

Decision Briefing

Improvements to computing infrastructure

Context

At present our 12 employees are all using desktop computers. Some are seeking to work from home and they need a mobile option. What aspects should we consider in making this decision.

Key Considerations

cost and transition

AI Perspectives

Strategic Analysis

- Laptop-first infrastructure is a prerequisite for distributed AI-assisted workflows.
- Desktop-only environments signal cultural opposition to flexible work to current and prospective staff.
- Remote capability compounds the 70/30 model by expanding contractor and specialist access.
- Deferred transition accelerates talent friction in roles where flexibility is a selection criterion.

Financial Analysis

- Total outlay of \$24,000–\$54,000 AUD excludes Mobile Device Management (MDM), peripherals, and home office stipends.
- Laptop refresh cycles are 18–24 months shorter than desktops — model this in Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).
- Two-scenario Net Present Value (NPV) model (full vs. phased) required before procurement commitment.

Operational Analysis

- Validate cloud access, VPN reliability, and collaboration tooling before hardware procurement begins.
- Conduct a one-day remote simulation across all 12 staff to surface infrastructure gaps.
- Negotiate a rapid-replacement supplier agreement before any device leaves the office.
- Standardise software versions and enforce cloud storage adoption during the hardware refresh.
- Build a formal data migration process covering local files, app configs, and project assets.

Risk Analysis

- Deploy MDM with remote wipe and full-disk encryption before or concurrent with

device rollout.

- Phased rollout creates mixed-device support complexity that erodes the cost-smoothing benefit.
- Cloud dependency introduces a single point of failure — audit stack resilience before transition.

Marketing Analysis

- Genuine remote capability directly supports employer brand in tight design and technical talent markets.
- Mobile staff reinforces credible studio positioning during client-site engagements.
- No external marketing story exists here — value is operational and internal.

Human Resource Analysis

- Validate whether flexibility demand is organisation-wide or concentrated in a small number of staff.
- Publish remote work policies — core hours, availability, home setup standards — concurrent with hardware rollout.
- Apply a defensible equity rationale to rollout sequencing before communicating to staff.
- Budget a one-time home office stipend of \$500–\$1,000 per person as a productivity investment.

Opportunity Perspective

- Sequence the transition: infrastructure and policy first, hardware second — this eliminates the most likely failure mode before it occurs.
- Negotiate a supplier rapid-replacement agreement before deployment; removes the acute risk of a failed device mid-project.
- Conduct a one-day remote-work simulation across all 12 staff before cutover to surface infrastructure gaps under real conditions.
- Treat the home office stipend as a productivity investment with a measurable output baseline, not a welfare gesture.
- Run the 36-month TCO model against two scenarios only — full replacement and phased — with a single decision gate at week two.

Risk Perspective

- Phased rollout creates a two-tier device environment; support complexity scales faster than cost savings justify.
- Security policy written post-deployment is theatre — 12 mobile endpoints without pre-configured MDM are immediately exposed.
- Remote infrastructure assumptions (cloud access, VPN reliability) are unvalidated; laptops may simply relocate the bottleneck.
- Retention framing inflates urgency — one or two vocal employees don't constitute an organisation-wide workforce signal.

- A 36-month TCO model built on vendor estimates will understate repair frequency and peripheral replacement by 20–40%.

Balanced View

- Infrastructure and policy must precede hardware; all three perspectives treat sequencing as the primary execution risk.
- MDM is not optional — it serves security, governance, and future AI tooling simultaneously.
- The 36-month TCO model is a required input, not a post-decision exercise

Key Tensions

- Full replacement is simpler to support but front-loads cost; phased replacement smooths budget but creates support complexity — neither is clearly dominant without TCO modelling.
- Treating this as an IT project rather than an operating model decision risks delivering the infrastructure without the policy, culture, and support framework that makes it work.
- Speed of response to employee retention signals vs. thoroughness of transition planning — rushing to signal goodwill increases execution risk.

Uncertainties

- Whether current remote infrastructure (cloud access, VPN, collaboration tooling) is actually fit for purpose — unvalidated by any perspective.
- Whether heavy-workload compute requirements (rendering, AI tasks) are met by shortlisted laptop specs — assumed but untested.
- Whether employee requests represent a broad workforce signal or a small number of vocal individuals.

Human Synthesis

This is a shift in your business operational model, enabling workplace flexibility, creating a significant capital expenditure and increased operational costs for staff training. A move to full mobility may have future impacts upon physical space, future employees, A fully mobile environment carries increased risk. The transition is not as straightforward as simply providing each employee with a laptop. There are opportunities as well as risks. If you do not have internal capacity, you may benefit from retaining an external IT provider/consultant to guide stress testing, procurement and implementation; though doing so will likely increase financial investment.

Reflection Questions

- What would need to be true for this to succeed?
- What would cause this decision to fail?

- What are you prioritising—and what are you willing to give up?

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This briefing supports decision-making. It does not make the decision.