Positioning for growth in a hybrid work environment

The right approach and technology can help organizations not only maintain continuity and productivity, but also grow and innovate. Build a successful future with cloud-powered Microsoft Surface devices for better productivity, endpoint security, and manageability.

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Estimated reading time:

20 minutes

Who this is for:

Decision-makers responsible for choosing workplace devices and associated technologies for their organizations.

Business and technology leaders looking to empower employees with devices that are optimized for hybrid work environments.

The workplace continues to evolve

While it's not certain that the global COVID-19 pandemic is subsiding, there are hopeful signs that infections are decreasing. In many parts of the world, this means businesses are strategically assessing whether to reopen and allow workers to return to the office, while carefully considering long-term hybrid work environments.

Not everyone wants to return to physical work spaces

The pandemic started a workplace transformation of more hybrid workers—employees who work partly in the office and partly at home. Business leaders expect more than half (52.6 percent) of their workforces to be remote or to work a hybrid schedule post-pandemic.[1]

While this flexibility benefits many workers and helps reduce overhead costs for companies, as much as 60 percent of people say they feel less connected to their team after shifting to remote work.[2]

More employees tend to BYOD

Further, the new post-pandemic workplace adds another wrinkle: bring-your-own-device (BYOD). It's a standard practice, with 59 percent of organizations allowing employees to use their own devices for work.[3] These devices can be more difficult for IT to protect and manage, and they can place company data and assets at higher risk of security breaches.

Increased security risks

Consider this: 27 percent of enterprise mobile endpoints were exposed to device threats in 2019,[4] and cybercrime is expected to cost $10.5 trillion per year worldwide by 2025.[5] Amid these threats, IT still must keep up with complex data privacy and industry regulations, and businesses often lack the skilled personnel necessary to deal with increasingly sophisticated attacks.

Deploying devices is challenging

Even when company-owned devices are provided to remote workers, managing them is no easy task. IT administrators must be able to send devices to a distributed workforce, with all the needed software preloaded for quick and easy sign-in capabilities. And these devices must be easily maintained by IT from remote locations, especially to protect against security threats with automatic software updates.

Tomorrow's workplace starts in the cloud

These challenges are accelerating the transition to the cloud for many companies, which increasingly view it as a critical part of their security strategies. Ninety percent of business leaders indicated that phishing attacks impacted their organizations during the early days of the pandemic, when cybercriminals applied COVID-19-themed lures to known scams and malware.[6] Successful phishing attacks were reported by significantly more organizations that described their resources as mostly on-premises (36 percent) as opposed to being more cloud-based.[6]

When it comes to securing technology, a "good enough" approach can leave your people, data, and customers vulnerable and unprotected. With cloud-based applications and services, and cloud-based device deployments, businesses can stay flexible and resilient. They can operate more efficiently with little disruption, while dealing with reduced staff and resources and addressing security threats. The cloud also helps enterprises optimize costs, without the need to own the underlying infrastructure. And businesses can use cloud infrastructure to provide on-demand capacity to meet employee and customer needs.

With more secure access to data and applications in the cloud, hybrid teams can do their best work anywhere they're located. Armed with the right hardware and software, such as Microsoft Surface devices and Microsoft 365, employees and IT organizations alike are empowered to:

- **Boost productivity by increasing engagement, creativity, and collaboration**
- **Strengthen security**
- **Streamline management**

03.

Boost productivity by increasing engagement, creativity, and collaboration

Across every industry and size, each organization's goal is to support a hybrid workplace model that enables approved users to have access to data without affecting employee productivity and collaboration. Microsoft 365 and Surface devices work seamlessly together to increase employee connections from anywhere, making each workday more productive, while keeping data secure.

Help people connect to do their best work

Collaborate and connect with Microsoft Teams. Chat, meetings, and whiteboarding enable co-authoring and more secure sharing of files and documents on any Surface device.

Discover and create on high-performing devices. Modern devices like Surface have functional, flexible tools built in. These tools work seamlessly with critical business apps, so that employees can access the data they need to progress from their first to final version sooner. Surface users saved an average of 10 hours weekly in efficiency and productivity.[7]

With digital pen and touchscreen technology on Surface devices, and the Microsoft Whiteboard experience on Microsoft Teams, colleagues in a virtual meeting can react quickly and contribute their ideas by sharing, taking notes, and even sketching out concepts together. And these collaborations are instantly shared with each contributor.

If an employee needs a powerful laptop with lots of processing power and storage, the Surface Laptop family offers several options. Other employees might prefer a Surface 2-in-1 digital pen experience, whether they collect signatures, handwrite their feedback in shared files, or sketch in 3D apps.

Access enterprise-grade productivity tools. The powerful suite of Microsoft 365 apps and services on Surface devices—including Microsoft Office, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, Stream, and many more—goes beyond other competing application suites in accommodating a wider variety of platforms and providing native Microsoft Office 365 experiences.[8] These tools also integrate seamlessly with advanced Microsoft analytics and work-management products, such as Microsoft Power BI Pro, Power Apps, Power Automate, and My Analytics.

Attracting and retaining a talented workforce

The best-performing companies—those that are effective in managing the time, talent, and energy of their teams—grew 5 to 8 percent more productive over 2020.[9] These companies know how to make use of their talent to build the capabilities that they need to win in the future. Employees feel valued and empowered at these companies, with high-quality computing devices in numerous form factors that support them throughout the workday. Eighty-six percent of organizations agree that Surface devices powered by Microsoft 365 have helped improve employee satisfaction and retention, according to a Forrester Consulting survey.[7]

Surface devices also provide the quality and performance that lets employees work in their preferred way, offering flexibility and versatility with 2-in-1 form factors. Accessories such as Surface Pen streamline work with handwritten versus typed notes, and Surface Headphones 2+ are certified for Microsoft Teams and provide noise cancellation for distraction-free focus time.

Strengthen security

With a cloud-based infrastructure, employees can work anywhere, share files, and store data with hardware and software security features that help minimize risk. Customers and IT staff also get peace of mind with end-to-end data protection under this "cloud cover."

Surface devices are modern endpoints that help drive a highly orchestrated, centrally managed, zero-trust security solution that protects employees, apps, and data from the latest cyberthreats. Engineered to integrate with Windows, Microsoft 365, and Microsoft cloud security provisions, Surface devices can be managed through the cloud down to the firmware level with just a few clicks. In addition, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation features enhance visibility and provide always-on vigilance to help catch what might otherwise be missed.
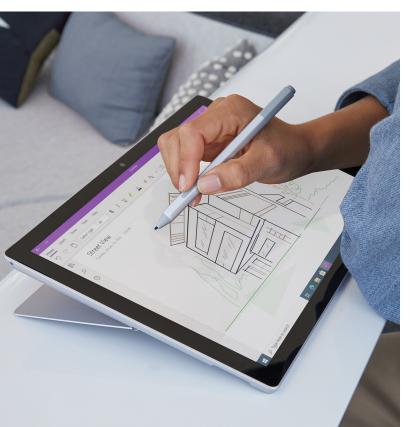
Together, cloud-based applications and Surface devices provide security from all angles, at scale—combining security, compliance, identity, and management—to protect data through security best practices and easy-to-use policies.

Fifty-one percent of respondents ranked the security benefits of Surface devices powered by Microsoft 365 as the top feature in a recent Forrester Consulting survey.[7]

Validate identities. With Microsoft Azure Active Directory (Azure AD), workers get simple, single sign-on for seamless access to all of their apps, onsite or remotely, without needing a password. Microsoft Azure AD passwordless support for sign-ins uses biometrics or a tap using Windows Hello for Business, the Microsoft Authenticator app, or a compatible FIDO2 security key from Microsoft Intelligent Security Association (MISA) partners such as Yubico, FEITIAN, and AuthenTrend. Conditional access and multifactor authentication provide additional layers of security, protecting and governing access. Policies can be customized for different users, groups, and types of credentials, and you can track your progress with new reporting tools.

Get firmware-level, multilayered protection. The Surface Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) helps minimize risk and maximize control before the device even boots.[10] And Device Firmware Configuration Interface (DFCI) supports zero-touch provisioning, eliminates BIOS passwords, and provides IT with control over security settings, including boot options and built-in peripherals, increasing security now while laying the groundwork for advanced security scenarios still to come. And because webcam hacking is an ever-present threat, Surface devices go beyond traditional software-based policy management with a rich set of firmware configuration settings that allow the Surface webcam to be disabled for highly-classified onsite jobs.

Proactively block threats. Security Policy Advisor for Microsoft 365 allows IT administrators to enforce policy settings for Microsoft 365 apps on devices. The policy settings roam to whichever device the user signs into and uses with Microsoft 365. Security Policy Advisor also provides recommendations and the implementation of security policies for devices managed by the Microsoft Office cloud-policy service.

Microsoft Defender Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) comes preconfigured on every Surface device to protect against known global threats in real time and launch security updates at scale. IT can also monitor the organization's Microsoft Secure Score on a Microsoft Azure portal to measure and track the company's security posture. A higher score indicates that more improvements have been made, and Microsoft Secure Score can provide robust visualizations of metrics and trends, integration with other Microsoft products, and comparisons with similar companies.

At the operating system level, Windows Pro provides built-in security features and automatic updates, including BitLocker and cloud-powered intelligent security, to further protect devices from modern threats.

Protect devices throughout their lifetimes. Data on Surface devices won't be exposed even when lost or stolen—the Surface firmware interface blocks unauthorized reimaging attempts, like a USB boot. The Surface Trusted Platform Module (TPM) protects the keys used in authentication and encryption, providing military-grade security protection. The solid-state drive (SSD) in select Surface devices can be removed and retained to remain in control of sensitive data at end of life or when servicing the device.

05.
Simplify
management

The ability to manage every device for every user is vital to business continuity, and it can mean significant time and cost savings for IT. Modern endpoint management demands a complete, streamlined view across endpoints, helping IT teams effectively and efficiently manage, streamline, deploy, and secure the wide variety of devices that are connecting to enterprise IT environments.

The cloud has had a big impact on endpoint management's evolution, delivering anywhere, anytime availability and advanced security. Microsoft 365 is built for Surface devices to enable modern endpoint management. By proactively moving endpoint management into the cloud, IT teams can better maintain secure control over every connected device, prevent employee-introduced vulnerabilities, and manage devices with just a few clicks.

Integrate management in one place. Microsoft Configuration Manager lets IT synchronize and deploy Surface firmware and driver updates within the Endpoint Configuration Manager client. Integration with Microsoft Intune enables IT to see all of the company's managed, co-managed, and partner-managed devices on a single dashboard. When using the Configuration Manager tenant-attach scenario, IT administrators can deploy endpoint security policies from Intune to devices that are managed with Configuration Manager.

Quickly bring employees online. Spin up virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and zero-touch provisioning via Windows Autopilot on Surface. Windows Autopilot helps set up and preconfigure new devices to get them ready for productive use. It also lets IT reset, repurpose, and recover devices while requiring little to no infrastructure to manage using a process that's easy and simple.

Control costs and improve return on investment (ROI). With Microsoft 365 on Surface devices, businesses use a single platform versus buying standalone apps for different capabilities. This helps reduce vendor license fees and associated labor costs. And to assist IT administrators, the Microsoft App Assure program is available to help ensure that an organization's apps work on the latest versions of Microsoft software.[11] If any issues arise, Microsoft helps resolve them at no additional cost.

Companies that use Microsoft 365 on Surface devices potentially benefit in numerous ways:

- 50 hours saved per user per year for improved productivity[7]
- 24 percent less time spent deploying and managing new software[7]
- Less than 3-month payback period[7]

> **Organizations further along in their Microsoft 365 journeys have the potential to reduce device-management time by 18 percent, freeing up approximately nine full-time employees (FTEs) (based on an average team size of 50).[7]**

Why businesses and schools should choose a cloud platform built for a hybrid world

There are many productivity solutions on the market today that might seem less expensive and complex, or that might seem just as secure as Microsoft cloud products and Surface devices. But while these solutions might offer some similar benefits, these alternatives often fall short upon closer examination.

By using Microsoft 365 on Surface devices, businesses, schools, and other organizations are fully supported by decades of innovation and enhancements that are capable of providing robust, long-term benefits in four key areas.

Security. "Good enough" security means more risk to many enterprises. While other productivity suites have played catch up to Microsoft 365 with improved security features, they still fall short of enterprise demands and require additional third-party services to bolster security, leading to additional complexity and costs.

Collaboration. Microsoft Teams is the hub for collaboration that brings together content, conversations, and tools in a single place. People can co-author and create in real time on Microsoft Teams, pulling in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files to edit and share without interrupting conversations to download and convert files. Meanwhile, other cloud-based chat and meeting apps are disconnected from productivity apps, with limited customization features. Microsoft Teams delivers a more integrated experience to chat, meet, call, and collaborate with automated workflows that meet everyone's needs.

Speed. Fifty percent of organizations surveyed said they chose Microsoft 365-powered Surface devices for speed and performance on daily tasks.[7]

Cost. Microsoft products are a full lineup of competitively priced services. And the complete nature of the Microsoft platform provides the opportunity to consolidate vendors beyond competitors' products, leading to lower total cost of ownership (TCO). Other ways organizations can save include:

- Vendor license fee consolidation
- IT administration and deployment savings from simplified administration and deployment
- Automation and process improvements through workflows, dashboards, AI capabilities, and more
- Shift from capital expenditures (CapEx) to consistent and predictable operating expense (OpEx) cash flow

Elevate K-8 hybrid education

The same benefits that businesses might gain from powerful Microsoft products are readily available to schools. Faculty, IT staff, and students have the freedom to teach and learn anywhere with zero-touch deployment, one-click device management, and cyber protection from Microsoft security features.

Education IT staff: Deploy easily, manage from anywhere, and stay more secure

- **Reduce IT complexity and eliminate time-consuming reimaging.** Ship and deploy Surface devices straight to students and teachers with Windows Autopilot zero-touch deployment. Students simply sign into their new Surface devices and start learning from day one. IT administrators can more securely provide devices to students without ever being in the same room.

- **Maintain secure control from anywhere.** Manage devices right down to the firmware level through the cloud with just a few clicks. Surface is the only manufacturer to have DFCI enabled for modern cloud-based device management through Microsoft Endpoint Manager, which helps ensure that students can only access the device and its peripherals for their intended use.[10] Surface devices enrolled with Intune can also be located, locked, and remotely wiped in the event that they are stolen.

- **Keep staff and students more secure on Windows.** Avoid critical vulnerability points and rest assured that the latest UEFI updates are pushed out automatically to your organization through Windows Update.[10] Stay one step ahead with Microsoft Defender ATP, which helps protect from outside threats, anywhere, anytime. Windows Hello can eliminate passwords and PINs with easy, enterprise-grade biometric sign-in.

Students: Learn and collaborate seamlessly with classmates

- **Speak and be heard.** Students show their best work in Flipgrid videos produced with far-field studio mics and high-definition (HD) cameras. Safely hear everyone's point of view and see what they're sharing with Dolby Audio and high-resolution displays in Microsoft Teams digital classrooms.

- **Effortlessly work together and participate in interactive lessons.** Students can share ideas easily, whether handwriting notes with a digital pen, recording verbal feedback, or co-authoring a presentation. Students can work together in shared documents via a web browser or in desktop apps. Teachers and students can use Whiteboard to brainstorm in groups and create with real-time sharing in a limitless white space, or they can set up class materials and presentations in a rich interactive space.

- **Express yourself and work it out on-screen with keyboards and digital pens.** When working independently on assignments and classwork, students can type an essay in Microsoft Word or sketch out ideas in Whiteboard. They can create a video of their book report with Flipgrid, and they can work out equations and annotate with Surface Pen in Microsoft OneNote.

Reimagine growth and innovation with
Microsoft 365 and Surface devices

As hybrid work and learning models become the norm, improving how and where people interact and work are critical to success. The best-performing organizations manage to stay connected and productive no matter what disruptions arise, by making the most out of the latest technology to collaborate effectively and efficiently. These organizations set themselves apart by how they manage the scarce time, talent, and energy of their most valuable resource: people. Transitioning to a cloud-based approach with the full collaboration, security, and management capabilities from Microsoft 365 on Surface devices can help empower everyone to do their best every day.

Build a successful future on the power of the cloud

Explore more ways that Microsoft Surface and Microsoft 365 move your organization forward.

Get started today:
Contact us today

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[11] Get app-compatibility assistance when deploying Windows, including ARM64 devices, Microsoft 365 Apps, Microsoft Edge, or Windows Virtual Desktop, at no additional cost with your eligible Microsoft 365 or Windows plan of 150+ licenses. See the App Assure website for more information.

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