

# GET I.T. RIGHT

The News Letter of Eurotek Networking Solutions Ltd.

## FOCUS ON HOME / REMOTE WORKER SUPPORT

### Remote Working, A great idea, But how do you support it effectively?

Remember all the articles in the early '90's about the idea of 'Tele-working'?

The implication was that, if you had some kind of remote access – modem or ISDN-link to a central computer network you could work remotely; either from home or a satellite office, or later even on the move with mobile data connectivity. There are obvious benefits to this approach, not least the freeing up or reduction of office space. Think how much traffic would *not* be on the roads if a significant number of workers did so remotely. And yet, the proposed numbers of remote workers suggested in those early articles has still not materialised, at least officially.

Why not? Well there are a number of regularly cited reasons, most of which revolve around the management of those users, and the cost implications of supporting them. Indeed, there are analyst figures out there that back up the argument that ITSM for remote users is a serious business expense. According to Noel Bruton, a UK-based, independent consultant and trainer who advises companies in improving their helpdesk and IT user support services, the costs of telephone support for remote users can be hellishly high.

While around 60% of all incoming support calls are fixed during the initial telephone call – which are, on average, around four minutes long – if the call goes to second line support, that averages out at 37 minutes of actual human effort per call, which may itself be outstanding for two days or more. Depending on call quantities, salary and service level, this means the costs of a support call can be anything from £2 to £20 – for a single call. These are relatively conservative estimates. Multiply this by several thousand calls a month or year – depending on the company size – and the costs look frightening.

So what is the current approach to eliminating this level of costs while still providing that all-important remote user support? Perhaps a reason for tele-working – by any name – not emerging anything like as significantly as it was touted to

be is that, while remote working requires a different approach to user support and different tools, by and large, management methods and products have stayed the same for the past 20 years. Still, today, the emphasis is on remote control of users, where you take control of the remote user's PC via a WAN or Internet connection. A number of companies offer this type of approach, either as a shrink-wrap product or a subscription-based service. In some cases it is quite effective, though connection speed is critical to the usability of this approach. Assuming there is a connection in the first place, that is...

Spot the obvious problem here? What if that connection is down? While the user at the remote site is panicking and can do nothing to find out whether there's really a problem or not, helpdesk technicians are helpless! So, it's back to the old telephone support method and all the costs implied with this methodology.

#### Remote Worker Statistics: Growing all the time

By 2008, 41 million corporate employees globally will spend at least one day a week Tele-working, and 100 million will work from home at least one day a month.

Nearly 250% growth in last five years in all markets

*Source: Gartner Group Inc. Sept 05  
Caroline Jones*

Even if the connection is working, there are fundamental limitations to the remote control approach, primarily that the user is helpless to help themselves. The problem is, non-technical users tend to panic at the slightest perceived problem. And that is precisely when – lacking in any localised form of help in a remote environment – they immediately pick up the phone and start reducing company profits at a rate of knots. So, at this point, it doesn't matter how efficient a centralised helpdesk and trouble ticketing system a company has in place; at the sharp-end, the remote sites, trouble is always brewing and costly trouble at that.

This limitation alone, then, might explain why companies have been reticent in letting their employees work from home. However, there is a difference between the official company line and what is *actually* happening. According to a survey from research firm Point Topic, around 16 percent of UK Internet users perform work-related tasks from their home connections, regardless of whether they are officially allowed to or not. And as more and more of the user-base are provided with laptop PCs as their primary working tool, despite the security issues, this trend can only be set to increase. All of which means that, either way, there is going to be an increased burden on the helpdesk for remote user support *and* a serious issue in controlling remote user activity. Imagine what kind of junk they might be installing on those laptop computers from home?

Then there's the "other" type of user – the dangerous user as cited by many support technicians – and that is the one who, in the absence of having tools to help them diagnose potential problems, decide instead that they know better and attempt a D.I.Y. solution. According to a report recently published on Silicon.com, two-thirds of UK office workers take a 'handy Andy' approach to PC problems and attempt to sort it out themselves, rather than contacting the IT helpdesk. More than half of workers will go for the classic turn-it-off-and-on-again option when faced with a computer problem, according to a survey of 250 office workers. One in 10 of those surveyed claimed they might try this up to five times in the hope of solving the problem before resorting to calling the IT helpdesk. A further 13 per cent of UK office workers reckon they would flick through a manual, and a brave nine per cent claim they would attempt to take the computer apart and try to rebuild it without guidance.

Clearly this is a dangerous approach in a remote environment and one that can easily lead to simply more support costs ultimately. So what is the solution to this obvious and growing problem? First, if we accept that there is a serious cost implication for user support, it is clear that anything we can do to automate that support, streamline the helpdesk process and increase the efficiency of each support staff member will be measurable via the bottom line – in pounds and pence. The vast majority of support "issues" are actually simple to fix when the support is onsite with the user.

The problems mount when that user is remote, such as in a branch office with no technical support staff on hand, or at home. If, then, we can recreate that "onsite" experience in the form of virtual automated, first-line support at the

remote end, then there is obvious potential for fixing the vast majority of so-called "problems" and thereby saving a ton of money in preventing those unnecessary support calls.

A solution to this problem exists in the form of NNT's Remote Angel. The proposition here is to provide that onsite, first level support, but in a fully automated form, on the users PC or laptop computer. In this way, Remote Angel can be seen as a possible enabler for companies looking to find a way of allowing their workforce to be based from home, as well as protecting them from those users illegal activities.

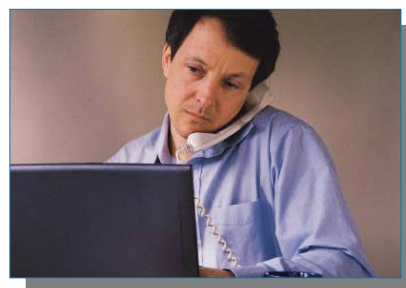
From a corporate perspective, Remote Angel, in optimising service desk (helpdesk) operations, by minimising the burden placed on ITSM staff, helps companies comply with the popular ITIL guidelines and – in so doing – streamline their ITSM. At the same time, its ability to be customised in many ways means that the product is flexible enough to both conform with ITIL requirements *and* fit into the shape each specific company needs it to.

A central console – HQ – can be added to provide complete visibility of remote users from a central site.

Equally importantly, Remote Angel can be integrated with other tools such as NNT's Change Tracker (device configuration change monitoring) so that all potential problem areas can be monitored from a single screen.

So, with office space and transport costs spiralling, the possibility of enabling part of your workforce to work from home, safe in the knowledge that their computer support requirements will be met without the need for expensive first-line support calls into head office and that their activities are effectively controlled, is undoubtedly an attractive proposition worthy of further investigation. Maybe 'Tele-working' can finally happen as planned all those years ago...

## Reduce Helpdesk calls by 20% and Improve remote worker support.

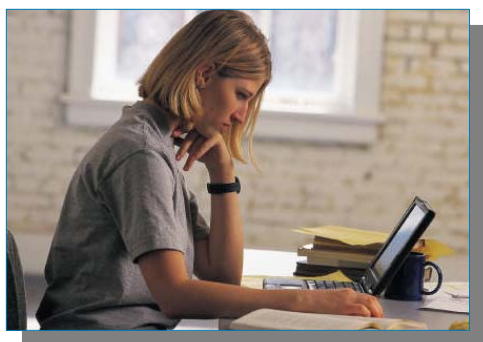


## The helpdesk engineer's problem...

"These guys working remotely are driving me crazy! They call me whenever anything is going slow – or they think is going slow – so I have to gather all their details and run through all the usual diagnostics I often find it's either a blip and no real problem, or that they've installed software that isn't even supposed to be on the PC. I understand they do need help, but I can't be with them all day... "

## The home / remote worker's problem...

"I think my PC is running slow, or is it the Internet? I can call Helpdesk and get them to check it out, but it will take at least 20 minutes to do so. Last time they checked it out and said there was nothing wrong, I wish I had some help at hand just when I need it....."



and here's the solution... Remote Angel™ from NNT.

Remote Angel™ is a unique solution designed to improve remote user experience and in doing so, reduce Helpdesk calls and support costs. Having Remote Angel™ on board the remote PC gives the user added comfort when working remotely, enhancing productivity and reducing panic when things don't go to plan

*According to Noel Bruton, an independent consultant helping companies to improve their IT user support services, the time taken to resolve a support call ranges from around 4 minutes to 37 minutes of actual effort. Worse still, if there is no immediate resolution, that time period may be spread across two days or more of an open helpdesk call. This means that just a single call may cost a company £20 plus. Multiply that by several thousand users and the costs looks alarming.*

*Source: Computerweekly.com*

Through the constant monitoring of PC and internet performance by Remote Angel™, a remote worker can immediately get a straight answer to their question – *'Is there a problem?'* When a Helpdesk call does need to be logged, Remote Angel™ will do this instantly. It will have already done all the time-consuming information-gathering and initial diagnostic checks a Helpdesk engineer will need, saving both the user, and engineer, time, and the company money.

## Remote Angel; What Is It?

Remote Angel is a solution specifically designed to reduce the number of helpdesk calls from home users and or remote users who access business applications over the internet

The software is designed to help remote users in the event they encounter a problem such as slower than normal response times or intermittent degradation in service quality. Independent surveys confirm that as many as 50% of helpdesk calls received from home users are unnecessary. In many instances a temporary disruption to service, whilst undesirable is in fact just a natural consequence of the user accessing core systems over the public internet rather than being physically attached to the network.

Remote Angel is like having a 1<sup>st</sup> line support engineer available 24/7 on the client machine and will only escalate a problem to the helpdesk if it is absolutely certain that it is necessary.

Unpredictable performance for home users can be extremely stressful and disruptive to business.

Rather than users ringing the helpdesk the moment they suspect a problem, Remote Angel provides an alternative solution by providing 'on demand' comprehensive tests of the PC, Internet connectivity & Applications, in fact all the parameters that may affect performance.

This reduces the number of helpdesk calls and also speeds up problem resolution. In the event a problem is escalated to the helpdesk the support team knows that the basic parameters have all been checked.

If Remote Angel identifies a genuine problem it will log the results of all tests run and automatically escalate to the helpdesk.

The support team will immediately be at an advantage as Remote Angel provides a detailed events history of all tests run and their results. This is a hugely effective method of identifying and helping to resolve problems for the user

If there is no serious problem Remote Angel will offer suitable advice to the user. If there is a minor problem that can easily be rectified (such as a missing network cable or too many open applications running creating an unnecessary burden on the PC) Remote Angel can provide the user with a set of clear, easy to follow and non technical instructions to resolve the problem.

In addition Remote Angel will monitor what applications are being used on the client PC identifying illegal applications or the absence of critical applications. This provides control of the client machine and ensures that only authorized applications are used.

Based on independent research it is estimated that the reduction of as little as one call to the helpdesk is likely to pay for the cost of Remote Angel.

### **Remote Angel Solution: Scenario 1**

The user's Internet connection is down. The user finds that the email or the web browser is no longer working. Calling up an automated support assistant could bring up a screen explaining the absence of a connection and some simple remedial steps that can be taken. These could be customised for each and every user and company. The automated assistant could then keep checking the connection and inform the user when it is available again. If the user cannot resolve it using the instructions provided, then a help desk 'phone number is made available, but only as a last resort

Remote Angel provides remote users with the reassurance of available 1<sup>st</sup> line support 24/7. Remote Angel helps an organization reduce the number of 1st line support calls from remote users as well as speeding up the resolution of problems when they are escalated. In addition Remote Angel will monitor and help control which applications the remote user loads and runs on the client machine.

### **Remote Angel Solution: Scenario 2**

The user's PC slows down significantly enough for them to notice and get anxious. Calling up an automated support assistant could inform the user of any new development or change in their system that might be causing this problem. For example, a new process has started that isn't on the approved processed list (which could be customised for each user/company). If this is likely to be a *trojan* or *spyware* it can be terminated immediately. Meantime, an overall system monitor ensures that the helpdesk is informed of what happened and what the outcome was, without directly burdening them. If a message has to be sent to the helpdesk, it can be accompanied by a list of occurrences that preceded the user identifying a potential problem – an invaluable aid in further diagnosis. Most importantly, all is transparent to the user and the helpdesk is only alerted when it is absolutely necessary.

### **Key Reasons to deploy Remote Angel:**

- Reduce the cost of helpdesk calls particularly unnecessary ones, and minimise wasted time
- Users calling the helpdesk with trivial problems that should be resolved at the client end
- Remote users are often miles away from support – providing support can be extremely difficult
- Managing what remote users actually put on their machines can be a big problem. Often users will innocently load applications onto their machine that could unwittingly cause problems on the user machine or worse the entire corporate network. Knowing about these applications and or stopping the users from loading them in the first place can have huge benefit
- Providing a constant and reliable quality of service to remote users

## **Key Features & Benefits:**

- **Improves service to remote users**
- **Reduces the number & cost of helpdesk calls**
- **Improves time to fix problems on remote machines**
- **Manages applications being run by the client machine**
- **Low cost of ownership**
- **Easy to deploy**
- **Intuitive – non threatening for technical users**
- **Integrates with helpdesk**
- **Can be used in conjunction with general quality business process such as ITIL & TQM**
- **Adaptable to suit every customers requirements**
- **Release Help Desk and Support staff to concentrate their skill sets and time on the resolution of more complex problems**
- **Remote Angel is designed with flexibility and intelligence built-in, allowing it to manage both Corporate Owned Company PCs, and Privately Owned Home PCs used for business work.**
- **Increase support staff job satisfaction by removing most of the “low brow” repetitious tasks, which in turn is likely to improve staff retention**

**For a FREE trial of  
Remote Angel**

**visit:**

**[www.euroteknetworking.com](http://www.euroteknetworking.com)**

**or call: 01908- 565608**