

Remote System Management: A Non-Technical Overview

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1. The Problem

1.1 Customer Needs

Information Technology or IT, within businesses today comprises servers, workstations, networks and software. Advanced IT is absolutely necessary to medium and large businesses. Quick, reliable access to customer information enables winning sales teams. Companies that decrease the time to market for their main product lines by implementing IT solutions that streamline their workflow, stay ahead of their competitors.

Information Technology in the small business market is seen as less necessary. The major factor in this assessment is cost. **But the cost of technology is generally not the issue; the issue is headcount.** Take Acme Widgets, Inc., for example.

Acme Widgets, Inc. has recently experienced a year of growth. During the past year their headcount has increased from 10 full time equivalents to 20. With all the added people, the old, plain vanilla, basic IT infrastructure is no longer performing adequately, and the efficiency of the company falls. Acme considers hiring a full time computer technician to help them grow and maintain the company's IT infrastructure.

Acme's president inquires among colleagues about the kind of help he needs, and tries to get an idea of what it will cost. After talking to some experts, he realizes that he needs a new IT infrastructure that will grow with the company, as well as acquire ongoing support and upgrades for his company's IT infrastructure.

After looking at the market for Information Technology Systems Engineers, Acme discovers it will cost the company about \$80,000 a year to pay for a full time Systems Engineer. They then considers hiring a less experienced and not as skilled Help Desk employee, and then contracting out the "heavy" work. After doing the math, Acme realizes they are still going to be spending nearly \$80,000 a year. Acme's president also wonders how much of this person's time will be utilized, given the expected increase in reliability once the new IT infrastructure is built.

Acme Widgets is in a quandary. Either they hire a high priced Systems Engineer to implement and support their IT infrastructure, or they hire a relatively lower priced Help Desk employee and contracts for the complex technical issues. The Systems Engineer is overkill for Acme. The Help Desk is inadequate for Acme. Where is the middle ground?

The key problem for small, growing companies is the uncertainty, cost, and risk associated with hiring IT personnel. Further, the small business doesn't want to have to worry about their IT infrastructure. They have more important things to think about, like their own customer set and products.

Additionally, these companies would like to get guaranteed, reliable service that would normally require them to invest in an IT organization. If Acme in the above example decided to add a single technology headcount, what will they do when this person is out of the office?

The ideal solution for most small businesses is to invest in only as much technology headcount as is necessary to meet their internal demand for these services.

2. The Solution

2.1 Remote System Management

The MACROSTAFF Projects Group solution for small business IT needs is based on a few assumptions:

- Our customers do not want to hire, manage and retain full time IT staff to manage their IT workload.
- Our customers do not have the technical demand for full time IT staff and if they were to invest in IT staff, the IT staff would normally spend most of their time underutilized.
- Our customers would be willing to pay for part of an IT organization if they could have the attention of a full time IT organization **when they need it.**

Our Vision...to empower the small business with reliable, trouble-free, effective and efficient Information Technology without the overhead associated with a traditional IT department.

Our Solution...combines Remote Monitoring of our customers IT infrastructure with Remote Active Management of our customers IT upgrade initiatives and problem issues.

Introducing Remote System Management (RSM)

RSM comprises two services, Remote Monitoring and Remote Active Management. We offer either or both services to our customers. Continue reading to find out more about these services.

2.2 Remote Monitoring

RSM provides customers with the peace of mind that comes with 24x7 monitoring of their key technology infrastructure, including:

- Backups
- LAN/WAN
- Internet
- Web Sites
- E-mail
- Servers

We work with our customers to understand which components of their IT infrastructure are most vital to their business. We then configure our monitoring software to be able to tell at a glance if a customer's technology is currently supporting the business, or getting in the way.

Within our monitoring software, we set alert thresholds for the components we are measuring. If an issue occurs we are notified within minutes.

Additionally, we provide reports to our customers that reflect measurement of important thresholds. We will point out and identify key trends such as:

- Hard drive utilization
- Server resource utilization
- LAN/WAN utilization
- Backup utilization
- Internet security
- And others

As we observe these trends we inform the customer about an impending issue, allowing us to work with the customer to solve the problem before it begins. **We call this service Remote Monitoring.**

2.3 Remote Active Management

Our RSM service provides customers with Remote Active Management. In other words, if an issue occurs with a customer's server, local area network or client workstation we can address the issue remotely from our offices. We do this using remote access and control technologies. The elements of our customer's IT infrastructure that we remotely manage include:

- Servers
- LAN/WAN infrastructure
- Client desktop workstations
- Internet connectivity
- Security
- Remote access
- Back office systems (CRM/Accounting)
- ...And others

The time between issue alert and resolution is minutes. Our goal is to solve the problem before we have time to notify the customer they have a problem, or before the customer even notices.

Customers receive a regular report in hard copy and/or electronic copy of all maintenance performed along with their monitoring data.

3. The Sales Pitch

3.1 The Demand For Reliable IT Infrastructure

The average company experiences two hours of unplanned system downtime per week. Multiply this figure by the number of employees affected and a company of 10 persons can realize up to 1,000 hours of productivity loss over the course of a year. This equates to tens of thousands of dollars lost. Technology adds tremendous capability to a company, but at the same time adds a significant recurring maintenance cost.

Downtime costs your company in productivity, but also in lost opportunity. What happens the day you are to engage a potential client and your network is down? How much does your infrastructure really cost?

For a growing company, the inevitable question must be answered: Is it time to begin building a full time Information Technology Staff? For many businesses, this question is more challenging than it would appear.

You don't manage your electrical infrastructure. You don't manage your plumbing. You wouldn't think about hiring a full time Electrician, or a full time Plumber. Yet these are critical systems to your business. You would rather focus on your business than focus on the building infrastructure.

Technology infrastructure can be the same way. You can focus on your business and expect your technology infrastructure to continue operating, just like your electricity or your plumbing.

The key to understanding how to do this is to understand that there are two ways to deal with Technology issues: Proactive and Reactive.

3.2 Proactive Issue Resolution vs. Reactive Issue Resolution

Most companies deal with Technology issues reactively. Once a critical business system malfunctions, they contract with their local service provider to resolve the issue and get back into business. What if you could solve problems before they happen?

Most day-to-day computer problems can be predicted with a fair degree of certainty. For example, if you were able to watch your network server's storage fill up over the course of a year, you would know when to expand the storage capacity, rather than experience downtime due to a full hard drive. If you were able to watch your network utilization over a year's time, you would be able to predict when your network will be oversubscribed and increase capacity before that time.

If you were able to monitor every critical business system you use on a regular basis, then you could cut down on your downtime dramatically. **Responding to future issues is known as Proactive issue resolution.**

3.3 RSM Proactive Monitoring

RSM provides proactive issue resolution. We monitor all of your critical business systems, analyze the data, and keep you abreast of the status of your network, as well as what is coming in the future. A trained Systems Engineer will learn your environment, systems, workflow, business needs and business goals, and craft a monitoring solution that ensures maximum uptime, and the best in proactive service.

3.4 RSM Remote Active Management

RSM can go much farther than monitoring. We can implement remote management tools that allow us to repair malfunctioning systems from our offices and resolve issues before you even know they exist. Add to this the ability to deal with issues as they arise whenever they arise, so if your web presence fails on Friday night, we make sure it's back in operation immediately, not Monday morning.

3.5 Manage Costs

Another benefit to proactive issue resolution is that it allows you to manage your Technology expenditures much more predictably. When there is no active monitoring of your systems, problems will appear at any time, and there is no way to predict how much time and money it will cost to resolve the issue.

RSM offers a subscription based Proactive Monitoring system. When you sign up for Proactive Monitoring, your regular report will illustrate future issues and estimate the time and materials cost to resolve them, along with a timeframe for when a future issue must be resolved to avoid downtime. Your regular subscription to monitoring is predictable cost. Your future issues are forecasted and communicated, allowing you to control when a future issue gets resolved.

When you sign up for RSM, you pay a discounted rate for Remote Active Management, and due to the elimination of Systems Engineer travel time, will pay a great deal less for day to day service than you would with a typical service arrangement. Additionally, your issue is dealt with immediately; no appointments to arrange, no trips to schedule. **The Systems Engineer is working with your systems the moment you have an issue.** Remote Active Management is available for both urgent Issues as well as for change/add/move activity, such as adding a user, or creating a new network location.

Because the connection between our Engineers and your network is so seamless, it is like having an IT department of your own.



Want to hear more?

Contact us: 425-373-1394 or information@ProjectsGroup.com

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