

# Helping you make the most of homeworking



**Working from home has become part of a hybrid working approach, with employers and employees establishing the mix of home or office hours that works best for everyone involved. Evidence from Frost & Sullivan and YouGov has predicted that employers would continue supporting this arrangement on an ongoing basis demonstrating a major shift in the workplace dynamic.**

Working from home is now so much easier – but there's still lots you can do to make your remote working as professional as it should be. This Good Practice Guide looks at four key areas: Optimising Audio Performance, Projecting the Right Image on Video, Taking Control of your Workspace, and Managing the Remote Workspace.

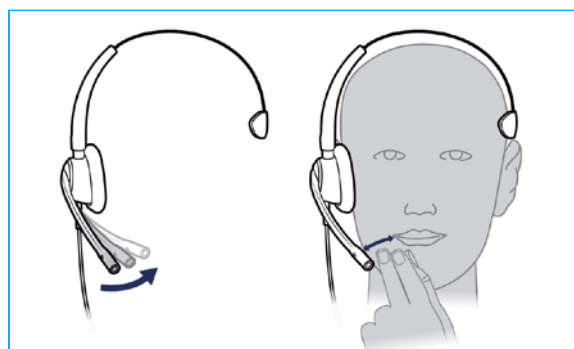
## **Optimising Audio Performance**

Quality audio performance is critical, especially as employees are speaking with customers, sometimes covering sensitive information. Home workers need to be able to hear and be heard clearly, so it's

important to remember that your headset isn't just about you. Colleagues and customers shouldn't have to struggle to listen to what's being said because of too much background noise. Invest in headsets with Noise Cancelling microphone technology to block out background noise. This helps to ensure your customers aren't subjected to background domestic noise.

## **Projecting the Right Image on Video**

Video has become a big part of homeworking, with platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom opening up their video collaboration services



### **Get the most from noise cancelling microphones**

Ask home workers to take advantage of the optimum headset mic position – around two fingers' width away from the corner of the mouth. And don't forget to train your employees to look after their headset. It's easy to replace ear cushions and keep it clean – it's only a 30-second task!

to everyone. Most video usage in call centres is currently for team meetings, but many organisations are starting to experiment with customer interactions over video.

Connectivity levels at home can vary for a range of reasons, but we all know that freezing during a video call is frustrating for everyone involved. Taking steps to prevent this is important – so look for features such as video simulcast in the camera which allows far-end participants to enjoy the highest resolution that their bandwidth can accommodate.

Also think about camera position and lighting. Video cameras should be positioned between the nose and the top of your head for optimum angle and remember to keep looking at the camera. Lighting also needs to come from the front, so look towards a window – if it's behind you, all the customers will see is a silhouette. Sometimes having the lights on can cause the screen to pulse.

Once happy with the position and lighting, it's useful for people to run through a checklist. Are you happy with what's on display in the background of your image? If not, utilise virtual backgrounds. Don't wear stripes or checks as they can make the video feed pulse and distract viewers. If you're going to share your screen, it's also worth checking what else is on your desktop – there may be things you don't want other people to see. Finally, mute any other devices, such as landline phones and mobile devices, and don't forget to mute your microphone if you're going to be typing during a call.

### **Taking Control of your Workspace**

Not everyone has the luxury of a home office or the option of taking over the kitchen table for the whole day. However, regardless of the location, home workers simply can't spend all day hunched up over a laptop.

So, people need to think hard about their workspace, setting themselves up with a comfortable office chair, sorting out some form of desk so that their laptop screen and camera are positioned correctly and ergonomically. To encourage wellbeing, review the provision of wireless headsets to home workers to ensure they can move

freely and remain in touch with customers.

If someone can't get a strong enough broadband signal at home, then it's maybe better that they're one of the colleagues that goes into the workplace. Whatever the situation, people need to take charge of their own workspace – and their employers still have a duty of care to ensure that they're working under appropriate conditions.

Some organisations may insist on a workspace assessment to ensure that remote workers are meeting health and safety requirements.

### **Managing the Remote Workspace**

Supporting call centre colleagues with the right IT equipment and headsets is fairly simple to manage when IT support can just walk round and address any equipment needs as and when they emerge. For a remote workforce, however, supporting and administering the workspace and its equipment is much more challenging.

It's important that the clear customer interactions delivered in the office are matched by those delivered at home. It's easy for home workers to pick up unapproved devices that may not work with cloud systems, or may not deliver the high audio quality needed, so IT needs to be enabled with cloud monitoring software to help them pick up unapproved devices.

Having remote support will also help in terms of keeping all the headsets up to date to match their customer interaction software collaboration software up to date, auditing devices, sending replacements to home addresses should they need replacing and also checking that only approved devices are being used.

**The hybrid workforce and homeworking will continue to be part of working life, so it's incumbent on Contact Centre Managers to ensure that the CX performance offered is seamless, whether it's delivered from the call centre or from someone's home.**