

Providing Immediate ROI & Productivity Gains

Cutting IT Support Costs and Increasing Operating Efficiency

IT professionals are responsible for maintaining the numerous computers of an organization. This never-ending task can prove to be quite expensive and time consuming and in many times requires traveling from one computer to the next. This white paper provides a proven and cost-effective solution that is giving an outstanding return on investment by eliminating the time and money wasted on IT travel expenses.

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1. Overview

Connecting directly to a remote computer to fix technical setbacks arises on a daily basis. IT professionals are constantly on the move and frequently need to be in several places at once. This puts a large dent into the IT employee's work day and an even larger dent in the company's pocketbook.

Remote control software provides organizations both large and small with a solution to this problem that offers a proven return on investment by increasing productivity and eliminating the need for travel. With remote control software, system administrators can immediately provide technical assistance from a centralized location.

In the IT industry, this is no exception. Remote control software enables users to monitor and support computers on the network and stabilizes business continuity by providing immediate technical support to all employees, whether across the hall or on the other side of the globe.

2. The Importance of Remote Control Software

According to industry research, the average IT professional handles 107 support calls per week. The results of an annual survey showed that the average fully burdened cost per service request is \$40 with the average first-level help desk call taking 5.5 minutes. However, 61% of all calls moved to an escalation procedure and took over 10 minutes. The largest portion of service requests (49%) were for software, operating system, and database support - problems that are much more easily addressed with remote control software.

If we incorporate these numbers into a hypothetical work week, the total cost of calls that can be resolved with remote control software converts to about \$2,100, equating from \$1,050 to \$1,575 per support representative.

CrossTec Remote Control provides IT employees with a number of features that provide the ability to manage individual machines or an entire network from the desktop or web browser of the system administrators computer or a USB drive from any PC located anywhere in the world. CrossTec Remote Control provides enterprises both large and small with a substantial return on investment in seven ways:

A) Improved Productivity - On average, CrossTec Remote Control users state that software support resolution time decreased by 50% to 75% when they began using CrossTec for support call resolution. CrossTec makes Help Desks and IT staff more productive by enabling them to take more calls, thus allowing an entire organization to be more productive because employees are not suffering 'down time' for extended periods of time.

B) Improved Customer Satisfaction - CrossTec enables IT departments to fix the dilemmas of customers quickly, resulting in the customer being much more satisfied with the vendor experience and reducing customer complaints/loss of business.

C) Improved Organization Flexibility - CrossTec enables an IT staff to fix problems on more operating systems or platforms than any other remote control application from the desktop, browser, or USB thumb drive. System administrators can provide software-support to employees on a Macintosh or Linux machine from a Windows PC or even a CE handheld computer.

D) Reduced Labor Costs - CrossTec eliminates travel expenses by enabling IT employees to access multiple computers at once from a centralized location. This is especially important with increasing gas prices and allotted travel time. Additionally, IT professionals can rely on CrossTec's scripting utility to accomplish monotonous network maintenance, including updating software, defragmenting any or all the computers on a network, and scanning for viruses. This gives more time to IT employees to focus on more important issues as well as saving time and money, increasing productivity, and reducing or even eliminating overtime costs.

E) Reduced IT Infrastructure Costs - CrossTec provides for asset management with its Inventory feature that helps monitor these types of expenses. Also, CrossTec's cross-platform support helps with migrations from older operating systems to newer ones, such as Windows 2000 to Windows XP.

F) Reduced Security Risks - CrossTec offers more security than any other remote control product on the market by providing several state-of-the-art security features that no other remote control application offers.

G) Improved Employee Retention - By giving your organization's IT staff better tools to address the challenges in which they attempt to solve, stressful conditions are diminished and employee morale increases. This lessens the burden of hiring and training new employees as well as reducing the risk of disgruntled employees attempting to harm the computer system.

3. Factors to Consider

Maintaining a computer is labor intensive and there are a number of tasks that must be accomplished on a regular basis to keep the network running at maximum potential. Products such as virus scanners and firewalls and operating programs are needed to ensure that all software is up to date and functioning correctly.

IT professionals that are responsible for maintaining hundreds or even thousands of computers require a stable remote control application to accomplish many of these tasks. The remote control solution solves a multitude of needs in network based organizations, including on-demand support, logging mechanisms, and inventory features. However, before deciding which remote control product is right for your organization, there are several factors that should be taken into consideration, including platform support, speed, and security.

4. Platform Support

Remote control capabilities provide access to remote machines on a network from a single computer. However, if a remote control application only supports a specific platform on the network, then it is not possible to access the machine with a different platform.

If the marketing department use Macintosh for graphic designing and the remote control application doesn't support access to a Mac, the IT staff member must physically visit the remote computer for any technical issue or call and instruct the employee – either taking up vast amounts of time while the valued customer becomes impatient.

With CrossTec Remote Control, companies migrating from Windows 2000 to Windows XP will be able to access both platforms in order to provide remote support. Platform support is extremely important to the organization running several operating systems through their offices or around the world. "Remote control is now being deployed worldwide as a complementary component of management and help desk solutions", says Stephen Drake, program manager, Mobile Infrastructure Software at IDC. "Providing cross-platform

support and security are essential for doing this effectively.” Extensive platform support will provide organizations with the assurance and flexibility of knowing that no matter what type of machine they currently operate or plan to get as they will still be able to remotely support those machines.

Being able to connect to a specific platform is important. However, an ideal solution will allow connections from a number of platforms, including the desktop, Internet Browser, a Pocket PC, or even a USB Flash Drive. USB support is a unique and desired feature for people on the move. With USB support, an administrator can securely conduct installations, diagnose PC problems, and upgrade software for all computers on the network from any temporary remote location. This is especially beneficial for IT professionals who are moving around the office constantly, at home, or even on vacation when they should not be working. Problems do not occur on a schedule, so the flexibility of the USB thumb drive ensures team confidence with dedicated support from anywhere.

5. Speed

When remotely resolving software related issues, it is vital to be able to remotely resolve software related issues in a timely manner. Having the capability to quickly resolve technical dilemmas will not only save time for both the IT staff member and employees. Whether from a dial-up, wireless, or broadband connection, quick data transfers and screen refreshing is very important to provide high quality technical support.

6. Security

The enterprise network is a library of confidential data that provides employees with information necessary for optimal productivity. Financial numbers, departmental records, and company passwords contain critical information that could possibly cripple a company if it is manipulated or even erased by a hacker.

Extremely secure remote control technologies are essential when providing remote support. Hackers are known to use every possible technique possible to find points of entry into the network, including war-dialing, sniffing, port scanning, or even using the same remote control application as the system administrator.

To cope with possible losses of information, money, and regulatory fines, CrossTec Remote Control offers 256-bit AES encryption, user privileges and passwords, security tokens, RSA SecurID authentication, and Gateway Servers. These are vital security features that ensure the safety and security of your network.

It is also important to be able to centrally manage the network from one location. CrossTec’s Security Server provides centralized management capabilities to ensure the security of the entire network. With a security server, a system administrator can assign each user individual privileges. Once the system administrator has assigned these roles and each time a remote connection is attempted, the individual machine attempting to connect is identified through an ODBC database and then assigned a predefined security privileges. If an unrecognized or outside user attempts to make a connection to a machine, the security server will automatically prevent the connection.

Additionally, a good security server will provide event logging. Every machine should have the ability to log on a local level any activity during a remote session in the event of an intrusion. However, attackers usually try to erase all activity logs in order to destroy any evidence or footprints that could incriminate them. A security server will enable all remote session activity logs to be stored in one central location with additional security measures in place. If any intrusions or tampering of company information is logged, the network administrator has all the documentation needed to complete a full investigation in one place.

7. Features Providing ROI

While the ability to provide secure and real-time remote support to a variety of platforms offers a good return on investment in itself, there are several other features that can save additional time and money.

IT professionals have suffered a variety of additional problems when troubleshooting computers. Typically with a software related issue, technical dilemmas occur when two applications conflict with one another. An Inventory Feature allows for quicker resolutions to software conflicts by enabling a system administrator to collect a list of all software that has been installed on the computer. The application name and date of installation is displayed with this feature to inform the IT staff of conflicts based on when the problem occurred and when a specific application was installed.

Therefore, if a system administrator receives a call about errors on the desktop of a team member, the system administrator can immediately collect an inventory of the computer and evaluate what is causing the problem. Once the problem is identified, the system administrator can access the remote computer and remove the conflicting software.

Inventory capabilities also allow for faster warranty repairs. While remote control applications cannot physically repair hardware issues, the Inventory Feature can collect a list with the model and serial numbers for further improvements. The IT staff can then call the manufacturer and supply them with the serial and model number of the hard drive without having to physically visit the damaged computer.

Perhaps the simplest way to save time is through automation. A Scripting Feature in a remote control application enables a system administrator to automate several of the monotonous tasks that are necessary for maintaining a computer or network - such as virus scanning, defragmenting hard drives, updating software, and even shutting down or powering up the entire network at once.

With a Scripting Feature, a system administrator can create and schedule specific tasks that take place at desired times throughout the day, week, month, or year. For example, the IT personnel can create a script that will tell every computer on a network to turn on at 7:00AM and shut down at 6:00PM. This not only saves time by not having to shut every computer down manually, but also saves electricity and keeps things more organized. Scripts can be created to run virus scanners on a daily basis, defragment all computers every Sunday night, or update the software on the first of each month.

Another positive feature included in remote control applications is the ability to conduct multiple remote sessions at the same time from a single desktop. By conducting multiple remote sessions at once, an IT employee can address several issues at the same time or make a comparison between two machines if necessary.

8. Calculating Return on Investment

When accurately completed, the equation illustrated on Figure 1.1 will yield the potential ROI an organization can anticipate from purchasing a remote control software application.

This enterprise-tested equation takes into account the company average cost-per-minute of a support call, the average amount of time spent on first and second level support calls, the average number of on-site visits, the average amount of time spent on those visits, and the average user down time resulting from technical dilemmas - all with and without CrossTec Remote Control. Using this data yields a one-year and five-year potential return on investment from using remote control software for support call resolution.

9. Summary

According to Encyclopedia Britannica Online (www.britannica.com), productivity is defined as “The ratio of what is produced compared to what is required to produce it.” What is the amount of work accomplished compared to the utilities or tools necessary to accomplish the task?

Using this definition, when comparing the amount of time the IT department wastes on travel time alone to the amount of time saved by using remote control software, the productivity gains are substantial.

Increased productivity alone is an excellent return on investment, but in an enterprise - money talks. The above equation clearly illustrates the amount of money being wasted on both a daily and annual basis by IT departments that aren't utilizing remote control software for end user support. Remote control software provides fast resolutions to software dilemmas. Quicker resolutions translate to less 'down time' for employees when technical issues arise, resulting in improved business continuity for the entire organization.

However, purchasing remote control software for an organization is not something to rush. The first step in deciding which application is best for your enterprise is to first identify what your needs are for network environment of the company. It is best to first make a list of your needs and what your projected demands will be from the selected application.

When you begin to research remote control applications, it will be easier to compare your needs with the features offered by specific applications. Sadly, full research is a crucial step that is sometimes overlooked or incomplete when purchasing software applications. Many organizations quickly test applications and then purchase inferior software without determining if it actually meets the needs of the organization.

This usually results in the company discovering that the application does not address all the needs of the company, which forces the company to invest additional funds and research time into purchasing additional software. Thirty days is usually enough time to test potential solutions with evaluation software offered by software vendors. Using this method, IT administrators can accurately make the final decision for which product will provide the best possible solution to minimize time and improve business continuity of an organization.



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This CrossTec Savings Calculator Shows the Amount Your Company Can Save by Using CrossTec Remote Control Software for Second Level Support Calls

Salary of Average Employee	\$37,500.00	Enter your Average Employee Salary Here
Salary plus 50% = Total Employee Cost	\$56,250	With Benefits, Time Off, etc.
Cost per Day per employee	\$234	
Cost per minute per employee	\$0.4883	Average yearly employee cost broken down to minutes
	Help Desk Costs without CrossTec	Using CrossTec Remote Control
Number of service requests per month	1800	1800
Average number of minutes per 1st level call	6.00	6.00
Cost for 1st Level support	\$5,273.44	\$5,273.44
Percent of Calls Turned Over to 2nd Level Support	24%	
Average Number of Minutes per 2nd Level Call	19.00	9.50
Cost for 2nd Level Call Support	\$4,007.81	\$2,003.91
Cost of User Downtime (Support Expense)	\$9,281.25	\$7,277.34
Monthly Cost of Service & Downtime	\$18,562.50	\$14,554.69
Monthly On-Site Visits by Techs/Trainers	125	
Average Minutes of Each On-Site Visit (Including Travel)	75.00	25.00
Cost of Average On-Site Visit for Techs/Trainers	\$36.62	\$12.21
Cost of Monthly On-Site Support	\$4,577.64	\$1,525.88
Cost of User Downtime (Support Cost)	\$4,577.64	\$1,525.88
Total Remote Problem Support & Downtime Cost	\$9,155.27	\$3,051.76
Total Remote & Phone Support per Month	\$27,717.77	\$17,606.45
TOTAL YEARLY COST OF SUPPORT	\$332,613.28	\$211,277.34
Yearly Savings With Remote Control Software	\$121,335.94	Total (X) 12 months
Total Five Year Savings Assuming No Growth*	\$606,679.69	Difference per Year
		Difference (X) 5 Years

Figure 1.1 – ROI example of a medium-sized company’s potential savings from using remote control software