Managing remote employees' IT needs with DaaS

By Megan Williams

According to a Gallup report cited by **The New York Times**, 43 percent of US workers telecommute. That number speaks volumes about how managing remote employees' IT needs is more than just a common challenge in today's business environment. When you factor in the remote office/branch office (ROBO) paradigm, it's a characteristic of the modern workforce all IT managers should address.

IT decision-makers in dispersed organizations should prioritize understanding Device as a Service, or DaaS, as a powerful aid in managing some of the most pressing IT challenges a growing remote workforce presents. After all, it's difficult enough to stay on top of a network with a nearly endless amount of endpoints to monitor, let alone remain in control of devices handling sensitive data off your network.

Understanding the remote work environment

A remote work environment is a diffused IT climate where end users frequently make decisions and tackle issues that, in a more centralized situation, a dedicated IT professional would normally handle in person. Even in the case of branch offices with an IT contact available, the staff member responsible for IT decisions is frequently taking on the job as a secondary responsibility. Still, the majority of workers in most organizations spend their time in traditional office settings, meaning IT managers are left dealing with a blended device environment and increasingly complex decision making.

Most importantly, though, a remote work environment is an organizational asset that can be used to attract and retain top talent at all levels. As companies like Honeywell, Yahoo, and Best Buy scale back their telecommuting options, as reported in the **StarTribune** in October 2016, they're predictably facing backlash from employees. Clearly, the flexibility of remote work is more than just a business decision. To many workers, it's a factor that impacts their job satisfaction, as the millennial demographic expects flexibility—a demand managers need to acknowledge. At the same time, older employees have their own needs, including tech they're familiar with, larger screens, and more ergonomic keyboards.

Aside from telecommuting, many businesses are expanding globally, stationing branch offices across the world or—at the very least— connecting with clients or employees who work in other countries. In certain industries, like retail, there are even many individual locations that act like satellites revolving around one headquartered entity. Combined, these diverse workplaces represent a new, blended IT environment that introduces specific challenges around remote employee IT needs, many of which DaaS is especially suited to address.

Addressing new challenges

HP's DaaS solution, in particular, directly addresses multiple challenges inherent to managing remote employees' diverse IT needs.

1. **Decentralization:** In HP's DaaS model, diffused device management is concentrated into a single point of accountability, shifting much of device management away from lone IT workers and back into a more centralized and efficient model. When it comes to remote branches in retail, for instance, individual stores may be tiny, lack local IT, and be located in remote areas. If a business has thousands of small stores like this, and each has its own point-of-sale terminal, it can prove difficult to monitor and repair these systems on a regular basis. HP DaaS can help identify each device, find where it is located and who's using it, and monitor its condition and performance. If a system needs repair, HP can send someone to the site and immediately fix the machine or deploy a new one to replace it, minimizing downtime for business-critical systems. In other words, IT can stay centralized at the main location, while still easily servicing each local store as needed.

2. **Volatility:** Managing remote employees' IT needs means managing volatility. Users often shift back and forth from remote work at home to centralized office settings—and their needs around configuration, maintenance, and optimization shift with them. HP's DaaS solution offers the ability to close gaps in infrastructure that occur with a remote workforce—and can do so across the lifecycle of all organizational devices.

3. **Security:** Especially in verticals with high-value customer information, such as health care and banking, managing security across devices that regularly navigate volatile and diverse connectivity environments is a particularly pressing challenge. To combat this challenge, you can turn to devices that have built-in security solutions, like the **HP EliteBook x360**. Aside from secure devices, HP DaaS can also

help businesses ensure that multiple remote work environments are functioning efficiently by allowing IT staff to identify vulnerabilities across a fleet of devices and prevent issues before they arise.

4. **Productivity:** Productivity is a significant concern when managing remote employees' IT needs, as uncovered in a **Forbes** article published on March 7, 2017. DaaS allows users the enjoyment of working on the devices they need to do their job well. It also gives management additional analytical insight into device location and condition, while helping cut back on employee downtime caused by device problems.

Launching DaaS in a dispersed workforce

If the process of setting up a remote office with a DaaS solution has you worried, HP's **factory configuration services** make it straightforward for businesses to integrate. HP, as a DaaS vendor, will take the time to understand the current state of your organization, as well as your objectives, before designing a solution that fits the needs of both your organization and its users. This includes a review of the images, labeling, applications, tagging, and settings your department needs to get your devices functioning at a level you see fit.

Even with a dispersed workforce, IT can use HP Dynamic Configuration to customize units before they ship, so units arrive ready to go at destinations in diverse geographies. After deployment, support services are available to optimize and maintain your devices and keep them functioning at the level your remote workers require.

Bottom line? There's no need to fear the incredible growth and complexity of modern IT environments—even if that growth involves setting up branch offices with unique IT needs or servicing employees and clients scattered across the globe. With a solution like HP DaaS, a business can optimize their technology needs and keep the business running better than ever.

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