

IT PRO REVIEW

NetSupport Manager 12.1 review

The remote support host with the most – it's easy to deploy and offers a great range of features



Specifications :

Supports Windows XP SP3/Server 2003 upwards
OSX 10.5 upwards
Linux
Mobile Control app for iOS and Android



Pros :

Easy, quick installation; Loads of features;



Cons :

Geo-location feature can be inaccurate;

Verdict:

NetSupport Manager is quite simply one of the best remote support tools on the market. It provides a superb range of tools, while including NetSupport's School software and the one-time cost per seat makes it excellent value.

NetSupport Manager (NSM) has one of the longest track records in the remote support market - and it shows. Its central console seamlessly integrates an unbeatable range of features, while a one-off fee means it's great value in the long term.

Pricing is based on the number of supported end points, with between one and 99 costing £40 each, which drops to £33 for between 100 and 249 systems. At its foundation, NSM provides centrally managed remote control, file transfer, text or two-way audio chat (with recording facilities), plus detailed hardware and software inventory. Furthermore, you receive NetSupport School at no extra charge. This provides monitored training sessions to classrooms.

Installation proved swift. We loaded the NSM Control component and then used the Deploy tool to scan the lab network and push the client to selected systems. Each installation took around a minute to complete and the utility allowed us to create silent installations, use different profiles for host groups and specify whether users could interact with the client.

We had no problems pushing the client to Windows 7, 8, 8.1 and 10 desktops, nor to a MacBook Pro running OS X El Capitan. A search tool made light work of adding them to the console, and NSM's dynamic grouping neatly sorted them into categories based on their operating system.

We then created custom groups in the console and dragged and dropped selected clients into them for easier management. Selecting the Connect option from each client icon pulled up live thumbnails that showed what each one was up to.

Double-clicking a client icon opens a remote session or, if you prefer, you can also use a dropdown menu to passively view a remote screen, start a file-transfer session, have a chat or send a message. We used the viewing window, through which we could take screenshots, launch applications, share clipboards, reboot the client and, where supported, have an audio conversation using headsets.

In theory, you can tell which country the client resides in using the Geo-Locate feature, which adds a small flag to the top-right corner of their icon. Hovering the mouse over the flag pops up a window with what appears to be the client's actual location. However, take into account that - because it used the termination point of our broadband connection - it was out by around 60 miles in our tests.

More impressive was the NSM client, which gathers hardware and software inventories for each system and stores them on the Control host. It's very accurate, showing all of the hardware components for our selected clients, plus installed software, and which applications were running, as well as processes and services.

The NSM iOS app proved very handy. With this loaded onto an iPad, we could view all clients, initiate remote control sessions, chat, check their inventory, pull up a virtual keyboard and reboot them.

Client connections are secured using an NSM PIN server running on either the NSM Control or another system. Once installed, the client or controlling user can request a PIN, which establishes a connection when correctly entered on both sides.

We were impressed by the security offerings: clients can be password-protected, the Gateway utility supports a range of encryption schemes and you can use Active Directory policies. NSM Control also lets you create different user profiles that determine what support staff are allowed to access on remote systems.

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