The quick way to the digital workplace.

Implementing and using Microsoft Teams efficiently.

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During crisis situations, companies must provide employees with the option to work from home or another location to maintain its ability to function. By using Microsoft Teams as part of the digital workplace, they are ready to manage current and future challenges.

At this time, companies are required to quickly and broadly implement modern collaboration solutions such as Microsoft Teams. But this conversion should not just be viewed as an emergency measure. Rather, it offers an opportunity for the introduction and permanent use of modern tools and digital work processes. They supplement or replace traditional processes, with the resulting increase in flexibility and agility in the company and at the workplace. In addition, they also offers a wider range of options, so employees are able to select the best solution for each situation.

As a result, work-life balance improves as individual work situations can be adapted flexibly and independently, and the workplace becomes more attractive to existing and potential new employees. After all, particularly the younger generation expects modern and flexible workstations that can be used based on their current requirements. Other strategic bonus points for the digital workplace include the ability to provide employees with work space during construction periods, higher cost efficiency by reducing the number of permanent workstations in the office, and time savings from long commutes to the workplace.

Working efficiently

The digital workplace also offers numerous efficiency advantages for the home office. It allows employees to work at another location without the usual IT hurdles such as VPN connection or separate authentication processes. In that context, the Microsoft on-board tools provide a high level of security for corporate applications. Microsoft Teams, for example, offers easy-to-use tools for communication and collaboration. In addition, Cloud-based technologies also enable smooth scaling processes for all sizes of companies. The solutions are always up to date and require minimal management by customers.

This provides companies with a pragmatic solution for quickly making available applications for site-independent work. Existing configuration standards can be used to reduce the complexity of the implementation process. Practical solutions are made available quickly, so they can be integrated into the company's processes more easily later on. Possible adjustments (such as the provision of existing data) can also be implemented at a later date.

The strengths of MS Teams

The strengths of MS Teams become especially visible in the current crisis. The Cloud-based platform enables targeted communication and collaboration from home - with colleagues, partners, suppliers and customers. Audio and video conferencing, as well as a chat function for rapid communication, are integrated into a user-friendly interface. A document management system that allows for the filing and joint editing of documents. Various Microsoft and third-party applications can also be used to expand the platform for special application cases. The solution can be used with any devices using Windows, Mac OS, Linux,

Android and iOS. In this way, MS Teams can support all essential operating processes.

Many Microsoft customers already have access to MS Teams through their existing licenses. And Microsoft makes the platform available to additional customers for free. Trough Microsoft's FastTrack program and Microsoft partners, customers receive support for planning, implementation and value creation (sometimes offered free of charge). Because of the current situation, Microsoft has also temporarily expanded the FastTrack program to include those who are using the free trial version.

Efficient provision of MS Teams

The efficient provision of MS Teams requires the appropriate user and access management processes to ensure that all employees, partners, suppliers and customers can work productively and securely. In addition, remote training as well as manuals and guidelines should also be used to ensure the effective and productive use of MS Teams for tasks and work processes. These Best Practices must be tailored to real application cases and the existing tool environment in the company.

Also, companies must not forget the other steps involved, such as the use of additional functionalities to increase productivity, the digitization of business processes, the integration of business applications or the establishment of new and adapted processes. This is where Microsoft partners can lend their support and contribute their experience.

Paying attention to the multitude of requirements

When introducing digital workplaces for an efficient and appropriate home office solution, companies must pay attention to a number of requirements. Integration into the existing IT environment is probably the key factor in this regard. For example, pre-defined Microsoft standard processes and settings can be used to quickly provide digital workplaces. Afterwards, they can gradually be adjusted to new / specific requirements.

The budget for implementation, licensing requirements and operations must be defined and approved at an early stage. If needed, compliance requirements (e.g. with regard to IT security, GDPR and labor law (works council)) must also be taken into account. Other requirements include the development of instructions for employees, including user guidelines for handling the new tools.

Gradual introduction

It is recommended that digital workplaces are introduced gradually, with the highest priority given to essential functions such as video conferencing, chat and the joint editing of documents, along with initial improvements. Less important but nevertheless useful functions such as attendance notification, calendar integration or search are only added afterwards. Particularly in times of crisis, a purposeful and clearly communicated focus on rapid introduction will take precedence over the permanent establishment of adjusted and additional functions. This also includes the establishment and gradual optimization of the integration into the existing IT environment.

At the same time, several hurdles that exist in the company must also be taken into account during the implementation

process. They include complex decision-making processes for a multitude of hierarchy levels, which lead to unnecessary delays. Shared areas of responsibility for technology, processes, support and operations can also lead to an unclear division of tasks, redundancies or (in the worst case) competing solutions.

Clear and uniform decisions, specifications and processes are required particularly in emergency situations, because they allow companies to maintain their ability to function. In a Microsoft environment, Microsoft Teams for collaboration and OneDrive for Business to store and edit personal files offer a quick entry point in this regard.

Conclusion

The fast introduction of digital workplaces requires joint and coordinated action by company management, the works council and the IT organization. They should closely support

employees, whether through general introductory guides for MS Teams or question periods. To this end, few but clear rules must be defined to facilitate collaboration. In this way, employees are able to work independent of location within one week.

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