

BUSINESS DAY

Tuesday, July 22 2003

Printed in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban

www.businessday.co.za

Remote support can cut costs

IT IS estimated that 35% of all IT staff are involved in user support.

This is a huge cost burden that is becoming increasingly difficult to manage as the number of remote workers accessing corporate networks increases.

But remote management tools are available that can reduce user support costs to the minimum.

"The average helpdesk support person handles 107 calls a week at an average of 5,5 minutes each, not counting the loss of productivity while the user's PC is down," says Tito Pereira, MD of Blue Label Technology.

About 61% of these calls are escalated, often to a more senior person, at an average call-duration of 10 minutes.

From there, 30% to 40% of these are converted into physical calls, often involving travel.

In many companies the true cost of support gets overlooked because it gets buried in general overheads, says Pereira.

But shrinking IT budgets are forcing companies to analyse their support costs.

"It was costing one of our customers, with 300 PCs, R500 a month a user just for the IT support people's salaries, which works out at R150 000 a month."

He says Netsupport Manager, a UK product distributed locally by Blue Label Technology, allows a support technician to access a user's PC remotely, over a local or wide area network, or over the internet. For 300 users, a system like this would involve a one-off investment of R373 a user.

The user and the technician can view the screen simultaneously, or the technician can work on the

problem in the background without interrupting the user.

"For example, the technician could look at how much memory and hard-disk capacity is available on the PC, stop and start services and close down applications that are giving trouble, without taking over the screen."

A user can also accept or reject the intended interaction with the technician, and an audit of the remote sessions is provided.

The tool can also be used to distribute software upgrades and for remote training, allowing the user to view a trainer's screen and interact, either by talking to the trainer or entering text.

A technician or administrator can scan the entire network and view several screens at the same time to monitor user activity from a remote location.