great connections are the foundations for success.

¹ Virgin Media Business, 'Why UK communities need local authorities to always be thinking digital', 2021, page 11.



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Optimise to get your network to go

Organisations have been turning to software-defined wide area networks (SD-WAN) to reduce the complexity, by prioritising traffic to and across cloud service providers, connecting branches and remote sites.

SD-WAN can deliver a massive improvement in network response, increased bandwidth efficiency, a reduction in failover times between connections and a smaller hardware footprint.

Take Surrey and Sussex Police. The force’s legacy infrastructure simply couldn’t handle the amount of data and digital services that the organisation needed.

Technical Project Manager, Dr. Steve Conn, says, “We wanted to empower our people with the ability to have the service they require to carry out their policing duties, as well as make it easy to support.”²

² <https://www.virginmediabusiness.co.uk/customer-stories/surrey-and-sussex-police/>

The team decided to implement an SD-WAN solution to improve network performance, boost security, reduce complexity and reduce operating costs.

The force had invested in body-worn video equipment and needed to deploy it in the field as quickly as possible. The new WAN infrastructure was in place at certain sites within just ten days, enabling officers to use the equipment while the core network was still being finalised.

The SD-WAN infrastructure was rolled out across 106 sites and 176 circuits. The team then migrated many operational services to the cloud and internet, with the ability to migrate more in the future.

Surrey and Sussex Police is now enjoying the benefits of up to ten times greater bandwidth. That means a better everyday experience for police officers, freeing them up to focus on face-to-face tasks.

The network comes with built-in resilience too, keeping a critical service up and running.

Dr. Steve Conn says, “We’re proud to be one of the first forces in the UK to adopt SD-WAN.” But other organisations will soon be catching up. As hybrid working is now the norm, legacy systems are increasing staff frustration, and organisations are modernising their networks to cope.



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Deliver better outcomes

Providing value for money is essential for the NHS. Improving its connectivity has enabled it to work faster by an order of magnitude, while still saving one-fifth from its budget.

Rob Harder, CTO for University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust, confirms: “It’s given us 10 times more bandwidth at 20% less cost.

“More reliable connectivity for our clinical systems gives us capacity to share more information.

“The more information our clinicians can share when discussing complex patients, the better their ability to provide the best patient care.”³

Adopting less complex, more flexible software and cloud technologies will mean it’s easier to manage than ever before.

Your network should allow you to make pain-free changes whenever and however you want so you can seamlessly scale up and down with demand.

If you’re well connected, no matter what the world throws at you in future, you’ll always be ready to adapt.

³ Virgin Media Business, ‘How the pandemic accelerated progress in UK health and social care’, 2021, page 10.

Need help connecting your workforce?

Additional info to help achieve your best everyday

- > [SD-WAN articles, insight and case studies](#)
- > [Why are we even talking about traditional networks anymore?](#)

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EMBRACING HYBRID WORKING: PROTECTED

Connectivity and security are like wings: if they don't come as a pair, you might as well have neither

The latest Cebr report found that since the pandemic, large organisations have increased their spend on cybersecurity by a whopping 11.9%. Even micro organisations have upped the spend by 3.9%.

But it's important to make sure that it's money well spent.

Many organisations are trying to secure their whole network at once, rather than looking at individual end points and users. But this is an impossible task, particularly as the network now stretches way beyond the traditional working premises.

In a hybrid working world, the only way to keep data safe without slowing anyone down is by taking a zero-trust approach. So you protect every entry point to the network, rather than the network as a whole.

Zero-trust security makes it easier to spot vulnerabilities as you're suddenly looking at the risks on a case-by-case basis. Rather than taking a blanket approach, you can drill down to each sign-in and end user.

It also brings you more flexibility too, as you can remove the one-size-fits-all security barrier and make sure that certain employees have access to vital data.

More and more organisations are turning to Secure Access Service Edge – SASE for short – a cloud-based security model that essentially allows you to control and configure all your security services from a single software platform.

With the information they need at their fingertips, employees can be more productive. That will enhance customer satisfaction too. Just think of the call centre employee, who can now look back through a customer's interactions to give them a fully tailored response.

Finally, zero trust also helps to get rid of human error. If an end user does click on a link that they shouldn't and they let in a cybercriminal, the fraudster will only have access to that one single application.

The rest of your applications, your data and your organisation as a whole will still be out of bounds.



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The path to secure hybrid working is actually not that long or that complicated.

93% of all security incidents can be avoided with basic cyber hygiene best practices, according to the Online Trust Alliance.

And GCHQ echoes that sentiment, saying 80% of data breaches could be prevented by ‘simple best practice’ like updating anti-malware software regularly.

Part of solving that problem comes down to training, of course. But more importantly than that, it’s about having security technology in place that is simple, intuitive and easy for anyone to use in the proper way.

For want of a less potentially offensive way of putting it: foolproof.

Because if your security doesn’t work for your people – *all* your people – it might as well not work at all.

And the easiest way to achieve the above?

Stop thinking of connectivity and security as two separate entities. They are one and the same.

Security has to be deeply embedded into every bit of your infrastructure. If it isn’t, you’ll need to treat security as an add-on. Not only does this suggest your connectivity is inherently at-risk in the first place – it also means you’ll have to deal with a separate supplier.

More risk. More admin. More hassle.

Choosing a connectivity provider that has the technology and expertise to secure its own service gives you less work, lower costs and more control.

And because security is baked in to your infrastructure, with no additional apps to navigate, you’re much less likely to fall foul of a human error-induced attack – no matter how or where your people are working.



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Protection at every touchpoint

When it comes to cyber security and the cloud, protection comes down to making sure every possible touch point is protected. And there are more of them than ever.

Law firm Irwin Mitchell showed some fantastic innovation in this area when it helped shape the way UK courts handled virtual cases during Covid.

Technical Director Jonathan Scarsbrook explains:

“Irwin Mitchell was an early adopter of cloud technology and an enthusiast for digital security.

“We’re routinely handling the most sensitive documents: private medical records, settlement discussions and so on.

“The idea that these should be stored on paper or even discs leaves a risk element that their security could be breached – something we simply couldn’t countenance.”⁴

Proactively nipping potential weaknesses in the bud, as Irwin Mitchell did, is essential. And that is much easier to do when you have full visibility and control of your entire network, with security technology and processes built in.

4 Virgin Media Business, 'How digital change is leading Britain's professional services firms out of crisis', 2021, page 12.

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Accurate, reliable, easy to use

There is another security benefit to adopting modern, cloud-based infrastructure, of course: it gives greater separation between remote users and your network. Breaches are more easily contained.

Tony Thiru, founder of care home consultancy Fulcrum, has seen first-hand how many institutions responsible for thousands of staff and patients have a cavalier attitude to security.

He explains:

“Our systems have removed the problem. By moving data to the cloud we’ve made it more accurate and more secure.”

Tony adds: “We use systems and apps that are completely intuitive. Anyone who has used an iPhone or a tablet will be able to use them immediately.”⁵

As Tony said, that intuitive nature is critical, not just for security apps but for anything connected to your network.

People need to be able to use those tools properly without having to spend hours on the phone to IT. Otherwise they may seek shortcuts. And in the security world, a shortcut is a massive (and perfectly avoidable) risk.

Make things easy to use, however, and you get the best of both worlds.

You keep your sensitive data safe without slowing employees down.

Again, we come back to our headline point: all of these things are easier to achieve when connectivity and security come as a pair.

⁵ Virgin Media Business, ‘How digital change is leading Britain’s professional services firms out of crisis’, 2021, page 9.

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Need help protecting your workforce?

Additional info to help achieve your best everyday.

> [How to adapt to new ways of working and still keep your data safe](#)

> [How to make your connectivity secure](#)

> [Safety in Simplicity guide](#)

Embracing hybrid working: empowered



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Put the right tools in people's hands wherever they happen to be, empowering them to do their job in a way that works for you, them and the customers they serve.

Digital transformation has made work a happier place for lots of us. The Cebr report shows that employees believe that working remotely will be more accessible in the future.

In fact, going forward, employees expect to work remotely for 2.5 days a week.

This is already having a big impact on employee satisfaction, improving morale without changing the hours they work.

Just below one third (29%) of employees feel more productive when working remotely. And 27% feel that working remotely offers them greater opportunities to spend time doing the activities they enjoy.

Thanks to being able to collaborate via laptops, mobiles and other devices using tools like MS Teams, employees are finding their working days are much more efficient.

From exercising to simply relaxing, now that the commute has gone, people have a lot more 'me-time'.

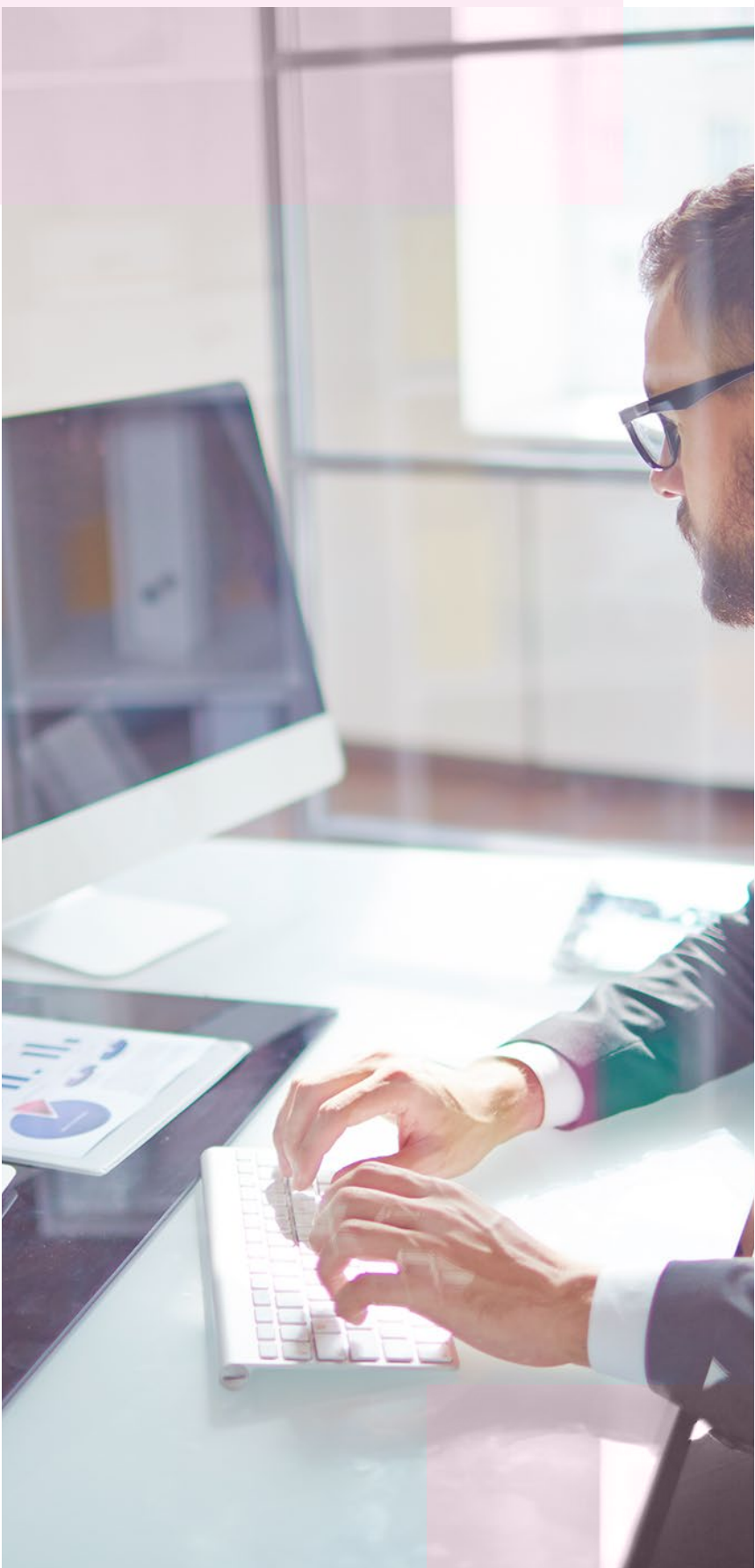
All that satisfaction trickles down to benefit the organisation and the people it serves too. The Cebr report sees an increase in productivity and customer satisfaction across the board, with a 6.7% increase in productivity in the health sector, for example, where there's also a 7.3% increase in patient satisfaction.

Yet there's still some more work to do. Truly successful hybrid working only happens when you remove barriers to communication, and therefore collaboration.

If the collaboration tools aren't joined up, then employees are having to flick between different applications depending on their tasks at hand. It's inconvenient and ineffective, leading to a lot of wasted productivity over the course of a working day.

By integrating all those different communication tools in one easy place, ensuring clear communications and consolidating your systems, you can build on the successes of hybrid working, enabling and empowering employees wherever they happen to be.

Because if they can work in ways that suit them, you'll be reaping the benefits too.



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Work faster, smarter, better

Your teams need to collaborate remotely with colleagues and customers. And the collaboration tools they use should improve productivity while enabling them to do their job in a healthy, sustainable way.

Edinburgh City Council is clear that innovation and staff empowerment are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the two complement each other.

Stephen Moir, Edinburgh's Executive Director of Resources, says: "We accelerated some things directly as a result of Covid... Digital is now at the heart of the way we work.

"Previously it took three weeks to clear 400 landlord applications. When we automated that clearance process, we had 80% cleared in three hours.

"It freed our staff up to focus on the complex ones that needed a conversation.

"There's more time for empathy, judgment and face-to-face human interaction. We're the fourth biggest employer in the city. We don't want technology to cut things, we want to do things better."⁶

Empowering your staff starts with your leadership and the culture you've created. But the tools you give them make it possible.

Cloud-based communication can take collaboration to the next level. It helps recreate that all-important office experience. And they can do it on any device, wherever they may be.

Sharing knowledge, data and ideas helps spread the load of non-traditional ways of working. Moving communication to the cloud helps you get there without compromising on security.

⁶ Virgin Media Business, 'Why UK communities need local authorities to always be thinking digital', 2021, page 10.



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Improve your employee and customer experience

Canary Wharf Group actually found that the digital innovations forced on them by Covid-19 were so well-received they left staff “asking for more”.

Director of Technology and Innovation, Mark Nallen, explains: “The pandemic allowed us as a company to embrace change. It showed how quick you can roll out new innovations.

“The cloud has been a huge enabler to get services up and running quickly, collaborate with teams and share documents... it’s really sped things up.”⁷

⁷ Virgin Media Business, ‘How digital strategy is building a better future for construction’, 2021, page 7.

Up in Manchester, similar innovations have been happening in the public sector.

Last year the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) launched its Digital Blueprint. The initiative sets out a clear framework through which the city can use digital tools to support citizens and businesses, not just during the pandemic but beyond.

Whether you’re trying to provide a better experience for citizens or customers, one thing is clear: putting the right tools in employees’ hands is the best place to start.

When you improve that employee experience it inevitably has a knock-on effect on people’s engagement.

And the numbers don’t lie.

Organisations that focus fully on **improving employee engagement** are 82% more likely to provide better customer experience and 96% more likely to achieve overall profitability.

Need help empowering your workforce?

Additional info to help achieve your best everyday.

- > [How do we keep the remote work momentum going after Covid-19?](#)
- > [Are you ready to operate from anywhere?](#)
- > [Back to Business with 8x8](#)

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Three key actions that will help you fully embrace hybrid working

Step 1: Say goodbye to legacy infrastructure

Is your network holding you back from moving fully to the cloud? Are you looking for more efficient ways of working that can connect all your teams seamlessly?

If your network is going to be using a mix of voice, video and data going forward (and let's face it, whose isn't?) then investigate SD-WAN. It connects you directly to the cloud from any location without having to pass through all that traditional infrastructure.

This means your people are closer to the apps and data they need. Those apps will perform better. And, as a result, the end-user experience is dramatically improved.



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Step 2: Build security from the network up

Do you currently see connectivity and security as two separate entities? Do you even have separate suppliers for both?

As lockdown comes to an end and a mix of office and remote work inevitably becomes the long-term norm, now is the time to start treating connectivity and security as one and the same.

Not only will this give you less admin, less hassle and much more control – it will also simplify things for end users and help reduce the risk of a cyberattack that's caused by human error (as most of them are).



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EMBRACE HYBRID WORKING:
EMPOWERED**

NEXT STEPS

GET IN TOUCH

Step 3: Put the right tools in people's hands

Do your staff always have the right tools for the job they need to do?

Can they access them anytime, anywhere, without having to negotiate unnecessary roadblocks?

If there's any friction that slows communication with colleagues and customers it will frustrate your shift towards hybrid working.

Cloud platforms mean you can streamline access to data and documents in real time, from any device.

Helping you grasp a once-in-a-generation opportunity

Virgin Media Business and O2 Business have joined forces due to one simple shared belief: **it's time for something different.**

Right now, the UK doesn't need more of the same. It needs a bold, fresh, exciting approach that can turn the fallout of Covid-19 into permanent, positive change – not just for organisations like yours but for every person who works here or calls it home.

The time to get ahead is now. And we're here to help you make that happen. The right way.

We don't just sell technology. We use the power of our networks, people and partnerships to help you get from where you are today to where you want to be tomorrow.



Are you ready to find out more?

Talk to one of our experts now

Call 0800 953 0180

or visit virginmediabusiness.co.uk

YOUR NEW EVERYDAY

INTRODUCTION: THE NEW EVERYDAY THAT NO ONE EXPECTED

THREE LITTLE WORDS TO LIVE BY IN A HYBRID WORKING WORLD

**CHAPTER 1
EMBRACE HYBRID WORKING:
CONNECTED**

**CHAPTER 2
EMBRACE HYBRID WORKING:
PROTECTED**

**CHAPTER 3
EMBRACE HYBRID WORKING:
EMPOWERED**

NEXT STEPS

GET IN TOUCH

Get in touch

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Talk to one of our hybrid working
experts now.

Call 0800 953 0180
or visit [virginmediabusiness.co.uk](https://www.virginmediabusiness.co.uk)

