

***Virtual Show and Tell:***  
**Using Remote Tech Support**  
**to Save Time and Money**



**Making Technology Work for You**

As companies take the lead on telecommuting and virtual work environments, the mobile workforce continues to grow by leaps and bounds—and with good reason. As reported in *The Wall Street Journal* last year, employees granted flexible work locations and hours report higher levels of job satisfaction and company loyalty.<sup>1</sup>

But now that we *can and do* work virtually anywhere at any time, ***what happens when the technology that enables us to work remotely doesn't work?***

Innovators in support services are finding the answer is in remote access tools which allow IT technicians to attach to any computing device connected to the Internet. These tools create a scalable, cost-effective solution for supporting desktops, laptops, and other mobile devices dispersed among multiple locations. Any IT decision-maker tasked with supporting a virtual workforce needs to know the what, how, and why of remote support—a show and tell tool that can save your company significant resources when it comes time to manage and maintain the many computing devices and increasingly more complex applications necessary for employees to work effectively.

### **Key Drivers of Remote Support**

According to IDC, “work from home” and “on-the-go” employees are increasing at the rate of 20% per year with the number of U.S. home office households expected to reach 37.7 million by 2009. In addition to personal computers, workers rely on PDAs and smart phones that offer a constant connection to colleagues and customers regardless of location. According to the Telework Coalition, 89 of the top 100 U.S. companies offer telecommuting, and 67 percent of all workers use mobile and/or wireless computing devices. Not only are computing capabilities becoming prolific and distributed but also more complex. Studies indicate that 63% of all applications are now considered complex by the user versus 20% in 2003. These drivers converge to challenge technical support organizations to provide remote users immediate access to problem resolutions.

**67% of workers use mobile/wireless devices**

**63% of all applications are now considered ‘complex’ by users**



<sup>1</sup> “Seeking Loyal, Devoted Workers? Let Them Stay Home.” *The Wall Street Journal*. September 11, 2007.

## Remote IT Support: The Fundamentals



So now that IT departments have all these virtual workers and mobile devices to support, what methods are available for taking care of challenges with printers, Microsoft Office, Smartphones, and even the new Iphone? Of course, managed help desk and desktop solutions still can fix various technical challenges that arise. But even companies with a solid help desk and on-site technicians shouldn't overlook the value "hands-on" remote support can provide. Defined as the process of taking control of a computer via a secure Internet connection to diagnose and resolve issues, **remote support can be an integral component of your plan to tackle the IT challenges experienced by off-site and mobile employees.** The requirements are simple—only a broadband connection is necessary—and the limitations are few. Essentially, through remote support access tools, IT technicians can adequately detect and solve most of the problems end-users encounter, save for the occasional hardware issue. Even common requests are easily identified and cleared without a technician physically touching the device. For example, remote access tools enable support professionals to help workers:

- **sync their computers with PDAs, Smartphones, and other gadgets**
- **remove viruses or spyware from machines**
- **install, configure, or remove software programs**
- **and restore printers from failure-mode back to normal operation.**

At first, the idea of remote IT support can be unsettling. Questions can arise, such as "Will my files remain secure?" and "Can the IT technician attach to my computer without my permission?" The answer to the first question is yes and to the second no. It is important to note that **remote support generally follows the same protocols as online financial transactions: Access is permission-based!** Users must first authorize the support personnel to take control of their computer before the technician can actually see the user's screen. Once access is granted, the employee can watch each step a technician takes by viewing the commands entered and programs opened. In "share" mode the user can also participate in the resolution by using the mouse and keyboard when asked. Many find that once they have experienced IT support through

a remote access tool, it also becomes an important teaching method to see how their issue was resolved.

## Benefits of Remote IT Support

In addition to easily resolving the IT challenges faced by off-site workers, remote support results in several other benefits to the organization:

**Reduced call-handling time:** According to Service & Support Professionals Association (SSPA), case studies' results from successful remote-support implementations demonstrate that when agents are in the driver's seat, incident-handling time can be lowered **by as much as 50 percent** over voice calls for similar incidents. As technology becomes more complex, walking customers through recovery procedures or checking detailed settings over the phone can take time and increase customer frustration. With the agent free to take control of the machine, perform needed procedures and check settings, much less time is spent actually resolving the issue.

**Increased first-call resolution rates:** SSPA also notes that when agents are able to instantly "see" error situations first-hand and check the system environment remotely, problems can be identified and resolved immediately, avoiding multiple calls or email communication to gather additional information.

**Deflected phone interactions:** Allowing customers to communicate effectively in their channel of choice is key to building satisfaction. As Generation X and Y enter into the target demographic of more industries, honoring their channel preferences means offering more online communication options. Remote support provides the same capabilities via a Web chat/collaboration session as a phone call, allowing customers to remain in their channel of choice for the entire problem-resolution session.

**Increased customer satisfaction:** In order for customers to feel content with the IT support rendered, they generally expect the issue to be resolved quickly at a convenient time. Remote support fills the bill because any off-site worker does

### **Remote Help Offers Users:**

- **Immediate help**
- **Quick resolution**
- **No need to follow complex instructions if technician is in "the driver's seat."**



not have to wait minutes or hours for the technician to arrive. Instead, support can commence immediately upon their approval. Also, users often appreciate that they do not have to follow complex instructions over the phone. The remote access tools allow them to watch and learn or turn their attention to another task while their computer issue is being resolved.

**Lower percent of escalations:** Fewer tickets are escalated to more expensive support tiers when remote support is initially used because the issues are easier to diagnose and faster to resolve when the technician is truly “in the driver’s seat.”

**Reduced end-user downtime:** With remote support, most of the communication with the technician is via the Web, freeing the user to handle phone calls or other tasks at the same time. Also, problem resolution generally occurs faster as travel time is eliminated, so the user is “down” for fewer minutes than if he or she had to wait for an on-site technician to arrive. Finally, users can schedule a remote appointment at their convenience. All in all, remote support diminishes lost productivity often experienced with traditional phone help desk and on-site desktop support.

**Lower incident costs:** For locations with fewer than 100 PCs it is less expensive to utilize remote support than to have someone either reside on-site or travel to multiple locations to provide assistance when needed. Residing on-site takes up valuable office space. Traveling takes time.

***Offering Cost Reduction through:***

- **Shortened call-handling times**
- **Less escalation to more expensive support tiers**
- **Elimination of agent travel time**
- **Fewer agents supporting the same number of users**

And, both of these are more expensive than using remote assistance. For example, service providers may charge a minimum of two hours to dispatch a person, even if the problem itself only takes 30 minutes to resolve. If the problem was diagnosed and resolved through remote tools, the fees can be dramatically reduced.

**Scalable solutions:** Fewer remote agents can support the same number of users—or more—than on-site or dispatched technicians. With traditional on-site support, a technician resides at each company location. Remote technicians, however, often can work with more than one user at a time, no matter where each user or support person resides.



Successful telecommuting and virtual workday programs have shown that flexibility and mobility have become mainstays in the global workplace. Led by the continuous release of wireless technologies and devices, workers find themselves conducting business not only from the office but also from cars, homes, airports, hotels, and other remote locations. For the IT manager, remote support access tools married with a managed level two solution is a secure, cost-effective, and scalable method for resolving the IT challenges faced by these off-site employees. As a faster, transparent mode of on-site support, users experience the next best thing to a desk-side visit without the hassle or cost of waiting for a technician to arrive.

### **What to watch out for:**

**Internet Bandwidth** – Though dial-up can work, high speed or broadband Internet access, is a must to minimize resolution times.

**Data and Applications Security** – Make sure that technical support requires a user permission to access their device, allows the user to view all actions, and does not leave software on the PC. Initially the users must be available to provide this access. Once permission is granted, they have the option to leave.

**Hardware Issues** – Remote support can diagnose most hardware problems but requires an on-site person to physically replace or repair a hardware device, such as keyboard, disk drive, printer, display, etc. The more complicated disk, memory and laptop display replacement may require a local certified technician.

**Benefits** of remote technical support are significant and include:

- Higher first call resolution rates
- Delivery of high-touch, low-cost service without adding travel costs.
- Instant response and prompt issue resolution anywhere there is an Internet connection - in the office, at home, or on the road.
- Reduced operational costs, increased productivity and more customers satisfied



## About ABS Associates

ABS Associates, Inc. serves clients across the nation with comprehensive outsourced help desk, desktop, managed hosting, and network support and solutions. For more than 25 years, ABS certified support professionals have expertly delivered IT solutions, helping hundreds of companies control capital expenses and support costs, improve company focus, and increase end-user productivity. *ABS*help™, the company's Web-enabled knowledge center, assumes the burden of IT support, eliminates distractions, and allows firms around the world to concentrate on achieving strategic business objectives. For more information, please visit [www.abs-inc.com](http://www.abs-inc.com).

