

How to empower your distributed workforce



The rapid advent of technology has enabled distributed workforce to emerge as a potent rival to the conventional work in-office. And an all-encompassing pandemic furthered the process in unanticipated means and unimaginable scales.

What is a distributed workforce?

A distributed workforce is essentially a system in which employees based in geographically diverse locations strive towards achieving a common objective/goal accessing a bunch of workspace tools created for executing tasks and assignments.

Distributed work and remote work – similar terms, but are they the same?



A remote work is when employees choose to work out of their in-office conventional settings. A phrase much-popularised after the pervasive pandemic turned the world upside down, remote work deals with people working in their residences (work from home) or in coffee-shops, satellite-offices or practically anywhere away from the traditional physical workplace. So, a remote work is predominantly perceived from the perspective of an employee.

Distributed work, on the other hand, refers to a wide network of the workforce based on varied locations (as in remote work) or even geographically distinct, diverse locations working in unison in pursuit of shared goals. Here, the terminology is an emphasis through the prism of businesses and organizations. To put things into perspective, remote work can be considered to be a subset of distributed work.

The ethos of a distributed workforce

Even though intensified with the advent of the pandemic, freelancing and gig-working has been scaling up exceedingly since the last decade. With a plethora of digital tools and workspaces being available for the end-user, remote-first policies are being adopted globally across enterprises.

Numerous studies have revealed that employees find working remotely provides them with a multitude of benefits and advantages over working on-site. That some individuals are opting for the option to work remotely even after the rollout of vaccines, points to the fact that the trend is here to stay.

Benefits of a distributed workforce

1. Freedom

“ May we think of freedom, not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right.

Contrary to conventional belief, bestowing the employees with the freedom to do their work- specifically on how, when, and where to get the work done has largely proven beneficial to corporates. Employees place huge value over the trust reposed on them and more often than not toil hard to live up to expectations.

2. Terrific output

Studies have revealed that a distributed workforce tends to be more productive, efficacious, and actively occupied.

3. Distributed work – from a desirable idea to table stakes



If, earlier, the option of remote working was being considered as an aspirational employee experience, now, being able to work remotely is considered as ‘table stakes’ by GenZ. Surveys reveal turnover to be 25% lower in businesses that facilitate distributed work. Individuals have started to make the decision to accept new offers and leave jobs over the possibilities of remote work that companies offer.

4. Future-proof

Creating a ‘state of the art’ digital workspace with functional tools and accessories augurs well for a later time when a considerable workforce returns to the office since a major chunk of work is executed with the aid of digital tools. Even in a physical office, a huge proportion of work will be managed and executed through digital channels in the future.

5. Collaboration

Digital workspace is adept, dynamic, and built for tasks that require cross-collaboration between various sections within an organization. Hence the seamless integration of various departments is achievable.

Disadvantages

1. Effective communication



In a distributed workforce, it's imperative that major communication takes place through the digital channel. And in the vast expanse of words emphasis and meaning often get detached due to the lack of physical gestures and facial expressions. This is a huge downside of digital communication and often results in confusion and misinterpretation.

2. Varied time-zones

Employees in a distributed workforce could be spread across geographies as diverse as different continents. This leads to a tricky situation in which some are forced to work in timings beyond normal hours. Working at odd hours has proven to be stressful and detrimental to the overall health of workers.

3. Blurring of work-life balance

Working remotely often leads to over-working and employees working in home offices tend to spend more time on their screens as opposed to traditional office settings which results in the inability to strike a proper work-life balance.



4. Lack of physical proximity and a lingering sense of isolation

One of the major pitfalls of a distributed workforce is the lack of togetherness and proximity a conventional workspace offers. Swinging by your co-worker's desk to convey regards or chatting over the water cooler takes a lot of stress out of hectic daily routine and fosters a culture of unity, transparency, and togetherness.

5. Technical hiccups

Technology is rapidly evolving and is still far from perfect. Unexpected blackouts, technical glitches, and networking issues aren't rare and often employees in a distributed workforce are left abandoned and helpless while being engaged in critical works and coping with meeting the deadlines.

Empowering the distributed workforce

Business leaders can focus on several aspects to equip a well-performing distributed workforce that delivers consistently for companies.

1. Providing necessary tools and amenities

The digital dexterity of a distributed workforce depends on the capability of digital tools and the compass of a digital workspace. It's vital that employees work in the latest and advanced digital environment.

Hexnode UEM is an essential end-point management solution offering various features critical to enable a distributed workforce.

Capabilities of Hexnode UEM

- Zero-touch enrollment in Hexnode UEM enables easy enrollment across various platforms via Android Zero Touch Enrollment, Apple Business Manager, and Samsung Knox Mobile Enrollment.
- Pre-configured policies to help devices work immediately as soon as the enrollment is completed.
- Granular control over the devices by containerization allows the corporate data to be stored in separate, encrypted containers away from personal data. This is vital in a 'BYOD' environment.
- Locking down the device to bare essential apps leveraging Hexnode's kiosk capabilities. Single app kiosk mode and multi-app kiosk mode are available.
- Location tracking and geo-fencing to track and ensure the safety of corporate data.
- Remote control features to remotely fix issues of the end-user.
- Remote data wipe to remove corporate data in the case of data breach by hacking/phishing or even when devices are reported lost.
- Hexnode UEM's application management allows whitelisting and blacklisting of apps.
- Device encryption strategies Hexnode UEM offers such as BitLocker for Windows and File Vault for macOS.

2. Assigning suitable jobs and forming cohesive groups

A basic understanding that corporates need to realize is that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Individuals are different and their interests and strengths vary. It's imperative that business leaders take cognizance and assign roles accordingly.

Teams should be carefully assigned preferably grouping employees who can perform together in unison. Various factors like time zones, language barriers should be carefully considered while enabling groups to work together.

3. Seeking purpose in everyday work



Engaging in remote, distributed workday after day can be tiresome and mundane. So, the employees need to find purpose in the daily routine and understand the context of their work in the larger scheme of things. It's essential that companies provide proper guidance and knowledge on the daily progress of each working-employee.

4. Creating a favourable environment based on Trust

Establishing an environment based on trust and belief fosters a comfortable, transparent workspace. This can encourage workers to pursue their work without the fear of inhibition and pessimism. Employees placing trust and faith in the employees is an incentive to work hard with utmost sincerity.

5. Leveraging feedback to improve

Feedbacks are essential in discovering the current standing and tracking the progress in the course of work. Feedbacks are critical in employee engagement since it aids businesses in identifying and rectifying errors in road-maps and course of action. Anonymous feedback often elicits candid, honest feedback from respondents.

6. Understanding the motto of the company

Every working employee ought to have a precise understanding of the mission, vision, and long-term goals that the enterprise encapsulates. Businesses should lucidly convey the motto and the idea they envisage to employees.

At Hexnode, the mission is that dependence between user, device, and corporate data is systematically aligned to provide the finest security and control needed to manage enterprise endpoints under a single console engaging a technology that is future-proof and edging towards complete automation. Meanwhile, the vision at Hexnode is to understand the risks and requirements of enterprises and to provide an encompassing platform that covers all security bases.