



DESKTOP SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

# NetSupport DNA 2

PRICE 100-249 users, £34 each exc VAT

INTERNET [www.netsupportsoftware.com](http://www.netsupportsoftware.com)

SUPPLIER NetSupport 01778 382270

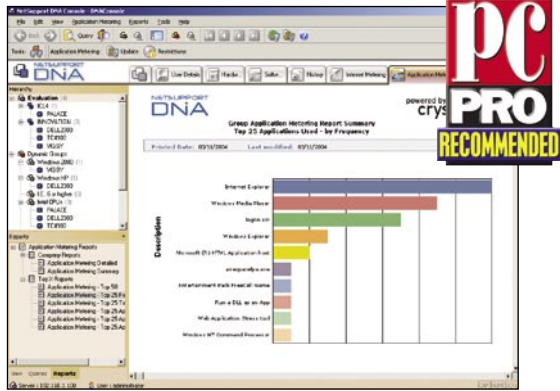
**VERDICT** An easily deployed desktop management product that offers some unusual Internet and application-usage controls. Its ease of use makes DNA 2 well suited to smaller businesses.

Best known for its excellent Manager remote control software, NetSupport moved into the desktop management arena in 2003 with a product that competed well on price, but on the surface looked unremarkable. However, closer inspection of NetSupport DNA revealed some unique management tools. This latest version introduces several new features and the unchanged price tag makes it look even better value.

Installation is the first high point, as the DNA console component takes only a few minutes to load. However, you must have an SQL database ready and waiting either on the same system or on a remote machine. Client deployment is also a simple process as DNA runs a network discovery on IP address ranges, domains or workgroups and will push the software to selected systems. If you're still using Windows 9x systems, you'll have to load the client utility manually.

Unlike some higher-end management products, the DNA console is a tidy affair that's easy to use. All clients are displayed in the main console window for easy selection and you can group them together by department or use dynamic groups based on details such as the operating system, hard disk space or installed memory. These groups can be set to automatically update as new clients appear that satisfy your chosen criteria.

Software distribution hasn't changed and still requires packages of pre-selected files, folders and parameters to be created and advertised for installation or pushed to clients. However, to reduce the impact on network bandwidth you can now designate DNA clients as 'distribution warehouses', allowing packages to be sent once from a remote location and then deployed locally. Hardware inventory details are gathered automatically, and we found the level of detail to be very good, with DNA identifying all key hardware components. Software also came under close scrutiny. DNA picked up virtually all installed applications on our five test clients along with all hotfixes and OS service packs. You can easily see which systems an application is installed on just by expanding its entry in the main list. New inventory features include the ability to manually add details to the database and a History tool that compares new inventories with current data and highlights any



The console is easy to navigate and provides good Crystal-based reporting tools.

changes. At present, alerts to changes aren't available, but NetSupport advised us it's implementing this in the next version. Improved search facilities also allow you to include specific file types in the software inventory process.

Whereas remote control comes as standard with many management products, it's only available as an optional add-on with DNA. This optional extra provides tools for remotely accessing and controlling workstations. However, Internet and application metering does give DNA an edge over the competition as it provides real-time views of sites being visited and software in use. Access controls are also on the menu. You can easily create lists to restrict or approve access to specific URLs, while application controls can be applied to individual clients and groups and activated during specific time periods.

Despite its simplicity, NetSupport DNA offers a good range of desktop management tools backed up by the unique Internet and application metering and control features. It's comparatively easy to install, deploy and use. This makes it a fine choice for smaller businesses that don't want the complexity inherent in many enterprise management products.

DAVE MITCHELL

PC PRO RATINGS	
EASE OF USE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

**REQUIREMENTS** Server: 500MHz Pentium III; 256MB RAM; 100MB hard disk space; Windows NT 4, 2000, XP, 2003. MSDE, SQL Server 7/2000 required. Client: 10MB hard disk space; Windows 98 SE or above. Options: DNA 2 and Manager; 100-249 users, £50 each.