

Many organisations have staff who don't sit at desks or in front of PCs. The challenge is how to give them access to the intranet, so they can easily complete common tasks, such as applying for leave.

Several approaches were outlined in the earlier article *Intranet kiosks or remote access?*. This highlighted the benefits gained by giving staff access to the intranet from outside the organisation, such as from home.

This enables staff to look up information and do transactions in their own time, as well as making it simple to confer with their partners or family.

In a large organisation, providing this type of remote access may seem daunting. While the technology hurdles have been greatly reduced, there is still a significant change management effort required.

Without this, staff will struggle to master often unfamiliar technology, and the investment in remote access will deliver few benefits.

This briefing outlines a number of practical tips and suggestions on how to roll out access, drawn from real-world projects.

Setting up and testing

- Make sure the remote access is to the entire intranet, and not just to a single app (such as HR self-service).
- Make sure the facility is useful (read-only access, for example, would be of limited value).
- Make it very simple for staff, eliminating as much of the technical complexity as possible.
- Implement the simplest form of secure access that is appropriate for the context (security can get very in depth!).
- Home computers vary greatly in their flavours and configurations, unlike corporate desktops. Find a test group of typical employees and conduct extensive testing at the early stages of the project.
- Spend time getting helpdesk staff prepared for questions and issues that are likely to arise once the rollout commences.

Training and support

- Sell the benefits for staff, and not just the organisation.
- Provide strong support during the initial rollout.
- Create online training materials, including detailed information on what configurations can and can't be supported, and how-to instructions.
- Communicate the rollout widely, through a variety of channels.
- Provide printed materials for all staff.
- Hold demonstration sessions that employees can attend, in a range of locations if necessary.
- Consider dedicating several individuals in the helpdesk team to addressing issues, and then routing calls to them.
- For larger organisations, double or triple the amount of support that is available for staff in the first three months.
- Provide a help forum and allow users to upload screenshots of their errors as well as share solutions with each other.

Cultural change

- Recognise concerns that staff may have about being 'required' to work from home, and address these in a balanced way.
- Work closely with the unions where needed, to ensure that they are comfortable with the approach being taken.
- Progressively eliminate alternative ways of completing tasks, moving these online instead.
- Ensure there is an overlap at the outset, where both new and old ways of getting information and doing tasks are available.

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