Support Your Workforce

Work-from-home productivity depends upon responsive IT support

BY LISA DETWILER

THE TRANSITION TO WORK-FROM-HOME operations has been remarkably successful. About 80 percent of businesses have implemented or expanded remote work strategies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a 451 Research study. Most found that employees can be just as productive working from home as in the office.

Employees have risen to the occasion. In an Enterprise Strategy Group study of more than 1,000 knowledge workers, 38 percent said their productivity has increased while working from home.

It's important to remember, however, that work-from-home productivity depends upon an array of technology tools. Employees need access to collaboration platforms, corporate IT resources, cloud-based applications, and more in order to work remotely. If any of those things stop working, employees will be hard-pressed to do their jobs.

Organizations should provide remote workers with the same level of IT support they would receive while in the office. Managed services programs are ideally suited to fill that need.

The Remote Support Challenge

While most organizations have some sort of IT support structure, few small to midsize businesses (SMBs) have the tools needed to troubleshoot IT issues remotely. What's more, most IT support processes are designed for traditional end-user computing models, with employees using company-owned PCs that are controlled by the IT team. Unless the company supplies laptops, remote workers will be using an array of personally-owned devices with different operating systems and applications. That makes support more difficult.

Devices need to be patched and updated no matter who owns them, and patches should be applied within 72 hours after they're released. However, a recent study conducted by AimPoint Group found that just 41 percent of enterprises meet the 72-hour standard.

Almost 60 percent of survey respondents said they update endpoints only monthly or annually, with 15 percent of systems remaining unpatched after 30 days. Survey respondents are less confident in their ability to update remote PCs and laptops compared to on-premises systems. Poorly managed remote systems put the organization at significant risk of cyberattack.

How Managed Services Can Help

By partnering with a managed services provider (MSP), organizations can ensure that work-from-home employees get the help they need, and

systems are kept up to date and secure. MSPs have a team of engineers and technicians who provide rapid response to support requests. Best-in-class MSPs allow the client to set the priority of each request — and respond accordingly.

MSPs are well-positioned to support a remote workforce. They use sophisticated tools to monitor systems and troubleshoot problems remotely.

But managed services are more than reactive support. MSPs proactively manage end-user devices to optimize performance. They also stay on top of emerging security threats, applying patches and updates to minimize the risk that a hacker will exploit a known vulnerability. If a security incident does occur, the MSP can quickly take steps to contain it.

Remote work is a whole new ballgame when it comes to end-user support. A managed services provider can ensure that your stay-at-home workers have the responsive support they need to stay productive. ■

Lisa Detwiler is the president of SSD Technology Partners, a Superstars in Business winner in 2005 and 2010.

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