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General Information

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Help For Your Help Desk

HP Tools Make Desktop Diagnosis More Manageable

For any company with more than a handful of desktops or notebooks, providing support to end users can be a nightmare. Complications can run from a printer driver that won't work to a notebook full of spyware. In a normal help desk scenario, the IT staff has to either walk the end user through diagnostics over the phone, use a third-party tool such as Citrix to remotely control the sick computer, or dispatch a technician to do an onsite fix.

HP's new Instant Support Corporate Edition tries to provide a new approach, combining automated diagnostic tools, problem tracking, and a multitiered problem escalation philosophy.

■ Leave No Trace

The first component of ISCE is a lightweight diagnostic client that is dynamically downloaded onto the user's computer when he requests help. Tom Tripp, an R&D manager at HP, claims that this is a major benefit for companies.

"Instant Support Corporate Edition is unique in that it requires nothing pre-installed on the computing device, nor does it leave anything on the computing device when the session is ended. So there's entirely a zero footprint," says Tripp.

Once the client is installed, it can be used to initiate a chat-based help session with an IT support person. The client lets the support staff look at the current state of the machine, run debugging software, and make fixes as needed. Because chat-based sessions allow the technician to multitask among several users, fewer technicians can handle a larger number of cases.

The problem can be further escalated up into HP support if the local help desk is unable to resolve the problem. HP offers support for heterogeneous Windows-based environments, even ones in which there is no HP hardware. Calls remain open until the end user is satisfied with the solution, and all information gathered by the diagnostic client is kept available, meaning that if the user needs to spend a few days testing a fix, they don't have to repeat information to the support staff when they call back.

■ Support, Simplified

Steve Eisenberg, director of technology at Episcopal High School in Houston, uses ISCE to deal with the nearly 800 notebooks issued to students and faculty. "As you can imagine, the environment of students with laptops is one that requires a great amount of support." According to Eisenberg, before the school moved to ISCE, a student who required assistance with her notebook would need to leave the classroom and take her computer to the support area. Now many problems are remotely diagnosed and repaired without the student needing to leave the class.

Instant Support Corporate Edition is usually sold as part of a support contract with HP; per-seat cost is around \$10 and can be lower depending on other factors. ■

by James Turner

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