Remote working toolkit

Do your employees have everything they need to work from home effectively?

We've listed five key tools you need for successful remote working, plus suggestions of popular options. Work through the list and make sure your equipment is up to scratch.

1. Communication

Email is a great general tool for communication, but it's hard to have a quick conversation in your inbox. Employees need a way to shoot quick questions or comments back and forth without having to send an email or arrange a time for a call.

Options include:

- Slack
- Microsoft Teams
- Google Chat

How do I decide what to use?
If you already use Google Workspace or Microsoft in your business, it's a no-brainer to test out the capabilities that are already there. However, Slack is a more robust tool if you have a large workforce or rely heavily on online comms.

2. Video conferencing

Video calls provide valuable human interaction and can go a long way in building a sense of camaraderie among remote workers.

Options include:

- Zoom
- Google Meet
- GoToMeeting

How do I decide what to use?
Zoom is a popular option for small meetings – the most basic plan is free and lets you host group meetings for up to 40 minutes.

At the other end of the spectrum, if you need your video conferencing to be able to work on a bigger scale too (for example, you're hosting thousands of people for an event), meeting capacities are much larger with GoToMeeting.

3. File sharing and cloud backup

Giving workers a safe place to store files creates a centralised system that's easily accessible for everyone. It will also help to make sure that important documents aren't lost on individual computers.

Options include:

- Google Drive
- Dropbox

How do I decide what to use?
Both Google Drive and Dropbox are easy to use and offer similar functionality.

Drive offers more free storage if you want to test it out before buying (15GB to Dropbox's 2GB), but Dropbox has the slight edge with data protection – business account users have the option to set passwords and expiry dates on links sent out.

4. Project management

Keeping track of projects remotely and getting visibility over what everyone is working on can be tricky. Project management tools vary by complexity, so trial a couple and see what fits your team.

Options include:

- Trello
- Jira
- Basecamp

How do I decide what to use?
While it's worth testing out a few different options, the right tool ultimately depends on your users.

Jira was designed for software teams, so works well for developers or project managers working on software projects. On the other hand, Trello is a lightweight tool, designed for general use and visualising each step of a task.

5. Security and password management

Security tools won't necessarily get staff excited, but they're a vital step in safeguarding your business. Don't overlook your security and regret it later.

Options include:

- Password manager tools like LastPass or 1Password
- Anti-virus software like Avast or McAfee
- Turn on two-factor authentication on email accounts

How do I decide what to use?
When it comes to something as important as security, it's best to spend time researching the right options for your business. Use the above suggestions as a starting point and don't be afraid to consult a cybersecurity expert if you need a second opinion.