

HOW TO ATTRACT SKILLED WORKERS WITH FLEXIBLE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.



Not long ago, organizations could attract talented employees by offering a comfortable work environment, a solid salary and the opportunity to advance their careers. These are all still important factors today, but they're no longer enough. Unemployment in Canada is low and the demand for skilled employees is high. Increasingly, workers want flexible work options, such as the ability to work from home, or outside the typical 9 to 5 workday to maintain a happy work-life balance.

According to human resources firm Mercer's 2018 Global Talent Trends study, 51 percent of employees wished their company offered more flexible work options. In Canada, many companies are offering more remote work opportunities. According to a recent study from flexible workspace provider Regus Canada, nearly 47 percent of Canadian employees work outside their main office for half the work week or more.

There are plenty of benefits to working away from the office at least part of the time. According to research from IWG Canada, a co-working office space provider, Canadian employees said remote work increased productivity (80 per cent), reduced their commute times (83 percent), made meetings more efficient (52 percent) and improved their work-life balance (75 per cent).

Unfortunately, implementing a more flexible work policy isn't as simple as adding a line to a company's human resources manual. Organizations who want to build an effective remote work environment need to have technologies in place that allow employees to be mobile, collaborative and productive. Below are some of the key solutions that underpin any successful flexible workforce.

MODERN LAPTOPS

If employees are going to be working away from the office on a regular basis they can't be tied to desktop computers. They need machines they can easily pick up, pack and take with them. Workers will want different laptops depending on how they'll be using them. For example, a sales associate will likely prioritize size and portability, while a graphic designer may want a heavier, larger machine with a discrete graphics card. Some factors you should consider include:

- **Weight** – Lighter is generally better. Laptops today can weigh in at three pounds or less, making them easy to pick up and move around. Some workers will require heavier machines that can handle more compute-intensive workloads, but portability should remain a priority.
- **Battery life** – Many laptops today offer more than 12 hours of battery life. For employees who will be on the road frequently, this should be a priority.
- **Security** – modern laptops boast an array of security features including fingerprint readers, facial recognition and shutters for video cameras. If employees will be working with sensitive files, it would be wise to invest in machines that offer features such as remote-wipe, which can erase a drive.
- **Ports** – USB is still the king of connections, but other port options you might want to consider include UCB-C Thunderbolt, for higher speed connectivity; HDMI for connecting to external monitors; and microSD support if employees will be working with videos or photography.

- **Flexibility** – Not all of today's laptops are the typical fold up and fold down machines, to which we've become accustomed. Some models can transform into tablets or boast hinges that allow them to rotate 360 degrees.
- **Reliability** – Bells and whistles don't matter much if a laptop won't boot up. Build quality is important. Make sure you buy machines from a reputable manufacturer that backs them up with solid warranties.

TABLETS

Tablets offer more portability than laptops. While they may not offer as much functionality as laptops, today's tablets are flexible and powerful devices. Features you should consider when shopping for tablets include:

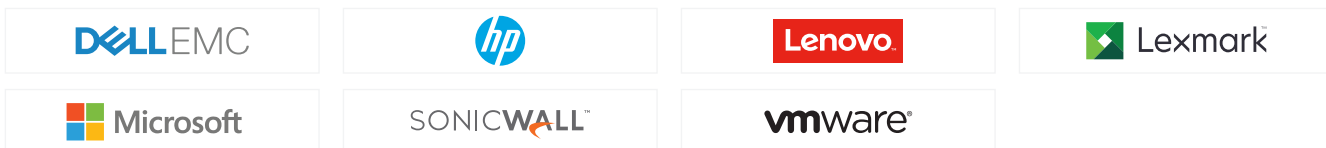
- **Screen size** – Real estate is a key consideration when purchasing a tablet. Professional tablets have screens that are larger than some laptops, which can make them a useful tool for workers who are always on the go.
- **Storage** – Tablets come with an array of storage options. Unfortunately, they don't have as much capacity as laptops, so if a worker will be using a tablet as their primary device it's a good idea to give them some external or cloud storage to complement their device.
- **Processing power** – Like laptops, tablets come with a variety of processor options. Pick the one that best suits each worker's requirements.
- **Application compatibility** – Not all tablets will support the applications an employee uses for their job. It's important to ensure a device can support any software requirements your company has now and in the future.

COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY

There are a wide range of solutions that make a remote office feel almost like a traditional office when it comes to communication and collaboration. Below are some tools you may want to consider for flexible workers:

- **File sharing** – Allowing remote workers to access and work on the same files without causing problems with different versions is important. Having a cloud-based solution where people can work securely on the same document at the same time and see each other's changes in real time is a necessity for any distributed workforce.
- **Conferencing applications** – Today there is a wide range of conferencing features and applications to choose from. Whether you need voice, video, text, or a combination of all three, make sure your employees have devices and peripherals that allow them to communicate with one another effectively and take full advantage of the features your conferencing solution offers.
- **Softphones** – Instead of having a dedicated phone handset, softphones allow workers to have their phone extension tied to their laptop. With a headset they can then make calls from home, the road or at the office.

If you need help designing a flexible workforce solution for your organization, CDW Canada has trained experts who can assess your needs, suggest solutions that meet your goals and help you acquire and set up your hardware and software.



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