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## Time to take remote working to the next level

### **Ailbhe McDarby from BT Ireland asks leaders of remote workforces: are you making the most of your new tools?**

The first challenge for businesses when they had no option but to allow their employees work from home, was setting up solutions that ensure business continuity; the second is about federation and integration of many business applications and business system for the long term, making sure it's enterprise class and stable.

With the threat of a second wave of the virus the need for a highly available Unified Communications & Collaboration (UC&C) platform becomes even more important.

For many multinationals on a digital transformation journey, remote working powered by UC tools was already on the roadmap; for others it's a new addition that has assumed huge importance. For both, it's now seen as essential to support 'the new normal', where a range of applications enable people to collaborate and work together from anywhere. Sustained levels of employee productivity and unexpected paybacks during the lockdown period has put an unplanned but affirmative business case forward, that has seen even the most skeptical companies factoring remote working into their future plans.

Twitter, Facebook and other tech titans of Silicon Valley have announced that they will support home working on a permanent basis. Research by Global Workplace Analytics revealed that 77pc of the workforce want to continue to work from home, at least weekly, after the pandemic is over. Work, it turns out, does not have to take place in an office.

Other factors strengthen the business case even further. The fact that UC reduces the need to travel and cuts a company's carbon footprint will not be lost on global business leaders looking to make their companies more sustainable. Discussions are also happening about savings on real estate and improvements in work-life balance by accommodating a more flexible workforce. The deeper a business digs into the benefits the more it will unearth and the greater the need to build out infrastructure that will support the transition.

### **A global and stable network to support remote working**

Integral to standing up this new digital workplace is network connectivity. This is core business for BT Ireland, something we have been providing to global clients for decades. In the last 10 years, enabling a distributed workforce to communicate and collaborate with UC tools has been an integral part of our portfolio. We have spent many years building up expertise that is now seen as fundamental for the workforce of the future.

For many companies the thought of digital transformation is arduous and complex. That is why we endeavour to work with our customers to demystify the technology, remove complexity and mitigate against risk. We also offer proof-of concept options that allow customers to test solutions before they make any substantial financial commitment.

## **Adding value to your current UC investment**

Let's take Microsoft 365 for example. MS Teams is now one of the biggest UC platforms in the world. Since March, MS Teams has seen exponential growth with users jumping by 70pc to 75m daily active users (DAUs). If you are one of the 500,000+ companies around the world with MS 365 and also have an international footprint, BT Ireland provide a comprehensive UC&C integration of Global PSTN in 38+ countries and offer a wider range of capabilities which are securely delivered and hosted through a robust infrastructure.

- Cost efficiencies – we manage individual network carriers, country by country, and offer more competitive calling plans than the UC vendor. By centralising SIP voice services and reducing legacy infrastructure, we drive further savings.
- Optimise performance – we can provide an end-to-end managed service across voice and data networks, using software to monitor, administer and track the user experience. We can troubleshoot call quality and diagnose faults right down to the compatibility of a user's headset. We also provide data analytics and reporting and provide continual service improvements.
- Seamless integration – we have a full portfolio of IT and data centre services, and the capability to integrate UC solutions with third party conferencing devices, ensuring everyone across each location has the same high-quality meeting experience, from desktop, mobile or video conferencing room.
- Simplify administration – we manage a full range of voice and collaboration services, setting policies, integrating new tools with legacy. By carrying out a voice inventory we make sure migration from traditional PBX services are carefully tracked for value and performance.
- User adoption - Along with the technical deployment of a UC solution, businesses need to run a parallel user education programme, highlighting how the tools will give the employee a better experience. The faster their adoption, the faster you will see the business benefits and a return on the investment. Here again BT can help. We run training and awareness programmes, starting with a pre-launch consultation and culminating in ongoing measurement to keep track of adoption rates. It's a crucial component of our UC support service, designed to make the transition to a future workplace as painless as possible.
- End-to-end network support available across the customers entire communications estate, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

In an uncertain world, we can offer our customers some certainty and peace of mind that their business can keep operating effectively, securely and efficiently. If enterprises are going to become more dependent on UC tools that have flourished during the pandemic, they should ensure they

are stable, resilient and maximised to their full potential.



*Ailbhe McDarby joined [BT Ireland](#) in January 2020. She has vast experience working on an array of projects and propositions in the ICT sector.*

*With Ailbhe's combined knowledge in both marketing and IT she is constantly looking for customer insight to deliver valuable propositions that will help businesses achieve their strategic goals*

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