Remote access in a disaster
Is your business prepared for the unthinkable?

The COVID-19 virus has caused a real threat to business operations throughout the world, showing that the need for contingency planning is essential.

STORY
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Understandably, there's only so much preparation that can be done for organisations who rely on others to maintain their workflow. However, businesses that can continue operations from anywhere can be unstoppable with the right software and planning in place.

Choosing the software that works best for your team in a remote situation is key. In order to do this, you must first understand the needs of your employees. The way managers work with employees in an office situation is very different when they're not face to face with them. Here are some tools to use to help with preparing your team for remote working:
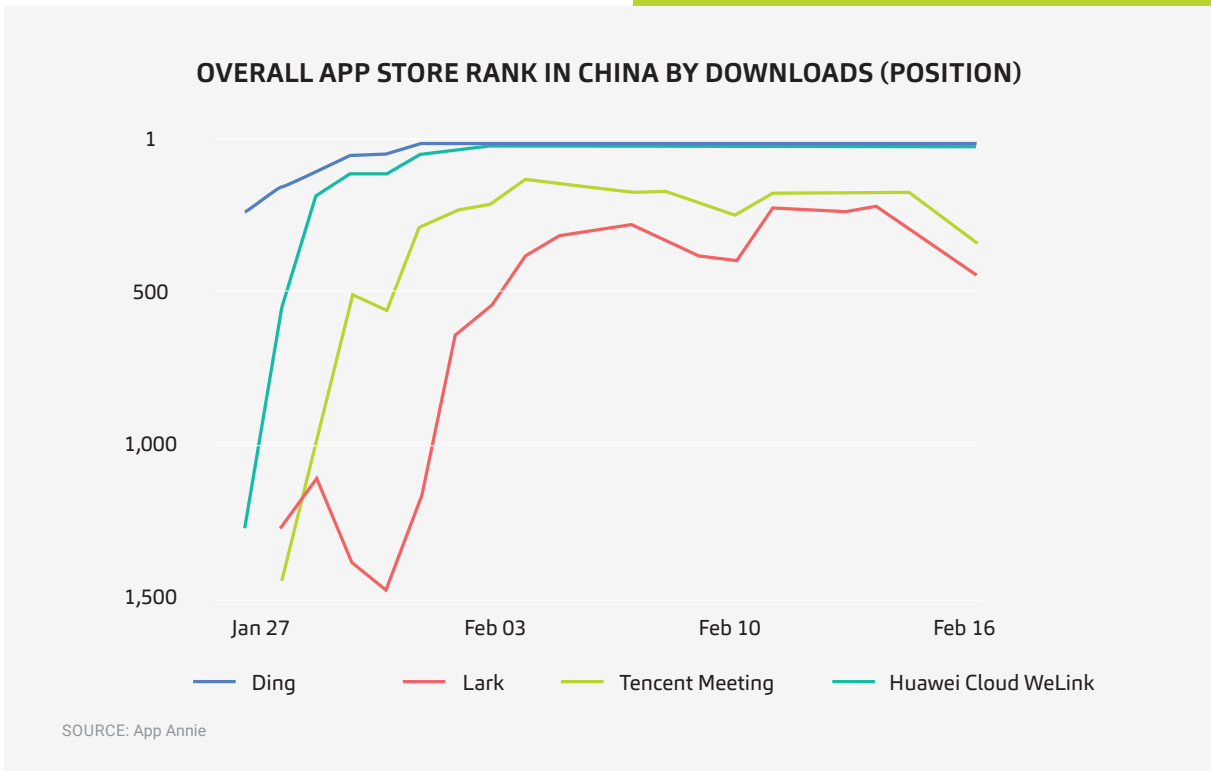
Maintaining face-to-face contact

Using apps that enable managers to have ongoing direct communications with their team is essential to keep operations on track. When working in an office environment it's relatively easy to gauge team morale by

assessing the mood of individuals, however when face to face communication isn't possible there are some great apps that allow quick video meetings.

Some companies in China that were affected by the COVID-19 virus began a huge work-from-home exercise and experienced these apps first-hand. During this time, the enterprise app DingTalk jumped 37 spots to the 3rd most downloaded app in China, according to metrics research firm App Annie. There was also a 50% increase in users of cloud service supplier Welink with 120,000 meetings being conducted on the platform in one day. It's clear from these statistics that remote software is a real game changer in the face of disaster.

The enterprise app DingTalk has jumped 37 spots to become the 3rd most downloaded app in China.

OVERALL APP STORE RANK IN CHINA BY DOWNLOADS (POSITION)

Ding · Lark · Tencent Meeting · Huawei Cloud WeLink

SOURCE: App Annie

Utilising workflow software

Keeping jobs on track is another common concern when working remotely. You can't show up at an employee's desk to check if a job has been completed, so this is where software packages such as Microsoft Office 365 come in.

Within the Office 365 system, apps like SharePoint and Planner allow everyone in a team to keep track of projects, capture tasks and monitor who is assigned to what. With a few quick clicks, projects can be marked as 'in progress', be tagged as urgent, assigned to a new person(s) or completed and saved. It makes remote management and oversight really simple.

Utilising the MyAnalytics tool on Microsoft is also another great way to keep employees on track and help to measure their productivity. Automated emails are sent to your people to show their work habits based on feedback generated from their computer activity. It is designed to help team members stay focussed and highlights the importance of building a positive work pattern especially when working from home.

Preparing your business for teleworking

The rollout of ultrafast fibre to homes across the country has enabled a range of improved teleworking options for businesses to consider.

Your reasons for encouraging teleworking can range from planning for pandemic isolation events, wanting to reduce the carbon footprint of your workplace, to being a family friendly employer. Whatever the reason, the technologies now exist that enable the modern office worker to operate from practically anywhere.

Microsoft Office 365 has a number of apps to help keep employees and projects on track

Personal computer remote access options

There is a broad range of technologies available for people to use. The most common and widely adopted personal computer remote access solutions include Team Viewer, GoToMyPC, VNC or Microsoft's Remote Desktop services. Larger enterprises implement more advanced remote access solutions which add additional features for printing, performance and security using products like Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops.

You will also need to consider security when choosing a remote access solution. This may include a virtual private network which extends the business network to the PC or tablet at home, certificate-based authentication, and multi factor authentication to ensure unauthorised parties are not able to access your company information.

Remote access software options each have different advantages and disadvantages, so do your research and make an informed decision. Some questions to consider before choosing the right software include:

• Where will your employees be remotely logging in from e.g. cafés, home, library?

• How many employees will be working remotely simultaneously?

• What are your requirements for privacy and security?

• What applications will need to be remotely accessible?

The important thing to consider is that there is no "one size fits all" solution. Every business is different and the applications they use, the locations they want to operate those applications from, the number of people who will be working remotely simultaneously and the requirements for privacy, security and availability will be determining factors for designing the appropriate solution for you.

Helping larger organisations adapt

It can be much harder for large organisations to adapt to remote working. They also have more to lose and security may be a much bigger concern.

However, an area that becomes easier for larger companies once they've made the switch to remote working is recruitment. With employees working from home, there is no longer a requirement to be based in one area, so hiring locally isn't essential. There are many apps available to help with hiring top quality employees internationally such as YouTeam, a talent pool app for finding software development professionals.

What next?

With the vast array of technologies available there is no reason for the modern office worker to operate in one place. The more prepared your business is now, the more flexible you can be in the face of crisis. What's more, the rollout of ultrafast fibre across the country means we have faster download/upload speeds, reliable connections, access to high definition video conferencing and improved voice communications capabilities.

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If you need support with rolling out a remote software package or an online workflow app, get in touch with Rob McEwan on 06 757 3155 or your local Baker Tilly Staples Rodway advisor.