

Remote Media Workflows

Survey Finds Widespread Adoption
of Working Offsite That Looks To
Continue Post COVID-19

tvtech

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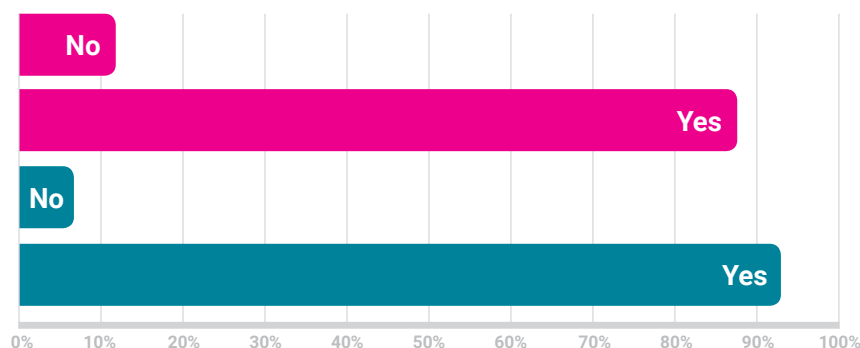
Executive Summary

TV Tech magazine early this year undertook a survey to examine remote workflow adoption and usage patterns among television broadcasters and other media organizations.

The survey was conducted in partnership with Teradici and fielded between Feb. 1 and March 5, 2021—roughly one year after the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a worldwide pandemic.

Deployed Remote Workflows Due To COVID-19

All Respondents vs. Broadcast & Cable Respondents



Overall, the survey found prevalent adoption of remote workflows among broadcasters since the pandemic was declared. A total of 88% of all respondents said their organizations had deployed some form of remote workflow in response to COVID-19. That trend was even more pronounced among TV broadcasting and cable TV network respondents (referred to throughout the rest of this report as “broadcast and cable TV respondents,”) with 93% saying the pandemic prompted adoption of remote workflows.

Not surprisingly, protecting staff from possible COVID-19 exposure was the biggest motivating factor in deciding to deploy remote workflows, the survey found.

Various workflows were affected. More than 67% of broadcast and cable TV respondents deployed remote workflows for business function. Over 60% did so for traffic and promotion. More than half (53.5% each) deployed remote workflows for newsroom and on-air functions.

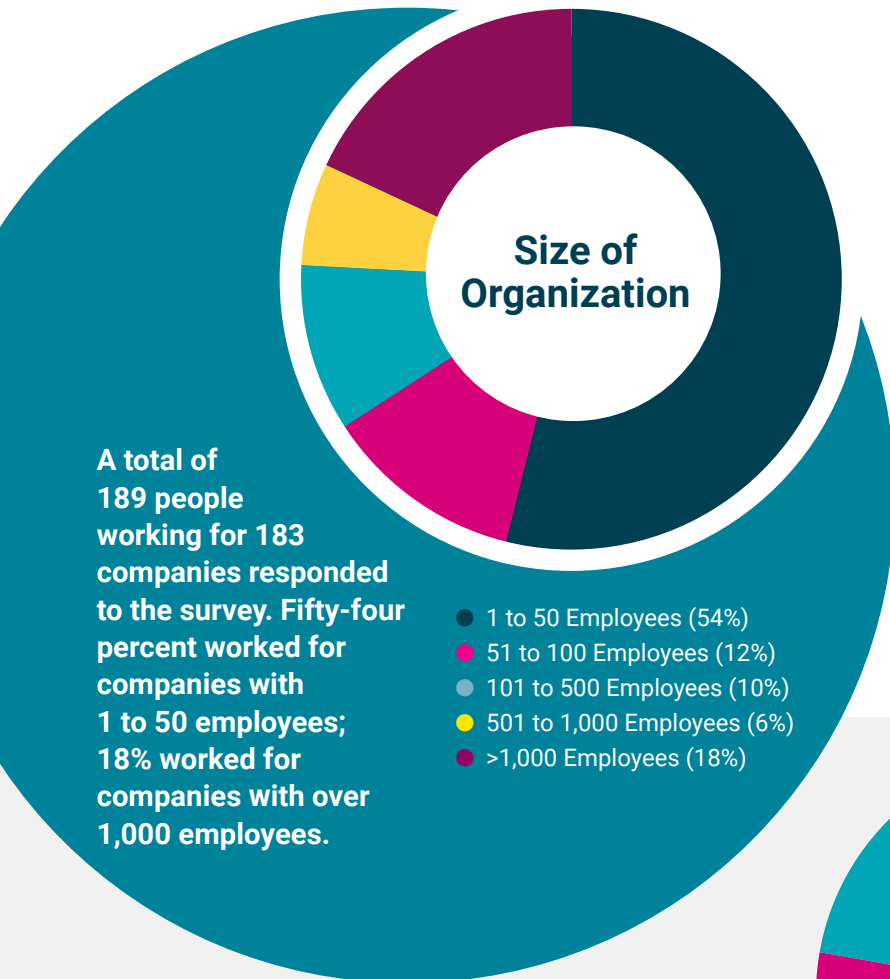
Given the value media companies place on their media assets, respondents said security was the top factor to consider when deciding to deploy remote workstations to enable offsite work. Among respondents working for organizations that did NOT deploy remote workflows during the pandemic, concerns about security, loss of management control over staff and too dramatic of a change topped the list of reasons for maintaining on-premise operations.

More broadly, the survey revealed COVID-19 had a major disruptive effect on long-established media workflows. While the primary reason to shift from working at the studio or headquarters was to protect staff from potential virus exposure, the survey revealed several other reasons broadcast and cable TV respondents said their organizations adopted a remote work strategy, including work schedule flexibility and promoting higher productivity and job satisfaction.

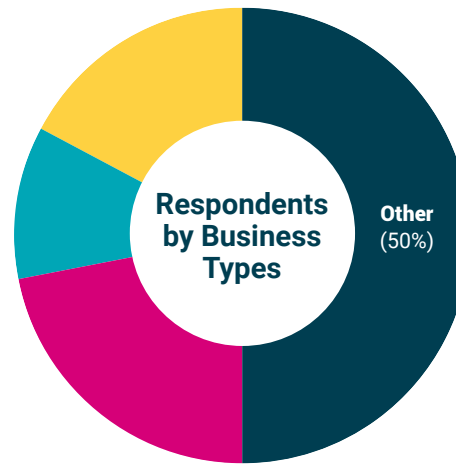
The survey also found that this group and media organizations in general are looking to continue deploying remote workflows after the pandemic has ended to continue realizing these benefits.

Security was the top factor to consider when deciding to deploy remote workstations to enable offsite work.

Respondents



- CEO (28%)
- Chief Engineers (13%)
- CTO (3%)
- VP of Engineering (3%)
- News Directors (2%)
- IT Manager (1%)

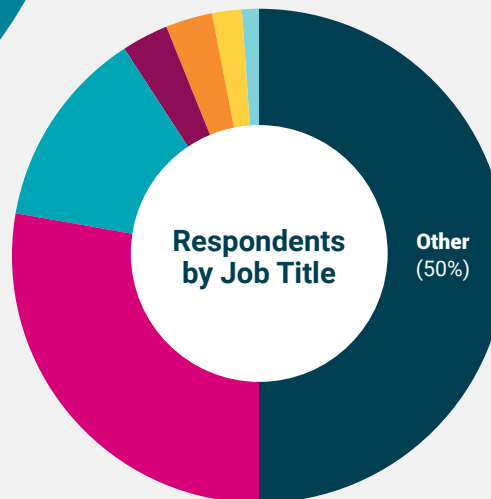


- TV Broadcasters (22%)
- Cable, Satellite & OTT Network (11%)
- Broadcast Consultancies (17%)

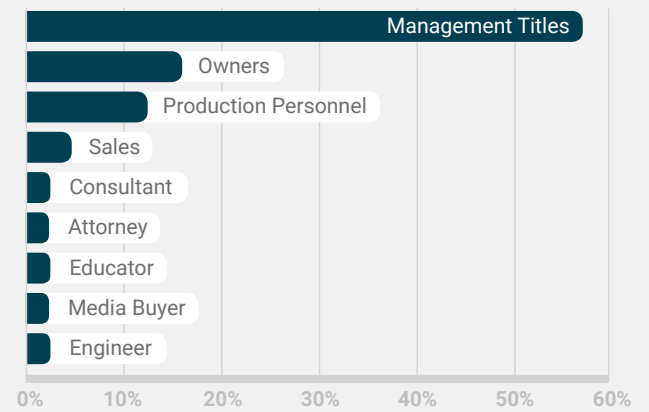


- Production
- Service
- Radio
- Education
- Sales
- Integrator
- Manufacturer/Vendor
- Government
- Broadcast Group
- Cable TV
- Streaming Service
- Consultant
- Ad Agency

Twenty-two percent worked for TV broadcasters, including TV networks, station groups and VHF and UHF stations. A total of 11% worked for cable, satellite and OTT networks. Seventeen percent were employed by broadcast consultancies.



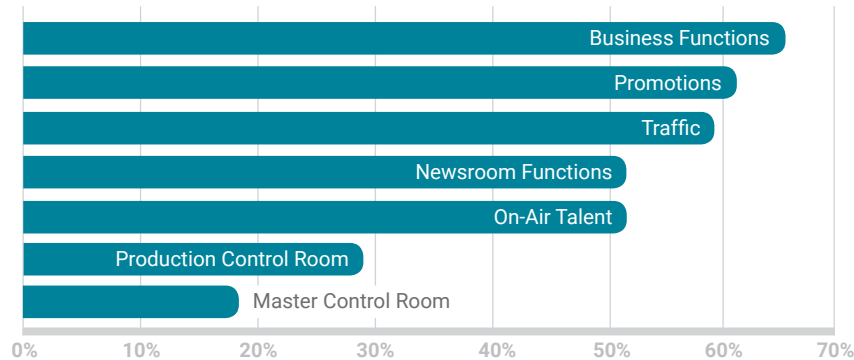
'Other' Job Titles



Remote Workflows

Protecting staff from possible COVID-19 exposure at work wasn't the sole reason motivating the shift to remote workflows and adoption of the technology needed to access on-premise workstations remotely or work in the cloud, however.

Currently Deployed Remote Workflows (Broadcast & Cable TV)



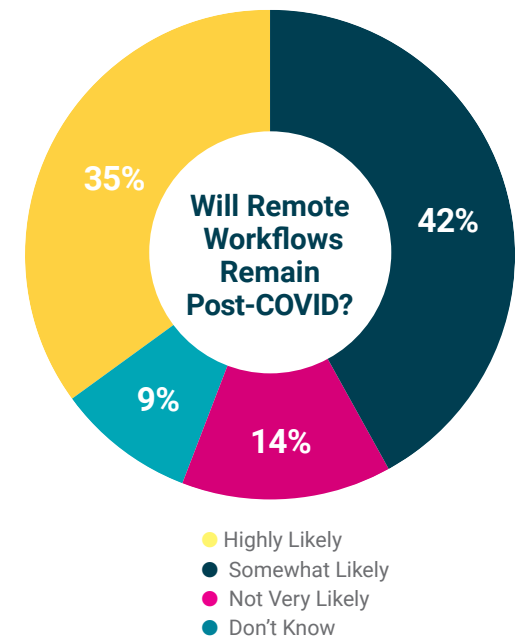
Forty-six percent identified the ability to more easily offer flex work schedules as a reason; 44% said promoting greater productivity by eliminating commute times to work; 43% chose employee benefit/job satisfaction; 37% said opening the workflow to the best available talent regardless of where they are located; and 30.5% identified facilitating creative collaboration. (Respondents were asked to select all reasons that applied.)

The survey asked respondents to identify the remote media workflows their organizations currently have deployed. Among broadcast and cable TV respondents, business functions (including analytics) topped the list with 67%; promotions

(including video editing) followed with 63%; then traffic at 60.5%; newsroom functions and on-air talent, both at 53.5%; production control room operations at 28%; and master control room operations at 19%. (Respondents were asked to select all that applied.)

Like other companies, media organizations tended to send those performing business functions –and office-like functions such as traffic, promotions and newsrooms—home to work, while those involved in the manufacturing aspects of business –in the case of TV, production control and master control operations—were more likely to continue working at the plant—the station—while other protective measures were employed.

Specifically as relates to news functions being done remotely, broadcast and cable TV respondents reported on what workflows were being done remotely. Video editing and digital, including social media and website news distribution, tied for the topped spot at 83%. They were followed by editorial meetings at 78%; newsroom computer functions at 74%; title (lower third) creation at 70%; graphics and animation creation at 65%; and quality assurance (QA) at 39%.



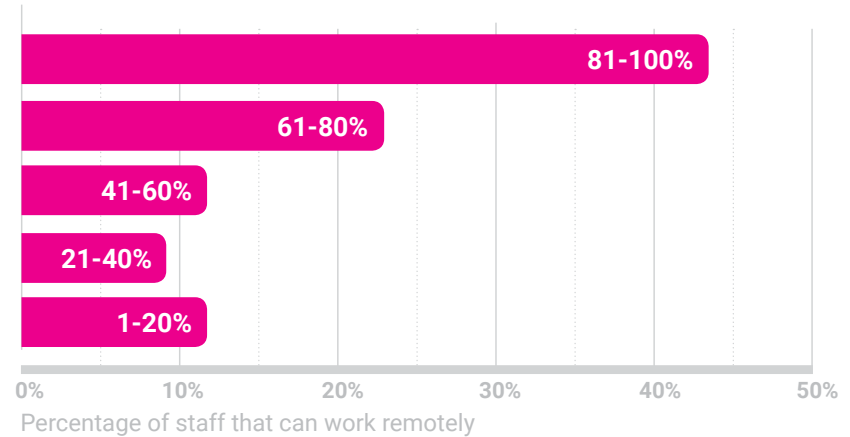
It does not appear the end of COVID-19 will motivate a return to pre-pandemic workflows. More than three out of four respondents said it is highly or somewhat likely that remote workflows will continue post-COVID. Fourteen percent said it is not very likely or unlikely that remote workflows will be maintained, and 9% did not know.

With so many respondents saying it's highly or somewhat likely remote workflows will stay in place post-COVID, the survey wanted to find out why. It asked respondents what their organizations hoped to accomplish by continuing to use remote workflows post-COVID.

Reasons For Continuing Remote Workflows Post Pandemic



We asked, post-pandemic, if employees can continue to work from home



It should be noted that while 52% identified improving productivity as a reason to continue remote workflows even after the pandemic passes, among those working for organizations that did NOT deploy remote workflows one of the top reasons was loss of management control over staff.

Just over 18 percent selected "Other." Among the reasons this group gave were "a larger talent pool with moving employees [being] optional," "attract personalities to our interview programs who might not have necessarily made the physical trip to the studio," and "cost cutting."

The survey revealed the pandemic has brought about a major rethink of staff deployment. Nearly one-third of respondents said more than 90% of their organization's employees could work from home. Seven out of 10 said more than half could do the same.

Together with the high percentage of respondents who said remote workflows are likely to continue after COVID-19, this finding appears to point to a significant shift in how many in the industry work and will work far into the future.

Respondents also were asked to identify what factor in their opinion is the most important to consider when using remote workstations as part of remote workflow. A total of 38.5% chose security. The selection receiving the second highest ranking was “Other,” at 18.5%.

Among those choosing “Other,” factors identified included “bandwidth,” “reliability,” “cloud-native applications” and “productivity.”

Next was lossless reproduction at 15%; accurate playout of high frame rate content, 11.5%; peripheral device support, 5%; 4K/8K content, 4%; SDI review monitors, 3%; HDR content formats, 2.5%; and color accuracy, 2%.

The Cloud

One technology enabling adoption of remote workflows is the cloud. Not only does the cloud offer an alternative for media storage and playout, but it also enables scalable access to CPUs and GPUs that can run virtualized equivalents of production and post-production hardware, thereby eliminating traditional workflows that might expose staff to the pandemic and in the processes bring a higher level of performance than otherwise accessible.

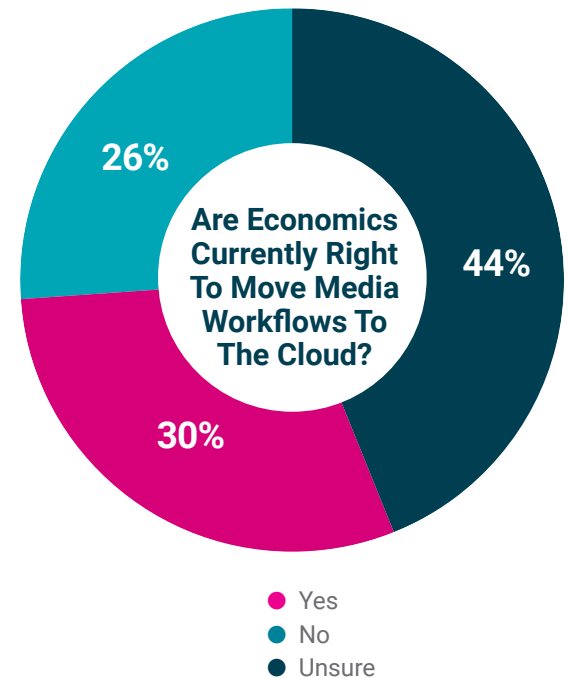
The survey asked respondents about the preferences of their organizations regarding how employees work remotely and what type of cloud is used.

When it came to the former, 21% of respondents said their organizations prefer employees work in the cloud; 19% said remotely access existing physical workstations in the office; 50% said a mix depending on the workflow involved; and 10% said no preference at the moment.

Regarding the latter, 41% chose the public cloud, such as Amazon AWS or Microsoft Azure; 25% said a private datacenter; 16% selected an on-premise datacenter; and 18% said a multi-cloud environment.

Relying on the cloud to enable remote workflows puts into play a new economic model for CapEx-heavy organizations such as broadcasters. The survey wanted to find out if the economics involved with the OpEx payment model of public cloud services are right at the current time for the organizations of respondents to move media workflows to the cloud.

A total of 30% agreed the economics are right; 26% said they are not; and 44% said they were unsure.



Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a dramatic reshaping of media workflows. Tasks, processes and business functions never seriously considered as candidates for being done outside the TV studio have moved wholesale offsite as organizations implemented strategies to reduce the risk of employees contracting the virus.

A wide swath of employees have been affected, ranging from management and others in the business office to those in the newsroom, production and master control rooms, traffic department and on air.

Many newsroom workflows are now being done remotely. More than eight of 10 respondents said digital workflows, including social media and web distribution of news, as well as video editing are being done offsite. Seven in 10 respondents said title creation, newsroom computer functions and editorial meetings are also being done remotely.

With one year of experience working during the pandemic, the prevailing attitude is that remote workflows will remain once the pandemic has passed. Reasons range from improved job satisfaction and productivity to reducing the real estate footprint of the studio and the ability to attract fresh talent to the operation.

Significantly, over 75% of respondents said that more than half of their organization's staff could work remotely, further pointing to a future in which more employees execute their duties from home.

The survey also revealed a fairly even mix exists among organizations that prefer their employees remotely access existing workstations on site and those that prefer they work in the cloud. However, twice as many respondents said their organization's preference depends on what workflow is involved.

Further, there appears to be a high degree of uncertainty over whether or not the economics are right at the moment to move media workflows to the cloud.

However, regardless of how they do it, it appears media organizations—and broadcast and cable TV, in particular—have made a breakthrough of sorts in attitudes about and implementation of remote workflows. While not as apparent as the changeover from black-and-white TV to color or SD television to HDTV, the transformation in how the work of television gets done to a model largely rooted in remote workflows may one day prove to be no less significant.

About Teradici

Teradici is the creator of the PCoIP® remote display protocol, which delivers desktops and workstations from the data center or public cloud to end users with the highest levels of security, responsiveness, and fidelity. Teradici CAS (Cloud Access Software), which won an Engineering Emmy from the Television Academy in 2020, powers the most secure remote solutions with unparalleled performance for even the most graphics-intensive applications. Teradici technology is trusted by leading media companies, design houses, financial firms and government agencies and is deployed to more than 15 million users around the world.

About the Author

Phil Kurz is a contributing editor for TVTech magazine. He has covered the TV industry for over 30 years.