

Product Review

Remote Control Done Right

Seeing the whole picture with NetSupport 8.1.

by Joe Crawford

December 2003 — "Who needs another remote control product?" I asked, looking at the NetSupport Manager box that just arrived. I installed the product, and took it through the paces. Turn by turn, I was pleasantly surprised.

After ignoring the 300-page manual (software should be intuitive) and launching the control console, I noticed the ability to add a new client, which should install the client on the system. It didn't. Right-clicking on the icon for the client didn't provide an installation option either, so up came the online help.

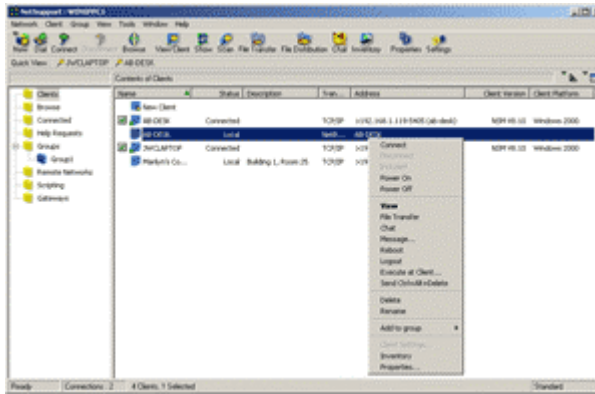
As it turns out, a client can't be installed remotely from the control console. Instead, you have to launch the separate NetSupport Deploy tool. While the tool is intuitive, and flexible in deployment options, it really should be integrated into NetSupport, or at least accessible from the Control Console.

Once the client was installed, taking control remotely was simple. There are options for voice chat, file transfers, inventory of the remote machine, Wake-On-LAN, etc. Think NetMeeting on steroids. Remote control was responsive, and the mouse lag common to most remote control products was virtually non-existent. And it didn't conflict with VNC or the SMS Client already on the machines. NetSupport also boasts a feature that allows clients to request assistance, which is wonderful in a school, library, or Internet Café setting.

Then I started really poking around and noticed that you can add a client of a different type-VNC. For the uninitiated, VNC is a free remote control product downloadable from www.realvnc.com. Suddenly I thought that NetSupport might serve as a central console for managing my VNC machines as well. It will, but not for Windows machines. Only Mac and Linux clients need apply. Although VNC has a Windows viewer, NetSupport doesn't support it.

Sulking, I returned to investigating the product again. When reviewing, I always try to find something that would compel me to buy. Something that would make me spend my sons' hard-earned paper route money. I found it.

NetSupport Tutor (also referred to as NetSupport School, with yet another standalone interface) allows an instructor, administrator, parent or Big Brother to simultaneously monitor multiple desktops. You can select what URLs and applications are permissible for the clients to run. This is a very compelling feature for a trainer or parent.



The NetSupport Control console lets admins totally control a remote PC, and communicate with the end user.

It also allows viewing of one user's desktop to the other machines, though it locked up the few times I tried it. In a classroom setting, this lets every student get involved in the troubleshooting process.

While I'd love to see the NetSupport folks integrate all of the functionality into a single interface, where features could be shown or hidden based on the user's job function, the product is well suited to the environments to which it caters. "Who needs another remote control product?" I asked myself. "I do." [M](#)

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Product Information Box

Product: Remote Control Done Right

Company: NetSupport, Inc.

Price: \$99; 1,000 users, \$2,936

Current MCPmag user rating for **Remote Control Done Right** is:

