



Information available anytime, anywhere.

This has become the mantra of the frenzied masses of workers in today's information-based society. A mother or father tries to balance work and parenting by working from home a few days each week. A busy executive needs a file from one of her corporate file servers while at the airport. Desktop users need instant problem resolution from their support department, and around the clock, corporate workers depend upon remotely accessing information from hotel rooms, from their cars via cell phones, or from home.

Several forces currently drive the move toward remote communications and remote computing. These include escalating real-estate costs, environmental concerns, and the need for increased worker productivity. Advances in software technology and communication technology, as with the Internet, also spur this increase in remote communications.

Telecommuting, the practice of setting up home offices for employees with appropriate resources for computing and communication is on the rise. It involves partial or total substitution of telecommunications technology for the commute to and from the primary workplace. Computers, faxes, advanced communications links, and dial-up access enable this new work paradigm.



In 2001, there were approximately 28 million telecommuters nationwide according to the International Telework Association and Council.

One factor driving telecommuting and the need for remote communications is the cost of corporate real estate. An office renting for \$18 per square foot in Dallas may go for \$36 in New York. Locations of equal value and quality may go for \$63 per square foot in Paris and \$155 per square foot in Tokyo.

Knowledge workers often have information-driven tasks that can be performed in many different places -- at home, in hotels, or even from a car. The idea of maintaining an expensive central location is giving way as "virtual offices" implement telecommuting or "hoteling."

In "hoteling," a practice becoming more common, eliminating private offices for all but the highest level of management and key support staff consolidates office space. Because so many workers today are more mobile and rarely use their offices a full eight hours a day, corporations ask them to reserve space to work, as they would reserve a room for a hotel. A coordinator tracks requests for office space, computing equipment, and communications tools. Thus, fewer offices are used for the same number of workers.

Environmental concerns also drive the move to remote communications. Government agencies and corporations recognize that telecommuting reduces gasoline consumption, auto emissions, and traffic congestion. Many states are implementing telecommuting to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act of 1990.

Many companies implement remote communications to provide better customer service, especially within the computer industry. Perhaps the most traditional remote access setting is the help desk. Help desk staff can use remote control software to correct

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problems on customer PCs across town or miles away in another state.

According to Telecommute America!, a nationwide public awareness program initiated by AT&T and government agencies, the following steps are necessary to implementing a successful telecommuting program:

- Determine the business tools you require to work productively away from your traditional office setting.
- Plan to work on tasks that can be accomplished using those resources.
- If necessary, and approved by your supervisor, locate office services locations near you for faxing, copying, and other services that you may require.
- Decide how you will stay in contact with co-workers, customers, clients, and the main office (using a combination of telephone, FAX, email, computer/modem links, and voice messaging).
- Investigate and plan how you will handle your messaging needs.
- Make sure that your co-workers and customers know how to reach you.
- Follow up with your supervisor to suggest setting up a pilot program within your organization.

Increased use of the Internet prompts more communication. According to the Computer Industry Almanac, estimates on Internet users range from 140 million to 160 million people who currently use or will soon use the Internet in the United States. A recent survey estimates one in three U.S. adults have used the World Wide Web.

The Internet is also prompting new ways of working together and sharing information at great distances. With an average cost of around \$15 per month for home users, connecting to the Internet has never been easier or more affordable.

Using remote access software, workers can read email, troubleshoot problems and even transfer files to and from office computers or corporate LANs. Several types of remote

communications are available to facilitate this work trend. The predominant technology is remote control software.

Using email alone does not constitute complete communications for the mobile or remote user. What happens when that mobile user is in a hotel room in Atlanta and needs to change some of the figures in a spreadsheet stored on a file server in New York at 3 AM? Remote control technology helps fill this void.

Continuous improvements in speed and reliability made over the past several years now give remote users near equivalent speed and functionality they enjoyed in the office. These developments can be attributed to several areas, especially improvements in higher speed communication lines and improvements in remote access software.

### **Remote Control**

Remote control allows a person to connect to a PC or PCs on a LAN, WAN or the Internet from a remote location, such as from home, other company locations and so on. The remote computer is typically called the "host" or "Client" computer, the home machine is called the "remote" or "Control".

The link between the two PCs generally occurs using existing POTS telephone lines, ISDN or other high speed connection over the Internet or an existing network connection. The user at the remote PC works as if present at the office -- all keyboard, mouse and screen operations from the remote PC control the host. All the same network resources are available from the remote PC as are available in the office.

When using remote control, the application software runs on the PC at the office, not on the home PC. The only communication between the office and home PC is keyboard & mouse activity, and screen updates. This minimizes the amount of data being transmitted across the connection.

With recent improvements in data communication technology and better data compression in software, remote control

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sessions can now give the remote user response times similar to what they enjoy at the office.

Remote control software vendors have moved into the Internet arena, using it as a means of controlling remote PCs. This poses certain challenges and hurdles for end users. To reliably use a remote control session over the Internet, you need confidence that certain issues have been resolved -- namely security, intruder detection, and ease-of-use.

When using remote control over the Internet, look for solutions that employ multiple levels of security, and for ones that encrypt your data before it's placed on the Internet. Would-be Internet eavesdroppers can be thwarted or stopped in this way. The best products offer ways to track security breaches via mechanisms such as security logs.

### **Applying Remote Control**

Several applications lend themselves towards remote control, especially training and support. End users' machines can be operated from a support person's PC without leaving their desks. For example, a help desk professional at a large corporation can connect to a user on another floor, solving hardware or software problems using remote control.

Help desks can now remotely observe problem situations and correct them, for example, adjusting Windows INI files and settings, or adding or removing a printer and various other issues. Problems on PCs at remote locations can also be diagnosed using remote control, eliminating expensive travel costs to those sites.

The estimated cost to manually support 2,500 desktops over a three-year period at best would be greater than \$650,000, at worst \$5.5 million, according to Gartner Group, Inc., a Stamford, CT information technology advisory firm. This is based on the number, complexity and types of calls and the time needed to address each call. It does not include costs of dispatching technicians, user downtime, and

the salaries of support personnel, who comprise the bulk--35.9 percent--of internal IT staffers.

Using remote control in training situations can help increase productivity. An instructor can remotely connect to a student's machine and demonstrate the steps to accomplish a function in the student's software. The instructor can then observe the student walking through the same steps remotely, without having to be present in the room with the student.

Some types of remote control software allow an instructor to connect to several separate PCs, potentially on opposite sides of a country, enabling simultaneous training from one instructor that would have required multiple instructors in the past. This will help instructors do away with travel to and from remote locations, thus gaining more effective use of their time.

Remote control is also useful when upgrading a department to a new software or operating system revision. For example, users running Windows 98, who might be unfamiliar with Windows XP, can connect and control a Windows XP machine from their Windows 98 machine, to start getting used to how things will work prior to the departmental upgrade.

Remote control is also a good fit when PC applications generate a great deal of network traffic. An example is an application requiring a lot of data transmitted to the PC, such as data from file or database servers. Since the data is sent to the office PC, none of the heavy network traffic is communicated to the "host" or "Control" machine at home.

Remote control software has improved over the years to include functions such as hardware & software inventory, file transfer (one-to-one), file distribution (one-to-many), screen broadcasting, automated tasks, scripting & scheduling suites and much more.

If you are unsure whether you need a remote control solution, please review the questions on the following page.

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## What if you don't already have a remote access solution in place at your organization?

### Do you really need one?

Answer the following questions, tallying up your answers, to determine whether you and/or your company are good candidates for a remote communications solution.

- Do you spend a significant amount of your time working away from your office?
- Do you find yourself working at odd hours of the day (or night)?
- Do you work from home? Or would you like to?
- Do you have corporate applications that will not run successfully on your home or portable PC?
- Do you maintain both a desktop and a portable PC?
- Do you have to provide customer support or service to various remote locations?
- Do you provide support to branch or remote offices that don't have dedicated IS staff?
- Do you need to connect to office resources like printers, databases, or CD-ROMs from a remote location or from home?
- Do you spend a significant portion of the day planning, writing, editing, or reviewing email?

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, you're definitely a candidate for remote communications.

### Is your organization a candidate for remote communications?

- Do you have more than 10 users connecting into your corporate computer resources?
- Do you have remote users who need to print to an office printer?
- Do you have branch offices in remote locations?
- Do any of these branch offices require access to your office network resources like printers, applications, or databases?
- Does your organization provide customer support or services to various remote locations?
- Do you need your IT support staff to be available to resolve problems immediately?
- Does your organization have applications that will not run successfully from older home or mobile computers?
- Is your organization obligated to comply with the Clean Air Act, reducing the number of vehicles commuting to work?
- Does your organization have remote users needing access to legacy information on mainframes or minicomputers?
- Does your organization have employees that travel and need to access their files remotely?
- Do you have a mixed environment at your organization with Windows 9x/NT/2000/XP running?

If you answered yes to four or more of these questions, your organization can benefit from implementing a remote communications strategy.

NetSupport is based in Atlanta, GA and provides desktop management tools including PC remote control, asset management and computer lab instruction & monitoring software. For more information, please call 1.888.665.0808 or visit our web site for a free 30 day trial.

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