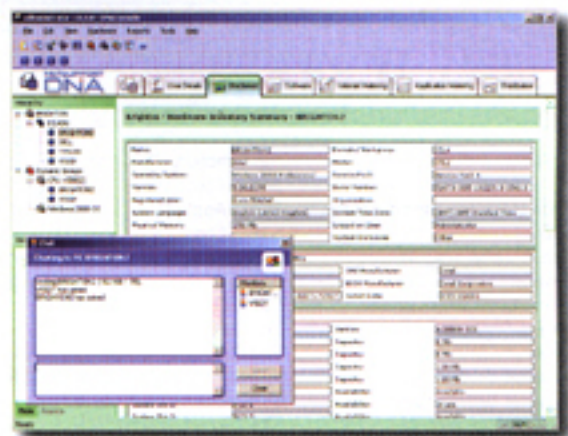


NetSupport DNA



NetSupport looks to have wrapped up the workstation remote control sector with its excellent NetSupport Manager 8 and School 7 products as they offer an unbeatable range of help desk features and remote teaching and examination aids. However, with NetSupport DNA (Dynamic Network Administration) the company is moving into the hotly contested territory of desktop management and is going head to head with well-established products such as LANDesk Management Suite 8, Altiris Client Management Suite and Microsoft's System Management Server 2003.

NetSupport DNA aims to provide the full gamut of tools for remotely managing workstations and includes hardware and software inventory, software distribution and application metering - the very tools you'd expect to see in these types of products. NetSupport DNA activities centre round a system running the main repository database and the software supports MSDE, SQL Server and Oracle. A separate remote console is used to access the database, view inventory details and run reports. Installation is a swift affair although NetSupport DNA expects a database to be ready, configured and waiting for it whereas companies such as LANDesk and Altiris

provide a check list to make sure all prerequisites are installed, and both offer the basic MSDE as part of their installation process. Busy support staff in charge of large networks won't have time to visit each workstation so client deployment tools need to be good and NetSupport DNA doesn't disappoint. It offers a network discovery service which scans IP address ranges or domains and allows you to select specific workstations and push the client software to them from the main console. This method works with NT, 2000, XP and 2003 clients as well as Windows 9x.

The main console is very well designed and provides easy access to each function. All clients are listed in an Explorer-style tree structure to the left and you can place them in groups based on features such as particular hardware components. As the groups use dynamic membership they will be updated if any specific component is changed or added. We found hardware inventory accuracy to be particularly good with all key components in our test systems correctly identified. Software accuracy is also comparatively good and one feature that gets our vote is the ability to separately list all Microsoft hot fixes for each client.

Application metering will prove useful as you can see at a glance how many instances of a product are in use and block

access permanently to them or for a specific period of time, and apply these restrictions to individual clients. To use the distribution tools you need to create a package consisting of pre-selected files, folders and optional action parameters and advertise them ready for installation. You can make packages available to certain groups and force distribution by pushing them to clients.

Internet metering is very similar to that provided by NetSupport School as it allows you to monitor which sites are being visited in real time and see how long each user accessed them for. You can easily see all the sites visited and swiftly create lists of blocked and allowed URLs.

Although NetSupport DNA is not as sophisticated as products such as LANDesk Management Suite it does provide a good range of management tools. Inventory is also comparatively good, and although software distribution features are limited it does provide some unique tools for controlling application and Internet usage - and delivers them at a price that will appeal to the small to medium business. **SW**

Product: NetSupport DNA

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Price: 100 users - £33:60 each ex. VAT