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Introduction

Every day, employees across the world rely on their digital tools and devices to get their job done effectively. The daily interactions that employees have with their devices, applications, and other digital resources make up what is called the Digital Employee Experience (DEX). A company's DEX serves as a critical driver of employee satisfaction, productivity, and ultimately, business success.

Most IT managers find it challenging to deliver a great digital experience to employees even when they're in the office, so expanding your support to include a "work from anywhere" model can seem even more daunting.

The stakes become much higher when workers are distributed both on and offsite: workers can feel less secure, more dependent on their collaboration tools (for lack of physical interaction) and third-party networks, and they can face multiple issues that ultimately weaken their company's security and productivity.

It doesn't have to be this way.

We have compiled 12 tips to help you optimize your workplace to support employees no matter where they work from. Use these tips, and our accompanying stories from real-life IT departments, to help your company deliver a powerful flexible work program for employees.



What does a great DEX look like?

- ✓ **Device** – your hardware is functional, performing smoothly, and remote-ready.
- ✓ **Business Applications** – your employees have undisrupted, responsive access to their critical business applications.
- ✓ **Productivity & Collaboration** – the tools and web browsers your workers depend on are stable, reliable, and error-free.
- ✓ **Employee Sentiment** – real-time, targeted feedback proves employees are delighted with their digital experience.

01. Learn how to manage the entire “Experience”

One of the reasons remote workers often encounter tech problems is because IT rarely has visibility into how their devices, applications, and networks are performing as one, single experience for end users. Traditional IT monitoring focuses on how technology services are performing from the perspective of IT, not on how they are consumed and experienced by employees.

To truly know how your employees experience their digital tools and services, you should consider a comprehensive, on-going index score to measure the critical metrics within your infrastructure.

TOYOTA MOTOR EUROPE

Scoring the digital experience: using IT to safeguard the wider business

Toyota Motor Europe (TME) tapped Nextthink to help their IT department align with their business philosophy of “Genchi Genbutsu,” which means to quite literally “go and see; and collect facts and data at the actual site of the work or problem.” Looking to consolidate 14,000 devices and 10,000 software licenses, Toyota used Nextthink’s Digital Experience Score (DEX Score) to identify possible problems in their infrastructure and to better benchmark their digital projects. When TME’s employees shifted to work offsite in 2020, their IT department continued to monitor their company’s DEX Score and intervene in case of any drops in performance across their devices, applications, or networks.



02. Embed flexibility into your infrastructure

Whether you support flexible work for all employees, or only a subset, it is critical that you get the basics right in your infrastructure.

To set the stage, you should first confirm the status of your different device types, whether virtualized or local. Ensure key certificates (VPN, Office 365, etc.) are in place, and that all necessary end-user software and firewalls are up to date. With a solid digital foundation in place, your IT department can support the needs of all workers, regardless of where they connect.

03.

Automate communication and remediation

IT is often slow to resolve incidents because they have to deal with large distributed workforces, increasingly complex network and application environments, siloed tools and massive data sets that require time-consuming analysis.

In order to reduce incidents, invest in solutions that have deep analytics, self-help capabilities and remediation scripts to automate manual work.

FORTUNE 500 CONSUMER SERVICES COMPANY

Restoring order to VPN performance

Soon after switching to a “work from anywhere” model, this customer used Nextthink’s built-in analytics and automations to reduce a spike in their VPN traffic. Using our drill-down dashboards, IT quickly discovered that a third of their employees connecting to the VPN only needed Office 365, a suite of tools that could’ve been easily accessed outside the network! IT then used our helpful automation capabilities to remind those employees that were taxing the network to kindly disconnect from the VPN.



04. Promote employee self-help

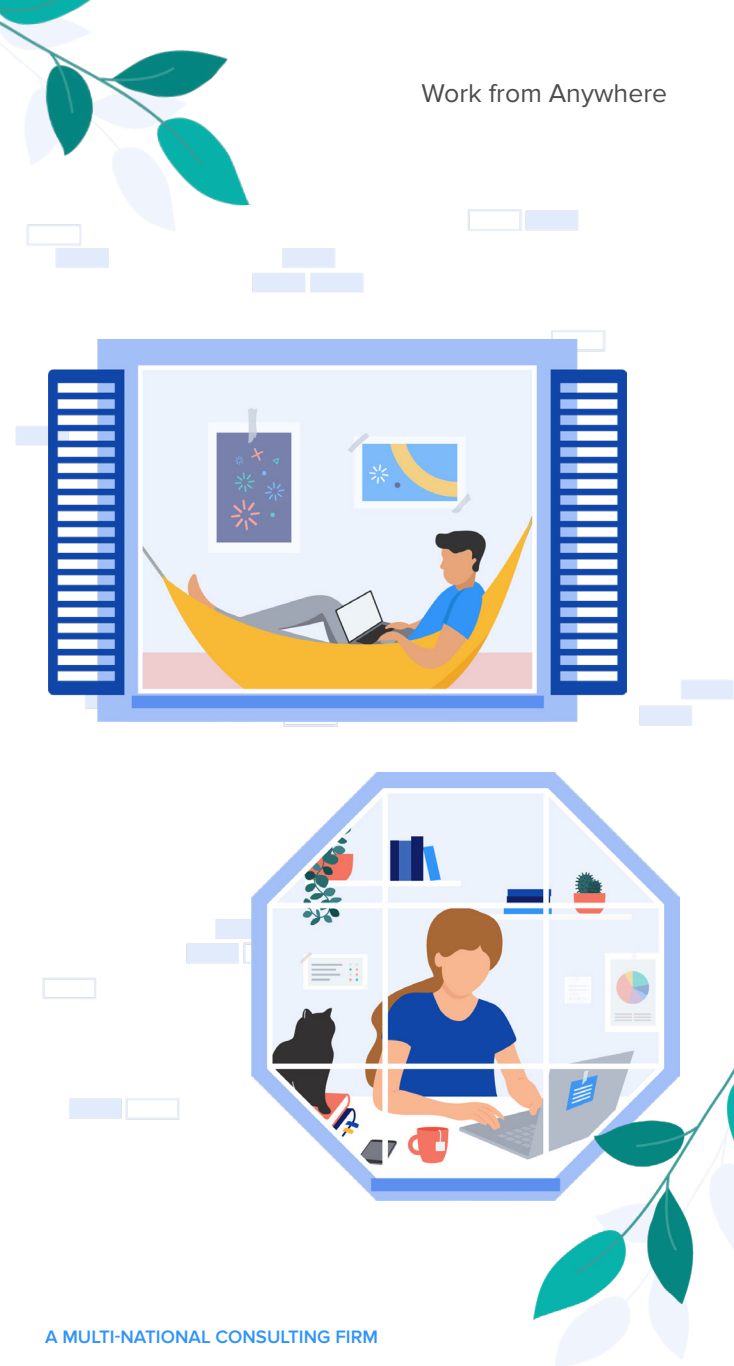
IT often has its hands full trying to support both in-office and remote employees. But with the right engagement and automation tools, you can offset IT's workload by establishing an easy-to-use employee self-help system.

Automatic device diagnostics can highlight issues such as network misconfigurations, unoptimized device settings or hard disks in need of clean-up. IT can then resolve issues like these with 1-click employee-assisted remediations, helping to remove the burden on support agents and empower employees.

05. Facilitate employee collaboration

One of the main disadvantages of flexible working is the lack of face-to-face communication employees have with their colleagues. Collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom are useful, but without the right visibility into employees' experience with them, transitioning to these applications can sometimes be more harmful than constructive. IT must worry about maintaining security compliance standards, mitigating adoption resistance, and solving tricky network-related problems.

You can mitigate all of these challenges by focusing on your employees' pre-deployment readiness. Evaluate their devices and infrastructure capabilities before initiating the piloting and full-scale rollout of deployments. Once successfully implemented, focus on maintaining a high service quality by engaging with employees for continuous feedback.

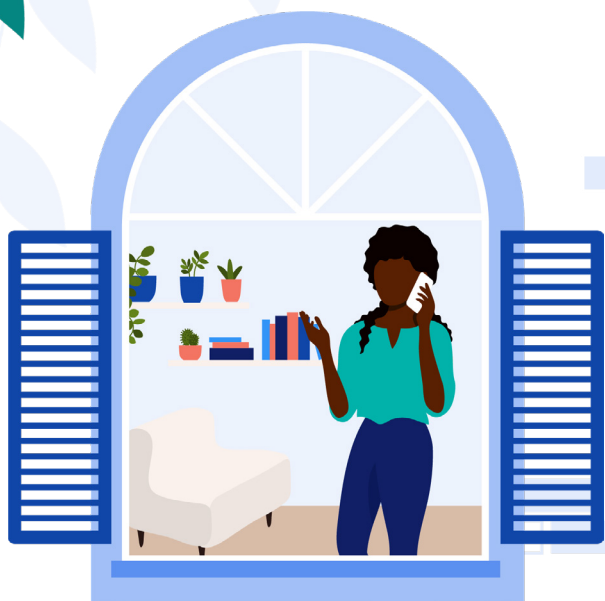


A MULTI-NATIONAL CONSULTING FIRM

Investigation and automation: distributed incident management

With an increasingly large section of their workforce working from different locations, this company noticed a sharp decrease in their DEX Score for remote workers. Device data captured by Nexthink revealed the most common problem was high CPU usage, and Nexthink further identified that most of those employees' devices had hard drives filling up faster than usual. Instead of manually fixing each issue, IT used Nexthink to quickly contact these employees via a friendly push notification to their devices and enable them to clean their respective disks in a single click.

Remarkably, this entire project, from discovery to resolution, was completed in under four hours!



06. Stay on top of critical services

A key contributor to a great DEX is being able to access the critical applications, files, and services that you need. When working from anywhere, a stable internet connection to access those critical services is a critical lifeline for employees—without it, they lose reliable contact with their working environment.

IT should continuously track key metrics like network response time so that if quality drops, they can pinpoint whether it is from the employee or corporate side. Unlocking insights into your critical services will provide a wealth of information for any remediation effort. Focus on continuously reporting on service and network performance and make sure you share that data with your different IT stakeholders.

INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Keeping tabs on what's critical

One of our customer's VPN network response time spiked from an average of 1s to 10s, so IT used Nexthink to rapidly identify the cause—a faulty Outlook plug-in. In a few clicks, IT was able to see the entire story: one plug-in error occurred on 8 devices which used 9 specific ports and 5 Exchange servers within their VPN environment. Tracing the VPN's slow network response time back to specific remote devices, end users, ports, and destinations gave IT a level of insight and clarity that would have been impossible to replicate with another tool.

07. Stay current with every IT environment

One of IT's biggest fears when managing a flexible workforce is the potential loss of visibility and control that they are used to having in an on-premises environment. IT should always seek to keep their infrastructure current when supporting large numbers of distributed employees.

To actively enhance your company's DEX, you need to know what exactly is installed, used, modified, patched, and configured across your enterprise, both for in-office and remote workers. Why should you care about these things? Without both clear endpoint data and employee-centric experience monitoring, any attempt to streamline services or fix issues will be out of sync with the rest of your environment.

INTERNATIONAL BANKING SECTOR

Updating the right versions

The IT department at a popular international bank used Nexthink's dashboards to quickly identify employee subgroups that hadn't updated particular business applications like SharePoint, Office 365, and Slack. Failing to update these apps in time could have left several hundred employees unable to work productively. Within the same Nexthink platform, IT was able to easily bulk-update those devices with the current application versions, which ensured their colleagues stayed productive and protected.



08. Shine a light on Shadow IT

Shadow IT is alive and well. Nowadays, third-party applications are easier to access, deploy and maintain outside the visibility and control of the IT team. One of the hardest challenges for IT is to ensure a safe and compliant experience, and this is especially the case when supporting a mix of remote and office-based workers across multiple locations.

💡 Our advice?

Start with an amnesty. Ask other departments to share what non-sanctioned applications they are using and why. Offer proactive IT support and look for ways to streamline and secure end-user experiences. Deliver a real-time view of how employees are using applications and services, along with the issues they encounter and your plan to resolve common issues. Engage with employees to understand the underlying reasons for choosing non-sanctioned tools, and work with them over time to adopt a more standardized approach – or consider supporting additional tools.

PACKAGE SUPPLIER

Ensuring DEX consistency across a distributed workforce

One customer used Nexthink's insights and guidance to reliably improve their once lop-sided DEX. Within the first month of setting up a remote workforce, hundreds of tickets poured in, with many employees struggling to work efficiently with the company's collaboration tools like Zoom and Teams. In an effort to ensure all employees, regardless of location, were receiving the same quality experience, IT then established a minimum acceptable DEX Score of 7.5 (out of 10 points). If scores dipped below that score, IT would take special notice to investigate the drop and fix any issues right away. After just three months of consistent benchmarking, this customer has increased their overall DEX Score from below 7 to 8.2 for office-based workers and 7.9 for remotely connected workers!

09.

Reach out directly to employees at any time

A significant concern for IT is the potential isolation that remote and hybrid workers can feel outside the office. Employees working away from corporate HQ, with limited in-office exposure, can often feel detached and excluded from their colleagues. With access to physical IT support now severed, IT needs to show these employees that the opposite is true: support is present every step of the way.

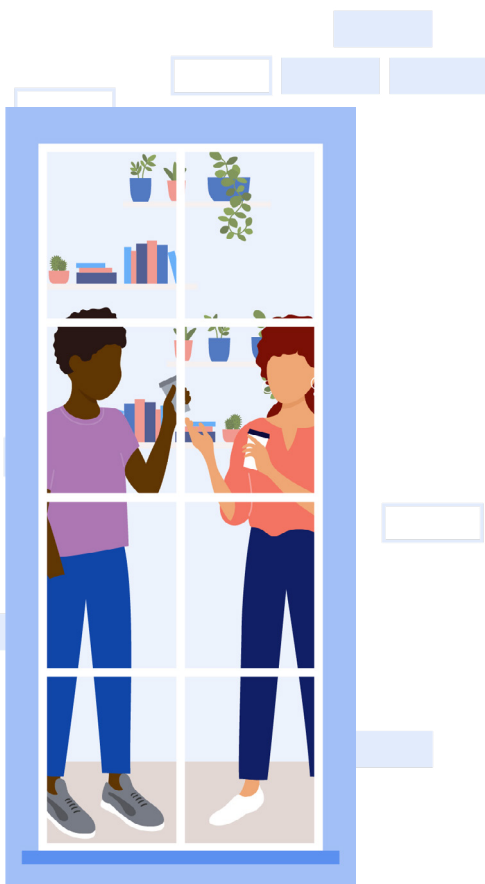
IT should keep the communication lines open with workers, whether to offer direct help for tech issues, to monitor their experience with new technologies, or just to confirm their ongoing productivity via sentiment gathering. Even subtle communication efforts provide employees with a vastly improved DEX—it makes them feel cared for, protected, and part of the same team.



LEADING MULTINATIONAL GAS COMPANY

Coming back to the office for the right reasons

One of our customer's is using Nexthink's sentiment gathering and experience scoring capabilities to plan how they will safely and systematically cycle workers back to the office. The company will have employees complete COVID-19 health declaration forms to vet their well-being, leveraging Nexthink's targeted on-screen messages to prompt completion. They are also using Nexthink to identify remote employees with below-average internet speed. Lastly, they are gathering feedback on which employees are suffering with a poor experience due to factors beyond IT's control (such as family distractions and uncomfortable work stations). Knowing which employees are unproductive at home and healthy enough to return to work will give IT the insight to determine who should return first to the office.



10. Get accurate, real-time employee sentiment

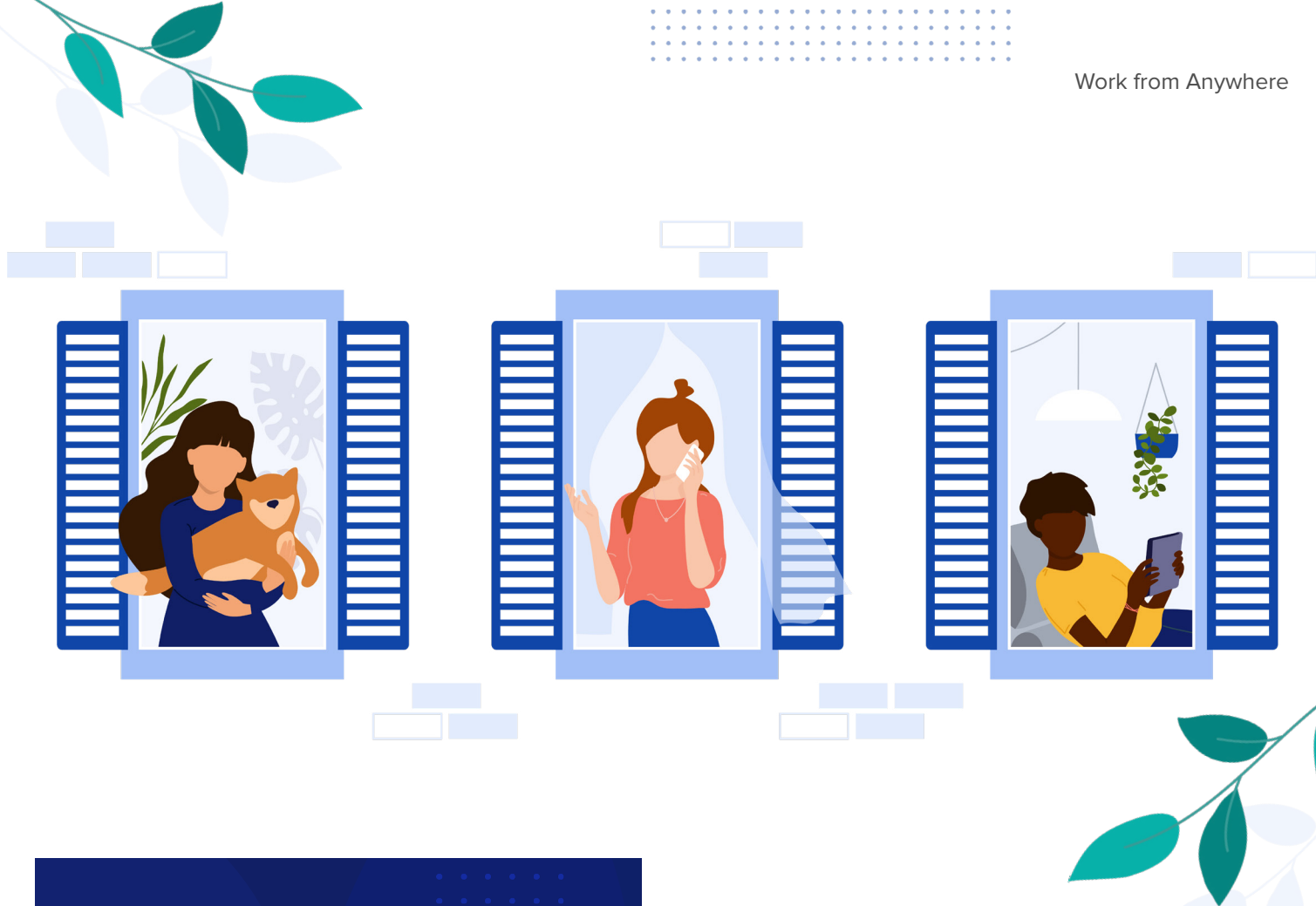
Unlike traditional email surveys with poor response rates and moment-in-time data, a continuous dialogue with employees offers the opportunity to gather timely feedback and monitor sentiment.

To gather comprehensive and continuous feedback, many organizations are embedding two-way communication methods into the digital workplace. This enables them to deliver requests for feedback as well as broadcast time-sensitive information as needed—allowing IT to collect rich, contextual feedback across office-based, remote, and hybrid IT environments.

11. Forge a path back to the office

Determining which employees are better off working onsite vs. offsite can be a tricky process. Traditional thinking might suggest employees are fine if they haven't placed any calls to the help desk. That line of reasoning is obviously flawed because many technology issues are never reported by employees.

We suggest you leverage capabilities that measure and analyze employees' remote experience by employee persona, geography, or other factors. Also, it's important to collect feedback straight from employees to assess if they have any non-IT issues at play—for example, some remote workers might encounter a poor DEX simply due to their home layout or interruptions from family or roommates.



LARGE PUBLIC HOSPITAL

Asking the right questions at the right time

One hospital was able to collect unique employee feedback by leveraging our diverse question formats and corroborating their surveys with our real-time device usage metrics. Using targeted on-screen messages, IT was able to continuously measure the device satisfaction for a random subset of nurses every day over a two-week period. IT did this by sending recurring engagement campaigns to users following periods of heavy device usage, and they received an impressive 90% response rate from the nurses. This provided enough feedback to properly assess their needs for any hardware upgrades, enabling the hospital to avoid spending money on unnecessary hardware.

12. Baseline and continuously improve DEX for all employees

IT departments that plan to sustain both their remote and office-based digital environments need to baseline and continuously improve the digital experience of all employee groups. Objective experience scoring can provide a “north star” by which to measure progress over time. Real-time DEX dashboards with prioritized issues and recommended solutions can then provide the guidance needed to improve every week. Automation capabilities integrated directly with those solutions provide the leverage IT needs to proactively resolve problems at scale.

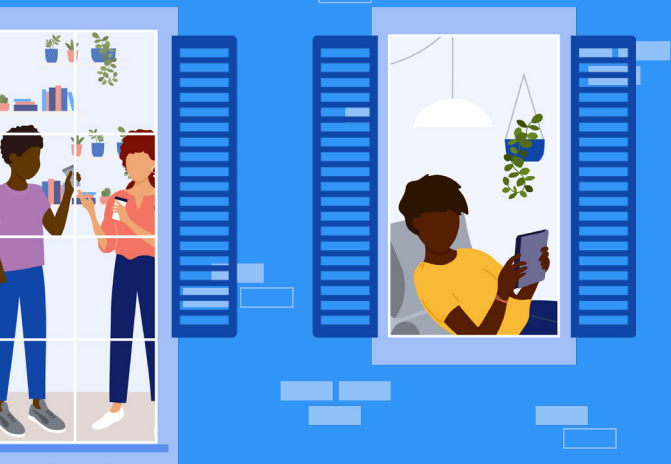


Conclusion

Managing your company's Digital Employee Experience can be challenging. Supporting employees while they work from anywhere can be even harder. But IT can play a critical role in helping employees enjoy their work experience, independent of where they work from.

As the pioneer in digital employee experience management, Nextthink is here to ensure that every employee around the world can stay productive, collaborate with their colleagues, receive timely IT support, and most importantly, have a great digital work experience.

We have helped over 1,000 organizations globally to measure, manage and improve the digital experience for their workforces—anytime, anywhere. Let us explore how we can help you.



nextthink

Want to find out more?
Schedule a Demo



nextthink.com