Leveraging GoToMyPC Corporate to Boost Productivity

Providing remote access to employees can increase productivity and work/life balance. However, VPN logistics and cost barriers tend to constrain where access is available and who receives that privilege.

A recent Citrix Online survey found that many users — including those with VPNs — would welcome a more convenient and flexible alternative that truly made it possible to work from anywhere. In this paper, we illustrate a variety of business situations in which GoToMyPC Corporate could be applied to improve workforce availability, efficiency, retention and job satisfaction.
Win-Win case for remote access

Technology advances and pressure to facilitate work/life balance continue to fuel workforce mobility. According to IDC, nearly 75% of U.S. workers will conduct business while outside the office or away from their desk by year-end 2011.1

“As mobility continues to play a key role in enabling companies to achieve greater productivity worldwide, IDC expects the global mobile-worker population to increase from 758.6 million in 2006 to more than one billion in 2011,” said research analyst Stacy Sudan. Companies that embrace this trend will enjoy a strategic competitive advantage over those who fail to integrate mobility into their cultural roadmap.

In fact, employers have plenty to gain by letting workers get their jobs done from diverse locations extending far beyond the traditional office walls.

• According to The Work Design Collaborative2, workers are at least 15% more productive when they can avoid wasting time on commuting and office distractions. Add days otherwise lost to inclement weather and personal time off and productivity gains become even more clear-cut. Simply put, workers given the opportunity to make better use of their day tend to get more accomplished, benefiting both the employer and employee.

• Many businesses offer teleworking programs to reduce real estate and facilities expenses. According to WorldAtWork3, the number of employers that allowed employees to work from home at least once per month grew 63% between 2004 and 2006. Not only can those businesses save up to 50% on overhead expenses, but they can react more quickly to change. Instead of being constrained by office space and geography, those employers can get new talent on-board quickly, without the time and expense of relocation.

• The ability to work remotely also helps to attract, motivate and retain staff. In a study of work/life and benefit programs4, 62% of surveyed companies allowed employees to work occasionally from home, while 82% offered flex-time. Nearly half found that those programs had high impact on employee retention, trumping benefits like dental and profit-sharing plans. Another study5 found that roughly 70% of employers have problems attracting critical-skill and top-performing employees. But when employees are satisfied with stress levels and work/life balance, they are measurably less likely to leave their job or employer.
Overcoming VPN limitations

These and other proven business benefits have prompted many companies to offer remote access to at least a portion of their workforce. In the late 90s, IPsec Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) were launched to satisfy road warriors who carried corporate laptops. Five years later, SSL VPNs began displacing IPsec, expanding access to day extenders who logged back into work from home at night and on weekends.

Together, these VPN technologies have shaped the way that most companies think about remote access. IPsec required VPN clients to be installed on IT-managed laptops. SSL overcame that barrier by using the ubiquitous Web browser as a VPN client. However, both VPNs tunnel business data between client/server applications. Workers use programs and files that reside on a remote endpoint and connect to a VPN gateway to reach servers inside the corporate network.

Although SSL has expanded remote access, the VPN client/server paradigm still limits where access is available and who receives that privilege. Users working from public PCs are often limited to a small handful of applications, presented through a “Webified” client interface. Those using home PCs may employ SSL VPN-access methods like port-forwarding, but must then install client-side business applications and synchronize files with those back at the office. PDA users cannot run familiar PC applications and so must learn to use altogether different mobile-client programs.

These users are forced to adjust the way they work to reflect endpoint and VPN constraints. That inefficiency can eat into productivity gains. Business data and programs duplicated onto mobile devices can be lost, with financial or regulatory consequences. Employees may find themselves unexpectedly away from the office for an extended period without viable remote access. Even when infrequent, such events frustrate workers and their managers, and can cripple a remote-access initiative.

The key to avoiding these problems is to acknowledge that offsite employees and their work environments vary, and so do their remote-access needs. A VPN might be the best fit for part of your workforce, but it is not necessarily ideal or even sufficient for everyone.

Rethinking remote access

In Top Predictions for IT Organizations and Users, 2008 and Beyond, Gartner predicts that, by 2012, half of traveling workers will leave their laptops behind in favor of other devices. This sea change will generate demand for new ways of packaging and accessing personal computing environments when away from the office.

Specifically, Gartner anticipates the rise of “a new class of application: a portable personality that encapsulates a user’s preferred work environment, enabling the user to recreate that environment across multiple locations or systems.” By making each user’s work environment accessible from any device, at any location, their applications and data are no longer tied to the individual devices they use to achieve remote access.

In fact, device-independent remote-access solutions are already available. GoToMyPC Corporate, a managed secure remote desktop access service from Citrix Online, is a perfect example. With GoToMyPC Corporate, remote workers can use ordinary Web browsers to log into Citrix Online from any Internet-connected computer (e.g., PC, Mac, PDA, Linux). Once logged into the Citrix Online server, each authenticated employee can connect to his or her own office desktop, if authorized to do so by the employer. All screen displays and keyboard/mouse interactions are sent over an encrypted end-to-end session between the user’s browser and office PC, ensuring that no one — not even Citrix Online — can intercept that information.
In this way, each individual can be given simple, secure access to his or her everyday work environment, including all applications, files and network shares normally used when working back at the office. There are no programs to install on remote devices and no “Webified” applications to learn. Instead, remote workers can conduct business just as they usually do, consistently, from nearly any location or device.

As a managed service, the infrastructure that supports GoToMyPC Corporate is provided by Citrix Online. Employers do not need to invest in VPN hardware or server integration to use this service. Rather, they pay a monthly fee based on the total number of office PCs that can be accessed at any time — a number that can be incremented as business needs grow. Thus, companies can easily and quickly reallocate GoToMyPC Corporate access to deal with challenges like acquisitions and business continuity.

In short, a flexible remote-access solution like GoToMyPC Corporate changes the ground rules previously established by VPNs. In a January 2008 survey, GoToMyPC Corporate Webcast attendees were asked about the remote-access solutions now available to them, situations in which they use or would like to use GoToMyPC Corporate and how frequently they would use GoToMyPC Corporate if it were available to them.

Most survey participants (82%) already had some other form of remote access — usually an IPsec or SSL VPN. Nonetheless, more than half said they would make significant use of GoToMyPC Corporate (10+ hours per week) if they had access to this service.

How many hours per month do you (or would you like to) use GoToMyPC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours per month</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20+ hours</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 hours</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 hours</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (e.g., on vacation)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 hours</td>
<td>5%</td>
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This begs the question: Why are these workers not fully satisfied by their existing remote-access methods? More importantly, what are the business scenarios in which GoToMyPC Corporate would actually be a better fit?
Leveraging GoToMyPC Corporate

According to those surveyed, the most common venue for using GoToMyPC Corporate was at home (73%), followed by business-travel venues (16%) and other offices (22%).

Most would use GoToMyPC to work from home in emergencies, when weather or disaster stopped them from reaching the office. Almost as many would use the service on weekends to catch up on email or check work status. Several wanted to use the service to deal with after-hours support calls or unexpected work problems. Because using GoToMyPC does not require advance planning, it is ideal for situations like these. GoToMyPC could help these employees be more productive and available as needed — even workers who do not require (or receive) regular VPN access.

Nearly half of those surveyed expressed interest in using GoToMyPC to help them meet family needs, such as caring for a sick child or working the occasional day from home. Another 30% wanted to use the service to “Web commute” by routinely working at home in the morning or at night, shifting hours actually spent at the office to reduce commuting time. These users saw GoToMyPC as an opportunity to improve their work/life balance, letting them work at home when doing so would be convenient.

Just 16% hoped to use GoToMyPC to work full-time from home. The IT investment and planning required to deliver VPN access may be justified for full-time teleworkers, especially those who do not have an office PC. Part-time Web commuters who get their jobs done from many locations — at the office, at home and on the road — are often a better fit for GoToMyPC Corporate.

How do you (or would you like to) use GoToMyPC to work from home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When weather/disaster prevents travel</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few extra hours on weekends</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet family needs (e.g., childcare)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full days every so often from home</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM/PM to reduce commuting time</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time from home</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g., after hours)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Most of those surveyed also wanted to use GoToMyPC from less common venues to balance personal convenience and business necessity. For example, 77% would use GoToMyPC to reach their office desktop on the go from a personal laptop or PDA. Nearly half expressed interest in using GoToMyPC from a hotel or, when working on-site at a client, someone else’s PC. Public PCs at conferences, business centers, airports and Internet cafes were also popular.
Where else do you (or would you like to) use GoToMyPC to get your job done?

- Your own laptop or PDA
- Hotel’s guest-access PC
- Desktop PC at a client’s site
- Public PC at a conference
- Commercial business center PC
- Internet kiosk at airport/train station
- Internet café PC
- Friend’s personal PC
- Other

All of these situations involve devices that IT departments hate to support as VPN endpoints. VPN users are typically either denied access altogether or given limited access to mitigate endpoint threats that could exploit a VPN tunnel. GoToMyPC Corporate is a better fit for high-risk devices because it does not tunnel traffic to corporate networks or servers. Users can interact with their office desktops, but malware cannot.

Many survey participants described situations where they’d gladly have gone the extra mile to get their jobs done but could not without a flexible-access method like GoToMyPC Corporate. For example, one user wrote, “I got a call while I was driving to work. I needed to look at one of our servers and fix something ASAP.” Another said “I was on vacation and did not have my laptop. I could have resolved server issues in a more timely manner with any Internet-ready machine.”

In fact, dozens of vacationing and traveling employees described using GoToMyPC in a variety of unusual venues — on the beach, at ski resorts, in the mountains. These responses demonstrate that employees would welcome a remote-access solution that let them respond quickly and effectively to a work crisis, while breaking the tie that binds them to their corporate laptops.

Users also described scenarios where GoToMyPC might have been able to overcome logistic constraints, if only their company had let them use this service. For example, no remote-access solution can overcome lack of Internet connectivity — including GoToMyPC. However, Internet access from public PCs is increasingly common in even the remotest locations — including ships at sea.

Furthermore, by transferring only display updates, GoToMyPC bandwidth needs are minimal. One user described using GoToMyPC “on the go, with my laptop using a data connection through my cell phone.” Another said, “I would see this used at our international sites where bandwidth constraints are an issue for our collaborative engineering applications.”

Finally, some users described how GoToMyPC could help them reach server desktops from remote locations. One user wrote, “We currently have a vendor in India accessing our database via GoToMyPC.” Another described wanting to access a Windows 2003 Server from a Linux desktop, using GoToMyPC as an alternative to VNC over VPN. These responses demonstrate how companies often find new business scenarios where GoToMyPC can be leveraged once they start using it.
Good for the employee and employer

These survey results show that workers do indeed welcome simple, flexible remote-access solutions that let them work when they want, where they want. GoToMyPC Corporate can help employees get their work done at a time and place that suits them while reducing office disruptions and the aggravation and cost of commuting.

Establishing a balance between personal and professional lives improves job satisfaction. Not only are happier employees more productive, but survey results show they are more likely to devote extra time and effort to getting the job done right, making themselves more available to co-workers and customers. Ultimately, this can translate into reduced absenteeism and better workforce retention. Add workforce agility and reduced operational expenses, and employers have a clear-cut case for providing remote access.

But years of experience show that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to remote access can be expensive and inadequate. As a device-independent alternative, GoToMyPC can fill gaps not addressed by remote-access VPNs. GoToMyPC Corporate is a great fit for remote workers who need as-needed, consistent access to their daily work environment from any Internet-connected device. Whether ensuring business continuity during a disaster or letting vacationing workers respond to crises, having this kind of service available can be a win-win proposition for both employee and employer.

1 Worldwide Mobile Worker 2007-2011 Forecast and Analysis (IDC #209813), January 2008
4 Attraction and Retention: The Impact and Prevalence of Work-Life & Benefit Programs, WorldatWork, October 2007
5 Playing to Win in a Global Economy, Watson Wyatt Worldwide, October 2007
6 Top Predictions for IT Organizations and Users, 2008 and Beyond: Going Green and Self-Healing, Gartner, January 2008