



# **CONNECT REMOTE EMPLOYEES WITH YAMMER AND TEAMS**

# THE LANDSCAPE

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A steady rise in homes with broadband, the boom of free WiFi hotspots, 4G mobile network and the introduction of the 5G mobile network, have changed – and will continue to evolve – the way we work, run our offices and manage our teams.

*Work From Home* by exception is rapidly morphing into *Work From Anywhere* as the norm for a rising number of businesses.

As a result the number of critical, full-time employees working in different locations, geographies and even time zones has **grown by over 90%** in the last decade\*.

Historically the phrase ‘remote workers’ was synonymous with colleagues working in distant offices and evoked a sense of isolated individuals unconnected to the heart of the main business.

Today, businesses advocating remote workers are making a declaration for employees’ individual needs, freedoms and the sense of trust they have in their workforce.



# THE LANDSCAPE

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Across the UK business working practices have evolved to **embrace a remote working culture**, and from SME's to Blue Chip organisations there has been **an explosion in both part and full time remote-working teams**.

A recent Harvard Business School study claims that when companies let their workers decide where and when they are going to do their jobs they see an increase in productivity, a reduction in employee turnover, and lower operating costs\*.

**But the shift in business and individual attitudes cannot be attributed to improvements in internet access alone.**

Huge leaps in the technology, function and availability of truly usable collaboration tools have made remote working viable, convenient, efficient and – deployed properly – engaging for employees and employers alike.



THE BENEFITS OF HOME WORKING OPTIONS ARE LARGELY REPORTED FROM BOTH INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS PERSPECTIVES; COST EFFICIENCIES, TIME EFFICIENCIES, EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS AND RETENTION.

IN THIS GUIDE WE LOOK AT THE PART THE MICROSOFT 365 PLAYS IN DRIVING AND SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – THE BENEFIT THAT UNDERPINS IT ALL.

# **THE WORK FROM ANYWHERE CHALLENGES:**

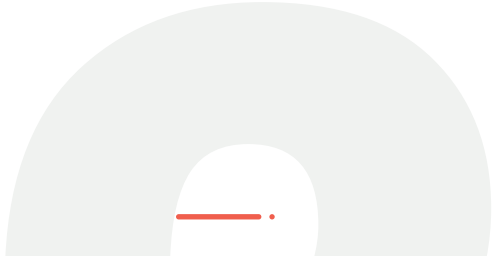
- 1. Communication**
- 2. Productivity**
- 3. Visibility  
& Recognition**
- 4. Culture**

# COMMUNICATION

Probably the biggest challenge for employees working remotely is staying connected to their organisation. From company announcements and briefings, to task management and collaboration, communication equals connection for businesses and individuals. It's hard to compensate for missing the passive information gathering that happens naturally in an office – at the kettle, across the desks or in the lunch queue.

The key is establishing distinct and appropriate communication streams, where company communication is consistent and trustworthy, and collaborative channels are always available, open, honest and true-to-life.

# 2 PRODUCTIVITY



Although many find working away from the buzz of an office highly beneficial, productivity can suffer without the focus of on-the-ground team and task management. When tasks are distributed granularly – for example when working in an agile way – how can an individual maintain a consistent focus? And when work requires collaboration to deliver an outcome together, how can a team share progress and ideas?

Your people are undoubtedly the most valuable asset in your organisation, with information a close second, and keeping your teams connected and data flowing is vital for maximising productivity.

# VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

For every role, at every level, individuals need to feel visible; seen, heard, included, and understood. For remote workers – where there is an absence of physical proximity and the ambient awareness of one's place in a team – this challenge is even greater.

Recognition of a team or individual is vital for engaging and inspiring employees. And recognising remote workers requires a little more thought than relying on the opportunity to throw in a “good job” at the end of a meeting. A remote worker may not only miss out on the inferred recognition from being surrounded by a high-performing team, but could also suffer from the perception of absence, and therefore a lack of contribution.

# 4

## CULTURE

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The behaviours and beliefs of your organisation can have a significant impact on employee wellbeing and productivity, but culture is a delicate balance to manage, particularly when you have even a small percentage of your employees working remotely. Get the balance right and you can ensure a motivated and connected workforce regardless of their location.

# YOUR PEOPLE-LED COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Consideration of the specific behaviours and motivations of office-based, remote-working and non-screen-based teams (such as shop floor and warehouse staff), and how these teams can best connect and work efficiently, is crucial to the success of any internal communication and supporting technology strategy.

When building your communication strategy, first understand:

**WHO ARE** your employees? – recognise the distinct personas within your organisation. They have different needs and ways of interacting with you and each other.

**HOW** do these personas communicate? – by video conference, text, call or email?

**WHEN** are they interacting? – are they logged-on and communicating consistently through the working day, or are they only connecting at key times?

**WHAT** tools do they use now?

By setting this picture against the vision of communicating, engaged teams that you have for your organisation you can identify the behavioural, skills and tools gap. Your communication strategy should look to close this gap and to create and support this vision.

# THE MICROSOFT 365 LANDSCAPE

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Over a million organisations globally are currently utilising Microsoft Office 365 to manage their communication and collaboration, with the Yammer and Teams tools key to delivering the end-user experience.

Cement your culture by establishing common practice across your organisation that cuts across the spectrum of communication and engagement channels and utilises tools consistently and effectively.

Remember, when the communication strategy takes hold and is adopted effectively across the business – it's often because the CEO and Senior Leadership team are committed and visibly using the tools.



# **YAMMER** **AND** **TEAMS**



# YAMMER

Part of the Microsoft 365 suite, Yammer is a private platform for enterprise social networking. It was designed for business user to easily collaborate with each other on projects and tasks. Yammer allows organisations to engage and inform employees and customers with media-rich live and streamed content broadcasts – to up to 10,000 attendees – along with the opportunity for seamless, simultaneous interactive discussion.



# TEAMS

Teams is the chat-based workspace in Microsoft 365. Teams is designed for communication and collaboration, including video, chat, file storage and is naturally integrated with familiar Office applications.

Both platforms are specifically designed to break down the boundaries of office vs remote teams differentiation. Yammer and Teams allow seamless communication and collaboration wherever the user is based and however they choose to work.



# **HOW YAMMER AND TEAMS MEET THE REMOTE WORKERS CHALLENGES HEAD ON**

- 1. Communication**
- 2. Productivity**
- 3. Visibility  
& Recognition**
- 4. Culture**

# 1 COMMUNICATION

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The Microsoft 365 platform cuts across core communication loops, providing tools to support interactions at individual, team and company-wide levels. **Teams** and **Yammer** play essential roles at both a group and organisation level respectively. With these tools consistently and frequently used across the organisation, the opportunity to keep your remote workforce plugged into company communications is almost endless.

**Yammer** is positioned as a broadcast connector across business structures, so is a perfect channel for regular company or team-wide announcements and information sharing. **Teams**, however, is the living space where individuals, teams and groups collaborate to get work done.

Striking the right attitude and maintaining a balance in these channels is vital and requires company and team leaders to pave the way, set expectations and stay involved. Through **Teams** Project Leads can establish threads and start conversations, setting the tone and stimulating conversation. **Yammer** allows a myriad of communication styles, such as video announcements and live broadcasts, pushing key information to individuals regardless of location or device.



# 2 PRODUCTIVITY

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Sharing information across geographies, disciplines, and often time zones, strengthens connections and improves engagement for all, but for the remote worker a steady reliable source and flow of information is vital to stay connected and productive. However remote your workforce, or disparate your teams, **Yammer Communities and Teams** are reliable, engaging tools to plug individual employees into the heart of the organisation on a day-to-day basis.

The **Teams** channel structure has been specifically designed to enable people to effectively meet, build, share and innovate together, creating a virtual workspace for common deliverables.

For a Microsoft 365 business the working day no longer starts with an **Outlook** login, and subsequent applications being opened as the day progresses. **Teams** provides each employee, regardless of their location, their own single view into the wider working community, with multiple communication and collaboration applications automatically plugged in, logged in and buzzing away.

With productivity measurement likely to be key in the next phase of MS AI capabilities, we are expecting to see interactions on **Teams, Yammer** and Teams-hosted meetings being captured as data points in **My Analytics** and contributing to overall company productivity KPI tracking of employee focus, wellbeing and collaboration effectiveness.

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## VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION



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Feeling connected to the central organisation, and warmly and accurately recognised by leadership and peers alike, can be an automatic path to employee engagement. Remote workers with a solid connection to the central office can still feel the positive effects of spontaneous celebrations of success, ad hoc plaudits and a general sense of a job well done.

Open communities established in **Yammer** promote unbiased visibility and an open platform to share project updates, knowledge and recognition. And **M365** offers a seamless transition through **Yammer** to join specific **Teams** channels and continue the collaboration.

Teams gives us the opportunity to ‘**work out loud**’ with every file shared, meeting attended, or conversation contributed to is visible to peers through a username stamp, making the employee visible, developing trust between colleagues and deepening a sense of relatedness.

If a comment or document is deemed to provide value to others, recognition through likes or further comments is flagged to the individual with a notification. These small gestures go a long way to provide positive feedback for the remote worker and deliver recognition that may not even have been given if working face-to-face.

# 3.

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**Teams** uses the one-click social feedback tools – Like, Sad, Laugh, etc – that we are all familiar with as colleagues are recognised in real-time for a comment, question or document share. For more stand-out or one-off acknowledgement, Teams offers **praise badges** which can be used for a team or individual who has made an outstanding effort towards the team goals.

These familiar icons play beautifully into the well-established psychology of social media, pervasive in our everyday lives. A psychological study in 2016\* confirmed that the same neural circuits that are activated by eating chocolate and winning money are also switched on when we see large numbers of likes. It is undeniable that – for the remote worker – this kind of acknowledgement and interaction with colleagues improves a feeling of connectedness and engagement. The study also showed that seeing likes on a stranger's post made participants of the study engage more with it, and so a virtuous cycle of recognition and engagement is triggered.

# 4 CULTURE

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The culture of your organisation doesn't begin and end at the office door. Rather it is in the beliefs and behaviours of your employees wherever they are, and whatever they are doing – engaging with customers or interacting with each other. And, for the remote worker, feeling part of that culture is an essential path to engaging with the company goals and spirit.

Promoting open sharing and communication through Yammer can help develop a sense of community and inclusion for both remote and office-based staff. Visuals, graphics, GIF animations, emojis and gamification all support a strategy of open, enjoyable and realistic collaboration. Creating well-trained Teams and Yammer champions throughout the organisation – and driving from the top by exemplifying the behaviours at a senior level – will help promote active engagement.

The 'real' nature of the communication styles used through **Yammer and Teams** can help to blur the lines between tech at home and tech at work and, in some ways, negate the impact of lack of direct human interaction. Having senior leadership and influencers promote using video enabled calls rather than voice calls help to improve the direct face to face interaction.



**BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER  
WHEREVER THEY WORK**





# CONNECTING A REMOTE GLOBAL TEAM

## UNILEVER HAIR HUB CASE STUDY

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Part of Unilever R&D, the Global Unilever Hair Specialist Team consists of 500 specialists working across continents, managing vast ranges of existing and developing products. As part of a company-wide digital transformation project to align the business through Microsoft 365, they wanted to drive community and project engagement via Yammer and Teams.

Silicon Reef worked closely with the Hair Hub leadership team to build a community strategy – looking at the needs of field and head office staff across the globe. It was agreed that bringing Yammer and Teams into the business could have a hugely positive impact on productivity, community engagement and individual/project recognition as well as overall communication.

As part of the technology transition, Silicon Reef created an engagement and communication approach, including selecting and educating Yammer and Teams Champions to encourage peer adoption to ensure effective adoption of the tools. The biggest champion was, and is still, the Vice President of Hair who engages through the channels daily – posting, commenting and sharing. This approach has inspired an active and successful community.

# UNILEVER HAIR HUB

The Hair Hub community has become a flagship of successful team communication within Unilever. The approach and tools have been identified as the blueprint for internal communication strategies and is being rolled out across other categories within the organisation.

## KEY SUCCESSES

- Hair team – 500 employees, 95% user adoption
- VP and leadership team – Yammer and Teams Champions
- Over 800 Yammer posts in 6 months
- 66,750 read messages
- 4,500+ likes
- Shift to primary communication method vs email is being well adopted
- Cross category open community sharing of ideas leading to innovation

# ABOUT SILICON REEF

Silicon Reef are **experts in all things M365, SharePoint and crafting strategies that support both office-based and remote teams**. We know the Microsoft toolkit inside and out and are proud to be an accredited Microsoft Silver Partner.

We have supported a multitude of national and international businesses in their transformation of internal communications platforms, whether it's the design and development of a new SharePoint platform or delivering adoption and communication strategies around an existing framework.

Our approach has always been personal, hands-on and collaborative. We work with our clients to gain a deep understanding of their goals, and work hand-in-hand with stakeholders to design a solution – and an execution – that fits the unique character of the business.

**ARE YOU READY  
TO SEE HOW WE  
CAN HELP YOU  
BETTER ENGAGE &  
INSPIRE YOUR  
REMOTE TEAM  
WITH M365?**



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