SOLVING COMMON WORK FROM HOME CHALLENGES WITH VOIP PHONES

FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND USER EXPERIENCE FOR REMOTE WORKERS
Starting in March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had IT departments scrambling to help their employees work from home. Many companies deployed “best effort” solutions using built-in laptop webcams with entry-level headsets and soft-client based phone apps to support voice and video calls for employees working at home. Forwarding work phone numbers to employees’ personal cellphones was another popular alternative. Everyone simply made do with what they could find for this massive, worldwide work from home experiment.

Many companies are now considering working from home on a more permanent basis. A recent Gartner CFO Survey revealed that 74% of CFOs intend to shift some employees to working remote permanently post Covid-19. It’s estimated that nearly 40% of all jobs in the U.S. can be performed entirely at home, and that nearly 30% of workers will work from home at least one day a week even after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended. So next up for IT is finding optimal solutions for working from home. For many employees, that will include a VoIP desk phone, upgraded professional headset, and quality USB webcam.

Cloud communications service providers have an important role to play in supporting their customers’ work from home initiatives during the pandemic and beyond. That includes helping customers understand work from home challenges and how they can overcome them.

In this e-book, we’ll look at some typical challenges encountered in work from home situations that a VoIP phone helps solve. We’ll focus on five of the top challenges:

- Noise at home
- PC issues
- Home network limitations
- Support and deployment
- Business calls on personal devices

After reviewing each challenge and solution, we’ll look at recommended configurations that provide end users the best overall work from home experience.

CHALLENGE

NOISE AT HOME

Kids, spouses on their own calls, vacuums, lawnmowers, barking dogs. Noisy interruptions get old for everyone on the other end of your call and disrupt communication and collaboration with colleagues. Noise at home is a productivity killer. In fact, 45% of WFH employees report that noise inside the home has an impact on their productivity.¹

SOLUTION

Unlike mobile phones or PCs, Poly phones have Acoustic Fence technology that greatly reduces noise problems in home environments. By picking up the handset or connecting a supported headset model to the phone, end users can stop worrying about the blender in the kitchen or zombie apocalypse outside. With Poly Acoustic Fence, the phone automatically blocks it all out, allowing you to be heard clearly.

Additionally, many Poly headsets—both wired and wireless—have noise reduction features to help you hear and be heard more clearly. For example, Close Conversation Limiting helps to filter out background noise which can be distracting to listeners on the far end of a call. Together, the phone and headset make a great combination for reducing distractions from noise in the home, allowing you to be more productive.

A desk phone is “always on”—no battery limits. These purpose-built devices don’t compete for PC resources or require app switching like PC soft clients do. Additionally, dedicated call control buttons and keys make one-touch call control easy. VoIP desktop phones are always ready for the next call.

Poly phones provide lifelike HD Voice quality, whether using the handset, hands-free speakerphone or optional headset. Additionally, they provide full-duplex conversations and acoustic echo cancellation to ensure you always sound your best. You get more productive conversations with no one asking, “Can you repeat that?”

While laptops and mobile phones are portable and can serve many functions, they present challenges as primary business communication devices. Call handling on these devices can be challenging, and you need an external device like a headset or speakerphone to get the best audio quality. Are you hearing audio glitches or echoes during calls with so many apps, windows, and browser tabs open and competing for PC resources? Left waiting for your PC to reboot or install an update to get back on your call? We’ve all been there.
An IP phone is a dedicated VoIP device and typically has a higher network priority by default with most modern home routers or mesh Wi-Fi systems. Many Poly phones can support Wi-Fi. Poly CCX 600 has Wi-Fi built-in and Poly VVX 250, Poly VVX 350, and Poly VVX 450 phones support Wi-Fi connectivity with the optional Poly USB Wi-Fi adapter. Just remember, most home offices don’t have PoE (Power over Ethernet), so you’ll want to provide a power supply with the phone for work from home users.

Poly phones also have adaptive jitter buffers and packet loss concealment built in, helping to smooth out the network glitches and improve call quality.

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**Challenge**

Are you able to troubleshoot and pinpoint call quality issues with end-users’ softphones or mobile devices? If you answered no, you’re not alone. But with Poly phones, cloud communications service providers and IT managers can easily troubleshoot issues and manage devices with Poly Cloud Services, including Poly Device Management Service for Service Providers (PDMS-SP) and Poly Lens service. Some services sold separately.

Deploying a Poly phone is easy with the provisioning tools built into PDMS-SP and Poly Lens. This allows phones to be drop-shipped directly to the remote home workers. The phone automatically contacts the provisioning server and downloads its configuration. Plug it in, and it’s ready for calls. Talk about curbside pickup—it’s the ultimate in touchless service.

**Solution**

Are end users reporting audio that’s not so smooth on PC soft client calls? Experiencing momentary glitches? Hearing things like, “Say that again” or, “You’re cutting out”? They might call for support after the call. But when the call is no longer live, it’s hard to trace the issue.

And during a time of social distancing and no-touch guidelines, it’s difficult if not impossible to deploy phones with a high-touch service level across the variety of locations and networks used by remote workers.
BUSINESS CALLS ON PERSONAL DEVICES

Some companies may think “We’ll just pay for the employees’ mobile phones. It works for sales, why not everyone else?” Or maybe they just forward calls from their business phone system to employees’ cell phones. Here’s the problem—not relying on a business phone number to make and receive calls leaves companies at risk of lost calls and lost business. Employees also can’t get the downtime needed to recharge and be productive, as calls may ring their mobile number any time of day, any day of the week.

Cloud communications service providers can assign business phone numbers to a user’s Poly phone, avoiding business calls on employee cell phone services and keeping expenses separate. A dedicated desk phone for work calls allows your customers and their employees to preserve the work-life separation they need to be most effective. And when you do need to roam—whether around the house or far beyond—you can easily forward calls from your desk phone work number to a mobile device with the touch of a button.
BUILDING YOUR WORK FROM HOME PHONE KIT

Now that you see the top reasons to provide a Poly phone for remote workers, you’ll need to figure out how to build the right kit to meet those users’ needs. Let’s look at the key considerations for building the right work from home kit: network, power, and usage.

NETWORK

Most home network routers have built-in Ethernet ports. But unless the router is in the home office near the phone, work from home users will likely need to connect using Wi-Fi. So, you’ll need to choose a phone that has optional or built-in Wi-Fi capabilities. If the phone supports Wi-Fi using a USB adapter, you’ll want to include that adapter as part of the equipment bundle.

POWER

Very few home users have Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) switches, which are commonly used in office environments to provide power to desk phones over network cabling. The simplest solution is to provide a power supply that plugs into standard household power outlets. Poly phones have a part number which includes a power supply in the box, or you can order power supplies separately to include in the shipment to an end user.

WORKSPACE / PERSONA

When designing a work from home kit, you’ll need to consider the workspace environment and the importance of communication and collaboration in the user’s daily work. You may want to include a headset for users who are on the phone frequently or whose home workspace can be noisy. If users alternate between the phone and cloud video meetings on their PC, providing them a USB webcam and headset that connects to both the PC and the phone is ideal.

With these considerations in mind, you can design work from home kits which meet the different needs of the variety of remote workers. We suggest assembling two or three different options which address different use cases, including both a power adapter and Wi-Fi USB dongle in each option.

Only 22% of people working from home during the pandemic have a separate home office that they work in. The remaining 78% work another part of the home, such as the living room, bedroom, or dining room.¹

SAMPLE WORK FROM HOME
KITS WITH PHONE

KIT OPTION 1

USE CASE/PERSONA
- Office Communicator
- Smaller footprint for shared spaces
- Majority of calling is voice, used to desk phone
- Low to no video calling

PROVIDES A DEDICATED WI-FI-ENABLED PHONE WITH HANDSET AND SPEAKERPHONE.
- VVX 250 with Power Supply
- ObiWiFi USB adapter
SAMPLE WORK FROM HOME KITS WITH PHONE

KIT OPTION 2

USE CASE/PERSONA

• Office Collaborator / Office Warrior
• Calling balanced between PC, mobile and desk phone
• Needs headset for higher call volumes and longer calls
• More frequent use of video calling/conferencing

PROVIDES A DEDICATED WI-FI-ENABLED PHONE WITH THE HANDS-FREE COMFORT AND NOISE-REDUCTION OF A WIRED HEADSET.

• VVX 350 with Power Supply
• ObiWiFi USB adapter
• Voyager 4200 Office headset
• EagleEye Mini USB camera
SAMPLE WORK FROM HOME KITS WITH PHONE

KIT OPTION 3

USE CASE/PERSO NA

- Office Warrior / Remote Worker / Connected Executive
- Most likely to have dedicated workspaces at home
- Calling balanced between PC, mobile and desk phone
- Needs headset for higher call volumes and longer calls
- More frequent use of video calling/conferencing

PROVIDES A DEDICATED WI-FI-ENABLED PHONE WITH A WIRELESS HEADSET TO ALLOW MOBILITY AND NOISE-REDUCTION, PLUS AN EXTERNAL USB WEBCAM FOR VIDEO COLLABORATION.

- VVX 450 with Power Supply
- ObiWiFi USB adapter
- Savi 7200 Office headset
- EagleEye Cube USB camera

OFFICE WARRIOR

REMOTE WORKER

CONNECTED EXECUTIVE
SAMPLE WORK FROM HOME KITS WITH PHONE

KIT OPTION 4

USE CASE/PERSO NA

• Flexible Worker / Road Warrior
• Kit gear needs to be portable and packable
• Calling balanced between PC, mobile and desk phone, with higher usage of mobile devices
• Needs headset for higher call volumes and longer calls

PROVIDES A DEDICATED WI-FI-ENABLED PHONE WITH A WIRELESS HEADSET TO ALLOW MOBILITY AND NOISE-REDUCTION, PLUS AN EXTERNAL USB WEBCAM FOR VIDEO COLLABORATION.

• VVX 601 Business Media Phone
• ObiWiFi USB adapter
• Voyager 5200 UC
• EagleEye Mini USB camera
WHO NEEDS A WORK FROM HOME KIT MOST?

Certain industries and professions have a greater opportunity to work remotely and have a higher percentage of workers doing so. Remote work can be found at organizations of all kinds, but certain industries and professions will have much greater needs that work from home kits can fulfill.

TOP WORK FROM HOME INDUSTRIES/VERTICALS

Companies in these industries report the highest opportunity to telework and had the highest percentage of employees working remotely during the pandemic. Many businesses within these industries, such as financial services and government, have regulatory or compliance needs which a dedicated desk phone can help to address. The top industries are:

1. Banking, finance, insurance
2. Professional, technical, or business services
3. Education
4. Information services
5. Government / public administration

TOP WORK FROM HOME OCCUPATIONS

These occupations report the greatest opportunity to do remote work, with 30% or more of the occupation’s workers able to do so. Many of these occupations fall into the “knowledge worker” category, whose work relies more on knowledge, analysis and access to digital information and tools than on manual tasks, and their physical presence at a work location.

1. Management, business, and financial occupations
2. Professional and related occupations
3. Office and administrative support occupations
4. Sales and related occupations

Don’t allow poor audio, video or user experience to impact productivity or your customers’ experience with your company. By providing end users with work from home endpoint options, including a Poly VoIP phone, you improve their overall experience, boost their productivity with familiar communication tools, and ensure them of proper support.

To get started building your Poly work from home kits, work with your Poly reseller, account manager or distributor to begin designing and building your kits using Poly phones, headsets, and video endpoints.

Visit www.poly.com for more on remote working strategies and solutions.