

NetSupport Manager version 11 from NetSupport Software



PRODUCT REVIEW PRODUCT REVIEW PRODUCT REV

Remote control software is an ideal tool for support engineers, allowing them to access users' systems and swiftly troubleshoot problems from the comfort of their own desk. NetSupport Manager (NSM) is one of a wide range of solutions on the market, but it is built on a development program that goes back some twenty years.

NSM offers a wealth of features including remote control, high performance file transfer, text or two-way audio chat and recording facilities, as well as a detailed hardware and software inventory. This new version on review here adds even more capabilities with full support for Intel's vPro and AMT, allowing it to access and manage the latest desktops and laptops that have this technology implemented in hardware. There's plenty more on the cards as NSM 11 sports a newly designed management interface featuring a smart auto-dynamic grouping function. Access to managed systems has been streamlined even further, file transfer options have been enhanced, and you now have full support for 32- and 64-bit Windows 7 and Server 2008 systems.

Installation and deployment couldn't be easier, as you choose whether to load both the Control and Client components and use profiles to determine how NSM will function on each managed system. To test NSM we

called up lab systems that were running Windows XP, Vista, 7, 2003 and 2008 operating systems and had no problems deploying the client to them. It's worth noting that NSM also has clients available for Macintosh, Linux and Windows CE devices.

Not that we've ever had any problems but the redesign really does make the NSM console even easier to use. A tree view to the left groups clients together for quick access and you have auto-dynamic groups preconfigured to add systems, based on their operating system or client version. Select a group and you'll see all its members in the main window alongside. Group views can be customised to show specific details about them including their hostname, IP address and platform, and for laptops you can include their wireless network and battery charge status. The thumbnail view is really handy as it allows you to view multiple clients simultaneously and passively observe what they are doing.

Thumbnails feature the new quick access toolbar which adds a row of icons underneath each one. These can be used for swift access to remote control, file transfer, registry edit, chat or inventory tools. On systems with the Control component installed, you can also view the network from Windows Explorer and access remote control, chat and inventory directly.

A new group in the tree view is provided for vPro enabled systems and to test this we called up a suitably equipped Dell Latitude XT2 tablet PC.

The NSM network search tool supports both the vPro SMB and enterprise modes with the latter requiring the location of a provisioning server. Using the SMB mode our NSM search identified the XT2 immediately, and from its icon within the vPro dynamic group, we could pull up a menu and power it off and on, reset it, or boot into its BIOS and all without a client installed. The vPro web interface for the XT2 was also accessible directly from NSM and we could use this to view the various AMT settings, directly control power, configure wireless network settings, and add power saving policies.

In our view remote control software simply doesn't get any better than this. NetSupport Manager 11 provides everything a support department could possibly need as it's very simple to deploy, delivers a wealth of highly accessible features and combines these with extreme ease of use and good value. **NC**

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