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Streamlining Operations With Remote Systems Management

By Evan Marty, Snap One

Custom integration is a constantly evolving business where projects can have hundreds of components, each of which can cause customer dissatisfaction should it fail or malfunction. Due to the complexity, time, and cost involved in visiting a job site to diagnose a problem, integrators are increasingly turning to remote systems management solutions that provide technicians with full insight into a system's operations and the ability to troubleshoot many issues remotely.



The most powerful solutions provide consolidated customer service information and intuitive interfaces that give employees full access to a system's information, as well as the ability to enter pertinent information and updates about the project and the clients. Many in the industry rely on these solutions to provide rapid response to customer needs and to manage project documents and data. For those who have not yet selected a solution for remote systems management, the tips below will help explain what to look for and how to maximize effectiveness.

1. Planning For a Remote Systems Management Solution

Having remote visibility and access to a client's system was unheard of before the advent of high-speed internet. Now, with so many devices possible on a home or business's network, one of the most important aspects of building an effective solution is accurately detailing the entire system, including labeling which outlet and ethernet port each device is connected to. While most solutions offer some degree of surge protection and the ability to see which devices are on or off, the most robust options go above and beyond to provide specific tools for different scenarios.

For instance, some remote systems management solutions rely exclusively on a web-based interface, while others have an additional local interface for use

Remote management solutions can not only help troubleshoot a client's system, but can also provide integrators with useful information about the installation.



on the job site where internet connectivity may be limited during installation or a service call. This can be crucial for system setup and helps ensure all the information is accurate to provide the best remote service possible.

In general, remote management solutions are built into power control ecosystems, such as surge protectors and rack-mount power distribution components with built-in intelligence. Because of this, one of the most powerful and most commonly used functions is simply cycling power off and on for malfunctioning or poor-performing equipment. Premium solutions can be set to automatically send push alerts for any major system disruption and also offer a front-page view of current status in the system's interface on mobile devices or PCs.

Wattbox's OvrC products offer even greater protection when internet service is unavailable by enabling integrators to set a custom IP address that pings devices and cycles power if they are unresponsive. These events are logged in a client's record so integrators can see when and how often they are occurring. The push alerts and automated redundant power ping capabilities combine to enable rapid responses, often before the client even notices an issue.

Internet connectivity is absolutely essential to the proper operation of both clients' systems and the integrator's ability to use remote management tools, so the on-site network should be unimpeachable. Hardwired connections should be used where possible to provide enhanced speed and reliability, and wireless access points must be intelligently located and tested to ensure proper connection and performance.

2. Giving the Client Control

Another consideration is how much control the client wants to have themselves, which can vary from residential installations to commercial projects, where a staff member may be responsible for daily maintenance. Some solutions do not enable control over what users can access, so all



operations available to technicians are also available to every user, which can be confusing or troublesome for simpler use cases. Since minor issues like a router reset are easily completed by a homeowner, they may enjoy the peace of mind knowing that they can fix it themselves at midnight on a weekend with a simple interface that prevents erroneous actions.

Like most other core system components, it's also important to consider the reputation of the solution and the brand, with established and trustworthy manufacturers offering the greatest assurance that products will be supported and updated throughout the full life of the installation.

3. Greater Attention to Details

Integrators widely agree that remote systems management solutions can save time and money. In order to do so, employees should understand how to navigate the interface quickly so they can respond appropriately to alerts or customer requests. Each interface is different and offers varying levels of both control and project details.

The latest, most robust solutions allow for full project management through the remote interface, with full documentation of client addresses, contact information, project notes, and even clickable links to project documents such as blueprints or invoices. This enables an office employee to use a single program when contacting and communicating with a client, which can help them be more knowledgeable and attentive to the customers' needs.

Detail is also critical when it comes to the naming conventions used in the interface. Simply labeling a device "hallway WAP" will not be specific enough and can complicate the job of a customer service rep or technician. There is no standard or requirement for naming, so each integrator can decide for

themselves what is most efficient or easiest. Similar to the client and project details, the most advanced solutions offer the ability to include information about each device, such as manufacturer, model, physical location, and notes that can be updated over time.

4. Better Customer Service

The ability to leave notes in a project file provides another integral benefit of a modern remote management solution — anyone can use it. It's no longer necessary for a specific customer service rep or technician to address a specific customer because all the information can be accessed by whomever is currently available. This democratizes service and essentially turns the project file into an operations manual for the property, which can be hugely helpful when resolving repeat issues by allowing technicians to immediately see how a problem was resolved previously. Since integrators are expected to guide customers from the very first meeting all the way to project completion and long-term maintenance, this bounty of information and access can save significant time and frustration over the course of a client relationship.

Clients can also benefit from all the documentation, such as if the integrator moves, goes out of business, or the home or business is sold to a new owner. By making the client the owner of the data, integrators can reinforce the relationship and instill long-term confidence and trust.

In most cases, the expensive and time-consuming practice of rolling a truck to a finished job should be a last resort. With the latest remote management solutions, integrators can greatly reduce site visits while improving responsiveness and delivering greater assurance to clients. [Res Evan Marty is the Director of Product Management at Snap One.](#)