Five Tips for Sending Your Team Remote

liveops

5 Best Practices for Deploying a Home-based Workforce

For many people, working now means working from home. Today, organizations of all sizes and industries leverage remote workforces for critical business processes such as customer service and sales.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these changes, the shift toward remote work was inevitable. For years, an increasing number of companies have been stepping away from brick-and-mortar call centers and relying instead on virtual contact centers staffed by home-based agents.

Study after study[1][2], confirms that this new working model is better for workers and employers alike, offering advantages such as...

- A more scalable, agile, and flexible business
- Access to the best talent, no matter where they live
- Reduced recruiting and training costs
- Greater workforce engagement
- Lower agent attrition
- More satisfied customers

WHAT IT MEANS TO GO REMOTE

But as many business leaders now know, building a distributed team doesn't happen automatically. To access the full benefits of a remote workforce—and to transition as quickly and securely as possible—organizations need to leverage often-unfamiliar technologies and practices.

For example, an organization needs a way to maintain the level of oversight and key performance indicator tracking for remote agents. Managers will need to remotely

---

1   https://www.gallup.com/workplace/283985/working-remotely-effective-gallup-research-says-yes.aspx

2   https://hbr.org/2019/08/is-it-time-to-let-employees-work-from-anywhere

train, oversee, and monitor agents—they can't walk the floor to listen in on calls, answer questions, or mentor agents face-to-face.

Equally important, the business needs to continue to provide a secure environment that protects customer and company data as agents work from their homes.

At Liveops, we know firsthand the challenges that enterprises face when deploying a remote workforce, along with what it takes to overcome them and ensure success. As pioneers of the on-demand, virtual flex workforce model, we've been doing this for nearly two decades—long before most companies even considered it.

To help business leaders navigate the new working reality, we've collected five essential best practices for deploying a home-based workforce. In this paper, you'll learn how you can enable real-time performance management, optimize training with distance learning, maximize agent desktop security, align compensation with

#1 – SELECT THE RIGHT TECH ECOSYSTEM

Before you can go remote, you need to find the right technology to support your team. Specifically, you need an on-demand contact center ecosystem that automatically routes calls to the right agent and enables remote agents to access the calls using high-speed internet and a computer.

This ecosystem should provide an integrated set of capabilities to support a remote workforce. It needs to be able to do the following:

- Enable interactive distance learning
- Provide access to from any device
- Track agent actions & record calls
- Ensure complete visibility & data security
- Support performance-based call-routing and omnichannel communication.

There are many innovative, flexible options out there. The approach you take will depend in part on your business and IT needs. For example, you can use an on-demand contact center solution that's hosted in the cloud by an application service provider. Another option is to leverage your existing platform and integrate it with other solutions to complement or enhance your current environment.

#2 – ENABLE REAL-TIME PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management is all about communication and transparency. This is particularly true when agents work from home. Regardless of where or what hours they're working, agents need someone to report to, provide feedback, and suggest ways to improve performance.

In other words, agents want to know how they are doing and what they can do better. They're looking to you for encouragement, answers to questions, and incentives to encourage them to perform to their best ability.

Here are some ways you can enable effective, real-time performance management in your virtual contact center:

Enable virtual, 24x7 supervision: In a remote environment, agents need to understand they're being supervised. Your organization should consider doing the following:

- Record every call so agents know someone may be listening
- Support supervisor-to-agent chat sessions in real time to assist and coach
- Allow stakeholders to listen on calls
- Regularly audit calls to assess agent performance
- Quickly access performance information so you can take action quickly
- Facilitate caller feedback on agent performance

Manage by performance: In a distributed agent community, the best way to manage agents is to measure their performance in real time, reward those agents who meet performance goals, and take action with those who don't.

This requires an automated way to capture and report on all relevant agent and campaign performance metrics. The most common metrics include…

- Queue length
- Call hold times
- Handle times
- Sales numbers
- Media effectiveness
- Offer effectiveness

Be sure to leverage these metrics to drive performance-based routing, in which new calls are routed to the highest performing agents—so customers have the best experience possible and agents are incentivized to perform at their best.

Establish multiple modes of communication: Create communication channels via community technologies such as live chat, message boards, or forums, so agents can talk to supervisors and other agents. With the right combination of communication tools, supervisors have a broader reach and faster response times.

With multiple modes of communication with agents, you also get an up-to-the-minute view into what's happening within your organization, as well as an easy way to broadcast consistent messages instantly to all agents. When agents know you are listening and taking action on the issues that are most important to them, they feel supported and engaged at work, which ultimately improves performance and lowers agent turnover.

#3 – OPTIMIZE SKILL DEVELOPMENT WITH DISTANCE LEARNING

Consider using distance learning or e-learning technologies to certify agents on new campaigns or products. With distance learning, you can overcome many of the common challenges associated with a traditional classroom setting, such as poorly designed content, overemphasis on lecturing, failure to address multiple learning styles, and limited interactivity.

By contrast, when you leverage well-designed, self-paced e-learning, you

drive agent performance by rewarding participation, motivation, and independence. Agents can choose to take different learning sessions in different orders, and learn at their own pace.

This model makes learning interactive and oriented on the individual, dramatically increasing comprehension and retention of material. Moreover, all agents access the same, high-quality instructional design, ensuring a consistent and consistently great learning experience.

This isn't just good for learners. Organizations that provide agents with self-paced e-learning benefit from significant savings. Among Liveops customers, businesses that shift from a traditional classroom setting to e-learning compress learning time by an average 30%. This makes organizations more agile and scalable—they can quickly certify additional agents on new or modified campaigns to meet changing business requirements.

It's also worth noting that e-learning eliminates the health and safety risks of traditional, in-person learning environments. It's the only viable training model during a pandemic, following a natural disaster or threat of workplace violence, or in any circumstance in which it's not feasible for agents to learn in a shared, physical location.

Not all e-learning programs are created equal. The most effective programs use a blended learning approach that engages all adult learning styles—auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. These programs include a variety of content such as self-paced modules, study guides, learning games, practical application examples, quizzes, and interactive video demonstrations.

#4 – MAXIMIZE AGENT SECURITY

Your work-at-home agents are not operating within the secure confines of your corporate network. You might have seamless, eight-layer firewalls in place, as well as comprehensive systems and application security. Instituting an equivalent security system remotely will take strategic planning, coordination, and likely some financial investment. Your choice of technology ecosystem greatly impacts the amount of effort, time, and money required to achieve appropriate levels of agent desktop security.

There are several ways you can achieve heightened security oversight and stronger controls in a remote environment:

Train agents for security compliance: The first step is to educate your agents about security common sense and heighten their awareness about the need for security. Your enterprise should have ongoing education programs about security.

Review common strategies scammers use to trick individuals into providing sensitive information. One of your conditions for employment should be compliance with a set of security standards. The overall goal is to make security a part of everyday thinking. For instance, Liveops strongly recommends that agents configure computer systems in accordance with Microsoft's recommendations as outlined in the company's "Protect Your PC"[1] guidance. These steps include:

- Use an antimalware app.
- Use a pop-up blocker.
- Keep the operating system updated by enabling automatic updates.
- Use a firewall.
- Use the internet browser's privacy settings.

Implement tight desktop and data security that is validated regularly. The easiest and most effective way to implement tight desktop and data security is to deploy a contact center technology ecosystem that has built-in security, data access controls, and monitoring.

Modern data protection controls must be data-centric rather than location-centric, protecting data no matter where it resides. Because Liveops agents operate from distributed locations, we carefully vet our vendors by conducting annual security, compliance, and risk assessments.

Create a data classification policy to classify data based on sensitivity. At minimum, there should be three levels of classification:

- **Restricted:** This is the most sensitive data that could cause great risk if compromised. Access is on a need to know basis only.

- **Confidential:** This is moderately sensitive data that would cause a moderate risk if your company is compromised. Access is internal to your company or department that owns the data.

- **Public:** This is non-sensitive data that would cause little or no risk to your company if accessed. Access is loosely controlled.

Generally, the more tasks and functions your agents perform, the greater the access they need to your systems and data. The key to maintaining tight security is to limit access to data and applications on a "need to know" basis. For instance, if your agents need access to credit card data, only allow access to the last four digits.

#5 – FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Successful remote working arrangements are people-focused. It's essential to provide agents with tools to ask questions of other agents, stay connected to the company, and build a meaningful social network.

Again, technology is an important piece of the puzzle. For example, your organization can institute online chat and establish in-house forums so that agents can talk offline. You can also implement a peer-to-peer coaching process whereby agents can listen in on calls and provide constructive feedback

> *"The more tasks and functions your agents perform, the greater the access they need to your systems and data."*

---

[1] https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/17228/windows-protect-my-pc-from-viruses

to other agents—feedback that can help improve customer satisfaction and service level scores.

Let your best agents mentor your new ones. This will enable faster ramping and encourage skill and knowledge sharing. It also makes certified agents more likely to stay, reducing overhead costs for replacing.

Establishing open lines of communication not only increases job satisfaction and retention, but also provides management an inside view into areas of agent frustration. By monitoring these communications, you can proactively identify and address issues in order to reduce turnover and foster community loyalty. Responding to agent needs goes a long way toward making home-based agents feel connected to the community and valued for the services they provide.

IN SUMMARY

Together, these best practices are vital to ensuring a smooth and successful transition from a traditional contact center to a remote solution staffed with home-based agents.

As you begin your journey, you'll first evaluate your company's needs. You might find it helpful to gather input from other division leaders to uncover areas where your enterprise needs greater flexibility to support growth and change.

Consider the following questions:

- Do you have a **seasonal business** with spikes in customer demand?
- Do events such as a media buy or event promotion **trigger demand fluctuations?**
- Do you have substantial **overhead costs** associated with customer service and sales?
- Are your customer service or sales teams **sometimes idle** due to lower demand?
- Do you have a difficult time **sourcing qualified talent**?
- Are you actively trying to **reduce attrition**, or are hiring and **training costs** on the rise?
- Are you anticipating a **product launch** or other service-intensive event, and are your customer service teams trained and ready for it?

While it's imperative for every organization that can to figure out a remote working solution, each organization's needs are unique. You don't need to navigate this new world alone. Liveops can make sure your business transitions to remote work as smoothly as possible. Our virtual flex model has supported people and businesses in good times and bad, during eras of prosperity as well as global crises and periods of upheaval. In any era, in any economic environment, Liveops ensures friendly, responsive customer service where it matters most.

For more information and to discuss your organization's needs with a virtual workforce expert, visit liveops.com.