

The New Way to Work:

What We've Learned As a Geographically Diverse Organization

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Fonality
Talking Business



There truly is a new way to work, and it's not a highway. More than 70 percent of companies say their workforces are geographically dispersed. In the United States and Canada that percentage exceeds 85 percent.*

Among those geographically diverse companies is Fonality, which has operations in the United States, Australia and the Philippines. In the U.S., Fonality employees are based in offices in Los Angeles and Dallas. More than 25 executives and others work from remote locations from coast to coast.

We've learned seven valuable lessons about being a geographically diverse organization, lessons that can help growing companies grow faster and larger ones be even more efficient.





Lessons We've Learned as a Geographically Diverse Organization

1. Work is an activity, not a place.
2. People can be more efficient working from home.
3. Today's employees expect true mobility.
4. There are new ways to start conversations that enhance productivity.
5. Talent recruitment is much easier when people can stay where they are.
6. Managing remote workers does require some different approaches.
7. Geographic diversity helps growing companies grow faster.

In the pages that follow, a different Fonality expert will explore each of these lessons and what it can mean for your business.

Lesson 1: Work Is an Activity, Not a Place

Daryl Reva, Manager of Product Marketing, Dallas, Texas

Everywhere we look, people are getting out of the office. Our mobile devices keep us connected wherever we are. Working from remote and home offices has become more and more commonplace. For an increasing number of younger workers who didn't grow up with home telephones, the concept of a desk phone is a misnomer.

And like it or not, today's employees are expected to remain available well after working hours. A growing number of us never leave work entirely. As a result, work is viewed increasingly as an activity instead of a location.

Powering that change are advances in technology that keep communications at our fingertips, especially location-independent phone systems that let individual users coordinate where calls are terminated.

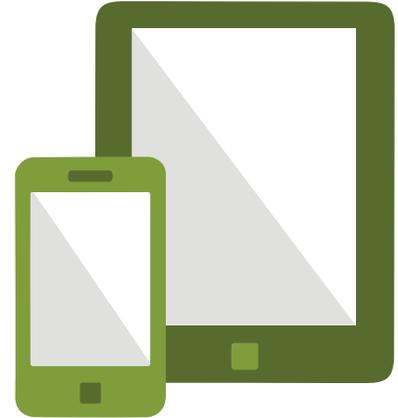
I'm sitting in my office, but if I want to go work from home I can quickly change my location in my online call management application and all my calls will be automatically routed to my home office. Calls made from my home office will still look like they're coming from the office.

The result of all this is that you never miss an important call and you maintain your professional image no matter where you are.



Lesson 1: Work Is an Activity, Not a Place

For us, another key is the ability to get real time contact center statistics on a cell phone. Members of our management team can pull up the application on their cell phones and track the number of waiting calls and the number of abandoned and completed calls.



A lot of folks on our team are home based. But we never really have to worry about connecting to them because all the same attributes that we take for granted here in an office environment are also part of any type of home-based worker's environment. There are no restrictions on them with respect to features and functionality. It's like a virtual cube wall has been torn down, and there are parallel environments between the office and home.

Technology gives us the ability to collaborate with colleagues, connect with customers, and manage real-time statistics. It's available when I want and where I am. These days, when it comes to a communication need, location is never an issue. Work is no longer a place.



TWEET THIS: Technology is tearing down cube walls, transforming work from a place to an activity.

Click on the Twitter icon or "TWEET THIS" to share this idea.

Lesson 2: People Can Be More Efficient Working from Home

*Amber Newman, Director of Marketing
Communications, Sacramento, California*

We like to think of the workplace as a space for collaboration, but for workers with jobs that require extended periods of concentration – writers and software engineers, for example – an office can be a den of distraction.

Ringing phones, loud conversations, co-workers dropping by to say hello: Each is innocent enough, but the amount of time they take away from the task at hand can be substantial. For tasks that require a great deal of creativity, the interruption

might not just absorb time, it might also interrupt the creative process and nip ideas in the bud before they have the chance to grow. And in almost any job, a break in the workflow introduces an opportunity for error.

So while it may seem counter-intuitive, working from home can make certain people in particular roles more efficient and productive than they would be in an office.

Lesson 2: People Can Be More Efficient Working from Home

The most recognized study comparing the efficiency of work done in an office and at home was conducted by Stanford University and involved a Chinese travel agency. Researchers found that home-based workers were 13% more efficient, largely due to working more minutes a shift with fewer breaks. It also found that home-based workers took more calls per minute because they had fewer distractions.

Some managers are concerned that distractions at home might be more problematic than distractions at the office. For some workers in some situations, this is absolutely true. But managers must take into account the personality and circumstances of each remote employee.

Is the worker someone who is driven to deliver quality work on time without constant supervision? Does she have an adequate workspace available that will help keep her focused despite the activities of others in the home? Is the type of work something that can be done without other team members being physically nearby? All of these are valid considerations.

Remote work isn't a cure-all, but for the right people in the right jobs it can mean more time spent on core tasks, better idea flow that fosters creativity, and fewer errors.



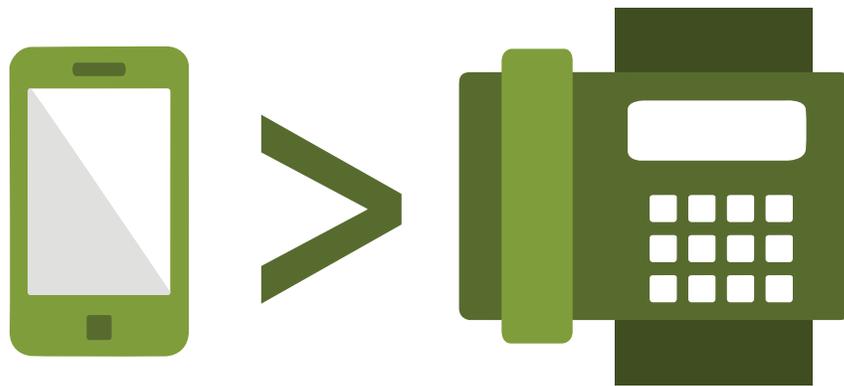
TWEET THIS: It's true: Working from home does make certain employees more productive.



Lesson 3: Today's Employees Expect True Mobility

Jeff Valentine, Chief Marketing Officer, Rochester, New York

There was a time when companies willingly installed private branch exchange phone systems – first for cost savings and later for advanced features that improved productivity. Today, you have to wonder, is the PBX still relevant?



It's an interesting question that I think is being answered by some younger companies today. One of them is a Fonality customer that is experiencing rapid growth. As it hired new employees for another remote office, it found that about half of these folks didn't want a desk phone. There was no need for them to sit at a desk. They had natural mobility because of their mobile phones, and they expected to keep it.

They can also keep those advanced features because the latest business phone systems bring those features to mobile devices. They give knowledge workers the ability to chat internally and exchange files and other information. The result is a tool that is with them most of the time. It's so powerful that it eliminates the need for some of the advanced phone features of recent decades.

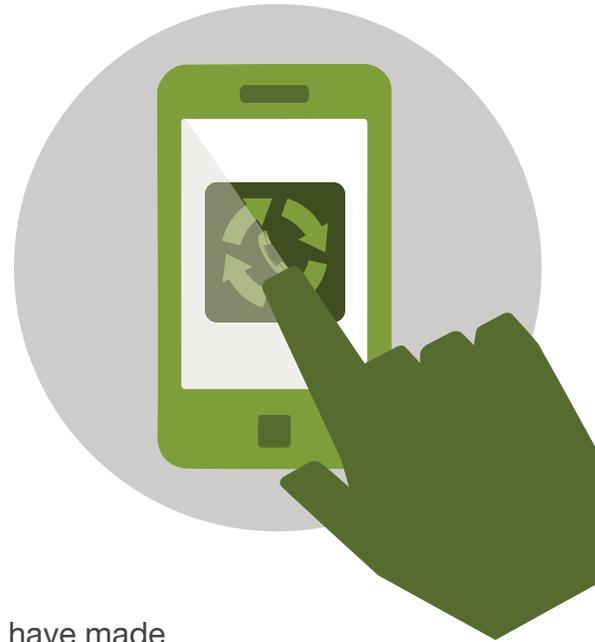
Lesson 3: Today's Employees Expect True Mobility

Now, you can transfer, hold, park and conference all using an app and not touching a button on your phone.

It's something people can depend upon. It's something that helps them get their jobs done; it makes them more productive. It's something that they feel passionately about, so passionately that if you were to ask somebody to give up their desk phone or their mobile phone, which do you think they would choose?

You can take advantage of the passion of someone's mobile experience and their mobile device – their preferred device, their personal device, the one that they brought, not the one the company provided.

Doing this helps people do their jobs, avoid clogged inboxes, communicate with their teams, sell more customers, and better support their clients.



TWEET THIS: Our personal devices have made us mobile. Today's employees expect to stay that way.

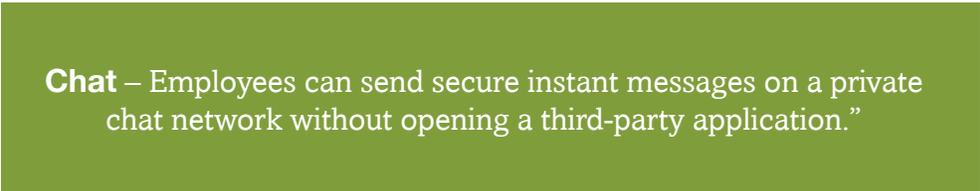


Lesson 4: There Are New Ways to Start Conversations That Enhance Productivity

David Scult, Chief Executive Officer, Seattle

Our chief marketing officer is in Rochester; the executive vice president for finance and administration is in Washington, D.C.; our chief operating officer is in Bozeman, Montana. I'm on the West Coast. For a geographically dispersed team like ours, the tight integration of chat features and audio conferencing is a huge productivity enhancer.

So, instead of just picking up the phone and calling people, I start virtually every non-scheduled interaction as a chat. Probably seven times out of 10, I'll wind up getting the answer that I need. Other times, I click on an icon and the chat will evolve into a full-blown phone conversation.



Chat – Employees can send secure instant messages on a private chat network without opening a third-party application.”



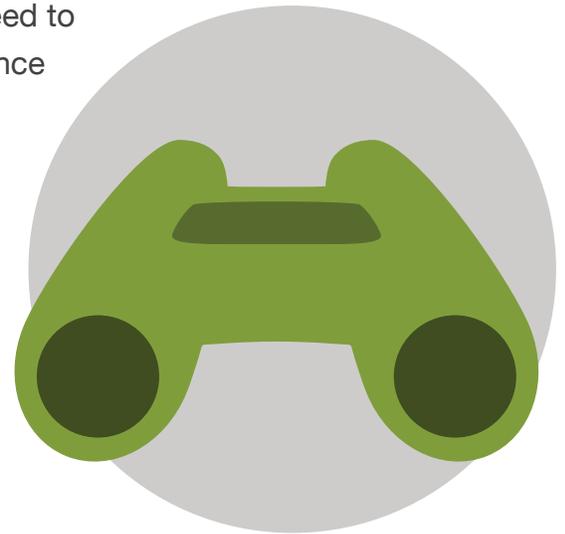
Lesson 4: There Are New Ways to Start Conversations That Enhance Productivity

Presence – Lets users see who's online, on the phone or away, so they can choose the most efficient way to make contact.

Audio Conferencing – Users can host on-demand conference calls for both internal and external attendees. They can record conferences and add or remove participants.

Let's say a new question comes up and we need to bring someone else into the call. With a presence functionality, we can see that the person who has the answer is available for a phone call and we can bring him or her into the call. If not, we can find someone else to help. Doing all that with traditional tools is possible, but you start this cycle of calling people and having the calls going to voicemail.

Having visibility, awareness and integrated chat makes for much more efficient interaction than using isolated or independent tools. That is especially true for a diverse workforce like ours.



TWEET THIS: Why dial a phone and talk when you can click a mouse and chat?



Lesson 5: Talent Recruitment Is Much Easier When People Can Stay Where They Are

Rob Snodgrass, Director of Human Resources, Los Angeles

A willingness to be geographically diverse opens up a range of opportunities for growing companies; and in the Human Resources areas one of the most significant involves employee recruiting and retention.



Let's say a telecommunications company needs a programmer who has to be located in its Los Angeles office. It's going to be a lot harder to find someone in the Los Angeles area than it will be in Dallas. There is just not as much telecom talent in California. So, when companies are looking for industry-specific skills, they can target where those skills are found and recruit there. Conduct a nationwide search and the talent pool opens up even further.

Another hurdle eliminated by geographic diversity is relocation. When prospective employees can stay where they are, they are more likely to be willing to make a job change and are more likely to be satisfied later with their decision. That's because they aren't forced to adapt to the new economic and cultural realities of a new location.

Lesson 5: Talent Recruitment Is Much Easier When People Can Stay Where They Are

It shouldn't go unmentioned that geographic diversity helps ensure cultural diversity. We have people here – remote and office-based – from all over the country. Different backgrounds can mean different approaches to solving problems.

We've seen how someone in, say, Montana is going to have a different mindset and a different way of life than someone from Los Angeles. L.A. people might try to rush through something while someone from a more rural area might be more likely to take their time and work their way through it.

Having those different mindsets is an asset in solving problems, especially technical problems. If two people are working on a project together, it might be helpful to have someone who takes their time and doesn't rush paired with another person who stays focused on making sure everything stays on schedule and timelines are met.

From recruiting to retention to problem solving, geographic diversity has benefits, but the most significant remains being able to bring in the most talented people.



TWEET THIS: Want to hire the best people?
Let them stay where they are.

Lesson 6: Managing Remote Workers Does Require Some Different Approaches

Rosemarie Savino, Vice President for Product Marketing, Los Angeles

When managing a team, nonverbal cues are so important to gaining a complete picture of what's really happening. An employee who is struggling can show the strain. A nod can prove that an assignment is understood. A quick conversation can solve a problem before it escalates.

In managing remote workers, many of those nonverbal cues are not available, which can make the process a little bit more challenging. But there are things managers can do:

1. Connect with remote employees on a regular basis.

Whenever I am in the office with members of my team whom I don't usually see, I make a point of spending time with them. When I can't be in the office with them, I try to have video conferences with them. They aren't as good as meetings in person, but it's amazing how much better it is to have a video conference with someone than a phone call.



Lesson 6: Managing Remote Workers Does Require Some Different Approaches

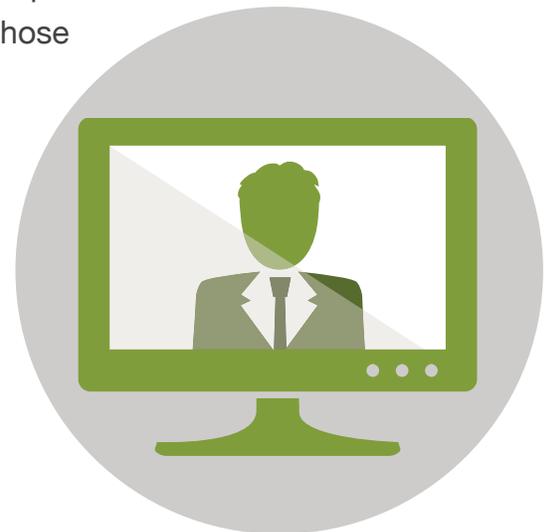
2. Make visual connections when possible. In person and in a video conference, it's so much easier to tell if someone is truly present in the conversation and understanding what they are being asked to do. This is difficult on the phone; in email it's impossible. So much of intent is nonverbal.

3. Take advantage of the tools available for quick conversations.

One of the biggest challenges of remote work is getting quick answers, even to simple questions. People can't drop by for a chat. But business phone systems do offer chat features, which along with presence and instant messaging capabilities, help keep those conversations short and information moving.

4. Make time for regular reviews of roles and responsibilities.

That's really the bottom line: making time. You have to make time if you are going to manage people, especially when they are not co-located with you. To make that time effective means leveraging every means available for staying in touch.



TWEET THIS: Managing remote employees takes new approaches. Try these.

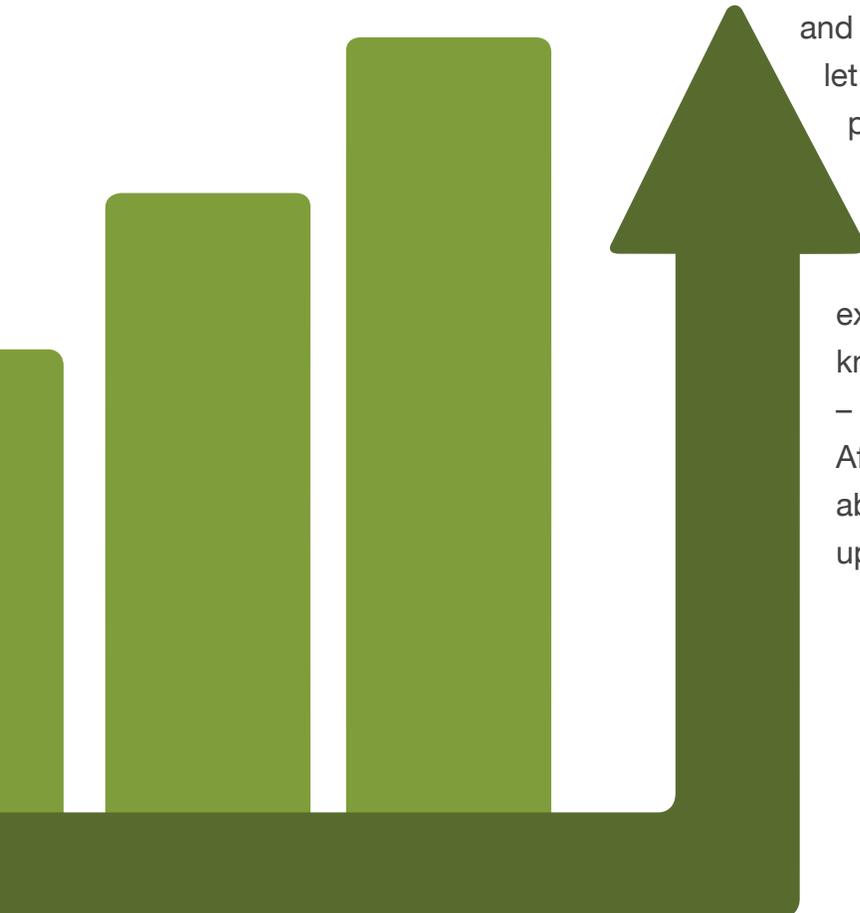


Lesson 7: Geographic Diversity Helps Growing Companies Grow Faster

Dan Rosenthal, Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration, Washington, D.C.

Fonality didn't set out to have a geographically dispersed workforce. We have one for a very simple reason: our desire for growth.

We are determined enough to meet our growth goals that when we look to hire executives, we search nationwide. And in making hiring decisions we recognize that we are living in a new economy where people want



and value flexibility, so we are willing to let people continue to live in the same place they were before joining us.

Our location in Dallas is the result of a desire to hire talented, experienced people in a place where we knew they were in the greatest supply – and to do so as quickly as possible. After making the decision, we were able to have 40 sales representatives up and running in just six weeks.

Lesson 7: Geographic Diversity Helps Growing Companies Grow Faster

Businesses like ours can't necessarily choose where their new customers are located, but by embracing remote employees, we can make hires in places near large customers. That helps us be much more responsive.

As a chief financial officer I can focus not on where I can do something, but instead on the best place to do it. In some cases cost efficiency drives the decision. In some cases it is talent acquisition. In some cases it is service area and being near clients.

Key to making all of this work is effective communications. Our communications, finance, and document sharing tools are all cloud-based. We also learned quickly that one of the best laboratories for developing and evaluating new business phone system features and functionalities is our own company.

Innovation is the spark for growth. Making it real takes the kind of drive that enabled us to be up and running in six week with 40 people in a new office. For truly rapid growth, nothing can get in the way, not even geography.



TWEET THIS: To grow a company quickly, don't let geography get in the way.

About Fidelity

Fidelity has built its business around helping growing businesses use their phone systems to become more competitive and successful. It has been developing Unified Communications systems since 2004 with more than 20,000 clients serving more than 260,000 end users around the world.

The company's engineering team developed the Fidelity Heads Up Display interface and patented hybrid solution to meet the unique needs of emerging companies.



Fidelity provides business phone systems and contact center solutions designed exclusively for growing businesses. Fidelity is the only provider that can deliver the same user experience in the cloud and on-premise, with innovative features that help small businesses save time, communicate more efficiently and reduce costs. For more information, visit www.Fidelity.com or call 1-888-768-3770.