Remote working

A guide to navigating the new world of work

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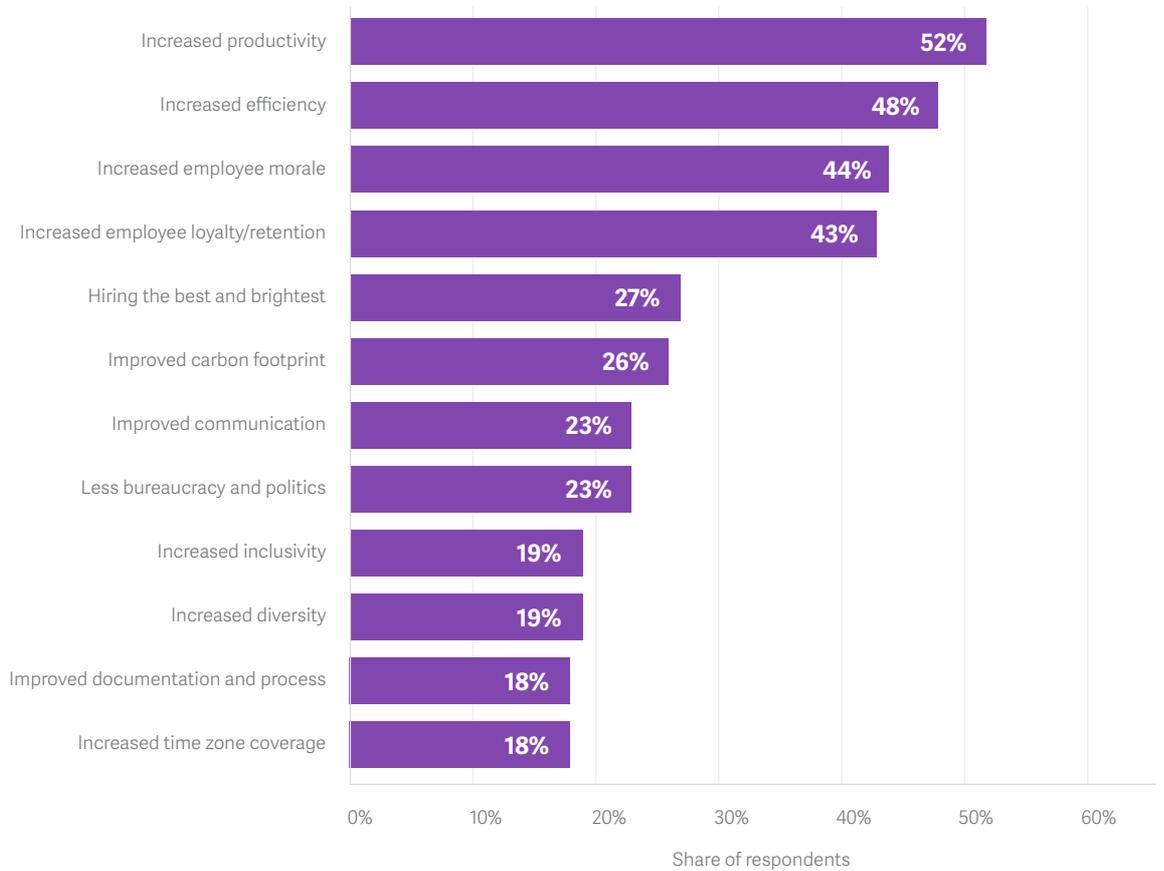# Remote working has a new place in society

Remote working is no longer a 'nice to have' incentive that employers use to attract talent. It has evolved to become an essential element of business continuity and crisis management.

It offers many benefits for the business and its employees. By embracing remote working, companies can see lower turnover rates, higher engagement and stronger performance as employees appreciate the convenience and flexibility. As shown in the graph on page four, GitLabs' research shows 52% of employers globally cite increased productivity as the top benefit of remote working.

Embracing remote working can mean happier, more productive employees who invest their best in their jobs, and go above and beyond for the company.

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Benefits of remote work to the employers in 2020*

Benefit	Share of respondents
Increased productivity	52%
Increased efficiency	48%
Increased employee morale	44%
Increased employee loyalty/retention	43%
Hiring the best and brightest	27%
Improved carbon footprint	26%
Improved communication	23%
Less bureaucracy and politics	23%
Increased inclusivity	19%
Increased diversity	19%
Improved documentation and process	18%
Increased time zone coverage	18%

Share of respondents

"People will work hard when they feel appreciated and are given the freedom to do so, whether they are in an office or not."

- Christine Sheedy, Global Head of HR, GAIN Capital Holdings.

New challenges for employers

The move to remote working means you have a new challenge: how to manage, support and engage a remote workforce to drive the company forward. Broken down, this involves the following:

- How to handle tasks such as performance management, onboarding, and offboarding, which are traditionally done in person.
- How to effectively manage employee relations within a remote workforce.
- How to manage flexible working hours to optimise productivity within the workforce.

- How to make it easier for the workforce to adjust to remote working and be successful in their roles.
- How to keep employees connected, engaged and motivated via remote channels.

This guide examines the top challenges for you to overcome so you can build an engaged remote workforce, and it explores how technology and cloud HR software can help. We'll reveal how you can tackle each challenge remotely to facilitate this new world of working.
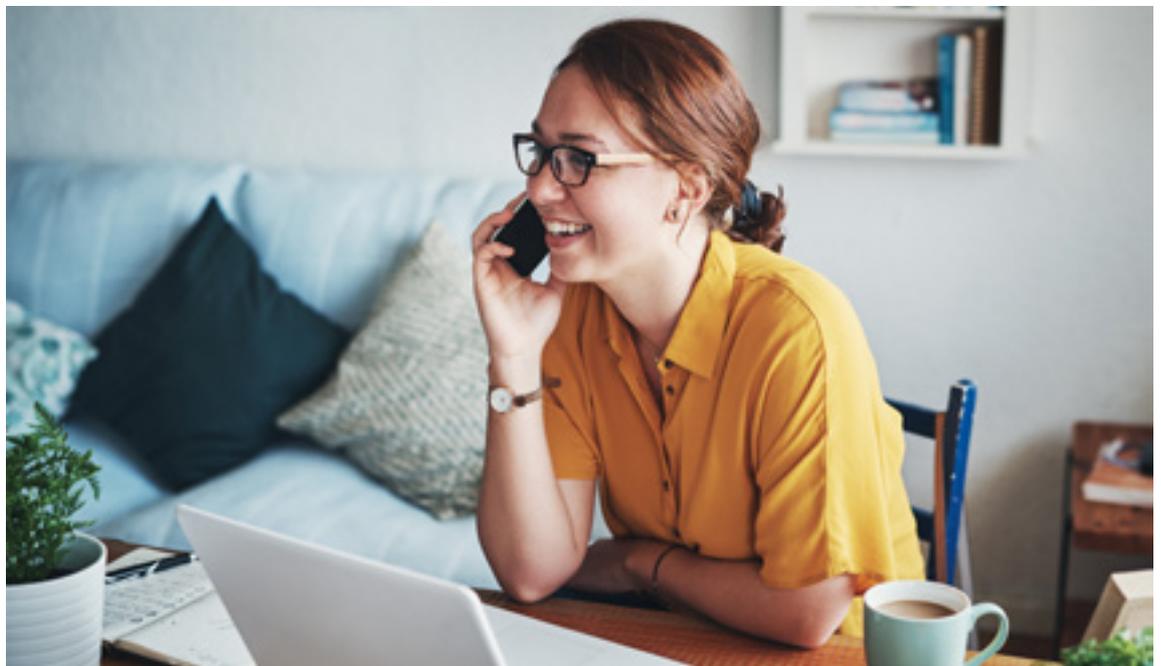
Challenge 1: Secure remote access to employee data

Your remote workforce needs a central online location to access their employee records. Employees may be spread across different time zones and flexible work schedules, and will need access on demand to update and review their details as required.

Solution: Store data in the cloud

Building an employee database for your remote workforce breaks down into four steps:

01. Determine what information you need to collect about your employees

02. Set up an employee database using an online HR solution

03. Customise your settings to capture the required information that you need for each person

04. Give your employees remote login access so they can keep their information up to date

A cloud-based HR solution can serve as your hub for storing employee information. It automatically captures the details you need for each person to create a digital employee profile. Your team and each employee can then have secure access to individual records from any device that has an internet connection.

Challenge 2: Supporting people services remotely

You need to set your employees up with the equipment and access they need to carry out their roles and keep the business going. They'll also need remote access to company policies and guidelines as compliance requires, since you can't pass these documents across the desk.

Solution: Use automation technology to build and streamline processes

Automation within cloud-based HR software makes setting up virtual workspaces easy to manage. You can build out tasks to issue equipment as part of your onboarding process once a new hire has activated a profile in your employee database. Once the employee confirms their home address, you can schedule their employer-issued equipment to post to them.

You can track the equipment via the serial number that is attached to the employee's profile in the database, so you know who it's with throughout the employee's lifecycle and can ensure its return once they leave the company. This helps the company's bottom line by reducing spend on replacing missing equipment.

And because the portal is securely accessible, you can also store your company policies and guidelines there for employees to self-serve as needed. This saves you time on posting copies to every employee, and you can upload revisions and updates in less time too.

Challenge 3: Managing a remote workforce
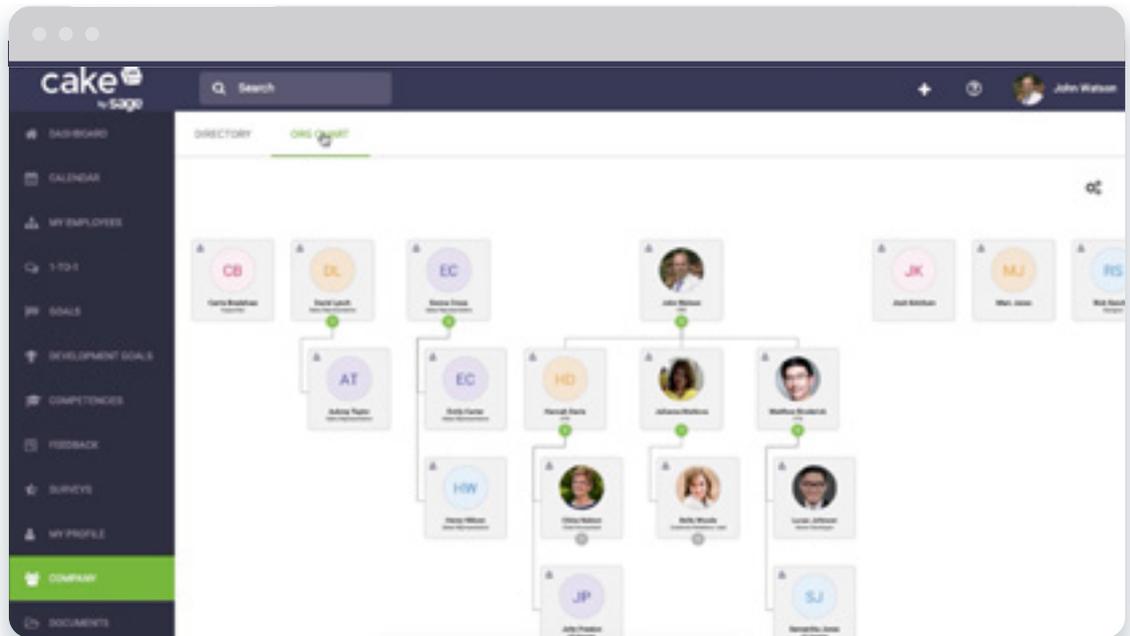
How do you manage your tasks, processes, and organisation remotely and just as quickly as you would if everyone were in the same office? You need clear visibility of the company's organisational structure to ensure processes and information are flowing in the right direction.

Solution: Build a digital map of the organisation

HR software enables you to build an organisation chart (also known as an org chart), so you (and your employees) have a clear vision of the company structure. You can build out job descriptions and responsibilities for each person on the org chart, and map out teams, so it's clear who reports to whom.

Today's robust software options pair visibility with automation and reporting tools to make it easier to generate reports and share information. Reporting tools are critical to help you liaise with your remote workforce efficiently, especially when working with people managers.

A software solution such as CakeHR by Sage can generate many views to help steer your conversations with stakeholders to identify trends and opportunities. You can view activity by team, group, job title, or region, or create a customised view for a specific request.

This is important for analysing HR and optimising its functions to improve the company's bottom line:

- **Leave management:** See spikes and lulls in leave activity and predict staff overages/shortages.

- **Performance management:** Share reports on employee feedback to build engagement and trust.

- **Scheduling:** Create daily, weekly, and monthly visual reports to track and predict payroll spend.

- **Expense management:** Build out permissions for expense approvals in alignment with the org chart and communicate potential over/under spend.

Challenge 4: Supporting flexible working

Flexible working is an essential factor in building a highly productive workforce. Employers need company-wide visibility of everyone's schedule to ensure sufficient coverage and documentation for payroll purposes.

Solution: Share shift patterns via cloud connectivity

First, create a flexible working policy to document how employees should designate and manage their work schedules. Your policy should set clear expectations around how employees should manage their workday:

- General objectives
- Whom to contact if issues arise
- How many hours per week they are expected to work
- How much work per day/week they should complete
- Your level of availability and how you can be reached

Next, share your policy company-wide on your HR portal. You can make updates and upload a new version within minutes as needed.

Last, depending on your provider, you can also create, edit, and share shift schedules from your solution's interactive platform. This usually includes access to a shared calendar, so you can see updates to the schedule in real time. You can also grant access to your workforce for company-wide visibility.

"A nine-to-five work schedule is almost non-existent. So learn to trust your team... Let them work on hours they think they are most productive."

- Kaspars Upmanis, VP Category Leader, Sage

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Challenge 5: Managing and tracking absence

You need to create a system to capture, track, and manage absences, so you can effectively plan business coverage.

Solution: Build automation into your absence policy

Automation technology can help here. You can automate absence approvals according to the organisational flow you've built and use your HR solution as the system for your employees to request time off. Your employees can track their schedules and take time off on demand—even using a mobile device. You can also set up rules and permissions according to your absence policy, so employees can only request time off within compliance.

Remember, your absence policy should include:

- The circumstances that qualify as an acceptable absence
- How to alert managers to an expected absence
- How the company will keep record of absences
- The consequences for failing to comply with the policy

Challenge 6: Keeping your workforce connected and engaged

You want to build a culture of connectedness to the business that's just as palpable as with an in-office environment.

"Strive for asynchronous communication—those that don't require an immediate response. Optimise your email channel with tools that allow you to send company-wide announcements pushed through HR software to email. Employees can see it's important because it's on an HR template, and they can come back to it when it's more convenient for them."

- Kaspars Upmanis, VP Category Leader, Sage
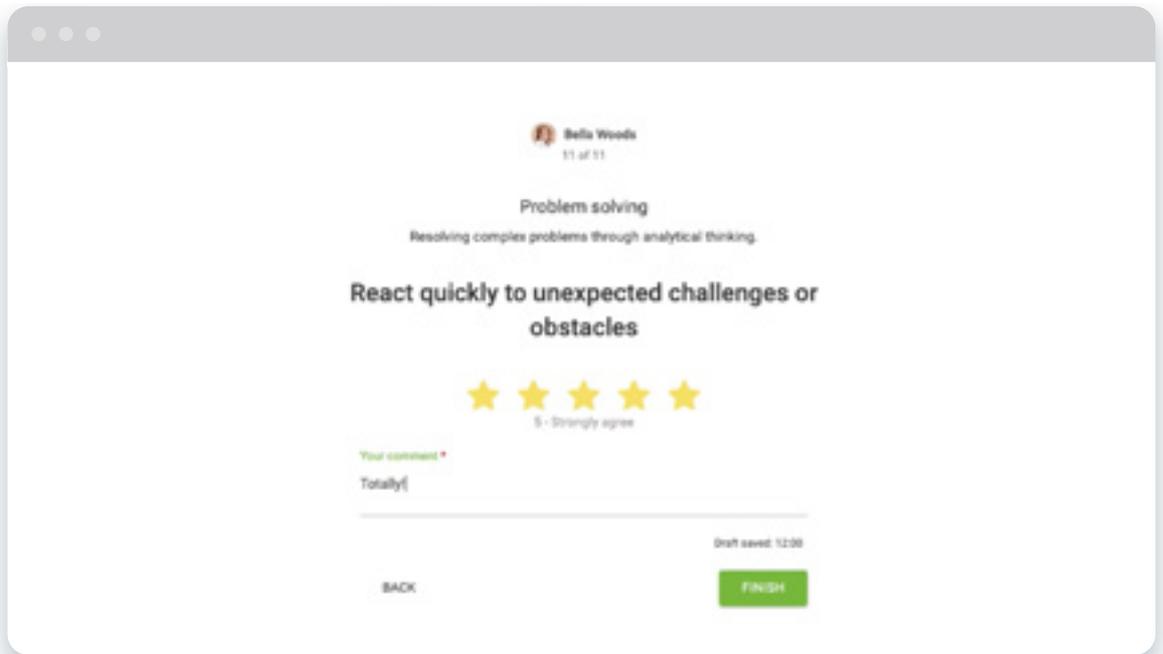
Solution: Streamline communication and encourage feedback

Communication streams are critical for engaging with a remote workforce. Employees need to receive essential and relevant business information at a frequency that doesn't interrupt their work or leave them in the dark.

You can use your HR software to send regular communications to your workforce and it can track who has and hasn't read your messages. You can use the software to schedule communications to give employee recognition—an important factor in engaging a remote workforce. You can use this same technology to facilitate employee collaboration across multiple locations. Microsoft Teams and Slack, for example, are popular options for messenger-style communicating and file sharing.

An HR software solution can also help you to manage performance reviews better. You can collaborate on goal setting with employees and their managers, and schedule regular 1-to-1s to gauge how employees are progressing with them and where their managers can offer additional support.

Collecting feedback is equally important. Since you don't see employees in an office every day, it can be challenging to gauge whether something is off or if anyone is struggling with working remotely. Cloud HR solutions offer tools for collecting feedback, so you have insight into how employees are feeling. You can use them to make adjustments where there are opportunities and foster an engaged remote work environment.

Increase communication

Manage performance

Collect feedback

Managing a remote workforce with CakeHR by Sage

The world of working has shifted, and employers must upgrade their tools to keep the business running smoothly. Supporting a remote workforce requires employers to rethink their processes and workflows, and find new ways to connect with employees to keep them engaged and empowered.

"I've challenged my team to check in with managers and staff regularly to ensure we are still supporting them."

- Christine Sheedy, Global Head of HR, GAIN Capital Holdings.

CakeHR by Sage is an all-in-one solution for supporting and managing a remote workforce. You can carry out all of your business' HR functions from one secure platform:

- **General HR requirements:** Create a central online employee database and manage onboarding and offloading. Get a complete picture of your workforce without the hassles of paperwork and spreadsheets.
- **Leave management:** Receive and manage requests for time off from a mobile app. Approve requests directly from Slack, and create unlimited time-off policies and assign them to specific employees.
- **Scheduling:** Get easy, drag-and-drop shift management. Save pre-defined shift templates and control permissions with access groups.
- **Timesheets:** Configure work patterns, prefill data with automation, and take advantage of a simple interface.

It's everything you need to provide great remote workforce experiences, plus:

- Compliance within all required jurisdictions
- Accessibility for employee self-service
- Reporting on workforce productivity
- Integration with your payroll system, Slack, Zapier, Microsoft Outlook, and G Suite.

Learn more about how CakeHR by Sage makes HR management simple by visiting the website: **sage.com**

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people benefit from CakeHR
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