NETSUPPORT 24-7

There's no denying that telephone-based IT support generally fails to deliver customer satisfaction - and now that this has reached farcical proportions it's no wonder that many organisations are looking for alternatives. Internet hosted remote access is looking like an ideal candidate, as it can be more cost-effective, easier to manage and, by providing a remote presence at a user's desktop, can dramatically improve results.

NetSupport 24-7 is a comparatively new service, and a key feature is that it removes any reliance on the telephone. NetViewer one2one and DanWare NetOp on Demand, for example, both require the support process to start with a phone call as a service ticket needs to be passed to the user. Even better is the fact that NetSupport 24-7 can be evaluated and purchased without having to be hassled by sales staff, as the entire process is web based. We found that GoToAssist can only be evaluated after a sales representative had contacted you, and the process can take up to two weeks to be activated.

Once an account has been activated, the administrator logs on to the global NetSupport 24-7 web site, to create new operator accounts and decide what privileges each one is allowed. The service automatically emails each account and requests that the new operators register on the main web site. End users and customers need to be supplied with a URL they can visit to request support, and the service can automatically create HTML code for pasting into the company web site. It also provides a range of buttons that users can pick for initiating the support request process.

Once a user selects the support button, they can be presented with a customisable questionnaire, asking for details about themselves and the problem they seek assistance with. When this has been submitted, a new request will appear in the operator's window and selecting it will fire up a simple text-based chat session.

NetSupport scores very highly here as it can present the service in any one of 26 languages, making it a superior choice for global support. Furthermore, operators can be placed into groups, allowing companies to present their support services based on language and areas of expertise. NetSupport's pricing model also makes the service highly versatile, as they are based only on remote control connections and not chat sessions.

If the chat session can't resolve the problem, then pushing a small utility to the user's desktop can activate remote control. This is also a cut above the rest as it's based on the excellent NetSupport Manager client, so you get top-notch remote control features, along with file transfer and screen annotation tools. The operator can invoke software and hardware inventory tasks, and we found the levels of detail to be very good.

Security is always a concern with these services, but NetSupport 24-7 offers four different levels of encryption for screen transfers - only those systems that have requested support are revealed to the operator and user's systems cannot be accessed in chat mode. You can also decide which specific functions operators are allowed to access, and users must permit the download of the client utility. Additionally, they can terminate it at any time. More importantly, the utility is only loaded in memory and cleans up after itself when it is unloaded, so once the session has been terminated, the system can no longer be accessed.

NetSupport 24-7 sets a high standard for hosted remote support services as it neatly avoids the telephone completely and is extremely easy to evaluate, purchase and install. Security is very good, and the range of tools on offer to support staff makes it particularly versatile.

Product: NetSupport 24-7
Supplier: NetSupport Ltd
Tel: 01778 382270
Web site: www.netsupport247.com
Price: As a guide, 1 operator, unlimited chats, unlimited remote control, £70 per month or £700 per annum