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A DocuWare Survey

Optimize your mobile workforce

See where businesses fell short responding to COVID-19 and learn how to prepare for the future

Introduction

This ebook was published during the COVID-19 pandemic but the insights will remain useful for organizations engaged in long-term planning of remote and mobile teams.

DocuWare recently polled 534 business owners and managers in charge of whether employees worked remotely during the coronavirus pandemic. Around 29% noted that *some* employees were working from home, and 30% said *all* employees were working from home.

That's roughly 60% of businesses managing a remote workforce during this time. This is more than double from just two years prior: according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, during 2017 and 2018 only around 29% of workers even had the option for working from home, and even then only about 25% of them did.

This is a sudden and dramatic shift from traditional to mobile workforces. Companies are scrambling to develop processes that support employees and the business' goals alike.

Understanding the types of challenges companies faced when navigating the coronavirus pandemic, and how DocuWare solutions and technology addresses the new and unique challenges of a mobile workforce, can help you future-proof your employee management strategy.

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Chapter **01**

What is
a mobile
workforce?

"Mobile workforce" versus "occasionally working from home"

A mobile workforce is a team that doesn't need to sit within a common office location to get the job done. Instead, the team is digitally connected, and its processes leverage mobile devices, apps and other technologies to ensure collaboration and a successful workflow.

A well-equipped and prepared mobile workforce isn't the same thing as people who can occasionally work from home.

Before COVID-19, work-from-home measures for many businesses included examples like workers using email and VPN access to shared drives, or workers who might have used their work laptops to spend a day fielding customer calls from their home office. But work-from-home policies were often not standardized, and companies had not invested in the tools to streamline remote, distributed workflow.

In other words, not all tasks could be completed if a person was out of the office. The coronavirus pandemic revealed that many businesses were not ready for a truly mobile workforce.

Putting aside companies like restaurants that require on-site labor, 45% of organizations that were able to shift some or all employees to remote working said they were, at best, only partially prepared or, at worst, were not prepared at all.

45% of companies were not fully prepared

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Were companies prepared to deploy mobile workforces during the COVID-19 crisis?

Prior to the pandemic, just under 50% of companies had invested in digitization of document creation and collaboration tools, which are critical technical requirements in mobile workforce management. Organizations were even less prepared in other areas.

→ **Just over 40%** had worked to digitize employee records, HR processes and contract management, including the use of electronic signatures

→ **Less than 40%** had created digital archives of corporate records

→ **Only 36%** had automated finance and accounting processes

→ Around **1 in 5 companies** had not implemented any initiatives to digitize processes or create support for mobile workforces prior to the COVID-19 crisis

40% had digitized HR and contract management

36% had automated accounting processes

>**60**% had failed to securely digitize corporate records

Technology to support mobile workforces is now a requirement

Without the software and processes to effectively manage remote and distributed work, many companies struggled to hit production goals, achieve planned strategies or even manage employees.

Team members often struggled to understand what their new requirements were, how to meet them, and how to communicate with each other. In hindsight, better preparation with digital workflow, electronic document management, collaboration tools, cloud software, and modern hardware like laptops and smartphones would have made a big difference.

Today's businesses must support mobile workforces for a variety of reasons, including:

⟶ **Business continuity** during emergencies or disasters

⟶ The ability to hire outside of traditional geographic areas to **get the best possible talent**

⟶ Options to provide **accessible jobs** for those with disabilities or circumstances that make it difficult to work full-time out of the home

⟶ Better positioning as an attractive employer, especially for younger generations who value **flexibility** as much or more than some traditional job perks

Chapter **02**

The biggest mobile workforce challenges for unprepared companies

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The biggest mobile workforce challenges for unprepared companies

Whether you're establishing a long-term roadmap or trying to support your mobile workforce through an emergency launch right now, you will likely run into some challenges.

DocuWare asked companies who had launched mobile workforces during the coronavirus pandemic about their biggest challenges. A summary of their feedback:

→ **Communication** is the most common challenge, with 48% of respondents saying it's challenging to communicate with other employees and efficiently keep everyone in the loop

→ **Slow VPN connections** are the second most-mentioned issue, with teams dealing with significant lag as they try to access files and software not hosted in the cloud

→ Almost a third of respondents noted that keeping documents organized and centralized while also **enforcing compliance and security** are challenges when everyone is working remotely

→ Understanding the **status of processes** is a challenge for more than 1 in 4 companies

48% said communication was the biggest challenge

30% were worried about document security

The most important processes that must work – whether remote or not

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, many businesses dragged their feet in investing in mobile workforce solutions because they didn't believe critical processes could run via remote and distributed models.

The COVID-19 crisis challenged all companies on this assumption. Not surprisingly, people and finances top the list, with more than 40% of companies saying ensuring timely payroll, managing HR functions and handling accounting tasks such as billing and collections were most critical.

DocuWare asked companies which processes were most critical to support effective production and business management.

→ **41%** said accounts payable, legal processes and contract management were most critical

→ **Almost a third** of respondents noted that it was most important to enable sales teams to continue work uninterrupted

→ **Around 1 in 5 companies** felt onboarding new employees was most critical, even during the stay-at-home environment of the COVID-19 crisis

41% said accounting, contracts and legal processes were most important

30% said sales must continue work uninterrupted

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"What if you could go back in time?"

Hindsight is 20/20. That's never been more apparent to businesses than during the 2020 pandemic.

DocuWare asked survey respondents, "If you could go back in time before the coronavirus pandemic, what processes or digitization initiatives would you implement to better prepare for a remote workforce?" Here are tips pulled straight from the reflections of business leaders dealing with mobile workforce integration during COVID-19.

1. **Deploy a partial or part-time mobile workforce to get used to distributed models.**
   This includes providing training on mobile solutions and collaboration tools, and equipping workers with the hardware and software they need to communicate and complete tasks. Respondents said they would have had team members work from home periodically to ensure everyone was used to the processes and environment.

2. **Take advantage of cloud storage and software solutions.**
   Many people said in hindsight, most — if not all — processes should have been cloud-based to allow for a more seamless rollout to remote work.

3. **Build culture digitally as well as in-person.**
   You've likely heard plenty about Zoom meetings during the COVID-19 crisis, but that's just one collaborative tool. Many respondents said they would have invested more money and time into using real-time collaboration tools so employees could feel connected despite geographic distance.

4. **Have an emergency or disaster plan in place.**
   Respondents noted that they simply weren't prepared for an emergency as well as they assumed. Reviewing the disaster response plan and ensuring it's current, practical and actionable was a key learning for many.

How companies use DocuWare to support their mobile workforce

Cloud software: what everyone agrees on

Is DocuWare secure?

How valuable are cloud solutions when you need to manage a mobile workforce? According to DocuWare's survey, **92%** of respondents said they were **valuable to critical business functions**, especially when teams work remotely.

DocuWare is available as an on-premises solution, a multitenant cloud solution, or in hybrid configurations with complete feature parity across any deployment option. Most customers select the cloud version for all of the advantages this ebook highlights.
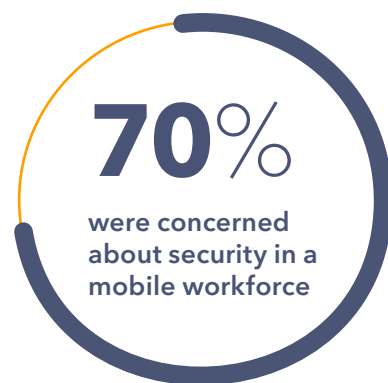
Security is always a priority, and that is heightened with a mobile workforce. When DocuWare asked respondents how concerned they were about information security when dealing with a remote workforce, more than 70% said they were somewhat, very, or extremely concerned.

DocuWare prioritizes security. This includes:

Transparency to document versions, ownership and access rights.

Completely traceable and logged workflows to understand the status of any process and audit those steps afterward.

Multiple layers of storage backup for protection in disasters.

Full encryption in every transaction.

Separation of customer data and DocuWare systems.

92% said cloud was critical to a mobile workforce

70% were concerned about security in a mobile workforce

How companies use DocuWare to support their mobile workforce

Now and in the future, where a worker sits should not affect their ability to deliver 100% of their work. DocuWare is designed to support every employee, no matter their location.

Industry-leading digitization tools enable you to **go paperless** with your documents. Capture, store, organize and retrieve them instantly without ever touching a paper document again.

Digital workflow enables **digital process automation**. For example, DocuWare can manage the complete process of incoming invoices, from indexing of key data, automatic approvals and routing, and then data sync with accounting software like QuickBooks, SAP or Sage.

Advanced **document management** keeps files secure and organized. For example, centralized employee records enable employees to access important information and the HR team to complete their own processes — from any location, on any device.

Access via **browser clients and mobile apps** enables work to be completed on any device, from any location, at any time.

Optimize your Workforce with DocuWare

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About

DocuWare

DocuWare office automation solutions deliver smart digital workflow and document control that set a new pace for worker productivity and business performance. DocuWare's zero-compromise cloud services are a recognized best-fit for digitizing, automating and transforming key processes. DocuWare operates in 90 countries with head-quarters in Germany and the U.S.

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