



Avoiding the Pitfalls when Transitioning into Managed Services

By Nick Cavallancia

When making the transition to managed services, even though the goal of supporting your clients remains the same, a lot can change along the way.

As you begin your journey transitioning into managed services, you'll quickly find the transition is more about *how* you provide services than the services themselves. You're still working to keep your clients operational. The difference is the method by which you accomplish that work.

When making the transition, even though the goal of supporting your clients remains the same, a lot can change along the way. Today, you provide simple reactive break/fix work. With managed services you would provide proactive standardized service offerings. Hourly rates turn into fixed monthly support costs. What was once nothing more than disorganized firefighting becomes an organized managed services strategy aimed at making your client's operations more productive – and you more profitable.

It sounds rather complex. But it doesn't have to be.

For many, the initial step is to employ a Remote Monitoring & Management (RMM) solution to streamline your service delivery and create predictable recurring revenue. RMM solutions provide your support techs with tools to quickly identify, troubleshoot, and address customer issues both remotely, as well as automatically.

An RMM increases productivity by proactively monitoring the systems you are responsible for, alerting you to issues, often before users experience problems. Additionally, by combining both relevant information about the systems and applications being supported, with tools used to configure and support issues, an RMM increases the speed, accuracy, and profitability of service management.

But it's not as simple as just go *get one and start watching the checks roll in*. You're making a monumental step and shifting the way you do business. You need to ensure the choices you make today put you on the correct path.

Simply going the route of using any RMM solution you can find doesn't guarantee simplicity.

So how can you easily make the jump and avoid the mistakes others before you have made?

In this whitepaper, we'll cover three pitfalls common to transitioning into managed services, and discuss ways to help you easily avoid them.

PITFALL #1: CHOOSING COMPLEXITY OVER SIMPLICITY

If you're like most IT service providers that would categorize themselves as a "break/fix" shop, your focus is on how to solve the *immediate* problems of your clients. Every common problem has some slightly different twist from client to client, making nearly everything a one-off solution. And even you realize the complexity you're bringing upon yourself is unnecessary, and there has to be a better way.

Simply going the route of using any RMM solution you can find doesn't guarantee simplicity; it's merely represents a tool that can help create a predictable, repeatable (and therefore, profitable) Managed Services business.

But in some cases, a service provider doesn't see the value in the RMM (or PSA) solution they invested in, and chooses to revert back to a reactive business model. In other cases, technicians move from company to company because they are unhappy with the complexity in their employer's support processes, and a lack of necessary tools to get their job done.

How is it that even with an RMM solution in place, managed services can still be riddled with complexity?

Making the Right Choice

If you're still in the manual break/fix camp, you spend most of your time repeating the same types of maintenance tasks. According to Gartner, utilizing an RMM solution will empower a tech to manage and support around 125 endpoints, but that doesn't necessarily guarantee simplicity. The tech still needs to do the work of supporting those 125 endpoints.

If you choose to go the multi-vendor route, your tech needs to learn multiple tools.

If you already have some form of an RMM solution (and are reading this whitepaper), you probably aren't finding it to be easy to use. Sure, it has some great remote management and remote control functionality, but you're still doing a lot of work to support your users.

The right RMM choice *will also include some level of automation* to speed the delivery and improve the quality of service provided. By adding automation alone to an RMM solution, Gartner estimates the number of endpoints supported *doubles to over 250*.

Simplicity through Automation with AVG Managed Workplace

AVG Managed Workplace's automation is designed to streamline routine tasks using repeatable turnkey and custom scripting, increasing support efficiency while decreasing efforts required. Tasks such as standardizing configurations, updating software, managing security, and performing diagnostics can easily be scheduled, complete with email notifications of the outcome of each task.

Even with operations focused on simplicity through standardization and automation, you may be running the risk of reduced operational efficiency *if you make the next mistake in our list*.

PITFALL #2: CHOOSING TOO MANY VENDORS

When making the transition to managed services, the desire to differentiate your offerings is a common one, often resulting in choosing a variety of tools from a number of vendors to create a "best of breed" offering. While doing so may empower your techs to more quickly solve issues than before, *are you really better off?*

For starters, if you choose to go the multi-vendor route, your tech needs to *learn* multiple tools, taking time away from customers. Once ramped up, there usually is little integration between the solutions, which only adds manual tasks, such as creating a helpdesk ticket, to a normally automated process, extending the time it takes to adequately provide support.

You need to partner with a single vendor who is laser focused on making your business more efficient.

Sure, when your processes are running smoothly, everything's great, but eventually *it may be you that needs some support*. Utilizing many vendors also means more support numbers to call when something goes wrong, multiple backend support portals, and too much time spent pointing fingers rather than solving customer problems.

It's obvious that using many vendors also has its downsides. Is *it even possible, then, to deliver a quality service efficiently and effectively using a single solution?*

Making the Right Choice

Notice the mistake here isn't choosing too many solutions, just too many vendors. So, the answer isn't simply to choose one solution (such as an RMM or PSA solution); doing so may limit your service offerings, your team's capabilities, and your differentiation among other service providers.

You need to partner with a single vendor who is laser focused on making your business more efficient, resulting in you providing better service, and more revenue. One that understands that IT service providers are about as different as the customers they support. This, in turn, translates into the right vendor offering a number of solutions that compliment one another allowing you to select the offerings that are right for you, with the ability to grow your business simply by adding on services from the vendor.

Single Vendor Strength with AVG

AVG's deep understanding of the service provider market is demonstrated by the breadth and depth of its offerings. From simple cloud-based protection and remote control with **AVG CloudCare**, to more advanced remote monitoring and management with **AVG Managed Workspace**, to adding on **NOC and Help Desk services**, AVG partners with you at every step. Whether you're a one-person operation just starting out, or an established service provider with teams of technicians, AVG has the solutions to optimize your business, increasing efficiency, performance, and revenue.

It's imperative that you don't just pick a product that is designed to assist a business like yours but actually choose an offering that solves your problems.

Given there are many vendors working to help service providers like you, each with a number of solutions, the question needs to be asked, *what defines the right solution for your business?*

PITFALL #3: CHOOSING THE WRONG SOLUTION

Since you're making the transition into managed services, it's imperative that you don't just pick a *product* that is designed to assist a business like yours, but to actually choose an offering that solves *your* problems. To determine what products you should be using to provide services, the question really is '*What problems are you trying to solve?*'

You need to improve the security of your client's environments. You need to raise the efficiency of your techs when troubleshooting and solving user issues. You need to be more cost efficient in handling routine tasks. You need to be able to do more with less time, allowing your business to be more profitable.

Is it even possible to address all of these needs easily as you're just starting out in managed services?

Making the Right Choice

For most service providers moving from break/fix to managed services, the easiest and most profitable step is to employ an RMM solution that speeds up the process of supporting user requests through insightful proactive tools and powerful automation.

But, what exactly should you be looking for in an RMM solution?

To help gauge whether an RMM solution is right for you or not, we've put together this helpful checklist, outlining the kinds of services you could choose to provide and the corresponding features you should be looking for in an RMM solution.

As you consider RMM solutions, use the checklist and determine whether it has the capabilities needed to efficiently, effectively, and quickly transition you into a managed services business.

| Feature | | Yes | No |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Monitoring | | | |
| | Automatic Discovery of All Devices | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Asset Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Monitoring of | | |
| | Servers, PCs, Laptops | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Applications | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Mobile Devices, Tablets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Printers, Imaging, and IP-based Devices | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Patch Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Backups | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Cloud Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 3 rd Party Best Practices | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Real-time Alerting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management | | | |
| | Unified Platform | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Servers, PCs, Laptops | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Mobile Device Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Print Devices | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Patch Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Power Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Reporting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Network Audits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Servicing | | | |
| | Remote Remediation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Remote Control | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Turnkey and Custom Task Automation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrated Add-On Solutions | | | |
| | Anti-Virus / Anti-Spam | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Content Filtering | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Backups | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Email Archiving | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Email Encryption | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Network Operations Center & Help Desk | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | PSA Integrations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Onboarding | | | |
| | One-day Client Deployment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What if Managed Services Just Isn't For You?

For some of you, the entire concept of managed services may still seem rather complex, yet you want to be able to provide additional automated services to your customer. If that's the case, **AVG CloudCare** protects your customers' data, devices, and people with a base set of offerings all centrally managed from the Cloud. By implementing **AVG CloudCare**, you'll be adding on protection from malware, cloud-based backups, content filtering and email security, along with remote access to customer devices. All this without the same complexity and hassle of using multiple vendors as with RMM.

TRANSITIONING WITHOUT THE PITFALLS

The path to an efficient and profitable managed service business can be a challenge. With so many options around offerings, solutions, and features, it's easy to see yourself getting lost and making wrong choices that have a negative impact on not only your business, but on that of your customers.

By avoiding these pitfalls and proactively looking for, and choosing, a simple, single vendor RMM solution, you'll be taking the first step to building a thriving, streamlined, and optimized managed services business.

With nearly 20 years of enterprise IT experience, Nick Cavallancia is an accomplished consultant, speaker, trainer, writer, and columnist and has achieved certifications including MCSE, MCT, MCNE and MCNI. He has authored, co-authored and contributed to over a dozen books on Windows, Active Directory, Exchange and other Microsoft technologies. He has spoken at conferences such as the Microsoft Exchange Conference, TechEd, Exchange Connections, and on countless webinars and at tradeshow around the world.

