

TECH & INNOVATION

NOVEMBER 1, 2016   REAL BUSINESS

## Driving economic growth with the borderless workforce

When it comes to economic growth, SMEs are pivotal to the future of the UK. They contribute to 60 per cent of all private sector employment in the country, according to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), and are often at the heart of finding new and innovative ways to work.

- Tags:
- BORDERLESS
  - CLOUD
  - ECONOMIC GROWTH
  - FLEXIBLE WORKING
  - MOBILE
  - OPINION
  - REMOTE WORKING



The concept of the borderless workplace is a prime example of this innovation. So, how exactly are these bright businesses leading their larger counterparts in the art of harnessing a mobile workforce to drive economic growth?

### Cloud holds the key

First and foremost, we must start with the cloud. Small businesses, especially those growing at pace, have to be able to work effectively as a mobile organisation. With members of the team constantly out of the office working to build the business, the cloud holds the key to building a successful borderless workforce, resulting in economic growth.

The traditional monolithic company structure centred around the humble desk and traditional phone system no longer holds as much worth for a team that is now spending the working day on other sides of the country or even the world.

As a consequence, many SMEs across a multitude of sectors have taken this flexibility and scalability that the cloud provides and are now using it to mould new ways of working.

Now, even if you are working from a coffee shop 300 miles from your headquarters, customers and clients see no discernible difference in the service they receive. This is an obvious positive for your business but it can also provide a great boost for the individuals that make up your team, as well as economic growth.

### Maximising your team's potential

With customers setting as high expectations for small businesses as they do for their larger counterparts, staff can come under greater pressure and, if they are not equipped with the requisite technology, their own performance can suffer. For SMEs keen to meet this demand, migrating communications systems to the cloud is an important first step.

By virtue of operating in the cloud, the pressure to field calls need not be laden on the shoulders of the handful of people working from the office on any given day. Calls can be routed through to the mobiles of those working remotely while any outbound calls can also appear to originate from the company phone number.

More of the team are on point to deal with customers as a result and the service can be delivered to the same standard as if the caller were being put through to a traditional contact centre.

Distributing the workload in this manner gives each member of staff the freedom to focus on tasks that will help grow the business as opposed to a few people being overloaded and just trying to keep the lights on.

Adding intelligent voicemail options to these cloud communications systems means SMEs around the country are ensuring that not only are they running a borderless workforce, but they are doing so successfully, contributing to economic growth.

This is not a case of a member of the team telling a client that they can “try the manager’s mobile”; businesses can now route calls with greater certainty. Intelligent systems will ensure that enquiries can be directed to the employee best equipped to handle them at the time.

Businesses don’t want important sales calls being diverted through to a private mailbox that may not be checked for 12 hours; they need to be able to act immediately. And economic growth can take place on the back of these efficiencies.

Individuals can now take meetings out of the office safe in the knowledge that important enquiries will be routed appropriately and handled. An effective workforce such as this is bound to be a happier workforce and also one that people will want to join.

### An attractive proposition

Smaller businesses can face a conundrum when hiring staff. They need the most talented people available but at the same time cannot afford to match the salaries that bigger competitors will be able to offer. This is where operating as a borderless workplace can act as a huge benefit for economic growth.

Increasingly employees are ranking flexible working opportunities on a par or higher than financial compensation. Proving to these candidates that your business gives them the freedom of working in the cloud can have a significant bearing on their decision to join.

SMEs can not only offer employees the chance to work remotely, they can give them the opportunity to work smarter and perform to a higher level as a result.

Not only can cloud communications systems revolutionise the way that distributed modern businesses deal with customers, they can also go a long way to maximising the potential of employees, a sure way of encouraging excellent candidates to join.

### Next on the horizon

So many SMEs have been influential in the introduction of effective borderless workplaces and the next stage of business’ evolution is likely to be heavily influenced by this group of companies as well. They are the lifeblood of the UK economy and, with the freedom that the cloud provides, are sure to continue driving economic growth.

*Paul Bensley is the director at X-on*