

**Channel Partners™**



# Business-Class Internet in the Work-from-Home Era

Remote workers need the same level of services  
and security as they would have in the office.

By James Anderson

PRESENTED WITH

**Channel Futures™**

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[channelpartnersonline.com](http://channelpartnersonline.com)

<b>The Work-from-Home Trend . . . . .</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Challenges . . . . .</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A New Priority. . . . .</b>	<b>8</b>

S050820



[Previous](#)[Next](#)

# ABOUT US

[channelpartnersonline.com](http://channelpartnersonline.com)

## Channel Partners

For nearly 30 years, Channel Partners has been the leader in providing news and analysis to indirect sales channels serving the communications industry. It is the unrivaled resource for resellers, agents, VARs, systems integrators, cloud and digital services providers and consultants that provide network-based communications and computing services, applications, cloud services, managed and professional services — and more.

[ChannelPartnersOnline.com](http://ChannelPartnersOnline.com) is the official media partner of [Channel Partners Conference & Expo](#), the world's largest channel event.

## Channel Futures

[Channel Futures](#) unites the diverse ecosystem of companies that comprise the “evolving channel,” which includes MSPs, systems integrators, born-in-the-cloud digital services companies, specialized services providers, agents, VARs and consultants who recommend digital services.

[ChannelFutures.com](http://ChannelFutures.com) co-produces the [CP Evolution](#) event.

Together [Channel Partners](#) and [Channel Futures](#) provide inspiration, insights and tools to help every partner thrive in a new, digitally transformed world.

## About the Author



**JAMES ANDERSON** is a news editor for Channel Futures & Channel Partners, covering SD-WAN, networking, carriers and master agents. He co-founded Channel NX2Z, an organization that works to bridge the gap between millennials and their older counterparts. He holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

 [linkedin.com/in/james-anderson-74894a5a/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/james-anderson-74894a5a/)

 [@jamesandersoncp](https://twitter.com/jamesandersoncp)

Want More?

# Never Miss a Report!

 Follow

 Follow

 Follow

**W**ork has changed. The effects of COVID-19 are here to stay. In particular, the way the pandemic forced businesses to adopt remote working.

Employees set up shop in home offices across the country in March as business leaders navigated an unforeseen crisis. The initial frenzy to move staff out of the office is long gone now, but problems persist for home workers. Businesses report serious work-from-home difficulties, and it's not just awkward video call blunders. Bandwidth limitations, deficient monitoring and security flaws are just a few of the problems. This report examines how vendors and channel partners can use technology to help customers not only overcome remote working challenges, but positively impact business outcomes as well.

### The Work-from-Home Trend

Irwin Lazar, vice president and service director at [Nemertes Research](#), said 91% of companies support remote work. Moreover, 72% of workers are operating out of their homes. That number stood at 34% before COVID-19 hit.

"We're kind of at the point where anyone who can work from home *is*," Lazar said.

Jeff Heynen, [Dell'Oro Group's](#) senior research director for broadband access and home networking, said there is uncertainty in the marketplace about returning to the office. Although many U.S. officials expect a COVID-19 vaccine to arrive in early 2021, [Bloomberg writes](#) that the average American might need to wait to receive a vaccination until the

### Key Work-from-Home Trends

**91%** of companies support video conferencing for remote work.

**72%** of employees are working from home.

**82%** of companies expect to invest in extra video conferencing technology.

➔ Weekly video conferences have tripled since the start of COVID-19.



Source: Nemertes Research, "Visual Communications and Collaboration Research Study: 2020-21"

middle or the end of the year.

"Cable operators in the U.S. that I've spoken with are modeling anywhere from 20% to up to 70% of workforces remaining at home, even into next year," Heynen said.

Even though many businesses sent their workers home begrudgingly, some have changed their tune. For many companies, that's due to better-than-expected productivity. Others have realized the cost effectiveness.

"We've had people reach out and say, 'We run a 250-person call center, and we don't think we need real estate anymore,'" said Christian Nascimento, [Comcast Business'](#) vice president of product management.

Even if states authorize workforces to re-enter their offices, analysts don't expect a complete shift away from remote work. Lazar said companies might schedule employees to come in once a week. Heynen said we might see businesses forming "working pods" to ensure that

employees number fewer than 10 or 20 in any given location.

Joel Hoffman, [TBI's](#) director of information technology, said "hoteling" could catch on in the long-term, particularly in commuter-averse cities.

Hoteling is a method of office management that eliminates assigned seating. Instead, much like they would book a hotel room, employees schedule their use of workspaces such as desks, cubicles and offices. They also bring their own computers

and work supplies.

"If you could get two days at home a week, that would help your employee satisfaction rate. Your employees' personal work-life balance would be better," he said. "The company benefits by avoiding the cost of additional office space for a company that is growing. They don't need to increase desk space."

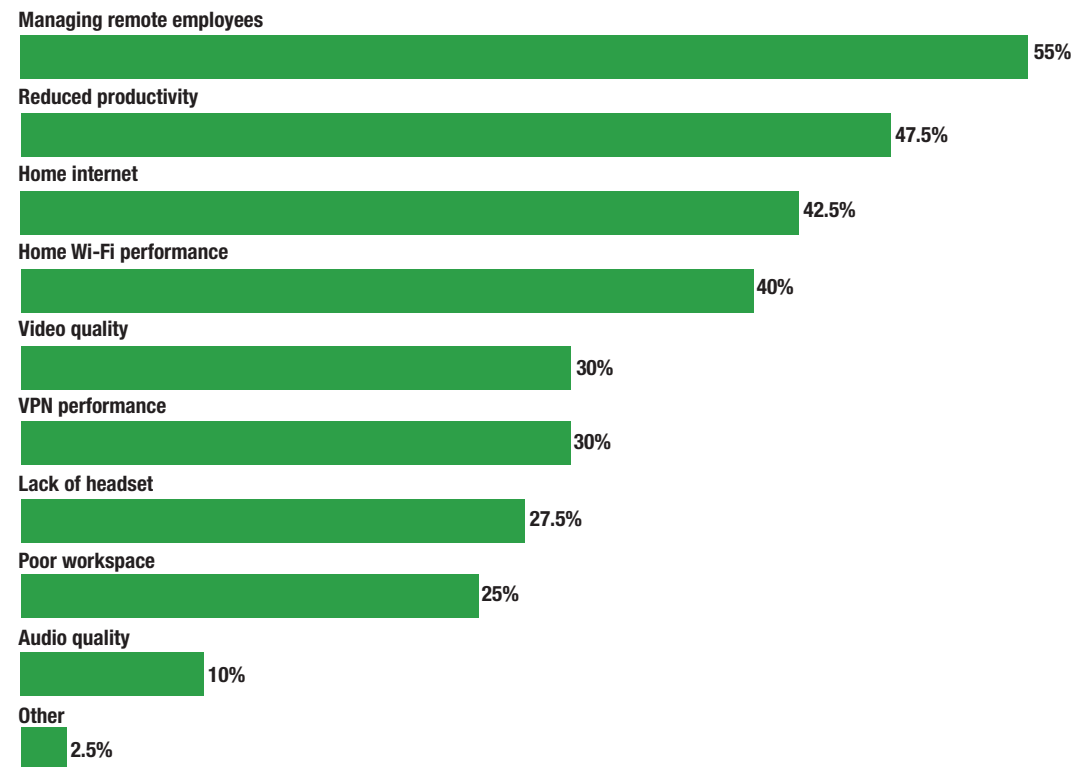
According to Lazar, one thing is for certain: Most businesses expect to work remotely in some fashion when the pandemic goes away.

"Only about 8% said, 'You know, we really want to go back to the way things were.' The majority are either going to say, 'If you're working from home and you're productive, continue,' or, 'We'll have a hybrid approach,'" he said.

Heynen echoed a sentiment we've been hearing frequently in channel circles recently; that businesses were surprised at how productive remote workers could be. Unfortunately, the efficiency has started to drop as more and more states relax shelter-in-place restrictions.

"We are seeing productivity rates drop a little bit, specifically in areas where life has sort of resumed to normal," Heynen said. "People didn't have the distractions that they did before and they were focused on work, staying at home, educating their kids. So people were putting in longer hours."

## Biggest Remote Work Challenges



Source: Nemertes Research, "Visual Communications and Collaboration Research Study: 2020-21"

### The Challenges

Reduced productivity is the second biggest work-from-home challenge for businesses, trailing only remote workforce management, according to Nemertes' latest Visual Communications and Collaboration Research Study. Home internet, home Wi-Fi performance, video quality and VPN performance rounded out the top six concerns.

The research firm interviewed 528 organizations in April and May about their work-from-home habits and pain points.

The study confirmed the massive role video is playing in remote work. Ninety-one percent of the companies are using video in their businesses, and the average number of weekly video calls has ticked up from 23 pre-pandemic to 68. They're also using real-time collaboration applications such as digital whiteboards.

The video uptick comes with consequences. The preponderance of conferencing and collaboration leads to a greater amount of upstream traffic. Heynen noted that cable operators designed home networks asymmetrically — meaning the networks dedicate far more bandwidth to downloads than uploads. The disparity emerges when remote jobs require the broadcast of multimedia. Factor in traffic from existing cloud-based security cameras and smart home devices, and the total is no small amount of upstream data.

"The focus has been, 'Let's provide 100 Mbps or 500 Mbps of downstream bandwidth and anywhere from 10-50 Mbps of upstream bandwidth. Because as residential users, we're streaming video and online gaming — these kinds of things that often didn't require heavy investment in the upstream bandwidth,'" Heynen said. "And numbers that we see advertised are of course are the downstream numbers. That's how as consumers we typically have made our decision. Well, the work-from-home environment has changed that significantly."

Poor connectivity is a key challenge for home workers. For some workers

---

“Now approximately 40% of businesses are offering Wi-Fi assessments, and another 35% are monitoring the quality of video and voice, according to Nemertes.”

---

the challenge might be setting up a Wi-Fi network in the first place.

"If I'm an employer and I've sent my team home, they're now a distributed workforce. I've kind of left them at the mercy of whatever decisions they've made," Nascimento said.

And for others, the problem is sharing bandwidth with their spouse's remote job and their kids' online classes.

"That's just a lot of activity on a single modem, and it's a lot of bandwidth that's being pulled. If I'm an employer, how do I know that my employee, whom I've sent home for their safety, has the right setup at home?" Nascimento said. "Do they have the right type of connectivity so that they have the speeds and bandwidth they need to be productive and effective?"

Comcast Business launched a work-from-home solution that gives households a second modem dedicated to business activity. Nascimento

stressed the importance of segregating residential internet activities from corporate internet activities, both in terms of bandwidth capability and security needs.

He said enterprises and even SMBs have requested a second modem for select employees. In those cases, the residential service the employees were using from another provider wasn't cutting it. This transaction also helped the employer give workers peace of mind.

"If I can go and order a commercial-grade internet connection into their home in addition to what they've ordered for their family, I've taken the stress out of their hands. I've basically said, 'Our corporate network is going to be expanded outside of our physical building into each of your individual homes,'" he said.

### A New Priority

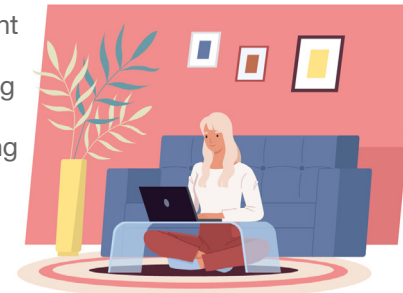
As you might expect, businesses are giving more support to their remote employees than ever before. Lazar said that before the pandemic, less than 10% of employers proactively invested in their home workers.

"It used to be, 'If you're working from home,

good luck. You're on your own. We'll give you a \$20/month internet stipend, but that's it," Lazar said. "But now you're seeing IT shops say, 'Not only do we have to make sure you have a good camera and headset and lighting, but we have to know what's going on with the performance of the home network.'"

### Common IT Support for Remote Workers

- ▶ Home Wi-Fi Assessment
- ▶ Voice Quality Monitoring
- ▶ Video Quality Monitoring
- ▶ ISP Plan Selection
- ▶ Lighting Guidance



Now approximately 40% of businesses are offering Wi-Fi assessments, and another 35% are monitoring the quality of video and voice, according to Nemertes. Another 30% are helping their customers choose an internet service provider plan.

There's a clear gap in those numbers — a gap that channel partners can meet.

"It's not critical mass yet. It's still under half in most cases that are taking the more proactive approach

toward supporting home workers," Lazar said.

And the companies that are providing their employees with the resources they need are reaping the benefits, according to Lazar. Nemertes found that the companies attaining the highest return-on-investment correlated positively with the companies who engaged the most with their remote workers.

Fifty-eight percent of the most successful companies performed Wi-Fi assessments. Fifty-one percent were monitoring voice and video quality. Half of them assisted in selecting an ISP.

Channel partners should see the opportunity to earn the trust of their customers.

"The message we're telling our clients is: There is a correlation there," Lazar said. "If you are proactively trying to improve the experience for home

workers and optimize connectivity and have measurement and monitoring, there's likely a strong correlation with a positive ROI."