



Remote Monitoring and Management:

The Key to Proactive,
Efficient IT Service Delivery

As businesses emerge from the difficult economic recession, they need to continue the low-cost and high-productivity practices that allowed them to successfully weather the storm.

Specifically for IT service providers, it's paramount that they find a competitive advantage and develop new ways to find additional revenue streams. In order to keep clients happy and maintain loyalty, IT service providers need to be able to do it all for their clients—from managing entire technology infrastructures to responding quickly to a multitude of end-user needs. With a growing number of issues to resolve and limited technicians at hand, how can IT service providers operate efficiently while providing top-notch service levels?

One tool that can help increase the efficiency of existing technical support staff and better leverage resources is remote monitoring and management (RMM). RMM delivers an arsenal of IT management tools, such as remote desktop monitoring, trouble ticket tracking, user information, support and more through one comprehensive interface. By definition, RMM refers to a set of IT tools that are loaded on the customer's servers and workstations. These tools collect information about the hardware and applications running in the client's environment and provide activity reports to the IT service provider for review and issue resolution.¹



What is Remote Monitoring and Management (RMM)?

RMM is remote, proactive monitoring of computer and network health. Some RMM tools use agent technology, which allows for the direct management of applications running on a computer. Remote agents can connect without VPNs, firewall issues or router configurations, and can perform tasks for their clients even while offline. This powerful technology enables technicians to fix problems without logging directly into the affected machine. Problems can be resolved remotely from the agent and console, even while a client is still using a computer or server.

For example, if a server's performance begins to act unstable, a technician can log in to determine what the problem is. If a virus is detected, the technician can go in and kill the virus process where it is starting up before it can cause major damage. It can be done quickly and remotely—without affecting the client's productivity—so that the virus does not have time to corrupt other files or systems. Since technicians do not need to log directly into an affected workstation, agent-based solutions also provide protection and flexibility for companies who utilize laptops and have a mobile workforce. Agents work as monitors and network probes so you can easily discover all devices on the network.

An RMM solution detects issues, reports them to the IT service provider, and allows technicians to resolve those issues from a remote location. For example, when a common problem arises, like when an end-user gets locked out of the system by typing in an incorrect password, an RMM solution allows the technician to pull up this information from another location and assist the end-user without leaving his or her station. The end-user password on the computer or domain can also be reset using the computer screen in the control center.



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Proactive Maintenance and Management



RMM also provides powerful maintenance and management capabilities. Proactive maintenance includes the management and deployment of Windows updates, defragmentation of hard drives, antivirus definition updates and many other tasks.

Before RMM tools provided a way to run these activities on a scheduled basis, technicians found themselves performing these tasks as an initial troubleshooting process when responding to an end-user complaint. The ability to set up routine, scheduled maintenance tasks with RMM not only prevents problems, but it also significantly reduces the troubleshooting time. Since the basic scans have already been performed, technicians can jump right into more complex troubleshooting steps and come to a quicker problem resolution.

RMM is also a powerful management tool for system administrators. IT service providers use RMM tools to manage software deployment, troubleshooting and other important IT service functions. RMM tools also offer the ability to create automated processes through scripting, which simplifies tasks such as copying files and performing advanced searches.

One popular management tool available with RMM is automatic remediation. If a technician always takes the same steps to resolve an alert, problem or customer request, RMM allows the technician to automate, save and share the remediation of these issues. If a monitor fails, a simple automation can gather information about the computer and network status and report useful information. More advanced automation with remediation can also be set up to kick off a scripted set of actions upon detection of a problem. Those actions can be recorded to a ticket or time entry that automatically documents the work completed on the client's monthly invoice. Some IT service providers are even billing time and material to clients for automated activities that are performed throughout the month.

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3 Why Do IT Service Providers Need to Offer RMM?

Offering RMM can provide numerous benefits both to IT service providers and their clients. RMM is a unique solution that allows IT service providers to increase the level of service to clients while differentiating themselves from the competition. In a recent survey by Ziff Davis Enterprise Research, only 36% of IT executives used Network & PC Management & Monitoring and just 34% used Data Center Management & Monitoring.²

RMM solutions also offer IT service providers a consistent revenue stream with relatively high margins. This market is expected to grow by 30% through 2012. In a 2009 report published by the Gartner Group, the opportunity to upsell RMM services was forecasted to be about \$30 billion in the next few years.³

Some IT service providers have already been using RMM to their advantage. These businesses have enjoyed the ability to get things done faster, work remotely, respond proactively and ultimately provide more value to their clients.

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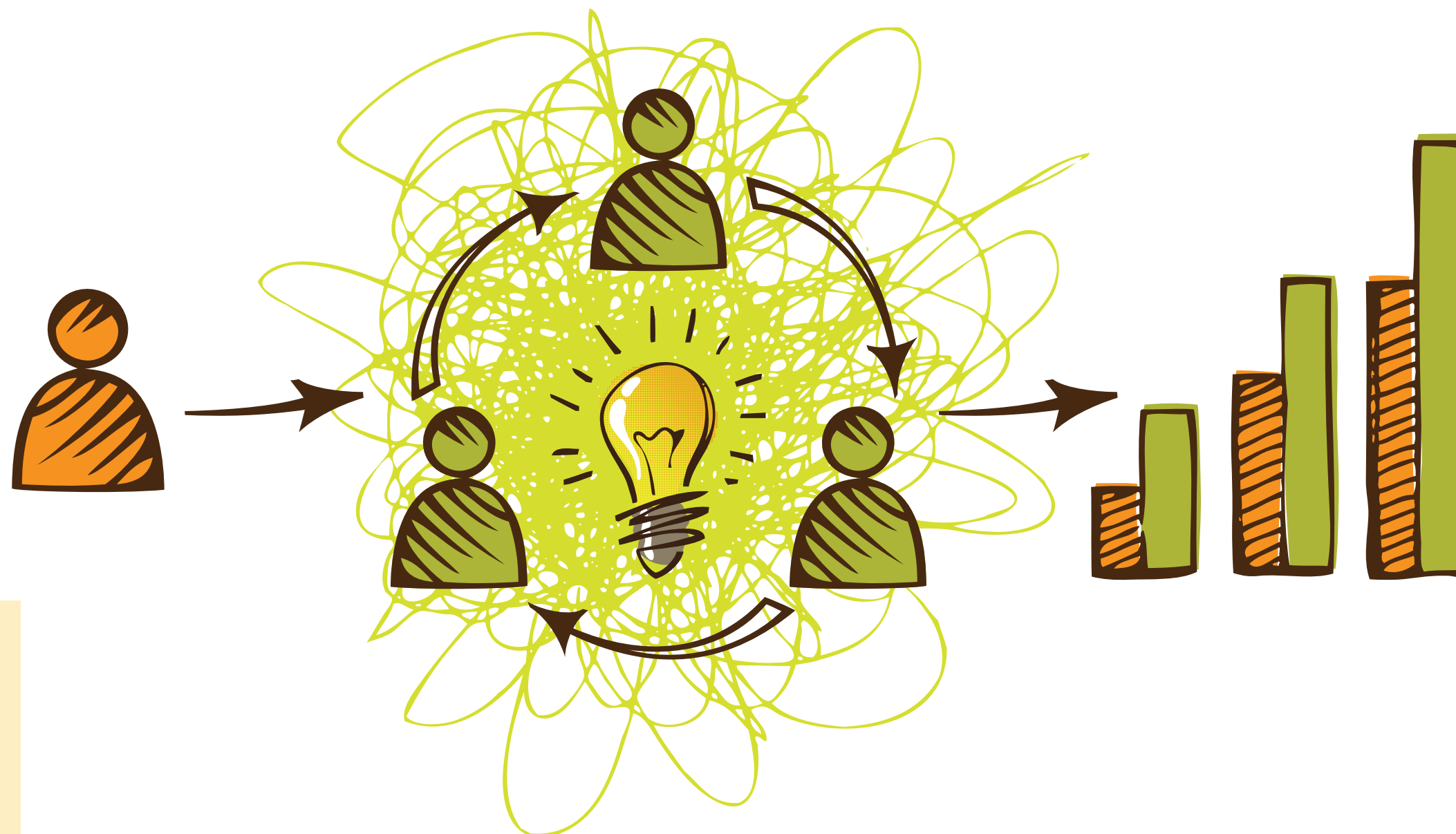
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Run Your Business More Effectively and Profitably

One of the most important benefits RMM tools offer IT service providers is the ability to better utilize labor and resources. Using RMM tools, technicians can work on multiple computers and clients at the same time. For example, technicians are able to multitask by kicking off a backup restoration job, move to another computer to start a disk scan for hard drive issues, and move back to the original computer to find the particular file from the backup that an end-user requested—all from the same interface. In this scenario, one technician completed three tasks in half the time

it would take if working onsite or with remote tools that made multitasking difficult. Consider the impact of multitasking with an RMM tool for an IT service provider handling thousands of tickets a month. This productivity savings can significantly improve the efficiency and profitability of the IT service provider.

RMM tools can help an IT service provider get things done faster, which is one of the primary indicators of profitability. RMM tools enable the efficient delivery of a variety of services, including

remote help desk, end-user information, support and more. IT service providers can even set up a customized home page for customers so they can track tickets, see status updates, access reports, review invoices and see the value of the services they are receiving at any time. Also, with proactive resolution to technical problems, IT service providers can strategically schedule site visits and work on new revenue-generating projects rather than simply running to put out fires.



5 Increase Customer Service Levels

Perhaps the most obvious benefit for your clients when using an RMM solution is less downtime. You can proactively monitor and fix issues before they interrupt your customer's business—sometimes before they even know they have a problem. For example, IT service providers can consistently monitor virus updates, ensure antivirus programs are enabled and that regular backups are taking place. Additionally, the IT service provider can keep the entire network operating efficiently by performing preventive maintenance on servers and workstations, including regular disk and registry cleanups and system defragmentation. Even common problems like running out of drive space can be handled proactively because the IT service provider can see what is going to happen and take action long before a customer incident takes place.

When remote monitoring is not utilized, IT service providers find out about technical issues through client calls or site visits and have to react to emergencies. With remote monitoring tools, the IT service provider can take advantage of agent and internal monitors to collect information automatically and set alerts when computers or applications need immediate attention.⁴

End-users will also see and feel a positive impact from the implementation of RMM tools. Clients will experience immediate response to requests or problems and will not have to wait for a technician to visit their location. Instead, technicians can instantly connect from a remote location and fix technical problems on the spot. Technicians can also work behind the scenes to resolve issues without taking over an end-user's system, enabling clients to continue working without interruption.

By consistently monitoring systems and fixing problems as they arise, the IT service provider becomes a true partner in the client's business. Inventory and bandwidth utilization reports can be provided to help clients budget for hardware and software expenditures. By providing exceptional and proactive customer service, clients are happier and more loyal, which means an improved bottom line for the IT service provider.

“Customers are no longer running us down to report problems; we are running them down to report preemptive resolutions! They love it!”

—BARRY LANGLEY, CEO, SIMPLE SOLUTIONS
BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY CONSULTING

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6 Save Time and Money

With an RMM solution, you no longer have to travel to a client's site to resolve IT issues. RMM allows your technicians to resolve issues remotely, so they won't have to lose a whole day if a problem only needs one hour to fix. By increasing technician efficiency, IT service providers have room to grow—both to take on more clients and to manage more endpoints without having to increase headcount. Additionally, IT service providers realize actual cost savings by eliminating the need for transportation, lodging and other associated costs. Some IT service providers have reported a 50% reduction in travel costs after implementing RMM.

As companies become more energy conscious, RMM tools can also help clients realize their goals to become more environmentally friendly. For example, "the simple act of shutting off a PC after hours and on weekends can quickly add up. In some case studies currently under way, companies are experiencing an average cost savings of \$17 per PC, per month. Multiply that by an office full of PCs and a company can really start to save. Advancements in remote management technologies are allowing managed service providers to help small and mid-size businesses realize these savings," reported Charles Weaver of ChannelPro SMB.⁵

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Summary

As IT service providers search for ways to more effectively manage technical resources and operate as efficiently as possible, they can benefit from tools that can help them proactively monitor and remotely manage and resolve IT issues. RMM solutions can help increase customer service levels, save time and money, and help businesses run more effectively and profitably.

With the ability to handle a variety of network and end-user problems remotely, IT service providers can offer superior customer service to clients while increasing their technical team's productivity. And as IT service providers' responses to client issues become more efficient and customer loyalties strengthen, they will be in a strong position to take advantage of opportunities and watch their business grow.

About LabTech Software

LabTech is the only managed services tool for remote monitoring, management and automation developed by a managed service provider (MSP) for MSPs. Their affordable, agent-based platform so closely emulates what technicians do in the field that the techs can provide the same support remotely. Because LabTech Software understands how to manage a growing MSP business, they make it easier to procure their software and allow partners to add agents as they grow. For more information, please visit labtechsoftware.com.



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