

Improving Worker Productivity with Better Remote Content Collaboration

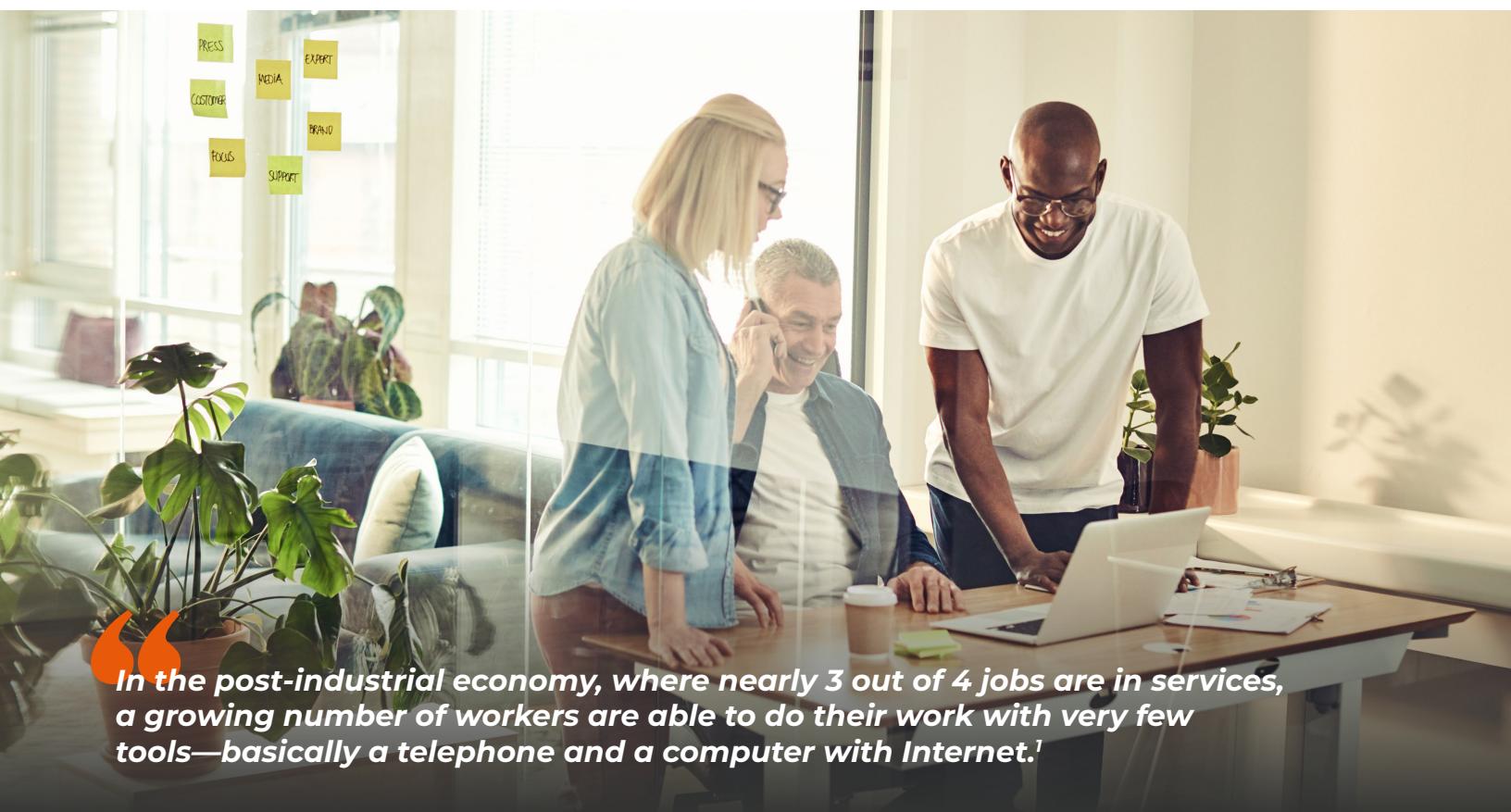
The New Norm for the Distributed Enterprise



Executive Summary

How employees accomplish their work, and where they accomplish it from, is changing. Not that long ago, employees clocked in and resigned themselves to their desks for long stretches of time to carry out their work. Although laptops, tablets, and smartphones have enabled mobility, most employees are still tied to the halls of their office in order to access files stored on corporate network. But the situation changing. Today, a many of companies allow employees to work outside the office and may even use contract and gig-based workers to handle a variety of tasks from customer service to software development. The result? A growing distributed workforce that includes external parties and gig-based workers that needs access to corporate network resources from home offices, co-working spaces, and even other countries.

With the onset of Covid-19, this new trend of telecommuting or teleworking is accelerating. In fact you could argue that it has become the norm. It's also an employment perk in today's business world and companies need to offer it to attract and keep the best talent—flexible work schedules that include some time at home and some time in the office. But having a distributed workforce introduces an interesting problem—how does a business make it cost-efficient and secure for all distributed workers, both in the office and remote,



In the post-industrial economy, where nearly 3 out of 4 jobs are in services, a growing number of workers are able to do their work with very few tools—basically a telephone and a computer with Internet.¹

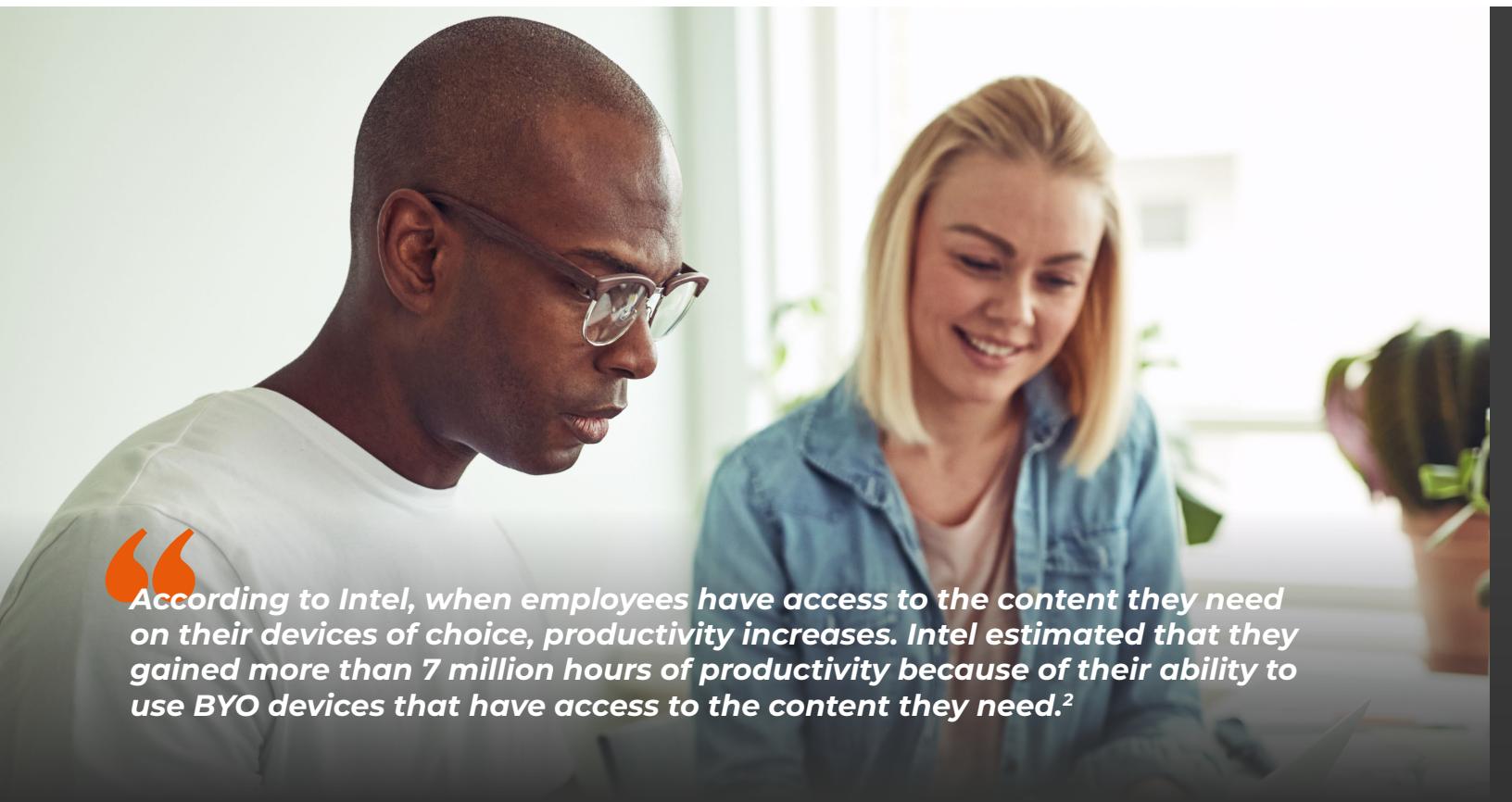
to collaborate on documents? Today they have 2 choices - either upload these documents to a cloud provider or provide access to network resources via a VPN.

For many organizations, the impact of lost productivity resulting from file sharing via the cloud is becoming significant. Employees can spend countless hours over the course of a month, uploading and downloading large files from the cloud in order to collaborate. And what happens when a file isn't synchronized to the cloud?

The alternative to the cloud is to provide remote workers VPN access, however VPNs act essentially like a super long ethernet cable. They provide access to the entire corporate network, not just to the individual files needed. So they are not appropriate for contract and gig-based workers.

Of course, there's always email, but it's not really a viable solution for very large files. All current solutions fall short in some critical ways.

This whitepaper explores the impact (both in cost and lost productivity) that can result from using the cloud in particular to share documents for collaboration and what that impact means to your business. In doing so, this paper also introduces the FileFlex Enterprise solution and how it can help mitigate the impact while enabling better, more effective, collaboration between in-local-network and out-of-local-network personnel.

A photograph of a man and a woman looking down at a screen, possibly a laptop or tablet, together. The man is on the left, wearing glasses and a white t-shirt, looking intently at the screen. The woman is on the right, wearing a blue denim jacket, smiling and looking at the screen. They appear to be in an office or workspace environment.

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According to Intel, when employees have access to the content they need on their devices of choice, productivity increases. Intel estimated that they gained more than 7 million hours of productivity because of their ability to use BYO devices that have access to the content they need.²

Remote File Access—Two Sides of the Same Problem

"It's not working Jim," Sara said as she leaned over his desk. "Every time someone on my team needs to access a file remotely, it's not there. They either have to ask someone in the office to copy it over to our corporate cloud drive, or, if it's not too big, email it. I feel like it's really cutting into our productivity."

Jim looked up at her as he tapped his pencil on the desk.

"What do you want me to do? Adding more storage to the company file sharing platform isn't a long term answer. You always quickly consume any additional storage I give you. And our private cloud storage is expensive. You need to manage it better."

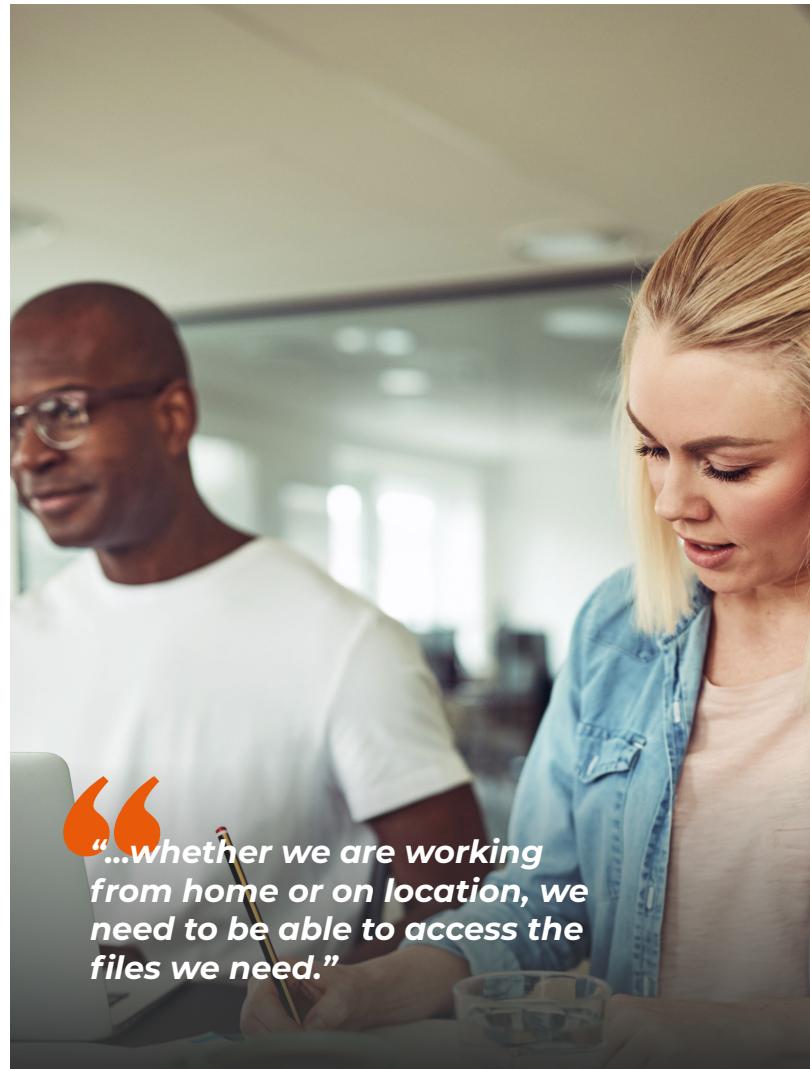
Sara sighed.

"I guess we can always use Google Drive. But, even then, I'll have members of my team wasting time uploading and downloading documents, especially as many of them are so big..." she said.

"No way," Jim replied. "The boss and corporate counsel say we can't use the public cloud. We cannot put our confidential files there because of the risk of legalized secret data exfiltration. Once our files go into a cloud service like Google or DropBox, we have no idea where our files might end up, who has them, or how to get them back. Plus, there are issues of version control and access by third parties. No, you can't use the public cloud."

Sara just shook her head.

"Whatever that means," she mumbled as she sat back down in the chair on the other side of Jim's desk. "Come on, Jim, you've got to help. My team's productivity is being

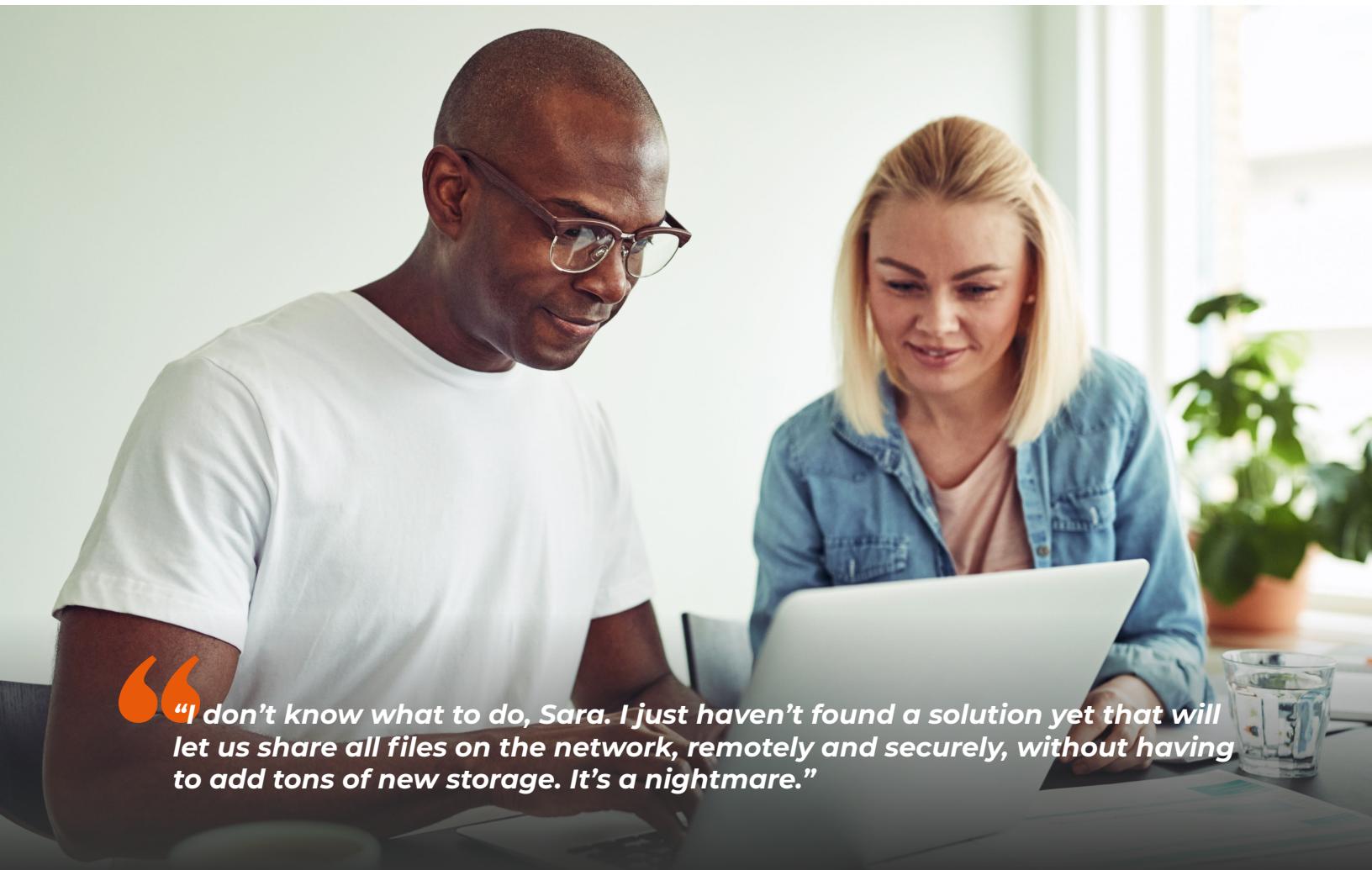


seriously undermined by your platform's shortcomings. I mean whether we are working from home or on location, we need to be able to access the files we need. And we need to be able to work together on them with others in the office."

"I don't know what to do, Sara. Other than giving everyone on your team VPN access, I just haven't found a solution yet that will let us share all files on the network, remotely and securely, without having to add tons of new cloud storage. And you know that since your team has a lot of freelancers, you are not allowed VPN access. It's a nightmare. I get that your team members are having to email documents around, which is wasting time that could be spent working billable tasks, but..." He shook his head. "I don't think there's a technology that can do what you need right now."

Sara pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Listen, Jim. Then I have to escalate this. My boss has tied some of my management objectives to how quickly we complete alterations to client project files. My bonus is going to be affected if we don't get this resolved."



"I don't know what to do, Sara. I just haven't found a solution yet that will let us share all files on the network, remotely and securely, without having to add tons of new storage. It's a nightmare."

She picked up her journal and stood up.

"It's not just me and my team, though. I mean my entire department wants to work from home like the freelancers do. If they can't access the files they need, or the files that they are working on with our gig-based workforce, what's the point? And our recruiters have been pitching telework as a perk to joining the company."

"I get it, Sara, I get it," Jim said as he leaned back in his chair. "I guess I can look some more to see if there's a different solution that will meet your team's needs, but I can't guarantee it."

Sara smiled.

"Thanks," she said. "Whatever you can do in the meantime would be great. I know my boss will probably talk to yours about this because it's something we have to solve now."

Jim shook his head as she walked out of his office.

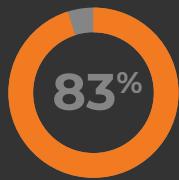
"This seems like an impossible ask," he mumbled as he turned back to the computer and started to search for a solution to a problem he thought he had already solved.



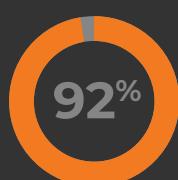
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In a Harris Interactive Poll of knowledge workers⁴:



Indicated that they lose or waste time each day on document collaboration issues



Said they still use email as a primary way to move documents around for collaboration

Today's Solutions Fall Short

Over the years, companies have taken a variety of approaches to address file sharing and synchronization. Some of these include VPNs, public cloud solutions, and expensive EFSS software packages that are installed on additional company servers. All of these have either financial, security, or productivity issues. Because VPNs provide network access for example, they are a prime target to malicious actors and thus need constant updates and maintenance. And it's not hard to find a user who hasn't had an issue trying to connect to their corporate VPN!

But enabling remote access to files is only half the problem. Allowing employees and freelancers to work outside the office, whether at home, at the local coffee shop, or at a client location, can actually introduce unforeseen financial impacts.

The issues that Sara raised to Jim points to a growing problem affecting employees and gig-based freelancers working remotely and those at the office collaborating with them. When employing one of today's file sharing solutions, remote employee productivity often takes a nose dive—all of the technology available today for file sharing either results in the unavailability of files (only designated storage locations can be shared) or an ineffective mechanism to collaborate with co-workers in the office. Either situation can undermine a remote worker's ability to accomplish their job. So how much time is wasted uploading or downloading documents that could be spent working on revisions? With current solutions to this problem, such as traditional EFSS, private cloud or public cloud, everyone's productivity suffers: in-office workers, out-of-office workers and, most importantly, your customers.

In the opening story, management and employees recognized that telecommuting and working from the field can't succeed without taking into account the needs of workers in and outside of the office.

54% of people who own two devices switch between them to complete tasks or activities and **73%** of people who have three devices do the same.¹

The Content Productivity Calculator

Consider the use case of an architecture firm with 100 architects working on very large files. They have decided, regardless of the threat of data exfiltration, to use the cloud. So, to work on a file, an employee must download it first, make changes, and re-upload it. If each one of them spends one hour per week uploading AutoCAD files to the cloud so that 10 remote workers can be more productive, then they are wasting 100 hours uploading and downloading. If the average compensation of those employees worked out to \$100 per hour, the cost to the company would be \$10,000 per week or \$520,000 per year... just so 10 remote workers can collaborate:

100 Employees	X	1 Hour Per Week (Uploading AutoCAD files)	@	\$100 Per Hour
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\$10,000 Per Week (Uploading AutoCAD files)	=	\$520,000 Per Year (Uploading AutoCAD files)
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What might this kind of productivity waste cost your company?

[Calculate My Costs](#)

The Solution Landscape

Remote file access isn't anything new. It's just become more of a hot topic as companies implement work environments that aren't tied to a specific, physical location. As such, there are a variety of technologies currently available to IT and employees that not only enable access to files while away from the corporate network, but also afford opportunities for collaboration with in-office workers:

Approach/ Technology	Description	Issues
Virtual Private Network (VPN)	Allow employees to access secure network resources, including storage, remotely through an encrypted point-to-point connection	Yes, it's possible that an employee could get access to network-attached drives via a VPN connection, but there's no opportunity for sharing, synchronization, or collaboration. Since they allow external access to the network, they are not appropriate for contractors and gig-based freelancers and they are a prime attack target. They need constant updating and maintenance.
Corporate Intranet (Microsoft SharePoint)	Allow employees to access sensitive data and other resources, including files, through a designated, private "web portal."	This is great for sharing when employees are connected to the network (i.e., via VPN) and can work in conjunction with files stored in Microsoft OneDrive for Business, for example. But, again, it's just a subset of files. If files aren't copied into a SharePoint page or OneDrive, they aren't available. Further sharing with external parties complicated - especially if using an on-premises implementation. Finally, SharePoint is a separate silo of information.
Public Cloud (DropBox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive)	Enable employees to remotely access, share, and collaborate on files by storing them on the servers of the cloud provider, outside the corporate network, accessible through web browser, desktop, or mobile application.	IT has no visibility or control over files stored in a public cloud. Storing files in the public cloud often addresses only a subset of corporate information and has issues of data residency, legal jurisdiction, third-party access, and secret access by law enforcement. Using these services increases the organization's attack surface, requires IT to manage multiple images and versions of files, and inherently creates a more complicated storage structure which translates to a higher risk posture.
Enterprise File Sync and Share (EFSS) or Content Collaboration Platform	Essentially a public cloud that provides IT oversight.	All the problems of a public cloud solution except that IT oversight is enabled. These solutions are also expensive and complex to implement.

Approach/ Technology	Description	Issues
Private Cloud	Has the same functionality as EFSS, except that the server and storage is hosted on-premise and is under the control of IT.	Although a robust way to share files remotely, this solution can be expensive to install and maintain, often requiring new servers and storage to support, not to mention the manpower required to continually maintain, update, and ensure proper operation. And even after implemented, besides issues of version control, it covers only a subset of organizational data.

Unfortunately, most of these solutions just don't meet the needs of IT, the remote worker, the freelancer or the in-office employee. Sure, each of them checks some of the boxes, but, until now, there hasn't been a single platform that provides the kind of control, security, and management Jim would want as well as the access, collaboration tools, and availability across devices Sara needs. None of the solutions listed in the table above inherently solves the productivity losses resulting from remote workers collaborating with in-office colleagues.

FileFlex Enterprise Allows You To Share Everything.

Thankfully, what Jim needs isn't a unicorn. The solution exists and it's called FileFlex Enterprise. This unique and disruptive solution that provides secure zero-trust remote access, sharing and remote editing of all files stored on your hybrid-IT infrastructure whether on-premises, cloud-hosted or SharePoint. A software-only solution FileFlex Enterprise provides:

- Robust, secure and private file sharing
- Remote editing content collaboration
- Supports the modern hybrid-IT storage infrastructure - No VPN
- Zero trust data access
- Virtual data rooms
- Remote file management between storage devices and locations
- Significant IT control
- Optional Intel SGX platform hardening
- Privacy and compliance
- Unparalleled security and lowered risk posture
- Very easy to install, configure and maintain

Sara's Back in Jim's Office...

"So, did you find a solution?" Sara asked as she fidgeted with her smartphone.

"Yes, I did," Jim replied. "In fact, the platform is already installed. It's called FileFlex Enterprise. You can access any file that's on any network drive. And if you need one that's not shared, we can enable it within a few minutes. No more public cloud. No more uploading and downloading. I think it's safe to say, no more wasting time!"

Sara looked up at the ceiling, smiling.

"Jim, I can't tell you how great that is to hear. My entire team will be more productive."

He smiled.

"I see you have your phone with you," he said. "Let's get you setup on FileFlex Enterprise right now so that you can start using the platform today."

Sara raised an eyebrow as she handed her phone to him across the desk.



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No more uploading and
downloading. I think it's safe
to say, no more wasting time!"**

Can You Afford for Your Employees Not to Be Productive?

Let's face it, remote work is a way of doing business today. With Covid-19, more employees are working from home and companies are benefiting, but only when productivity can be assured. Maintaining that productivity requires everyone have access to the files they need, securely, from the devices they use without having to waste valuable time uploading and downloading from the cloud or emailing new versions. FileFlex Enterprise is the perfect solution, checking all the boxes for both IT and executives who are looking to streamline productivity and cut wasted time out of their employee's days while out performing existing remote file sharing platforms like the public cloud and complicated EFSS software.

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