



Virtual Working During Challenging Times

Recent events have highlighted more than ever the need for remote and virtual working practices. GLK Solutions regularly utilise remote working solutions with our clients to ensure we are flexible, agile, and able to provide excellent value for money.

To support effective remote working for our clients and wider contacts we have gathered information in respect of systems as well as some hints and advice on how to get the most from virtual working.

Popular Remote/Online Systems

Microsoft Teams

A professional virtual working space with conference call facilities. Allows teams to work alongside on projects, share information, plan and develop documents and thinking. Microsoft Teams includes a number of integrated add-ons such as the use of a team calendar, file storage, task management, and messaging. **GLK Solutions fully utilise Microsoft Teams through a subscribed account and can therefore offer current and potential clients the option to work remotely on projects straight away. We can offer full support and guidance to get started and use the platform effectively.**

Pros:

- Established and professional virtual working space.
- Ability to integrate a shared calendar, task management, and document storage.
- Ability to manage large online meeting numbers (paid for account).

Cons:

- Some limitations on a free Microsoft Account (storage, users, and ability to schedule meetings).
- Some users have struggled to get started and may therefore need support.

Zoom

Simple video conferencing application. Zoom have responded to security concerns and made updates such as an automatic 'waiting room' for people joining the meeting to ensure only known attendees are admitted and allowing you to choose your country's region in respect of data handling (please note Zoom is based in the USA and therefore falls outside of GDPR rules).

Pros:

- Free and unlimited for up to two people (limited to 40 minutes for three or more on a free account).
- Monthly cost for unlimited meetings (can be purchased on a month by month basis).
- Large number of attendees on view at once.
- Attendees do not need to have an account to join the meeting.

Cons:

- It has been noted that the Chat feature is not encrypted and therefore should not be used for sharing confidential information.
- There are some concerns around GDPR compliance and this should always be considered.

CISCO WebEx

CISCO WebEx offer cloud-based productivity tools. CISCO WebEx works in the same way as Zoom through a desktop application which can be used on laptops, PC, tablets, and phones. In call features include ability to see up to 25 attendees, calendar integrations, host meeting controls, screen sharing options, and chat. CISCO WebEx have updated their free account to include up to 100 participants with no meeting limit.

Pros:

- Free account doesn't limit the length of the meeting and allows up to 100 participants.
- Easy to use either through application or web browser.

Cons:

- Unable to customise personal meeting link.
- Unable to record meetings on a free account.



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Hints and Advice

If remote or virtual working is something you are not familiar with it can be sometimes difficult to get started. We have listed below some best practice advice on how to work effectively in a virtual world:

- **Don't forget your phone.** Often it feels easier to email someone, but much of what we do on a daily basis requires quick conversations and decisions. Don't be afraid of telephone discussions. The ability to get hold of people at the moment may be easier than you think.
- If joining a conference call (no video) it is good practice to **introduce your name before speaking**, especially if the other attendees are unfamiliar with your voice or there are a large number of attendees.
- Often in video and teleconference calls, attendees will talk over each other. It's an unavoidable annoyance, but don't worry about it happening; it happens to everyone. Video conferencing eases this issue slightly and on those systems it may be worth agreeing a protocol at the start of the meeting to decide how questions will be posed (chat function, hand raising button, etc.).
- **Treat video and teleconference meetings as you would a normal meeting.** Be on time, dress appropriately (when using video), be professional, and engage in the meeting.
- **Prepare your space.** Make sure you have everything ready and to hand before the meeting is due to start. Check you have the necessary information and/or paperwork and you have read any necessary documents beforehand.
- **Fully utilise any features available** on video conferencing platforms such as blurred background in Microsoft Teams, mute functions when you are not talking, document sharing options, chat function, dial in audio (if your bandwidth is low), and think about using headphones with a microphone for better sound for you and the other attendees.
- **Treat home working as you would physically going to a place of work.** Plan your day, have set working and break times, take a break from screens, have a good working space prepared, and ensure all necessary charging equipment is to hand and easily accessible.
- If you are sharing home working space with others, **communicate** and discuss each person's working day. Some planning may be required around video and teleconference meetings to ensure you are not disturbed.