Remote Access

Just like the name suggests, remote access is a technology that allows you to access your files, folders, printers and applications from a location other than your office PC. It makes your employees more productive by allowing them to use your office data and infrastructure during the off-hours, when they travel or when they'd rather work from home on an important project without being distracted by the zoo that your office often turns into.

Why It's On Our Radar

It's a mature technology that works well, it gives you extreme flexibility and it pays for itself very quickly with convenience and increased productivity.

Solution Types

The most common remote access solution is Remote Desktop Access, a technology that allows you to use your home machine, for example, to display the desktop of your office computer. The experience is rather seamless, although there can be a slight delay in mouse and keyboard inputs, and the color depth of the office computer's screen may be degraded to enhance performance and conserve bandwidth. You can work with all of your work files and applications just the same as if you were sitting at your office PC, and since you're just "viewing" your office desktop, none of the sensitive files actually leave the office.

There are two types of remote desktop solutions: the do-it-yourself type and the ready-to-use type.

- The do-it-yourself remote access uses the built-in capabilities of your Windows operating system to provide a remote desktop connection. In its simplest form without any added security, the service isn't difficult to set up and offers great performance. We always recommend, however, that a remote access solution be used in conjunction with a virtual private network (VPN) to provide secure connectivity over the internet. The VPN can be a stand-alone system or be incorporated into your firewall or network router, but it is essential if you're dealing with sensitive customer, project and company information. The do-it-yourself way is free to use as much as you want and leverages your existing technologies, but it may take a bit of time to set up.
- The ready-to-use remote access solutions are designed to include all the tools you need to be up and running quickly. Popular services like GoToMyPC and PCanywhere typically include software for both the office and the home computer and provide a secure framework for data transmission. The main benefit of these solutions is that they are easy to set up and use (although your existing firewall can give you some trouble) and can provide you great features like multi-monitor support, drag-and-drop file transfer and others. The disadvantage is that they all come at a monthly subscriber charge.

Which method you choose depends on your existing IT infrastructure, your security requirements and the number of employees you expect to be working remotely.

Vendors to Watch

The do-it-yourself remote access solutions will be based on your existing hardware and software. Some ready-to-use products we've recommended include:

- GoToMyPC
- PCanywhere
- RemotePC
- LogMeIn

SIMPLE MATH OF REMOTE ACCESS:

Gaining an hour of work per week for just one of your employees pays for 95% of remote access solutions on the market today.