When Aruba was founded in 2002 the idea of connecting to a network using a wireless radio was bleeding edge. But like many successful technology revolutions, Wi-Fi connectivity is now the primary network access method in the office and at home. Now, with the cataclysmic shift to distributed workforces and work from home, Wi-Fi is even more strategic—as it is the foundation for the new normal, the reimagined and completely overhauled workplace. In fact, the reimagined workplace now joins data-driven applications such as IoT and digital transformation as yet one more reason to move to the Intelligent Edge.

The consensus is that the reimagined workplace is a journey that will extend across three phases. The first, work from home, is where many of us are today. As the fog begins to lift, many organizations are now entering the second phase and planning on how to return some portion of the workforce to the office. The third phase will be the “Hybrid Workplace,” which envisions a completely new approach to workforce management, facilities and connectivity where there’s a mixture of employees that come to the office on a daily basis and those that continue to work from home and come into the office on occasion for meetings and customer engagement. Phase 3 will build on the lessons learned in phases 1 and 2.

**PHASE 1.**

**Work from Home – The power of purpose-built solutions**

To ride the wave, many vendors put new labels on old campus hardware and leave it to customers to figure out how to use them at home. In contrast, Aruba has over 10 years of shipping proven remote connectivity solutions specifically designed for the home office managed by Aruba Central. For example, Aruba Remote Access Points or RAPs, not only supply home wireless connectivity that is identical to an in-office experience (down to the SSID), they also support zero touch provisioning, identity-based zero trust security and cloud management designed from the ground up for work from home. Even the packaging is home office friendly—desktop or wall mount enclosures, wired ports, power options, etc.

The Aruba VPN soft client, VIA for mobile devices such as phones and tablets, offers a secure solution for access and security from any location to provide a complete remote workforce portfolio.

**Figure 1: Aruba Cloud-native, Remote and Teleworker Solutions**
PHASE 2.

Return to the Office – Employee wellness and safety
As this phase is focused on bringing employees back to the office, their health and safety means that physical changes to the workplace and solutions that provide for contact tracing and social distancing compliance are essential. Just like RAPs enable organizations to deliver enterprise wireless performance, security and management to the home, Aruba’s 500,000 customers already have the network foundation they need to easily deploy new return to the office solutions. No need to rip and replace, no forklift upgrades.

Aruba access points are platforms that include Wi-Fi, Zigbee and Bluetooth radios that deliver the Smart Telemetry—precision indoor and outdoor location data necessary for these new applications. And to facilitate the return to the office, Aruba is providing AI-powered, cloud-based proximity solutions that will operate seamlessly on existing Aruba networks. These include:

- **Contact tracing** using Wi-Fi and Bluetooth to quickly identify employees, visitors, and customers who may have come into proximity with a person who has been identified as exhibiting health issues
- **Hotspot or heat mapping** that carefully pinpoints physical locations that require quarantining and special cleaning schedules
- **Purpose-built dashboards and reports** in Aruba Central to accelerate discovery and investigation
- **AI-based data enhancement** to relieve IT from tedious collection and analysis that enables HR to quickly respond in real time to issues
- **Point and click views and filters** that provide **precision site, building, floor and access point granularity** across a wide range of user and device attributes
- **Rapid set up** on any existing Aruba infrastructure

Aruba’s partner ecosystem numbers in the hundreds and these cloud-delivered services are complemented by a broad range of solutions our partners have developed that also leverage Aruba connectivity, data and open API’s, with the controls necessary for maintaining privacy and confidentiality.

LOCATION DATA OR AI-POWERED CONTACT SOLUTIONS?
You will hear a lot about using location data but how do you turn that into useful contact information? Many wireless vendors will supply a large amount of raw data—which is table stakes, but it’s then left up to you to interpret how to use this data for employee health and safety solutions. How do you distinguish between contacts that are separated by walls from true personal interactions? Given that we all use multiple devices, how do you build a comprehensive contact profile that correlates devices to users? Will the data provide a proximity “risk score” to prioritize action? Aruba offers proximity solutions that start with precision location data post-processed by AI-based Machine Learning and visualized by graphically-rich applications to solve these challenges. You are provided with accurate contact and location information without the guesswork. This relieves HR from the overhead and delays associated with correlating data and analysis, so they can focus on protecting employees.
PHASE 3.

The Hybrid Workplace – Long-term changes

As we learn what the “new normal” really means and the combination of home and campus offices becomes better understood, the Hybrid Workplace will come into focus. We expect the Hybrid Workplace to consist of a new generation of home office products and form factors that build on current work-from-home solutions like RAP’s, while new campus guidelines for density and space management will require flexibility, intelligence and fluid connectivity with remote locations.

The reimagined office will increasingly rely on Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, IoT sensors and other capabilities that extend or leverage what we’ve learned in phases 1 and 2 of the journey. Where can touchless solutions be used more effectively? How does the network play a bigger role in security and crisis management should any health or other type of emergency surface? What about automatically adjusting physical and environmental factors for each individual based on their learned preferences?

With a rich set of open API’s and high quality, AI-curated data, Aruba is actively mapping out what the Hybrid Workplace may look like and the benefits it will provide. Long established partnerships with key leaders in the field of office architecture, design and furnishings, such as Gensler and Herman Miller will to help redefine next generation spaces. Additional technology partnerships will address smart building and long-term health and safety challenges, regardless of where employees and visitors connect.

THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE STARTS WITH THE NETWORK YOU HAVE

With 14 straight years in the Gartner Wired/Wireless Leader’s Quadrant, innovation at the Intelligent Edge is second nature, and it is driving solutions for all three of these phases. Aruba’s technology portfolio and solutions are designed to work in every customer environment—from small businesses to the enterprise, remote, branch, campus, datacenter and cloud. No matter where the journey may lead, Aruba customers can count on having a network that offers the connectivity, security, management, AI and data necessary for the reimagined workplace.