



Red River

HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN LEVERAGE  
**MICROSOFT TEAMS FOR**  
**SUCCESSFUL REMOTE WORK**



3.9 million Americans now work from home at least half the week. Even more work from home once or twice a week, and many remote employees are now being hired from outside of America altogether. As employees and employers discover the benefits of remote work, the remote work sector is steadily growing. Technology needs to grow with it.

With the right technology, remote and in-office employees can work together seamlessly. They can communicate quickly, share files with each other, and work within the same digital workspace. With the wrong technology, remote employees may feel alienated from their team, and may not be able to work effectively with their in-office colleagues; in-office employees may grow to resent remote employees for not being more accessible.

Microsoft Teams can make the difference. Through Microsoft Teams, companies can facilitate the interactions of their remote workers. MS Teams provides an all-in-one interface through which employees are able to connect and communicate.

Here's what you need to know about the growth of the remote worker, and how Microsoft Teams can help a business grow.



## **BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES LOVE REMOTE WORK**

Why is remote work growing by such leaps and bounds? It's because it's a mutually beneficial relationship. In the past, employers were hesitant to allow their employees to work from home. They didn't feel that their employees would continue to work while at home, and most employees didn't have the workspace or tools needed to do their job properly.

But that's all changed.

Employers today are hiring full-time remote workers, some even in other countries. They're also offering "work from home" options to their otherwise in-office employees, made easier by Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) policies. It's now not uncommon for workers to use the same laptop at work as they do at home, so they can bring all the resources they need to their home with them.

At the extreme end of this scale is the "digital nomad" lifestyle: workers who are constantly moving, and continually working from new locations. These workers may stop by virtual offices, or may just work wherever they are with a tablet, smartphone, or laptop. These workers can work anywhere there's a good internet connection.

Remote work is desirable to employers because it opens up a wide talent pool. For smaller companies, it means that organizations can save money on their facilities. Companies no longer need to have sprawling brick-and-mortar offices or debate internally whether they should have cubicles or an open office plan. Instead, they can hire remote employees as needed.



This cannot be underestimated: Remote workers make it possible for a business to easily and quickly scale. Companies can hire employees as they need without considering the size of their offices, and they are able to negotiate for better offices in less busy (and less expensive) parts of town. Companies don't need to be in the heart of the city if their workers are remote; they can position their offices in the most convenient or affordable place.

For employees, remote work is desirable because it provides better work-life balance. It helps them be more productive and satisfied with their jobs, and it opens up possibilities for travel while still working. Employees don't need to spend their time in a lengthy commute; they don't need to spend additional money on gas. They can just focus on their job.

Further, employees are able to look farther away for work. They can find a job that they're truly happy with and that they're going to stay with, because they can look for work anywhere. They can find companies that truly resonate with their own values, and that can best utilize their skills and education.



However, remote work also comes with challenges. Remote work can make it difficult for remote employees to feel like they're part of a true team. When employees aren't getting face time with other employees – having lunch together, going out for drinks after work – they are often less able to build positive working relationships and rapport. It's easy to feel disconnected.

Teamwork relies upon all team members feeling comfortable with each other and understanding each other. If there's someone who never comes into the office, other team members may not feel like they can approach them for information and help or may not have a firm handle on their personality. They may not even know how to best contact remote team members, and may feel as though their messages frequently go ignored and unanswered.

Modern cloud solutions are changing this. Businesses are increasingly moving to the cloud, so there's no difference in work environment or available tools, whether an employee is in the office or the Outback. (Though internet access in the latter may be limited.) Through cloud solutions, everyone is able to operate on the same, level playing field, and employees are able to work together on apps such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Microsoft Teams makes communicating and collaborating even easier, by creating a singular platform through which all employees are able to connect. With the power of Microsoft Teams, businesses can make sure that their employees are able to interact with each other and grow together, and that team relationships remain strong and effective.



## THE ADVANTAGES OF MICROSOFT TEAMS FOR THE NEW DIGITAL OFFICE

Microsoft Teams has been built with the new digital office in mind. It has some of the best collaborative features available for both remote and in-office employees, ranging from document management to collaborative tools. Even better, MS Teams offers complete integration with the Microsoft ecosystem. Employees are able to work together on nearly all Microsoft documents and solutions.

An all-in-one communication solution, MS Teams makes it possible for employees to connect with each other in a number of convenient and easy ways. Employees are able to instant message, video chat, voice chat, or hold large conferences, all within the same applications. This has a number of clear advantages for a business using remote workers.

Here are some of the most important features of Microsoft Teams:

- **Multiple options for communication.** With Microsoft Teams, you have the option of using multiple communication methods. You can text if the answer isn't too urgent, or you can make a call if the answer is needed immediately. You can have a video conference if it's something that has to be discussed face-to-face, or you can share screens if you need to show someone something. Being able to have multiple methods of communication means that remote employees and in-office employees are able to explain themselves more effectively, working together in ways that are mutually advantageous.
- **Video conferencing.** With video conferencing, remote workers can feel like they're right there in the office. They can build a face-to-face rapport with other employees, and will be able to easily explain complex topics. In the past, video conferencing was often avoided because internet connections weren't fast enough or reliable enough to support them. Today, with the help of solutions such as Microsoft Azure servers, video conferencing is extremely clear and reliable.



- **File sharing and productivity tools.** Tools such as Microsoft Planner can be integrated directly into MS Teams, providing an all-in-one dashboard through which tasks and projects can be managed. Further, files can be shared directly within the system, and the system can link to other Microsoft solutions such as PowerPoint. Employees can look back at prior conversations regarding documents, or can leave notes for each other when they're working on shared documents. Documents will never be lost or accidentally overwritten: All the changes will be stored in the system so they can be reverted.
- **Communication tools.** Fun features such as GIFs and emoji can help employees communicate with each other. While it may seem frivolous, it allows employees to get a better feel for the personalities of their coworkers, especially those who may not be in the office, and a little fun helps employees bond. Further, communication tools like emoji can ease potential misunderstandings, by avoiding communications that sound too "terse" or "abrupt."
- **Automatic recordkeeping.** Team chats and one-on-one conversations held in MS Teams will be automatically recorded and can be searched later. Employees will be able to easily review their old chats, searching through them with keywords, and finding information rather than having to ping a coworker to ask them if they remember what was discussed. Even in-office employees are able to access information more easily through these systems.



- **Hardware integrations.** Communications hardware manufacturers like Polycom make devices that are able to further improve the quality and reliability of Teams meetings. With this hardware, many of the features of MS Teams and Skype for Business can be accessed directly through a physical handset. This makes it easier for employees to hold conferences, audio calls, and video conferences.
- **File collaboration tools.** Microsoft Teams integrates directly with the Microsoft Office ecosystem, which makes it possible to work seamlessly in MS Teams, Excel, Word, PowerPoint and more. Employees are able to reach out-of-office employees as easily as they could call them over to their desk, reducing frustration and improving productivity. Screensharing solutions are particularly useful, as employees are able to quickly show each other what's on their screen as though the coworker was looking over their shoulder.
- **Large meetings and conferences.** Video and audio can be broadcasted to very large groups for everything from seminars to training. It's convenient to be able to hold large meetings in this way. Remote workers are able to experience the same conferences as in-office workers, getting the same information and starting a dialogue with other employees. Remote workers can often feel adrift or as though they aren't kept up to speed; having regular large meetings like this can keep people on the same page.

These are only some of the advantages that MS Teams can offer. Microsoft Teams is a complete platform for communication, and it's getting improvements all the time. Through MS Teams, employees are able to reach their team members, managers, and colleagues, and are able to keep records of all that communication, so they can reference it at a later date. Employees no longer need to play phone tag or try to chase down remote employees.





## BUILDING MICROSOFT TEAMS ROOMS FOR BETTER CONNECTIVITY

Microsoft Teams Rooms can help turn conference rooms into multimedia connected spaces, with crystal-clear audio and video. Workers or teams around the country can feel even more connected to each other by being able to easily connect at the simple touch of a button.

What's more, some of the Teams Rooms systems available are extremely affordable, especially compared to traditional video conferencing gear. This makes feasible for an individual remote worker to turn their home office into a Teams Room, which makes it easier for them to connect with other employees.

Having a dedicated Microsoft Teams Room make the process of connecting easier. Rather than having to set up and test software and hardware each time, employees can just walk into the Microsoft Teams Room, press the "JOIN" button, and trust that everything will work right without the need to spend any time on setting things up. Not only is this a more effective setup, but it's also a more professional one.

Microsoft Teams Rooms can be positioned in multiple departments and offices in different cities, so employees are able to use meeting rooms on-the-fly as needed. With collaborative tools such as this, remote work is far easier to achieve.



## BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS WITH MICROSOFT TEAMS

Remote work is only becoming more common and frequent. With its robust collaborative solutions, Microsoft Teams helps employees stay connected whether they're in or out of the office. Microsoft has shown that it's dedicated to the MS Teams platform, and that it will continue to develop this platform moving forward. Right now, it's one of the best collaborative solutions available for companies of all sizes and industries.

Microsoft Teams is able to deliver a seamless communication experience for in-office and remote employees. In-office employees are able to easily see whether remote employees are available, and can connect with employees through the method of their choosing. Remote employees are able to be included in large scale communications such as team meetings and seminars, and can even create a home Microsoft Teams Room to more quickly connect, if they have the budget for it.

But the value of Microsoft Teams doesn't stop there. Microsoft Teams is an ideal all-around collaboration solution, even for companies that don't have many remote employees. MS Teams works with the MS Office ecosystem to make it possible to work on files together, share information on the fly, and refer back to previous records.

Microsoft Teams offers a comprehensive, consolidated solution for audio conferencing, video conferencing, and text chat – all of which are necessary for companies hiring remote employees. For more information about what Microsoft Teams can do for you and your business, [contact CWPS today](#).



## ABOUT RED RIVER

Red River brings together the ideal combination of talent, partners and products to disrupt the status quo in technology and drive success for business and government in ways previously unattainable. Red River serves organizations well beyond traditional technology integration, bringing 25 years of experience and mission-critical expertise in security, networking, analytics, collaboration, mobility and cloud solutions. To learn more, visit [redriver.com](http://redriver.com).