SUPPORTING THE
DESKLESS
WORKER

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES IN THE
"WORK FROM ANYWHERE" ERA

Greenshades

80%
OF THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE FALLS UNDER THE TRADITIONAL DEFINITION OF "DESKLESS WORKER"

BUT WITH THE SUDDEN RISE OF REMOTE WORKERS, THAT DEFINITION IS EXPANDING.

THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES WHO DON'T HAVE A CENTRALIZED OFFICE OR DEDICATED WORKSPACE IS ON THE RISE, BUT GREENSHADES SOFTWARE CAN ENSURE ALL EMPLOYEES FEEL PRODUCTIVE, CONNECTED, AND ENGAGED.
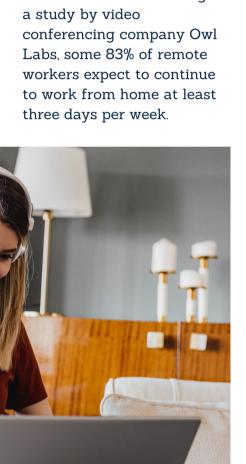
THE RISE OF THE DESKLESS WORKER

Historically, there has always been something of a dividing line between traditional office workers and those whose day-to-day responsibilities don't allow the luxury of being stationary. As technology began to play an increasingly important role in the way organizations communicated and collaborated, these "deskless workers" – nurses, retail workers, manufacturers, field technicians, and other such roles – were sometimes at a disadvantage.

Despite the fact that roughly 80% of the global workforce falls under the traditional definition of a deskless worker, many business applications still had a decidedly "desktop-first" bias. According to a report from the investment group Emergence Capital, 75% of deskless workers indicate they spend most of their time interacting with technology, yet 60% indicate at least some level of dissatisfaction with the technology their employers provided.

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, the dividing line between these groups grew deeper still. Many, if not most, office workers were forced to work from home, while the majority of deskless workers were deemed "essential" and continued working, often under dramatically modified conditions. Although this category of worker has always been essential, their efforts throughout the pandemic quite literally kept the country moving forward.

As social distancing and shutdown restrictions extended well beyond their originally defined scope, the dividing line between office worker and deskless worker started to blur. While employers struggled to establish and maintain connections and collaboration with a suddenly geographically dispersed workforce, there came a realization that most workers were now among the ranks of the deskless.

By the end of 2020, 71% of employed Americans who could do their jobs remotely were working from home.* But as the pandemic began to wane and offices reopened in 2021, employers faced a different challenge: most employees did not want to return. According to a study by video conferencing company Owl Labs, some 83% of remote workers expect to continue to work from home at least three days per week.

In addition to this dynamic, another category of worker began to emerge: the solopreneur. In November 2021, the Wall Street Journal reported that 9.4 million US workers classified as self-employed, an increase of 500,000 since the beginning of the pandemic. Unlike the last spike in "gig economy" workers we saw in the wake of the 2008 financial recession, this increase was largely comprised of professionals who saw an opportunity to redefine how they approach a work/life balance and found fulfillment through contracting or other similar activities.

Taken together, the events of the past two years have triggered a seismic shift in the world of work. High attrition, a war for talent, and workers reprioritizing professional and personal goals are redefining the employment landscape. In a post-COVID workplace, the vast majority of workers will not have a traditional office experience. Further, as job vacancy rates continue to climb, employers will need to rely on a diverse group of worker types (and work locations) to remain competitive.

Addressing the new "now of work" requires a new approach to the way technology is used, and deskless workers are leading the way.

ADDRESSING EMERGING NEEDS

As new categories of workers emerged, and as employers found workers reluctant to return to a life of daily commutes and eight-plus hours in the office, challenges that deskless workers have been raising for years – from connectivity and bandwidth concerns to poor User Experience (UX) on mobile devices – were being experienced by broad swaths of the workforce.

Employers are beginning to address these issues head-on, with many reprioritizing the way they assess, select, and implement solutions. Cloud-based applications, for example, have become more popular than ever. Offering a combination of accessibility and usability, cloud applications will play a pivotal role in helping employers and employees to stay connected, no matter where in the world they're located.

To meet the needs of today's deskless and remote workforce, employers need to meet three primary conditions:

1. Workers want to feel more connected

2. Workers want to feel more supported

3. Workers want technology to work on their terms

Connecting the dispersed workforce

Current market conditions are creating a bit of a dichotomy within the workforce. On one hand, employees are demanding a greater sense of autonomy – they want to define where they work, how their schedules are created, and when/if they come into an office. On the other, they also want to connect with coworkers and collaborate across teams in a remote way.

Employers are addressing this need by using a diverse array of communication and collaboration tools – such as Microsoft Teams – that keep everyone working together and offer a digital equivalent to the "drop by" hallway conversations that typically happened in an office.

To meet the one-to-many communication needs, such as employers sharing company updates and other similar pieces of news, the same applications used for Payroll and HR purposes can offer a great way to reach workers in a way that is already familiar and part of their daily routine. Push notifications to mobile devices, even displaying brief messages on timeclock displays as workers begin shifts, help to ensure everyone is "in the know" on company events and activities.

Supporting the entire team

With people spending less time in a central location, and with hybrid workforces becoming the norm, all workers need access to:

Information that allows them to perform their jobs

From a Payroll and HR perspective, this means providing access to employee handbooks, learning modules, "how-to" content, and other similar materials in a centralized location so they can be accessed from anywhere, anytime, and from a variety of different devices.

Resources that support both work and personal lives

From benefits statements and paystubs to a simplified approach for updating life events (such as the birth of a child, a change of address, marriages, and similar events), employees should be able to accommodate most of their needs directly without additional support from HR personnel.

Applications that extend value beyond HR & Payroll

Another artifact of the pandemic is the expectation that employers deliver better support for unique challenges workers may encounter from time to time. Services that provide financial assistance with unforeseen healthcare expenses, for example, then can be repaid over time via payroll deduction are becoming an increasingly popular benefit, as is earned wage access (a.k.a "on-demand pay") for employees who wish to gain access to money they've earned *before* payday comes. This requires a non-traditional approach, but the employee satisfaction results can be impressive.

As new resources and applications are introduced to meet the evolving needs of today's workers, employers should seek technology platforms that deliver a unified employee experience yet can readily add such applications to their technology stack. This minimizes disruption (employees don't need to be trained on a new piece of technology, for example) and highlights that you're continually investing in meeting their needs.

FOCUS ON KEY FEATURES

Over and above <u>what</u> resources you're delivering for your workers, <u>how</u> they're delivered can make a huge difference as well. As you assess selecting a new Payroll and HR platform, or as you consider adding functionality to an existing investment, ensure it meets these four features:

Easy to use
During the pandemic, employees became increasingly comfortable with consumer-grade technology. Social media platforms, streaming services, and other similar resources are all designed around delivering a smooth user experience, so your business applications should do the same. If a new application requires extensive training on how to use it properly, it might not be the best choice for your deskless and remote workers. Of course, anything new typically requires some level of introduction, but it should come in the form of a brief "how to" video or simple document. If it's complex or cumbersome, it either will not be used or it will create frustration.

Empowering
Self-service tools, self-learning features, and the ability to easily collaborate with someone online (should they encounter a problem) all contribute to the sense of independence and empowerment that workers seek. This even extends to applications such as labor scheduling, by allowing employees to indicate preferred shifts and times when they're unavailable. Such functionality both creates an environment that's positive for the worker and can reduce last-minute scrambles of managers attempting to fill empty shifts.

Transparent

For hourly employees in particular, having a clear line of sight into pay calculations, hours worked, wages earned, benefits elections, and other similar details is critical. This information should be clear and readily accessible. Transparency into other facets of work life – when certifications are due up for renewal, for example – are also important. Simple alerts, alarms, and calendar reminders can go a long way in reinforcing to your employees that they have your support.

Payroll and HR support for ALL workers: A checklist

Whether your workforce is comprised primarily of office workers who are now based at home, hourly workers who are on the move and in the field, or some combination of the two, the core components of an effective Payroll and HR platform are universal.

Here's a checklist you can use to evaluate your current platform and see how it measures up:

Four key areas.
Fourteen "must have" features.

PAYROLL

☐ **Address wages & Fair Labor:** Must address minimum wage, blended OT, and other critical FLSA compliance standards.

☐ **Accelerate validation:** A payroll process that automatically reconciles hours to bring deviations to your attention.

☐ **Support intelligent schedules:** proactively remind Payroll users of upcoming pay runs.

☐ **Deliver unwavering accuracy:** Easily manage employee minimum wage, overtime garnishments, child support, and more.

HR & BENEFITS

☐ **Offer robust self-service tools:** Empower employees to elect benefits, record life changes, change address, and other personal data *independently*.

☐ **Automate employee data:** Flows from Applicant Tracking to Onboarding to Payroll.

☐ **Support all benefit types:** Including Open Enrollment, Qualifying Life Events, and more.

☐ **Empower employees:** with features such as financial inclusion for the unbanked, early pay access, allows employees to switch between home and work.

TAXES

☐ **Automate tax code assignment:** To employees upon hire, relocation, or switching between home and office.

☐ **Facilitate tax compliance:** Relieve the headaches of tax and reporting submissions, with zero floating of payroll or tax funds.

☐ **Support all tax types:** Federal, state, and local. Extensive experience with multi-location businesses as well.

USABILITY

☐ **Integrate seamlessly:** between Payroll, core HR functions, and other employee-facing and back-end systems.

☐ **Deliver a modern experience:** with intuitive and intelligent for all team members.

☐ **Have a "mobile-first" mindset:** All workers, particularly deskless workers, want "anywhere, anytime" access to tools & resources.

A quick note on compliance

As employers begin to adjust to the "new normal" of work, it's important to note that payroll tax obligations and calculations can vary widely by geography. Key conditions contributing to compliance issues include:

- Workers deployed across state and city lines
- Temporary assignments in other locations
- Accurately reflecting stipends, allowances, and other travel expenses
- Employees moving to different areas

Each of these conditions warrant an extra bit of scrutiny to ensure wage, location, and other relevant data is being captured accurately and that relevant calculations and withholdings are being applied.

In Conclusion

The past couple of years have been challenging on many levels, including the multiple curveballs it has thrown into the world of work. Workers have been through a lot, and as current staffing and recruiting challenges reveal, employees are changing how they approach and prioritize work. Developing a strategy and investing in technologies that cater to these evolving needs can deliver benefits that elevate the operational excellence of your business and ensure all employees feel like they're part of the team.

Greenshades