



How to Prepare for a Permanent Remote Workforce

White Paper | Parallels Remote Application Server

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Introduction

Pre-pandemic, “remote work” typically included a broad mix of working styles: working remotely while traveling, working from home on occasion, and the rare breed of employee who worked remotely full-time—whether from home or in places such as coffee shops or co-working spaces.

But when the COVID-19 health crisis hit, all that changed. Many companies had no choice but to send all in-office workers home to work remotely full-time. Now, even as the end of the pandemic begins to near, today’s workforce is trending toward a permanent uptick in remote work.

Industry experts indicate that remote work is [here to stay](#), benefiting both employers and employees. While some roles are not suited for remote working conditions, the days of seeing the whole team in the office every day will likely end for many organizations. In this white paper, we’ll explore how preparing your company for a permanent remote workforce can benefit both your business and employees.

How the Pandemic Has Impacted Remote Work

Owl Labs’ 2020 State of Remote Work [report](#) indicates that almost 70% of full-time workers in the US are working remotely to avoid catching or spreading COVID-19. This is a sharp increase from their 2019 report [findings](#), in which only 30% of survey respondents worked remotely full-time.

In addition, a Gartner [survey](#) of CFOs and finance leaders finds that 74% will shift some employees to permanent remote work post-pandemic.

Many companies are embracing their newly remote workforce and preparing for a permanent shift beyond the occasional work-from-home day to full-time remote work. A [LinkedIn Workforce Confidence Index](#) indicates that 55% of respondents believe that their industry can be effective while working remotely.

[The Kung Group](#), an organization development consulting firm, [surveyed](#) company founders to see how the global health crisis has impacted their business. The survey indicates that when companies emerge from the pandemic, they will likely see profound changes to what every day work looks like.

Here are a few notable stats:

- 70% reported that after their offices reopen, they will let some or all their employees continue to work remotely.
- 66% are rethinking their physical office space requirements.
- 65% stated that if stay-at-home orders were lifted tomorrow, they would not return their companies to the office.
- 76% reported that productivity has either stayed the same or increased as a result of working remotely.

The key finding of the Kung Group’s survey is that employers are adopting a positive outlook for remote work opportunities. In other words, this is not a passing trend. Many businesses are embracing distributed teams, with companies like Facebook announcing a permanent shift to remote work. And the perks of remote work for employees, employers and communities are only helping to encourage this shift to a permanent remote workforce beyond the era of COVID-19.

The Benefits of a Remote Workforce

Shifting applicable roles to permanent remote work benefits employers, employees and their communities. Let's take a closer look at each.

For Employees: For employees, perks can include flexible schedules, the elimination of exhausting commutes, the choice to live and work from anywhere, [better physical and mental health](#) (especially in light of [COVID-19](#)) and more time to spend with family and friends.

Remote work saves a significant amount of time spent traveling to and from the office. The average one-way [commute time](#) in the United States is just under 30 minutes—time that can be spent on more productive activities. In addition, remote workers spend less money on travel costs, lunches, snacks and other expenses associated with a traditional office environment.

For Employers: Remote work expands the talent pool far beyond a local area, as companies can hire the right employees from around the globe. This helps organizations remain competitive while bringing in fresh new skillsets and perspectives.

Offering remote work is also a cost-saving opportunity. Businesses can reduce office operating costs and reduce or even eliminate office space. [Survey responses](#) gathered by Global Workplace Analytics indicate that the majority of employers that allow remote work identify cost savings as a major benefit.

For Communities: Attracting remote workers can be easier than persuading companies to [relocate to small towns](#). Some smaller communities are offering incentives for talented employees to relocate and work remotely for companies that don't require them to work onsite. These employees can bring money and other business opportunities to these smaller towns and communities as new residents, homeowners and taxpayers.

In addition, remote work can have a [positive environmental impact](#) on towns and communities, leading to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuels, air pollution and a lower carbon footprint.

Planning for a Fully Remote Workforce

The potential for permanent remote work conditions depends on several factors, including company industry, job scope and activities and required equipment.

Many jobs require workers to be physically present and cannot be performed remotely. For example, a land surveyor must travel to a site to analyze data and information, whereas a financial analyst can likely perform most, if not all, their tasks remotely.

To assess if remote work is a feasible long-term solution for your company, do the following:

- Identify what job roles, functions and tasks can be performed off-site.
- Recognize which activities cannot be performed remotely (e.g., use of fixed equipment or specialized machinery).
- Determine the tasks that can be done remotely but are done more effectively in person (e.g., event management, important meetings, etc.).
- Consider the potential impact of an employee's remote work environment, such as the needs of other household members they may live with, whether they have access to a dedicated home office setup, and potential distractions.
- Evaluate the components needed to work remotely, including company hardware and software, internet connectivity, collaboration tools and data security.
- Calculate the potential cost savings of remote work. If your company can save money (or at the very least, not lose any) without a reduction in productivity, a permanent arrangement may be worthwhile.

Employee sentiment is also a key factor when determining your remote work strategy. Survey your employees about the possibility of full-time remote work. Ask if they prefer working remotely or on-site, or a combination of both (and what that would look like).

As you consider your post-pandemic remote work options, focus not just on how employees want to work, but also the types of environments that promote productivity. There's no one-size-fits-all model for a remote work program; you have to determine what environment(s) employees are happiest and most productive working in.

This may require adopting a [hybrid remote work solution](#), where some employees work remotely full time, some come into the office every day, and the rest split their time between the two.

Revamp Policies and Agreements

Whatever you decide, it's important that you revise your remote work policies and agreements accordingly. For example, you might need to create a policy that outlines specific guidelines for employees who work from locations other than company offices.

In addition to remote work specifications, it is important to clarify that standard company rules still apply. This includes things such as attendance, hours worked per day, codes of conduct, and the protection of company data, assets and systems.

When revamping your remote work policy, include the following elements:

- **Eligibility:** Determine the parameters for remote work eligibility. Consider each role and its associated responsibilities, scheduling requirements and equipment needs.
- **Availability:** Specify if remote workers can set their own schedules or if they will be required to be online and working during a specific time frame each day.
- **Equipment:** Identify the equipment needed to work remotely. Specify if equipment will be supplied by the employer or purchased by the employee. For the latter, identify any reimbursements available for employees to create a remote work environment that meets technological expectations.
- **Performance:** Explain how a remote employee's performance and productivity will be measured, such as time spent on a project, phone calls made, closed sales, etc.
- **Communication:** Implement rules related to response time and clear communication. Specify the accepted modes of communication, procedures for reporting technical issues, the expected time frame for responding to colleagues and clients and other applicable elements.
- **Security:** Identify requirements for a secure remote workforce, such as what steps employees must take to protect sensitive company information.

Invest in Necessary IT and Infrastructure

Your existing internal IT systems may not be ideal for permanent remote work. Evaluate the hardware and software your company uses and determine if it's well-suited for supporting workers who are 100% remote. If not, identify where you have gaps (e.g., facilitating secure remote access to corporate files and applications) and make new investments accordingly.

An array of technologies has emerged to meet employers' and remote employees' needs to work securely and productively. In addition to videoconferencing tools, file-sharing platforms and project management and time-tracking tools, new adaptive analytics and secure data-access technologies are helping employees who work from home, from coworking spaces or from other locations outside the office.

Investing in the required technology to support remote work is extremely important. Beyond making it easier for employees to work remotely, solutions that provide secure data access—including virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), virtual private networks (VPN), electronic document signing, locked PDFs, “read” time stamps and secure messaging—can help make company leadership more comfortable with a remote work environment.

A permanent remote workforce can also reduce the need for office space and the cost of utilities, insurance and travel expenses. Businesses can invest this savings in new tools to facilitate improved remote access and increased worker productivity.

Introducing Parallels Remote Application Server (RAS)

Parallels® Remote Application Server (RAS) provides seamless access to virtual workspaces, helping to enable a permanent remote workforce. Its intuitive user experience streamlines remote working across any device (including smartphones and tablets) from anywhere, giving employees easy access to both desktops and critical business applications.

Parallels RAS provides IT administrators with several convenient ways of delivering applications and desktops remotely, via a single pane of glass:

- Remote Desktop Session Host (RDSH)
- VDI
- Remote PC
- [Integration with Windows Virtual Desktop](#)

Parallels RAS and Remote Desktop Session Host

Parallels RAS works with RDSH, a component of Windows Remote Desktop Services (RDS), to provide session-based resource sharing so users can access desktops and applications simultaneously from a single instance of Windows Server. With multiple users sharing a single virtual machine (VM), fewer resources (e.g., CPU, memory and storage) are consumed, which in turn translates into cost savings.

Parallels RAS augments the benefits of RDS by adding the following:

- Better access to published applications and desktops through native clients for Windows, macOS, Linux, iOS/iPadOS, Android and HTML5 web browsers.
- Superior load-balancing capabilities that factor in user sessions, memory, application usage and CPU utilization instead of only session count and server weight.
- RDSH and VDI auto-provisioning and auto-scaling.
- A more complete selection of supported hypervisors. In addition to Microsoft Hyper-V, Parallels RAS also supports VMware ESXi, even hyperconverged infrastructures (e.g., Scale Computing H3, Nutanix, etc.), as well as Microsoft Azure and other cloud integrations.

Parallels RAS and VDI

VDI is the perfect answer for use cases that require strong security and a consistent user experience as well as resource-intensive workflows, such as vector graphics editing, 3D modeling, modern technical computing and video editing. In a VDI environment, each virtual desktop is assigned to a VM, enabling each one to receive all the CPU, RAM and storage resources it needs.

Parallels RAS boosts VDI functionality by enabling the following:

- Automatic on-demand deployment of VDI desktops through customized templates.
- The ability to mix and match hypervisors within the same infrastructure.
- Auto-provisioning and autoscaling of VDI and RDSH workloads, even on Microsoft Azure.
- Pre-configuration of VMs in order to shorten user connection and log-in times to VDI instances.

Parallels RAS and Remote PC

A remote PC can be a regular physical desktop computer in the office or a dedicated physical desktop hosted in a data center that's accessed remotely from any device. This functionality can come in handy when remote employees need to access files and applications on their work PCs when they happen to be at home or in another location.

Parallels RAS is an ideal solution for managing and securing remote PCs. It enables the following:

- Secure, remote access to any domain-joined physical or virtual workstation without requiring a VPN.
- Configuration of user policies that restrict what applications can be accessed remotely.
- Granular access control based on Internet Protocol (IP) address, endpoint device and location.
- Minimal hardware investment, as you can simply use existing PCs instead of building an RDS server or VDI hypervisor.

When company-issued hardware is not available to employees, Parallels RAS is especially useful because it enables the use of almost any device (e.g., smartphones, tablets, laptops, thin clients or desktops) and operating system (e.g., Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS, Android or Chrome).

Parallels RAS offers one of the best user experiences (UX) in the VDI space. Through the Parallels Client, users can access line-of-business (LOB) and other Windows applications or desktops from practically any device, anytime, anywhere.

When it comes to deployment, Parallels RAS offers two options. The first is a native application that's built to be installed specifically on a given operating system (for example, macOS). The second doesn't require any installation at all: you simply need an HTML5 web browser like Chrome, Firefox or Safari.

Parallels RAS enables your business to quickly scale your IT infrastructure on demand with auto-provisioning to your entire remote workforce. This helps ensure operations run smoothly regardless of where they're located and allows you to easily add new users if existing in-office employees transition to remote work, or if you hire new employees who are fully remote.

Conclusion

In order for companies to adapt to today's new business climate, many will have to embrace, support and grow a workforce that consists of some fully remote employees. In order to do this successfully, investing in a solution that provides secure access to virtual desktops and applications should be at the top of every organization's to-do list.

Parallels RAS is a simple, affordable remote working solution that provides consistent yet flexible access to business resources. It can help support your organization's current needs while helping you future-proof your workforce to ensure continued success moving forward.

[Learn how Parallels RAS can help your business support a permanent remote workforce.](#)

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