



How to Select the Right Remote Support Tool:

[A practical guide for the support desk owner](#)

Executive Summary

Today's customer support and IT service organizations are charged with supporting ever-more complex environments that include multiple channels of communication to a seemingly limitless number of devices and systems—all while keeping support costs down. To meet these conflicting demands, service organizations are turning to remote support solutions.

But as these remote support systems grow in sophistication, it becomes challenging to evaluate available choices. This buyer's guide describes what to look for to select the right remote support tool for your organization.

Remote support solutions deliver capabilities that impact business-critical metrics in several ways, for example, they improve first call resolution, reduce repeat calls, lower call handling time, and boost customer satisfaction.

Why Organizations Adopt Remote Support Solutions

Many enterprise helpdesks, customer service centers, outsourced IT services providers and IT departments are turning to remote support solutions to help customers and staff in far-flung locations using desktops and laptops or even personal consumer and mobile devices. All remote support solutions enable a support team to connect to remote machines, share screens and control the device to provide personalized hands-on support, although individual features and levels of sophistication vary. IDC has reported that between 2006 and 2010, the worldwide market for clientless remote support software tools grew from \$100.9M to \$248.6M, more than doubling over a four year period. IDC expects strong growth to continue. They're forecasting that the market will reach \$581.5 M in 2015, a compound annual growth rate of 18.5% over the period 2011 through 2015.¹

By adopting remote support solutions, support organizations achieve significant return on investment. By allowing agents to access and troubleshoot a device quickly, these solutions improve agent productivity and reduce travel costs. Call handling time can be lowered because agents simply take control of the user's machine, perform needed procedures and check settings, rather than having to walk novice users through detailed recovery procedures or checking detailed settings. These solutions increase first-call resolution rates by providing scripts to automate complex or repetitive tasks and by enabling multiple agents to collaborate to quickly resolve an issue. Existing help-desk staff can also support more users with features like chat and the ability to handle multiple sessions at once.

How to Select a Remote Support Solution

Once you've decided that a remote support solution is the answer to your challenges, the question becomes, "How do you select the most appropriate remote support solution for your organization?"

LogMeIn has developed this guide to provide the information you need to make an informed decision. We have identified the most important factors to consider when evaluating remote support options based on our experience working with tens of thousands of support professionals in organizations of all shapes and sizes worldwide. These factors are:

- Core Functionality
- Usability
- Customization/Branding
- Security
- Scalability
- Deployment Model

This guide details each of these factors and provides a checklist for use as you work through your remote support solution selection process.

¹ MARKET ANALYSIS: Worldwide Clientless Remote Support Software 2011-2015 Forecast, IDC, 2011.

Core Functionality

Most remote support solutions provide essential capabilities such as remote control, remote screen sharing and file transfer that allow agents to perform routine support tasks. Look for a solution that also allows agents to perform less common support tasks through sophisticated capabilities including:

<p>Quick diagnostics</p> <p>Getting harried end users to accurately describe what's happening on their computer, tablet or smartphone can be time consuming and error prone. Quick diagnostics capabilities check essential technical data automatically, speeding up troubleshooting and eliminating frustration for users and agents alike.</p>
<p>Multi-platform, multi-device support</p> <p>Organizations must support a growing array of computing devices that their customers use, including personal consumer and mobile devices like tablets and smartphones. However, service desks wish to avoid the need to use a proliferating number of support tools. By selecting a remote support solution that allows agents to connect to PCs, Macs, tablets, and smartphones running on multiple operating systems, such as IOs and Android, from a single, familiar environment, organizations can avoid the need to juggle multiple support tools for multiple devices.</p>
<p>Task automation</p> <p>Many problems crop up repeatedly. Scripting enables agents to automate complex or repetitive systems tasks and deploy them on the end user's device. By eliminating the need to reinvent the wheel each time, scripting reduces average handling time. When automating complex tasks, scripting also improves resolution rates.</p>
<p>Unattended access</p> <p>Busy users want to be able to go about their work without being tethered to their computer, following an agent's instructions. A solution that – with appropriate permission from the user – allows agents to work with a system without requiring the user to be in attendance improves customer satisfaction. It also enables the support team to manage unmanned devices such as printers and servers.</p>
<p>Integration with other systems</p> <p>Jumping between different tools to gather information to solve a problem is frustrating for agents and end users. Both lose valuable time waiting for answers that should be readily available, and end users feel hassled when they must repeat the same information to different people. The remote support tool should allow you to integrate your solution with ticketing, CRM, and other complementary systems to eliminate the need to repeat the same information multiple times. (For agents, support for single sign-on eliminates the complexities of managing multiple logins, with multiple authentication protocols.)</p>
<p>Multiple session handling</p> <p>When agents provide support over the phone, they can only work with one user at a time. Solutions that include an interface that allows agents to interact with customers via chat and easily move back and forth between sessions enable agents to support multiple users simultaneously. This means that agents are utilized more effectively, solving more problems more quickly and at lower cost.</p>
<p>Agent collaboration</p> <p>Support costs and customer satisfaction scores improve when issues are resolved on the first call. But because front line staff can't possibly be experts on every device and technology platform, many organizations continue to push a substantial fraction of their tickets to the next tier. A solution that allows agents to collaborate on an issue increases first-call resolution rates. Techs can also gain excellent real-time training by observing other specialists as they resolve issues. As a result, agents broaden their skills, customer satisfaction is improved and costly escalations are reduced.</p>
<p>Administration</p> <p>Managers need capabilities to help them run their help desks efficiently. Remote support solutions should therefore allow managers to assign agents to specific issues in which they have expertise and create escalation levels. To run their helpdesks more effectively, managers need to be able to monitor agents (e.g., to see how long they spend resolving issues) and conduct customer satisfaction surveys.</p>

Usability

Regardless of their benefits, tools will be left in the toolbox if they're not simple to use. A remote support solution must address the usability requirements for two key audiences: support agents and end users.

Agents need a solution that will help them do their jobs quickly and effectively – through an user interface that is inviting and easy to navigate. The tool must be intuitive enough to help new and less experienced agents get up to speed quickly, while providing advanced and powerful capabilities to handle complex support problems. The capabilities outlined in the previous section are designed for agent effectiveness.

End users are concerned with having the ability to:

Choose communication channels
Today's end users expect to interact with organizations using a choice of communication methods. A remote support solution should meet these demands by allowing them to request support through a website or desktop icon, or by using supported devices to make a request without the need for previously installed software.
Quickly establish a connection
Nothing frustrates an end user more than wasting time waiting for a remote support connection to be set up. While no hard and fast rules apply, other than "make it quick," a good rule of thumb is that making the connection should take no more than 20 seconds. Faster connections also reduce incident handling time.
Work with a reliable support connection
Frequently dropped connections are another annoyance for both end users and agents. Connection reliability is therefore paramount for a remote support solution. The solution provider should be able to demonstrate the reliability of their connections.
Minimize involvement in support
Non-technical users often find it difficult to follow requests from agents over the phone. Remote support tools enable agents to control the end user's desktop, collect diagnostic information, transfer files, and execute programs – all without end user involvement. In addition, the remote support solution should operate even when the device is unattended to allow users to get on with other tasks – assuming that the appropriate authorization has been given and that users can terminate sessions at any time to avoid disclosing private information.
Deliver their opinions
Surveying capabilities help ensure that end users know that their opinion matters.

Customization/Branding

All support channels should reflect your brand and be consistent with other aspects of your website to avoid confusing customers. You should also be able to add new features to your support solution as necessary:

Branding across all your channels
To deliver consistent branding and make the support solution easier to use, it should enable you to use your own brand (colors, logo, taglines) on desktop icons that invoke support; in your chat boxes; on your support gateway web page; and on supported mobile devices.
Customization
Many organizations have specialized requirements. A remote support solution should allow your organization to customize your support. For example, you might wish to add a feature that displays waiting times in the support queue so you can manage expectations and make agents aware of elapsed time so they can assure end users that help is on the way.

Security

Whenever an organization adds a new technology, security is always an important concern, particularly in industries such as financial services and healthcare where security measures are mandated by law. Because remote support tools enable access to networked devices that often harbor proprietary applications and confidential data, security is even more important. The most critical security capabilities include:

<p>Authentication/identification</p> <p>Your organization must guarantee that remote agents are who they claim to be by authenticating remote agents through a password with a specified minimum strength. Users should also maintain control over when agents can access their system; the tool should enable end users to give explicit permission for an agent to perform specific functions as well as terminate a session at any time. When a remote support session is complete, traces of any applet installed during the session should be removed.</p>
<p>Secure communications and data transfer</p> <p>All communications must remain secure in-flight. A secure remote support solution should use end-to-end, 256-bit SSL encryption for all communications, ensuring the messages can be exchanged confidentially and that files being transferred cannot be hacked. The tool should also detect whether a message has been modified in transit.</p>
<p>Agent management</p> <p>Administrators using a remote support solutions should be able to control agent access by defining what actions agents can perform, and then auditing their actions. The solution should include capabilities that allow administrators to define permissions for different agent groups at a granular level and monitor agent activity in real-time and via reports. Essential auditing capabilities include recording support sessions to video files and detailed logging of session activity, stored in a database for query as needed.</p>

Scalability

As your business grows, the IT infrastructure that supports your business needs to scale to handle more support agents and users with the same level of reliability, availability and performance. A remote support solution must be able to:

<p>Handle concurrent session loads</p> <p>Support loads can vary widely based on the time of day, the time of year, unusual circumstances, onboarding of new employees, and new systems rollouts. A remote support solution must be able to handle a maximum load while maintaining high performance and response times, even when that load cannot be anticipated.</p>
<p>Support more customers or employees</p> <p>Cost-conscious organizations are constantly looking to do more with the same or fewer resources. A solution that offers chat combined with the ability for an agent to easily manage multiple concurrent sessions enables the support organization to engage more end users without increasing headcount.</p>
<p>Easily add new agents</p> <p>Your organizations should be able to easily add new agents to the roster. A remote support solution that uses the SaaS model of deployment makes it possible to bring on new agents without having to worry about scaling your infrastructure.</p>
<p>Deliver reliable connections regardless of load</p> <p>A remote support solution should offer high availability and avoid downtime, regardless of load.</p>

Deployment Model

Today, software application vendors of all types give their customers the option of subscription-based Cloud/Software as a Service (SaaS) or on-premise deployment. Remote support solution vendors are no exception. Many customers are selecting the Cloud-based approach because it eliminates the up-front capital expenses necessary to purchase software and the equipment it runs on or deal with technological incompatibilities. The SaaS model removes the need to devote time to implementing, managing, upgrading, and supporting the application and hardware. SaaS solutions deliver built-in redundancy and on-demand scalability. And when the SaaS offering is a support solution, support organizations no longer need to support the support tool.

Conclusion

As more demands are placed on support agents to solve more complex problems with fewer resources, more organizations are turning to remote support tools. Highly sophisticated solutions are now available that provide extensive capabilities for support agents combined with ease of use for end users. These solutions allow agents to address a wide range of problems far more productively while enabling customization and branding, high security, scalability, reliability and ease of deployment. This scorecard details how various solutions compare in each of these key areas. With this guideline, your organization will be better able to weigh your options and choose the solution that best meets your unique requirements.

Scorecard

Capabilities	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Core Functionality			
Quick Diagnostics			
Multi-Platform/Device Support			
Task Automation			
Unattended Access			
Integration			
Multiple Sessions			
Agent Collaboration			
Administration			
Usability			
Multiple Communication Channels			
Rapid Connection			
Connection Reliability			
Minimal End User Involvement			
End-User Surveys			
Branding			
Customization			
Security			
Authentication/Identification			
Secure Communication and Data Transfer			
Agent Management			
Scalability			
Handles Concurrent Sessions			
Supports Multiple Customers			
Easily Add Agents			
Reliable Connections			

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