WHITEPAPER

8 Considerations for Choosing a Remote Support Solution

solarwinds

CHOOSING SUPPORT TOOLS FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY

In the IT service business, time is money. Any time your technicians spend bogged down is time they can't spend taking care of real problem.

When choosing software for your IT pros, focus on tools to help make them more efficient. By making it easier for techs to create tickets, to collaborate with teammates, or to easily access info while on site visits, you improve the efficiency of your help desk team. To top it off, choosing the right tools can boost your team's morale and its popularity across the company.

Your end users expect professionalism, so you should be using professional tools to get the job done.

When shopping for a service desk or remote access tool, try to evaluate the software across the following eight dimensions. This will help ensure you pick software to speed your team up rather than slow them down.

1. PROFESSIONAL-GRADE TOOLS

Snap-on® and Sears® built tools to last a lifetime. You knew if you bought a hammer from one of these vendors, you bought quality. You bought something to get the job done, get it done right, and get it done quickly.

The same should apply to your IT support tools. Your end users expect professionalism, so you should use professional tools to get the job done. While you could buy budget or free software, choosing something with a strong brand will give you a far better experience and reliability. Your investment in software will continue meeting your needs as you grow.

Fortunately, choosing a brand name tool doesn't have to break the bank. With larger companies, you can often find flexible pricing to meet your price range—wherever that is.

2. SPEED AND POWER

In the IT service business, small advantages add up over time. Small disadvantages do, too.

Every time you spend 12 seconds connecting to a machine, 20 seconds logging into a mobile app rather than using your thumbprint, or taking five clicks instead of two to solve a problem, your time is wasted. Those slowdowns add up over time, hurting end-user satisfaction and weighing down service speed.

- **Strong network and infrastructure:** Try the systems and make sure you don't see significant delays. For example, a good remote access tool should allow you to connect to a system within seconds.

- **Quality features:** Yes, you want your tools to have the features you need. However, one of the bigger mistakes you can make is to evaluate based on a laundry list of features. You'll likely never use all the features in a system, so look for quality, not quantity. Which leads us to…
- **Usability:** Take a trial. Test the system yourself, and have your teammates test it. A few days up front can pay dividends in terms of efficiency gains down the line. If something annoys you during the trial period, it will only bother you more over time.

The best IT providers are often "out of sight, out of mind," which can mean customers don't always see the value of their services.

3. AUTOMATION

Automation brings multiple benefits to a business. Not only can it improve efficiency, it can also boost the consistency and quality of a service. Plus, it helps employees avoid mundane, manual tasks and gives them space to focus on higher-value projects (and perhaps take on more daily tasks).

While your remote monitoring and management (RMM) platform likely includes some automation tools, your IT support tools should also help you automate processes.

Your remote access solution should allow you the ability to push scripts and other files to your users. This is a lot easier than having technicians spend time manually solving issues.

4. COLLABORATION

IT service businesses are rarely solo shows. IT help desk departments usually have a mixture of employees to get the job done. Some are senior, some are junior. Some are specialists, some are generalists.

Even if you don't currently have a large team with diverse skillsets, you likely will as your business grows.

Even if you don't currently have a large team with diverse skillsets, you likely will as your business grows. Your IT support software should help you make the most of this dynamic.

- **Session transfers:** Sometimes, technicians need to ask each other for help. Maybe a problem is particularly thorny for a generalist technician but would be straightforward for a specialist. Your remote access software should allow your team to easily transfer sessions.
- **Communication:** Even if they don't need to transfer sessions, technicians can benefit from good communication tools. Being able to chat with other techs in the background will help them solve issues much faster.
- **Historical information:** Anyone should be able to quickly get the information they need to get the job done. Your service desk should allow easy access to ticket information, session histories, notes, and even photos and videos of configurations or processes.
- **Performance:** Both your remote access and help desk software should give you full visibility into technician performance. This lets you know when to provide training, how to schedule your team, and how to optimize your team's skillsets. Look for a system that gives you reports on ticket resolution times, session lengths and scheduling density, and the types of issues resolved by each technician.

5. MOBILE APPLICATIONS

Device issues and outages don't respect business hours. Yet customers pay you to handle problems, even if you're out at dinner or watching a basketball game.

So, frankly, there's no excuse for IT support tools that don't give you an exceptional mobile experience. It may not be the first thing you think to check when you sign up for a trial, but we highly recommend testing out the mobile app before you buy.

» **Native features:** Look for applications that can leverage the device's hardware and software capabilities. For example, a service desk app that allows you to log in using your fingerprint will save time over the long haul. Additionally, the app should leverage access to maps for site visit directions, photos for ticket information and configurations, and calendars for scheduling.

» **Test usability:** Test drive the application by seeing how fast it takes to create tickets, how easy it is to navigate and search for information, and whether it gives you the information you need to solve issues on site. Small issues during the testing phase could grow to really annoy you or slow you down after a few months.

6. FLEXIBILITY

No two companies are exactly alike. How you set up your business depends on multiple factors, including your company's size, your end users and their needs, and your current infrastructure. You need to look for tools, especially a service desk, that can support the way you do business.

» **Flexible interface:** The interface should be easy to use, and the system should provide configurable roles and access rights. For example, if you're an owner or manager, you may want to see detailed reports while technicians simply need access to tickets, customer information, scheduling, and their daily task lists.

» **Flexible setup:** You should be able to configure your system to accommodate your service models. And don't think about just now—your needs may shift over time.

7. MINIMIZE ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

Technicians are great at fixing technology problems, which is why you want them spending more of their time there than writing up notes, analyzing, and reporting.

While important, if you can minimize the amount of time they spend on admin work, you can get them back to doing what they do best. Not only does reducing this kind of "paperwork" give your techs more time to focus on their core job, but it also improves your service quality.

» **Time tracking:** Your service desk software should include timers to allow a tech to simply click a button to track their time.

» **Ticket creation:** When evaluating solutions, put yourself into a technician's shoes and think, "What's the minimum amount of information they need to capture?" Look for systems that let technicians enter a few critical details, then get back to the task at hand. The techs can always put in more details after the fact.

- **Session recordings:** Your remote access tools should also allow you to record sessions. This can cut down on the amount of information a tech needs to enter on a ticket, but it can also help you improve service quality in the event you want to review sessions.

8. COMMUNICATION

Like any good relationship, the end-user/technician relationship relies on a firm foundation of strong communication. Besides being problem solvers, technicians also play the roles of educators and advisors.

Your tools should make it easy for end users to reach you and for technicians to fix problems from afar. This can be particularly important for remote access tools.

- **Multiple communication methods:** The technicians and users should have multiple methods of communicating with each other. At a bare minimum, you and your customers should have access to email, live chat, and pre-session messaging.
- **Messaging:** If you're working on someone's machine in the background, then you may want to shoot them a message on their screen before you start, giving the user the chance to ask for the work to be delayed if they're extremely busy.
- **System communications:** Often, technicians have to pass content files, code snippets, or user guides to users to solve issues. Your remote access software should be able to handle mass file transfers, and it should be able to easily support copying and pasting files.

TIME IS MONEY. GET BOTH WITH BETTER SUPPORT TOOLS.

Technicians pretty much live in their support software. If you're in charge of picking software for your IT provider's employees, you may be tempted to use free or open-source tools. While this seems like it could save you money, it can harm your business in the long run. Choosing brand-name tools can help you improve efficiency, cut costs, and take on a larger customer base.

When you're shopping for IT support tools like remote access or service desk software, make sure to think about how easy they will make your team's lives. In other words, don't just buy based on the car's features—buy based on how well it drives.

Keep these seven tips in mind to help you avoid picking a lemon.

For additional information, please contact SolarWinds at 866.530.8100 or email sales@solarwinds.com.
To locate an international reseller near you, visit http://www.solarwinds.com/partners/reseller_locator.aspx

© 2019 SolarWinds Worldwide, LLC. All rights reserved.

The SolarWinds, SolarWinds & Design, Orion, and THWACK trademarks are the exclusive property of SolarWinds Worldwide, LLC or its affiliates, are registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and may be registered or pending registration in other countries. All other SolarWinds trademarks, service marks, and logos may be common law marks or are registered or pending registration. All other trademarks mentioned herein are used for identification purposes only and are trademarks of (and may be registered trademarks) of their respective companies.