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Advice for SMBs: What you can do right now to enable employees to work from home

Businesses are scrambling to keep employees connected and productive while working from home. If you're running Windows Server, you probably already have the capability to enable remote workers, while adding a dedicated solution can give you even more flexible, remote access capabilities.

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Many businesses are looking for ways to enable their employees to stay home with their families due to Covid-19. Some companies already have robust SMB network capabilities in place for employees to securely access files, applications and data from anywhere and on any device; however, if you're trying to run your business with all of your employees working from home, using nothing more than video conferencing and email, you're probably finding out just how limiting that can be. Not to mention risky. Without access to a central repository, files will probably be stored on personal devices, making it difficult to collaborate. More importantly, devices where they may be vulnerable to user error and cyber-crime.

Here's the good news - you may already have remote access capabilities built right into your system. That's right, if you're running Microsoft Windows Server at the office, you can probably take advantage of embedded Remote Desktop Service (RDS) to enable limited work from home capability for your employees - right away.

With RDS, you can run a single Windows Server instance, either on physical hardware or on a virtual machine (VM), and users can access it via a network connection and Remote Desktop Protocol. The desktop image you configure on the server is cloned and presented to users with all its associated applications and data. All the processing takes place on your on-premises server—not on local user machines—and all instances run simultaneously on the on-premises server.

RDS is a great fit for simple desktop applications—like Microsoft Office and Outlook—especially when most users access the same applications and use roughly the same amount of resources. RDS can be fairly simple to set up, but it does require some customisation and specific licensing from Microsoft. HPE Small Business Solutions for Small Office Deployment provide RDS capabilities. They can also help you contact your IT provider for assistance in setting up RDS on your current server and make sure your licences are in order.

If you need to provide access to more powerful applications or ultra-high resolution graphics, or if you'd like to prepare for the future with a more robust and flexible work from home solution, you may want to consider virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI). With VDI, you use virtualisation software to configure a pool of virtual desktop servers that you can then assign to various users. These desktops are not limited to a single operating system (OS) or a single application architecture, as is the case with RDS. These on-premises solutions leverage the power of virtualisation and specialised VDI software to provide users with customisable desktop environments just like they're used to with their traditional PC/laptop.

VDI is a great fit if your users require more personalisation or custom applications, or use intensive applications like graphics or video editing, 3D modelling or heavy data processing. It's also extremely flexible and able to support many types of devices and OSs with high performance and security. Persistent desktops mean users can get a personalised experience with resource access tailored to their usage profile. They can even have custom application installs and OS configurations.

Whether you choose RDS or VDI, you can benefit from HPE Small Business Solutions. These are ready-to-go solution packages that include the hardware, software, services, and top-selling HPE ProLiant options you need to succeed. Plus, all HPE Small Business Solutions can be easily extended to hybrid cloud for additional disaster recovery options with cloud services from Microsoft Azure or a managed service provider.

If budget is an issue, HPE Financial Services has flexible offers, like HPE Subscription, which can help you get the IT you need now and pay for it over time with predictable, affordable monthly payments.

We know things are moving pretty fast right now and it can be hard to keep up. If you need assistance working through the various options and/or getting your employees set up for success, please contact your HPE or authorised partner representative. We're here to help.

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