

*A quick guide to*  
**REMOTE CLOUD SECURITY**



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EDGE IT***™  

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**SECURE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS**

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# Opportunities & Risks of Remote Work

Something many small and medium-sized businesses have discovered during the rapid shift to remote everything: There's a lot to be gained by *not* relying on a physical space. It can save overhead, reduce travel expense, and some studies have found it has increased worker productivity (one found a 13% performance boost among at-home workers)<sup>1</sup> As a result, many businesses are seriously considering tools and strategies to make the non-physical workplace a permanent part of their businesses.

To succeed, this transformation of physical businesses will require new structures and processes, especially for smaller businesses that were not used to working remotely. Regardless of size, all companies now need to think about securing remote endpoints and IT resources. Employees need to be more vigilant than ever. Cyber attackers have made it clear they're not taking any time off.

Many of us saw the additional security risks of the remote work explosion. Video data breaches represent only the visible fraction of other, less flamboyant, but more costly threats enabled by the new scale of endpoint devices in use. Just during the first quarter of 2020, COVID-19 opened up a floodgate of new data security threats, including:

- **220x increase in spam** from February to March of 2020
- That increase represents **907,000 spam messages** related to COVID-19
- **737 malware attacks** that leveraged the crisis
- **A 260% increase** in malicious URL hits in February and March 2020<sup>2</sup>

And that's only in the United States. Bad actors aren't taking time off, so you, your IT teams, and end users all need to be ready now for the increased security risks in this new age.



<sup>1</sup> "Remote Working: The New Normal?" Casey Rue, Forbes, May 20, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Trend Micro research data based on coverage of their Smart Protection Network, Jan. 1 – Mar. 30, 2020.

# Access & Security Challenge

Like so many other companies making the decision to shift to remote everything, your company's first challenge was how to ensure unimpeded performance for your remote workers who are trying to access their tools and data—or just find a reliable internet connection.

Following close on this first issue is the question of security. Suddenly it's the ultimate bring-your-own-device (BYOD) world. Every employee is now remote, and more focused on being productive than following your pesky security procedures. They'll access the data they need however they can; often bypassing VPNs to access cloud services or grabbing hotspots wherever they can—secured or not. This do-it-yourself attitude can lead to risky

activities beyond your control, such as employees downloading software on their own.

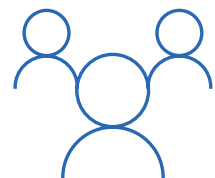
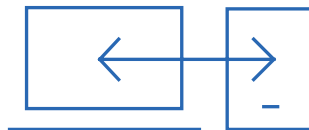
With everyone using whatever devices are handy—personal phones, home computers, even kids' tablets (it has happened!)—the situation is especially perilous. One wrong click can instantly launch an attack that could jeopardize your entire business.

Given the limited capabilities of traditional perimeter firewall and VPN solutions to protect against these remote threats, companies need new security measures, new levels of expertise, and new technologies to protect their assets.

**And the good news is you can build on current measures to get there.**

## Get a Handle on Security

If you haven't had time to perform basic endpoint hygiene and connectivity performance checks on your computers and devices, better late than never. In addition to confirming all your laptops have the necessary endpoint protection configurations for all this new off-LAN activity, ensure your employees are following recommended security practices by asking these three important questions:



1. Have you reviewed and adjusted the security settings of your cloud tenant and your organization's internal network?
2. Have you made sure the security settings and measures for remote users are appropriate for current and foreseeable levels of usage?
3. Is your team proficient in all of the latest security threats or do they need help?

# Make Remote the Center of Attention



Remote workers are now the core of your productivity. The devices they work on can no longer exist at the edge of your security planning; they are dead center and must be treated as such starting now. All that mixing and matching of personal devices with company equipment demands different practices and elevated controls. That means much more than the basic antivirus and antispyware protection, including multi-factor authentication (MFA) and onboard endpoint detection and response (EDR) capabilities.

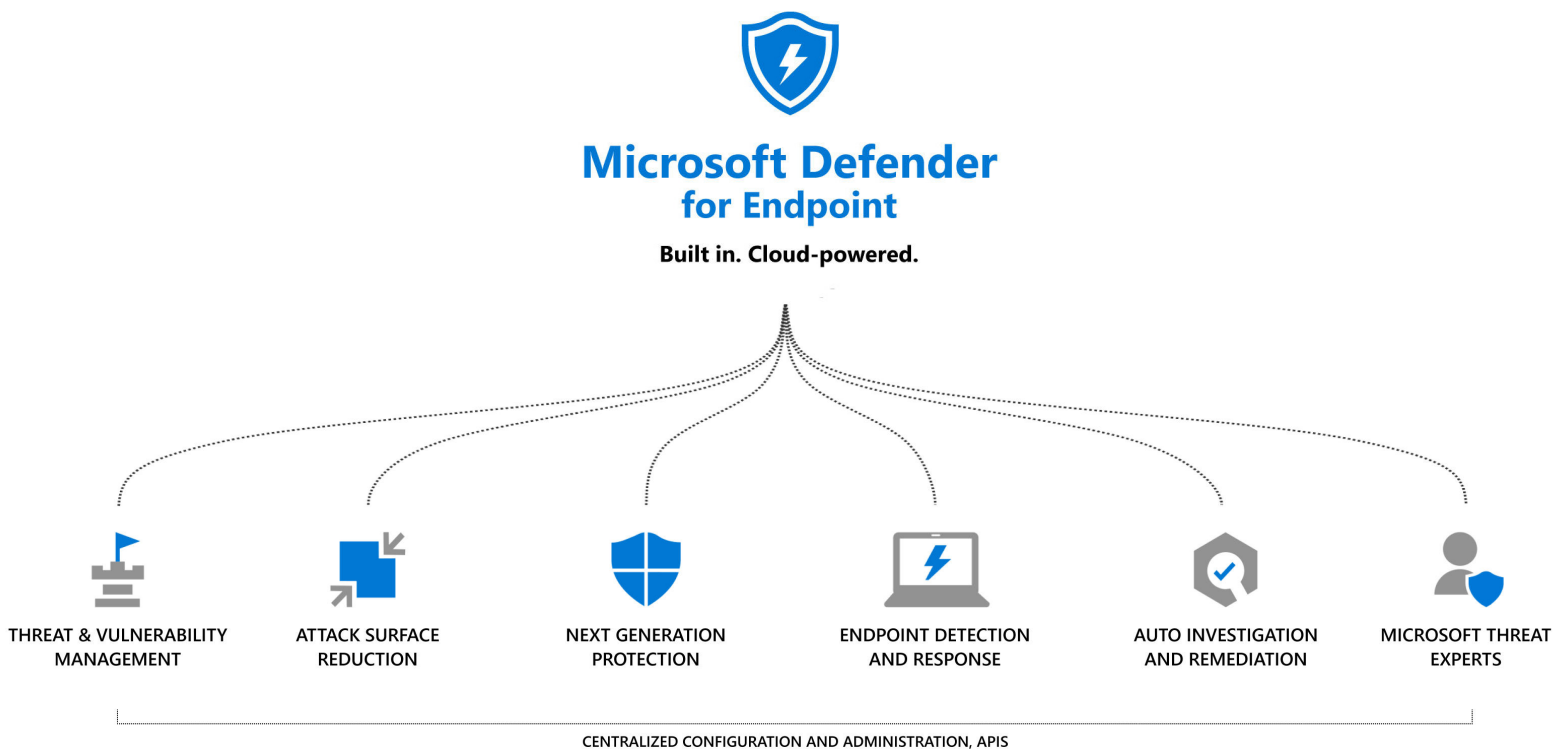
Not only should your remote workers be aware of these new measures, but the tools and safeguards you use to attain and remain at a new level of endpoint and data security should meet those needs. With the world rapidly—and permanently—changing, now is the time to enlist the help of a partner that has already worked out the best practices to face it. Without this critical help, you can't be sure each endpoint requesting access to internal resources meets security policy requirements. You need the right tools to track and enforce policy on all devices and with employees everywhere, while delivering easy user onboarding and offboarding.

# Enhanced Security Responses

The decentralization of the workplace makes endpoint security more critical than ever. And the new tactics used by malicious actors require focus on different tools and solutions. If your organization uses Windows 10 or later, **odds are you already have access to the world-class antivirus and antimalware solution already built into the operating system.** You also probably have the cloud license to activate the centralized management and greater capabilities of Microsoft Defender.

Microsoft Defender for Endpoint gives you unmatched breach remediation and research capabilities. With a graphical representation, this tool enables security teams to map the precise point at which an attacker entered your network, how the attacker moved once inside, and the activities they engaged in.

It is one thing to remediate a network breach but having the rich details of exactly how the breach occurred enables you to make sure any vulnerabilities in the network are found and corrected to prevent future breaches.





# Three Ways to Enhance Security Now

## 1

### **Phishing: Be the one that got away**

Social engineering has always been a successful vector for malicious actors. But now with more employees working on their own, the bad guys have more targets of opportunity. With cloud providers hardening their security more than ever, phishing for credentials and spoofable material is becoming a path of least resistance. Once they have convinced a user to give up their sign-in information, hackers can accurately spoof the emails of internal users. The user receives an internal email, clicks on the link and that's it. The links lead to websites that look very real. For example, they might mimic the Microsoft Office 365 sign-in page. When a user enters credentials on this site to sign in, the bad actor then has access to your environment for further attacks.

Phishing is successful because even with the proper training, anyone can be fooled. So training must be regularly performed and reinforced through simulated activities—just like fire drills—to remind users to be skeptical of any email they receive.

If a single phishing attack gets through, it can cost your organization hundreds of thousands of dollars, and a reputation damaged beyond repair. Just look at the news in the last several years. For training that's unmatched, Attack Simulator for Office 365 uses the Microsoft Intelligent Security Graph. It's constantly learning from global signals received from one of the largest telemetry systems on the planet. For example, Microsoft Office 365 scans 400 billion emails every month and finds a large number of malicious spear-phishing emails. The Attack Simulator carefully crafts simulated spear-phishing emails based on this real data, ensuring the most realistic attack experience for your user population. It then tracks and reports on user responses to the simulated email security events, providing invaluable data on how to better secure the organization.

## 2

**Watch out for well-intentioned “shadow IT”**

As we’ve said, the new remote world of work is full of bright end users. They’re bound to think they have better tools than those your IT department authorizes. And they will use them. Sometimes a tool can go internally viral, becoming the app-of-choice before IT can stop it, or even become aware of their existence. Though your users see these as smart and cool new solutions, and see themselves as taking initiative to deploy them, they’re dangerous to your data security and can obviously become the source of network breaches. We can help you through our managed security service to continuously monitor for these unsanctioned applications and the “shadow IT” they engender.

## 3

**Keep your defenses strong**

Your known tools can help protect you from unknown new threats—if you know how to use them. Our team of security experts will help ensure that your company’s critical data protection is innovative enough to stay ahead of the threat environment with tactics that include:

- Security alert monitoring of Office 365 with Security Score
- Baiting and trapping of threats using honey pots
- Setup of antivirus active threat monitoring and mitigation
- App installation monitoring to prevent “shadow IT” behaviors with Device Guard
- User data classification setup
- Simulations of email phishing attacks raising awareness
- Simulated password spray and brute force password attacks to better secure credentials

# CASE STUDY: Can't stand the heat? Get out of the boiler room.

## THE CHALLENGE

A supplier of boiler room services with three office locations across two states and over 30 staff members was growing, and fast: 20% over the past 5 years. Their current IT provider couldn't handle the heat. The client needed a provider who was responsive, strategic, and powerful enough to lead them into the future.

## THE SOLUTION

After an introductory meeting about Visual Edge IT's capabilities, customer-focused approach, and highly integrated service desk, the client agreed to an IT assessment. This led to Visual Edge IT's management of the company's desktops and laptops and Microsoft services, as well as their network and physical and virtual servers.

## THE RESULTS

The boiler maker services company appreciated Visual Edge IT's more thorough and secure services—not to mention their lower price—when compared to those of their previous provider. In fact, Visual Edge was able to lower the client's monthly IT spend by 15%. Talk about standing up to the heat.





# National Presence with Local Care

## We're here for you 24/7

When you're powered by Visual Edge IT™, it means you get a partner who's already monitoring and managing 825 businesses and 13,000 devices in 22 states from 90 locations.

We manage all the technical aspects of your business with 20 years' experience, 250 subject matter experts, US-based network and security operations centers, and an end-user service desk—all with 24/7 proactive monitoring. That's national reach with a local presence and care.

## Microsoft gets it done

Let's be honest: Microsoft technology powers business today, from big, global companies to family-owned local businesses. By using their products, we're able to provide security, collaboration, and a stable communication platform between your business and your customers.

Visual Edge IT, a Microsoft Gold Partner, has a full team of Microsoft Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who are here to help your business, from implementing security to solving business challenges. With over 80 engineers, a US-based service desk, NOC, and SOC, Visual Edge IT gives you everything you need to make the most of every last Microsoft tool, so you can focus on growing your business.

Gold  
Microsoft  
Partner



## Let's Get Started

Visual Edge IT has been securing businesses like yours for more than two decades. We have a team of skilled experts who can deliver the cloud security solutions and services you need to ensure your business runs smoothly and your employees are productive wherever they are. [Feel free to contact us](#) to help you with your remote workforce needs.



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