

Solutions

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AaSys Group will be closed on
Monday, September 7, 2020 in
observance of Labor Day.

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Preparing For The Fall

We are six months into the Coronavirus pandemic and although we have learned more about the virus, there is still no cohesive national plan to move forward on defeating it. Although COVID-19 has presented many challenges for all sectors across the board, the virus has also opened the door to a new way of doing business, causing a number of companies to be more innovative than ever before. As the fall approaches, everyone is bracing for the flu season and the possible next wave; a wave that many experts say can be catastrophic, both from a global economy standpoint as well as a from a public health standpoint. As we all anxiously await a possible vaccine, companies should start planning for the next several months to come and take a good look at existing contingency plans and focus on increasing agility and building resilience.

Early on in the pandemic, businesses were in crisis mode, unprepared and shocked. But six months in, those same businesses are beginning to focus their attention on what's next. Remote working has become the main reason most companies have been able to stay afloat and go back to somewhat business as usual. Going digital was always something most could do but, while we are in the middle of this pandemic, it is something that many organizations now must do. Companies will need to continue to come up with ways to re-engage with their workforce and to reduce operational risks, increase security and ensure customer access. One of the ways of doing so is making sure organizations focus on inventory management and having the right technology hardware.

Having hardware and software in place that make daily business functions seamless is critical. Many will remember in March and April laptops were in high demand. It was difficult to secure them; most with a six to eight-week lead time. Many of the hardware we use for remote work are manufactured

overseas with suppliers who also faced their own challenges with the virus and had to shut down for some time. Right now, everyone is essentially playing catch up. At the end of May, Windows notebooks and Chromebooks saw a mid-40 percent year-over-year increase in unit sales, and tablets and PCs saw a 38 percent increase in unit sales. And although things have been better since the early days of the pandemic, we are most likely to see similar constraints as we did in March as we enter into the fall months. As students return to school, some in person, some virtual, school districts across the nation are starting to secure large amounts of devices to ensure all students have access in the event another full shut down occurs.

As the demand for remote hardware and software increases again, AaSys recommends that you start planning for the fall and really assessing your business needs for crucial solutions (laptops, cameras, printers, network equipment, etc.) Waiting too long to make a decision on purchasing laptops or any other hardware may result in your organization not obtaining the model with the specific specs and configuration that is needed. You also want to factor in possible shipping and manufacturing delays. The sooner orders are placed, the better position your organization is to deal with what may come in the fall.

Also, don't forget applications that can streamline your business process. Many institutions have adopted technology that allows for digital signatures on contracts and other documents. The wait time for these solutions have ebbed, but may blossom forth again if there is a mass rush to implement. Have you had time to conduct a risk assessment for these technologies and to adapt your policies and procedures?

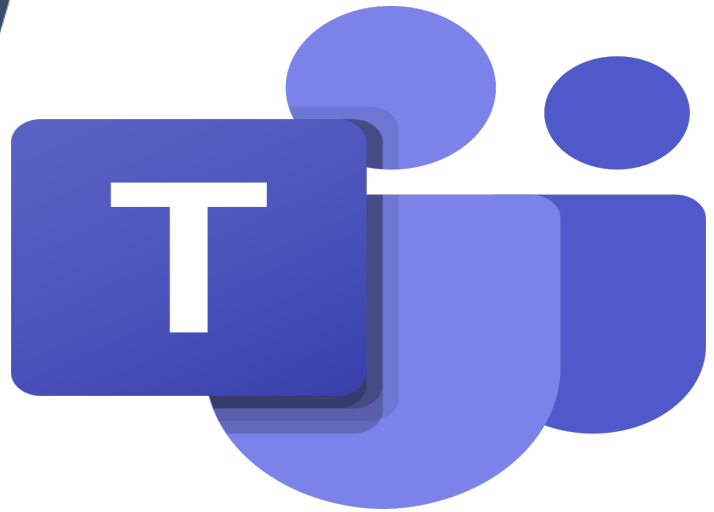
Because no one knows what will happen next, businesses need to continue to build up resiliency, be agile and be open to a degree of flexibility. The need for remote tech gear will not subside any time soon and as we enter into the flu season it surely will exacerbate the problem. Contact your Account Executive today so they can help your organization get ready for the months ahead.



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Microsoft Teams Adds New Features



Microsoft Office 365 is now called Microsoft 365. Despite the name change, it is still the preferred cloud-based application and has proven itself to be a game changer. As the future of work and education is being reshaped, having a platform that can adapt to rapid changes is key. Microsoft 365 has done an in-depth study over the last several months to find ways to make the new era of remote working more interactive and feel more natural and yes, more normal.

Microsoft 365 is an integrated experience of apps and services, designed to help you grow your business. It is a subscription-based platform that helps merge productivity with efficiency. The solution includes the traditional Office desktop apps (for Windows or Mac) such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint, along with a full suite of online services for email, file storage, collaboration meetings, Office Mobile, Office Web Apps and more. Because the solution is web-based, the applications are regularly updated allowing users to always have the latest version. Many have seen cost savings from switching to a subscription pay model versus the perpetual Microsoft Office license model.

One of the major benefits of Microsoft 365 is Microsoft Teams which AaSys recommends. Microsoft Teams is part of the Office 365 subscription office productivity suite and features extensions that can integrate with non

Microsoft products. The application was designed for businesses, schools and other organizations, allowing individuals to collaborate virtually. Teams allows several different types of communications such as chat, audio or video calls or channels that have major benefits to your organization, promoting collaboration and a more streamlined workflow.

Now that we are in the COVID-19 era, the need to collaborate is more important than ever before. With remote work now being the only option for some to conduct business, it is crucial to have an effective way to engage with employees. Because of that, Microsoft has added some great new features to Microsoft Teams that make virtual interactions more engaging and ultimately will bring a more human aspect to remote work. Here are a few of the new upgrades to Microsoft Teams.

Together Mode

Together mode is a new meeting experience in Teams that uses AI segmentation technology to digitally place participants in a shared background. The goal is to make everyone in the meeting feel as if they are all sitting in the same room. Together mode makes meetings more engaging allowing participants to focus on other people's faces and body language and making it easier to pick up on the non-verbal cues

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that are so important to human interaction. It's great for meetings in which multiple people will speak, such as brainstorming or roundtable discussions.

Live Reactions

Sometimes it is difficult for participants to see or notice non-verbal cues like smiles and head nods in an online meeting. That can make it difficult for presenters to read his or her audience reactions and for participants in large meetings to share a sentiment without interrupting the meeting flow. Soon, there will be a feature that allows attendees of a virtual Teams meeting to be able to react using emojis that will appear to all participants. Live reactions are already available on PowerPoint Live Presentations and Microsoft plans to bring PowerPoint Live Presentations to Teams in the future!

Microsoft Whiteboard

Visual collaboration tools are always a plus in any meeting or training session. Whiteboard in Teams will soon be updated with new features including faster load times, sticky notes, text, and drag and drop capabilities. These features enable team members who don't have access to a touchscreen or Surface Hub to participate in whiteboarding sessions during Teams meetings.

Touchless Meeting Experiences

Participants of an online meeting can join a Teams meeting from their Microsoft Teams Room and collaboration bar devices, share content and collaborate using their personal PC or mobile device, without ever having to touch the shared device display. Later this year, Microsoft plans to enable voice assistance for Microsoft Teams Room devices which will allow in-room participants to ask Cortana to join and leave a meeting, add a participant from the address book to a meeting using their name or phone number, and more.

Tasks App

Task app is a more cohesive view of tasks from across Microsoft To Do, Planner, and Outlook. It allows smart task lists to be created and assigned to individuals and can bring tasks together across different platforms, whether on a desktop, web, or mobile device.

Although these are just a few of the changes, Microsoft is committed to reinventing the future of work where everyone is able to contribute and do their best, whether remotely or physically in a shared office. AaSys understands this is a unique time that requires flexibility and patience. Our goal is to help all our customers find solutions that fit your environment and enable you to stay connected and productive. To learn more about Microsoft Teams or Microsoft 365 reach out to your Account Executive today.

Sources:
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