A woman with dark hair, wearing a white blazer, is sitting at a desk and looking at a laptop. A young girl with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a light blue shirt, is leaning over her shoulder and kissing her on the cheek. The woman is holding a pen in her right hand. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office environment.

A practical guide to
actions your business
should take now in
[response to COVID-19](#)



Elastic Digital Workplace for the Microsoft Platform

Remote working and the first step to Workplace Experience transformation
in exceptional times

COVID-19 is a global crisis, evolving at unprecedented speed and scale. It's creating a universal imperative for governments and organizations to take immediate action to protect their people. The virus continues to spread rapidly, with scores of countries impacted and thousands of new cases reported daily.



No industry is immune. All are grappling with the immediate impacts of COVID-19 in varying degrees of severity and complexity. Travel and tourism companies are experiencing the largest hit to their business since 9/11. Retail and consumer goods organizations are dealing with stock shortages due to production delays, disrupted manufacturing and broken supply chains. Industry and technology conferences, along with large group gatherings, are being postponed or canceled entirely. To protect their people, organizations are implementing travel bans, restricting who they let into their offices, and reexamining how their workplaces operate, and how their people work.

Experts don't know how long it will take to contain the virus. Leaders must prepare for the short term while also developing new capabilities and ways of working that will seamlessly enable longer-term changes to how they operate.

The time to act is now.

This document outlines the practical steps you should take, whether you're getting started or already using the Microsoft 365 platform.



Protect your people and your productivity

In this climate of crisis, your decisions not only determine how you operate in the near term, but also significantly impact how you'll operate in the future. Smart leaders will seize this opportunity to take swift action to navigate the crisis to avoid business disruption and potential revenue loss, forge new levels of trust with their workforce, and position their businesses for greater resiliency and productivity in the future.

An important first step is to begin planning to enable a remote workplace at scale. Develop and provide clear guidelines to your people about self-quarantine and/or travel restrictions. Prepare for a larger than normal percentage of employees to be on sick leave. Each company, industry and region will have different needs and requirements for the workplace with people management, customer service, data management and business continuity. But there are three major foundations that all organizations should consider.

1. Protect and empower your people:

Modernize your workplace technologies to enable scalable and sustainable remote working. Evolve ways of working and employee experiences to fit the new context. Empower your people through skills development, delegated authority and a focus on their well-being

2. Serve your customers' core needs:

Adapt to changing global and local conditions by serving your customers' core needs, including being transparent in your operations and compassionate in your engagements – all of which will create deeper, more trusted relationships.

3. Establish business continuity:

Ensure supplier relationships and business-to-business processes are effectively supported. Develop new business processes to adapt to new ways of collaboration and decision-making. Use automation and AI to create capacity and augment your valuable human workforce.



Start today: The Elastic Digital Workplace for the Microsoft Platform

Our Elastic Digital Workplace solution is the first stage of a comprehensive Workplace Experience transformation, creating a highly extensible environment that allows you to quickly scale and dynamically adapt to changing business needs based on global and local conditions.

The first step is a quick Elastic Digital Workplace assessment. This allows your organization to quickly evaluate your capabilities across multiple dimensions and prioritize where to focus.


While many organizations have some form of remote working environment, most have never conducted a full remote worker business continuity test, much less developed the culture, technology, experiences, communication and policies that will have to work together nearly simultaneously in today's global context.

To get started, consider the following six questions:

1. How prepared is your organization to equip your employees to work effectively from remote locations?
2. Do you have a team dedicated to helping your employees work remotely?
3. Do you provide clear guidance to your remote workers on home office/network setup and troubleshooting?
4. Do you have a clear mobile device and application strategy that provides your employees guidelines on using personal (and company-owned) devices?
5. Do you have collaboration solutions that seamlessly and securely connect with your customers and strategic partners?
6. Do your solutions for employee "moments that matter" (e.g., on-boarding, device failure, real-time expert guidance) work in a remote scenario?

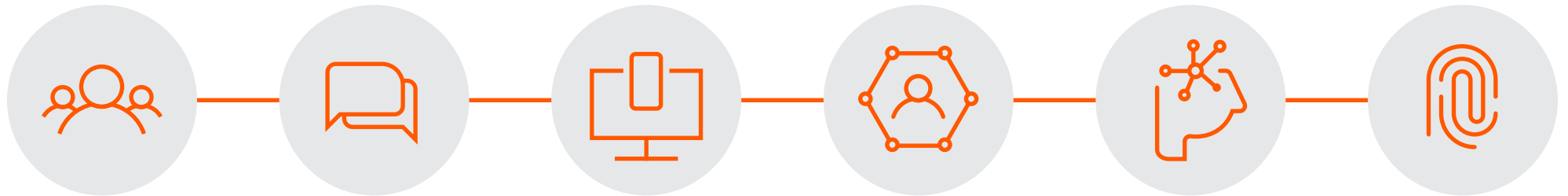


The Elastic Digital Workplace for Microsoft roadmap outlines six dimensions that have proved effective in quickly transitioning to a remote workplace environment:

-  **Culture and adoption**
-  **Elastic collaboration**
-  **Virtual work environment**
-  **Seamless networking**
-  **Distributed continuity**
-  **Adaptive security**



Enhance workplace practices



Culture and adoption

Adapt leadership practices and behavioral norms for the current context while protecting the culture and engagement of your distributed workforce.

Elastic collaboration

Rapidly deploy or extend Teams, SharePoint and OneDrive to enable collaboration and remote working at scale.

Use workplace analytics to help understand adoption and use this as an opportunity to improve employee experience, leading to improved customer and partner experiences.

Virtual work environment

Evaluate your network, accelerate device deployment and leverage virtual environments such as Microsoft Virtual Desktop to support increased mobile demand.

Seamless networking

Enable reliable and secure remote network connectivity to employees' homes and seamless integration with customers and partners.

Distributed continuity

Enhance business continuity plans to include reduction in workforce, travel restrictions and large-scale remote working environments. Use Power Apps to rapidly fill urgent needs.

Adaptive security

Review Active Directory, System Center for Configuration Management and Intune configuration to empower employees to collaborate, remain vigilant, protect company data and secure users without getting in the way.

Culture and adoption

Avanade has become accustomed to a highly distributed and cloud-based way of working, which we have evolved over the years. We rely on Microsoft 365 to create, connect and collaborate. We have a staff of highly trained digital workplace adoption professionals who teach people how to work effectively in remote environments.

Our people are accustomed to collaborating remotely on a continual basis with their co-workers worldwide. However, each organization will have its own nuances. At a more virtual company, your best gig economy workers might be worried about continuity of work and a paycheck during the crisis. In a company with workers mainly in physical locations, there may be concerns as basic as hand sanitizer and avoiding in-person meetings. They need to feel safe while working, the most basic of human needs. Once these risks are addressed and realized, only then can they begin to work on technology training and adoption.

Over the first week, implement the following:

- **Support leaders in modeling virtual behavior:** Take special care to direct leaders to exemplify remote-working behaviors. Coach them to schedule Teams meetings with video and to move away from working on local versions of data and documents to cloud-based applications and storage. Pay attention to the small things like coaching on video meeting etiquette and guidance on home network bandwidth.
- **Recognize working from home is not the same as remote working:** Employees working from home are likely taking on additional responsibilities and may have increased distraction. Keep the well-being of employees front-and-center, and consider things like flexible work hours, shared roles and postponing non-essential work.
- **Keep engagement high:** Use Teams video to replace the drop-ins and informal conversations essential to business continuity. Embrace the fun by encouraging project teams to run virtual team-building events and competitions. Incorporate photos of kids, pets or other personal interests into virtual meetings and townhalls.



Elastic collaboration

The new reality is that employees need to get work done with zero face-to-face interaction. They need tools that allow them to make decisions and produce documents, presentations and spreadsheets efficiently. Building their workday around a platform that allows multi-modal communications and simultaneous document creation on any device is the way towards a new normal of broad-spectrum collaboration.

Microsoft Teams enables multi-user texting, voice calling and video conferencing on the desktop, in the browser, and on tablets and smartphones. When people can hear and see each other while they take notes or produce results, they are more engaged, less distracted and better equipped to accomplish their tasks.

Actions to take immediately include:

- **Adopt and measure collaboration:** Starting today, expand the existing footprint of collaboration and communication capabilities to provide large-scale employee coverage. Restructure SharePoint to help people work on documents and share know-how from home. Consider a digital hub to take away some of the friction of day-to-day tasks.
- **Determine your collaboration strategy:** Review standard governance and policy guidelines for safe and compliant collaboration with Teams and modify them for the needs and culture of your organization. Determine your roll-out strategy and how these new users will be trained and supported as they shift into a new way of working. Provide guidance on the best headsets and cameras that will support a quality remote working experience.
- **Enable rapid adoption of the new platform:** Train and support the leaders in the organization who will model behavior for their direct reports and

the pyramids below them. Help them understand the etiquette and rules of the new paradigm and show them how to encourage and reassure their teams that they can get their work done with speed and quality by using their tools well. Identify champions at all levels who can help their peers to feel comfortable and productive.

- **Cross-business enablement:** Identify key business-to-business contacts and relationships across your ecosystem. In the next 24 to 48 hours, assess current virtual meeting capabilities (web conferencing, video services) and deploy a pilot of video and messaging bridging services for seamless interaction with partners, suppliers and customers. Create integrated communications and training materials to enable business users to adopt the shift in work style. Use data and analytics to identify opportunities to increase adoption and improve employee experiences.

Virtual work environment

Virtual work environments provide employees with the key resources they need to be productive, such as a secure laptop, and provide seamless access to corporate applications and data.

Key aspects that should be addressed within the first two weeks are:

- **Coordinate virtual work environment:** Start by educating workers with security initiatives and open communication with operational teams. This means making sure that access policies, permissions and audit logs are in place to enable the use of a virtual work environment. You can manage user identity, network security and device security together.
- **Explore virtual desktops:** Within the first week, explore and implement Microsoft Virtual Desktop solutions, which offer virtualized workspaces that can extend across boundaries while allowing secure access to remote applications and data for employees who don't have access to secure mobile devices. Your ability to enable these rapidly will depend on whether your corporate applications are located primarily on your internal corporate network or are cloud based.
- **Enable large-scale virtual sessions:** Enable interactive broadcast and web conferencing for one-to-many events with Teams Live Events to support the shift from physical to virtual workshops and conferences. Identify and train high-touch session facilitators to support the best possible user experience. Consider your needs for production assistance. For more interactive engagement with groups under 250 participants, use regular Teams meetings.
- **Augment remote working experience:** Establish dedicated service management teams enabled with remote user-specific standard operating procedures/ FAQs to effectively support the workforce in a high-touch environment using offerings from Azure Marketplace like ServiceNow or BMC Remedy. Establish specific service level agreements and policies to manage incidents and service requests.
- **Device enablement and mobility acceleration:** Prioritize enabling workers who have critical roles in driving the business by ensuring they have the tools and access they need. Reclaim devices from users with more than one device and use contractor devices or explore creative sourcing options such as Device as a Service from providers such as Dell, HP and Lenovo. Are you starting by enabling users with corporate-approved, secured and managed devices only, browser access or allowing a "bring your own device" policy? Balancing the need to quickly enable virtual work environments can be further orchestrated with management solutions such as BitLocker or Intune. Additionally, how user identity is managed and controlled (modern authentication, and multi-factor authentication enabled for specific device access) will govern experience and training needs.

Seamless networking

When many of your employees are working remotely, they may encounter network issues such as bandwidth challenges with other family members at home, slow corporate VPNs and blackouts due to worldwide volumes. Seamless connectivity is key to ensuring the work-from-home experience is equal to or better than the office experience. Users need to be properly educated on security while working at home; this becomes harder to control when a worker is outside the corporate network. Reliable connectivity to corporate networks, cloud assets and strategic partners are key to working productively from home. Over the last few weeks, video and audio conferencing has jumped by 80% – this strains a user’s ability to access resources from home. Make sure that your team is ready for and understands these issues are to be expected and acceptable.

Over the first week, implement the following:

- **Virtual Private Network (VPN) capacity:** Rapidly complement your traditional VPN technology with new cloud remote access solutions (e.g., Palo Alto Networks) that will improve remote worker experience, performance and security while alleviating capacity risks on your legacy VPN solution.
- **Remote and home networking:** Provide clear and prescriptive guidance to employees about broadband connectivity options and packages in their home locations. Consider subsidizing higher bandwidth and quality of service solutions. As most network issues start at home, provide guidance to employees on the best Wi-Fi home network solutions, such as dual radios and MIMO. Give advice on where to place the gateways and direct people to use 5 GHz frequencies to avoid interference. Guide them on how to configure the solutions to prioritize voice, video and collaboration traffic, and help them troubleshoot issues. Ensure users at home are following corporate guidance to secure their network. If using commercial routers, work-from-home employees need to change the default password on the router to a strong password to ensure corporate data safety. During peak hours instruct users to try and limit internet usage to business specific, this will greatly increase success over the last mile to the users, as many users have internet plans with much lower capacity than in the workplace. Turn off non-essential devices connected to the home Wi-Fi to prioritize network connectivity.
- **Mobile connectivity:** Many users may have to rely on mobile networks for connectivity and the use of mobile apps to connect to the corporate network. Mobile users face challenges such as cellular network coverage, mobile access, security and computer tethering. To allow users to access the corporate network, two-factor authentication such as Microsoft Company Portal should be used to secure data. Educate users that mobile tethering can cause additional data charges if they exceed their plan limits.
- **Internal network:** If possible, use the corporate backup ISP connections to route internal communication traffic such as cloud backups, directory synchronization, file storage and such. Try implementing traffic shaping on the edge for unified communication traffic if using central egress and ingress. Remove non-essential devices from the internal network to reduce as much overhead as possible.
- **Partner connectivity:** Establish a SWAT team to quickly provide, or to expand, business-to-business connectivity solutions to strategic partners.

Distributed continuity

Distilled to one essential message, your workforce is looking to trust you. And they will trust you if they believe leadership cares for them and humanity as a whole. But beyond caring, leaders must show they have a plan. You don't have to know everything, but you do need to be transparent about what's driving decisions. A leadership team that looks ahead proactively, and responds rather than reacts, goes a long way toward helping a workforce in volatile times. This requires assessing and monitoring a quickly evolving environment, making timely business decisions and communicating clearly and prescriptively to your people on how to navigate the situation.

Ongoing actions include:

- **Enable a more distributed virtual way of working:** Use Teams to enable virtual connections among employees, suppliers and customers. For example, we're working with healthcare providers to enable virtual video consultations around patient cases, which cuts down the need for face-to-face meetings and reduces the risk of spreading disease. This can be especially effective if key resources are subject to quarantine or sheltering in place.
- **Employee contingency planning:** Keep a check on employee health by having regular employee touchpoints. At the same time prepare contingency plans to cover for absence due to sick leave for critical employees. To avoid a single point of failure, encourage employees to share and record daily updates and progress on critical deliverables in Teams or OneNote and keep track of tasks through Planners.
- **Leverage Power Platform:** Use Power Platform for rapid app development and continually provision information for the most urgent needs.



Adaptive security

At an unprecedented rate, businesses are forced to rethink a work-from-home strategy due to COVID-19. This brings about additional security challenges in the form of risk as we see new populations of employees stretching the boundaries of where they're performing their work tasks. In many cases the processes and technology that empower businesses to securely enable employees to work from home were not designed to handle the demands that a change in behavior like this causes.

Some key risks you need to focus on are:

- **Untrusted networks:** Provide guidance to employees on best practices regarding security on their home network. With Microsoft Defender Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) on the employee's devices you will have visibility over risks before they become issues.
- **Least privilege access:** Understand which users have increased requirements for security, such as those handling sensitive data. Focus on securing identities by leveraging Azure Active Directory conditional access to dynamically provide the right level of access to your business-critical applications at the right time to the right person. Consider using Azure Active Directory B2B for enabling collaboration with your partners and suppliers. Establish SSO with critical applications to reduce identity compromises.
- **Data protection:** Using Microsoft Teams for collaboration helps to control where data resides and is processed. The security policies in Teams and Office 365 can extend to corporate-owned devices or even personal devices. Configure Microsoft Rights Management and Information Protection for classifying and managing sensitive corporate data at rest and in motion.
- **Endpoint analytics:** Configure analytics and automation into endpoint management detection and response programs to reduce the amount of human intervention required.
- **Endpoint protection:** Enable bring your own device (BYOD) for employees and partners, and enhance security and compliance of corporate assets by leveraging endpoint management solutions like Intune.
- **Policies and behaviors:** Review and assign policies to ensure and enforce secure behaviors. In parallel, provide employees with clear, prescriptive guidance to help them adopt the behaviors required to remain secure in remote working scenarios.

How do I get started? The time is now.

Every deferred decision has real consequences for people, business and society. Time is of the essence.

Here's a quick summary of how you can rapidly create a highly effective Elastic Digital Workplace:

1. The top priority is to immediately help employees adapt to remote working and optimize the experience to maximize productivity, including how to effectively run large and small virtual meetings.
2. Immediately deploy or scale the use of collaboration tools, such as Microsoft Teams, and provide targeted prescriptive guidance for effective productivity for the remotely connected workforce.
3. Organize an Elastic Digital Workplace task force today with representation from the business, Legal, HR, IT, Marketing and Communications, and Security.
4. Equip traditional desktop workers with mobile solutions and implement virtual desktop solutions from the Microsoft ecosystem to provide secure remote access to applications and data.
5. Use the experience available through Accenture, Avanade and Microsoft and take advantage of limited free-use solutions from our ecosystem of strategic partners and providers to rapidly scale your capabilities to meet the new demand.

How do Accenture and Avanade manage their Elastic Digital Workplace?

Avanade's global workforce of more than 500,000 people is highly distributed and accustomed to working in an elastic workplace environment. Here's how we approach the topics highlighted in this paper:

- 1. Pervasive and scaled use of Microsoft 365:** Our people are accustomed to a highly distributed and cloud-based way of working relying on Microsoft 365 to create, connect and collaborate. We have deployed Microsoft Teams to our entire global workforce, and we are intensive users of calling/conference and video. In fact, our people use about 400 million minutes of voice every month. And we rely on Pexip as a bridging solution to allow Microsoft Teams to be used across other conferencing services and endpoints.
- 2. Digital worker change and adoption:** A staff of highly trained digital worker change and adoption professionals, as well as a larger, distributed network of champions, train our people on modern ways of working from the cloud.
- 3. Leading from the front:** To demonstrate the new ways of working, it was critical that our people observed the new behaviors in the way our senior leadership works. Our leaders empowered our team to make the right decisions, encouraging flexible working, communicating frequently and providing holistic support. A few examples include having leaders turn on video on calls, using collaborative Microsoft Teams sites instead of relying on emails, and collaborating on files in the cloud instead of emailing them back and forth.
- 4. Business continuity team:** We are actively managing the evolving COVID-19 health crisis, with the safety and well-being of our people as our top priority, while continuing to serve our clients during this time. We are following direction from international health organizations, local governments as well as our own safety and security protocols, and actively monitoring the situation through a network of outside experts and organizations that provide us real-time information. Where applicable, we are following local government direction on office working arrangements, including self-quarantine and working remotely from home where appropriate. In line with our Infectious Diseases Plan, we are keeping our people updated and reinforcing our standard hygiene guidelines.

Continued >

How do Accenture and Avanade manage their Elastic Digital Workplace?

- 5. A scaled and modern network:** Our employees are enabled to work anytime and from anywhere securely all around the world. We have a global distributed team that supports connectivity with resilient circuits in each office and in our global WAN. We are cloud powered, and 95% of our capabilities required to serve our people are served through public cloud services, e.g., Microsoft 365, finance, legal, HR applications. Our people can work from home securely using their managed devices.
- 6. Device enablement:** We support a wide array of device types. Most computers are company owned and comply to strict security standards allowing for secure work from any location around the world. We also support a wide range of mobile phones and tablets, most of which are employee owned. To enable communication and to protect our data and the privacy of our employees, we have deployed both mobile device management and mobile application management through Microsoft Intune.

How can Avanade help?

Here are the immediate next steps that we can help you put into action:

1. **Within 24 hours** – Assess your current state. Analyze your current technology capabilities and your ability to scale out internally, including your current communications plan and support structure.
2. **Within 72 hours** – Identify how you can leverage existing technologies more effectively.
3. **Within five days** – Develop a leadership and culture awareness change plan. Include leadership communications that encourage employees to adopt key technologies that will enable them to work in this new environment, including conducting virtual meetings and large-scale events.
4. **Within two weeks** – Rapidly modernize and scale your collaboration capabilities as well as your workforce engagement plans. Identify how to expand your workplace to the periphery, including a focus on home networking, broader networking, security, upgrading other tools and capabilities. Explore ways to help your people learn and embrace new ways of working with each other.
5. **Also within two weeks** – Gain access to remote working content that can help you to define and implement your Elastic Digital Workplace roadmap.
6. **Going forward** – Develop a comprehensive Workplace Experience strategy and roadmap. Improve business agility, robustness and create sustainable business value by establishing a far-reaching and actionable plan for improving Workplace Experience through reimagining culture and employee experience, modernizing technologies and transforming business operations.

Elastic Digital Workplace foundations are the first step. But how do you build on them with a wider workplace transformation to achieve meaningful, durable change?

Elevate the performance of your business operations and become ready to adapt and thrive during both business-as-usual and uncertain times by expanding your remote working plan into a far-reaching and impactful Workplace Experience strategy.

Research by [MIT CISR](#) shows that companies that invest in a Workplace Experience strategy are able to:

- Increase profitability by 26%
- Halve the time to market for new products and services, generating new sales and revenues more quickly
- Double customer satisfaction scores

The rewards are tangible

Companies making big leaps in Workplace Experience (WX) are seeing corresponding uplift across the business, with measurable improvements in growth, profitability, efficiency, innovation and customer experience. According to [Avanade research](#), they're proving the power of WX and delivering results including:

- 16% potential boost to revenue
- 13% anticipated reduction in operating costs

For visionary business leaders, the opportunity is enormous. It's time to realize that value.



Further information

- [COVID-19 – we're here to help](#)
- [Microsoft Teams Rapid Deployment Resource Center](#)
- [Workplace Experience](#)

North America

Seattle
Phone +1 206 239 5600
America@avanade.com

South America

Sao Paulo
AvanadeBrasil@avanade.com

Asia-Pacific

Australia
Phone +61 2 9005 5900
AsiaPac@avanade.com

Europe

London
Phone +44 0 20 7025 1000
Europe@avanade.com

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help make a human impact on our clients, their customers and their employees. We are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Avanade has 38,000 professionals in 25 countries, bringing clients our best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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