

Work anywhere you want



Business people of the world unplug, you have nothing to lose but the constraints of your office. Find out how to work, communicate and get online wherever you want to work.

Technology has set us free to work wherever and whenever we want. Whether we're calling clients on our mobile phones or picking up email and getting work done on a smartphone, nearly every entrepreneur benefits from mobile working. But are you getting the most out of your technology? Could your staff benefit from more flexibility?

The benefits of mobility

Mobile working – using technology to work at home, during our commute, when we're with clients or pretty much anywhere else – has grown enormously in the last few years. No wonder. The benefits are clear:

- **Be more responsive.** You can deal with orders, new business enquiries and problems much faster.
- **More flexibility.** Many entrepreneurs chose to be self-employed so that they could work when and where they want. (Hence the old joke that an entrepreneur has to work 24 hours a day but at least they get to choose which 24.) Mobile working makes this possible.
- **Improved productivity.** Companies that let staff work flexibly see a rise in productivity of 15-31 percent¹. Extending the benefits of mobile and flexible working can be very profitable.

TOP TIP: two for the price of one

Microsoft Office 2010 Home & Business and Professional include a licence that allows you to install the software on your desktop and laptop, providing that you are the primary user on both machines. This cuts the cost of using the latest applications when you're out of the office.

Yet, however much owners love their flexibility, only one in eight small businesses let their staff work virtually at least once a week². The rest could be missing out.

Getting online

There are two main ways to get online when you are not connected to the internet in your office. The first is Wi-Fi, also known as wireless networking. Most laptops and smartphones can use this technology and it is capable of high-speed links, but it requires a base station that is physically connected to the internet. Usually offices or homes have such a router but when you are away from them, it can be difficult to find an open connection. If you have a wireless router it is strongly advised to password-protect them to keep out freeloaders and hackers.

This is where the second option – 3G mobile broadband – comes in. This uses the mobile phone network to make a data connection to the internet. Unlike Wi-Fi at home or in the office, you have to pay for the connection wherever you are – it's like using your mobile phone except that you pay for the amount of data you use rather than the length of your calls. Phone companies sell smartphones with 3G mobile broadband contracts as well as plug-in USB dongles for laptops, and standalone SIM chips for computers that have a 3G modem built in. Like a phone, you can pay as you go or get a monthly contract. It is recommended to monitor usage and be careful about downloading more data than your monthly allowance – especially when travelling abroad. Another downside to 3G mobile broadband is performance. If you have a good connection, you can get broadband

speeds but if you're moving around or in a poor coverage area, things can slow down.

The best approach is to have both options and use Wi-Fi whenever possible. That way you should be able to get online pretty much anywhere but still get low-cost, high-speed connections when you need them most.

Keep your laptop safe and secure

"Take care of your laptop," advises Tony Neate, Managing Director of [Get Safe Online](#), a joint initiative between government, law enforcement, business and the public sector. "They're easy to steal and easy to sell, but if a thief takes your data, you could lose a lot more than the cost of buying a new PC." He recommends encrypting sensitive data, using software such as Microsoft [BitLocker Drive Encryption](#) in Windows 7 Professional. Cable locks, permanent security marking and common sense can also help to prevent theft and data loss. "Mobile working is great," says Neate, "but you have to use your common sense and protect your business."

Tools for remote working

"It's never been easier to take your files with you wherever you go," says Chris Adams, Office Product Manager at Microsoft. "With [Windows Live SkyDrive](#), I can save files to secure storage on the internet directly from my Office 2010 applications and then they're accessible anywhere I have a web connection." SkyDrive gives you 25GB of free online storage and you can use it to store your files and share them (using access control) with other people.

With Microsoft Office Web Apps you can view and edit Office files using web-based versions of familiar applications like Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel. "Web apps are not designed to replace the desktop client but they're a great way of extending the office experience wherever you go," says Adams. They retain the full fidelity of the original files but offer limited editing features. You could use them to add comments to someone else's documents, correct typos, update prices or fine-tune a presentation before you deliver it. There are other ways to keep your files synchronised. For example, you can use the [Sync Center](#) in Windows 7 to synchronise files on your laptop with files on your

Mobile working tips

- Invest in a smart phone. A Windows Phone 7 smart phone keeps you in touch with your email and diary and has pocket versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint so you're always close to your key documents.
- Noise cancelling headphones. Cut out noise and disruptions.
- Duplicate power supply. Keep a laptop power supply at home and the office so you don't need to keep carrying it back and forth.
- Docking station. Turn your laptop into a desktop when you need to.
- Keep backups. Use an online backup strategy so your files are stored safely whenever you are connected to the internet and not just when you're in the office.
- Use a mouse on a laptop. Don't get RSI by using a laptop track pad all day, every day; use a portable mouse.
- Save weight. Charge portable devices like music players and cameras using a USB cable rather than separate power supplies.
- Consider a Wi-Fi hotspot network. Companies like [The Cloud](#) and [BT OpenZone](#) will give you access to thousands of Wi-Fi hotspots.

office computer or server. You can also use Microsoft SharePoint, a private website and file sharing system, to store files and share them with colleagues. It's a sophisticated, powerful system and you can run it on your own server computer or pay for SharePoint Online as part of the Microsoft [Business Productivity Online Suite](#). This is an online, hosted communications and collaboration system that operates on the internet without the need for paying up front for on-site hardware and software. It gives you access to the same technology that large companies use without the big company overheads.

Windows Phone 7

Microsoft's new phone operating system, [Windows Phone 7](#), promises new capabilities for smartphones, including high-resolution multitouch screens, 5-megapixel cameras and support for Microsoft Bing search, Xbox Live gaming and an advanced Internet Explorer web browser.

Adobe has announced that it will release Flash Player 10.1 on the system.

For business users, it includes the full suite of Office 2010 Mobile applications, with mobile versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote as well as email, diary and contacts via Outlook.

Staying in touch

Communicating via email, instant messaging, voice and video chat is another key part of mobile working. When it comes to email, "Outlook Anywhere (Exchange ActiveSync) is a necessity, we couldn't live without it – every business should use this as standard," according to Justin Sherwood, Managing Director, [Serium](#), a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner.

Microsoft Exchange Server ensures that you and your staff can email one another, share calendars and contacts and keep everything synchronised between smartphones, PCs, notebooks and even access a web-based email client. You can run Exchange on a Windows Small Business Server 2008 computer in your office – and get the benefits of an on-premise server such as greater control, flexibility and support for networked computers or rent it on a per-user, per-month basis as part of the Microsoft [Business Productivity Online Suite](#) and have the benefits of not needing to worry about upgrades

For smaller businesses with fewer employees and without the need for a sophisticated email system, Microsoft Office Live gives you web-based email, calendar and contacts. You can access your messages via the web, on many smartphones or with Microsoft Outlook, so it is very flexible.

For more information

- [Windows Live SkyDrive](#)
- [Microsoft Office Live](#)
- [Microsoft Business Productivity Online Suite](#)

¹ <http://www.smeweb.com/management/top-tips/making-remote-working-work-031008.html>

² [Ibid.](#)