Understanding Remote Server Management in Small and Medium Size Business

Research conducted by:

COMPUTERWORLD
The Voice of IT Management

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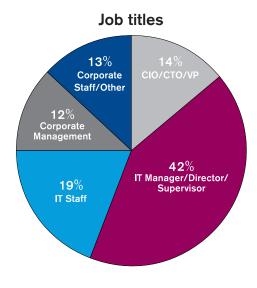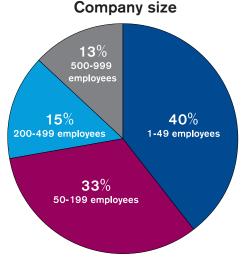
Overview

In November 2005, Computerworld invited its online visitors in small businesses to participate in a short survey on IT infrastructure and server management. The goal of the survey was to better understand the challenges related to managing remote servers in smaller organizations. The survey was commissioned by Raritan, but data was gathered and tabulated independently by Computerworld Research. The following report represents top-line results of that survey.

Profile of respondents

Total respondents: 323

All 323 respondents were qualified through screening questions as being involved in the management of servers and being employed by for-profit organizations with fewer than 1,000 employees. Below is a breakdown of the respondent job titles and company sizes.

Job titles

- **14%** CIO/CTO/VP
- **42%** IT Manager/Director/Supervisor
- **19%** IT Staff
- **12%** Corporate Management
- **13%** Corporate Staff/Other

Company size

- **40%** 1-49 employees
- **33%** 50-199 employees
- **15%** 200-499 employees
- **13%** 500-999 employees

Executive summary

- More than half of businesses with fewer than 1,000 employees have remote servers. Increasingly, these smaller businesses need solutions to effectively manage this remote infrastructure.

- More than one-quarter of these smaller businesses report that they make off-hour trips to the server room on a weekly basis – sometimes more than once a week. These off-hour or "midnight" trips were identified as a major problem for these businesses.

- 31% of these businesses are currently using or considering using KVM-over-IP as a solution to help them manage their remote infrastructure.

- Roughly 39% of those familiar with KVM-over-IP are planning to purchase it for their organization this year or next.
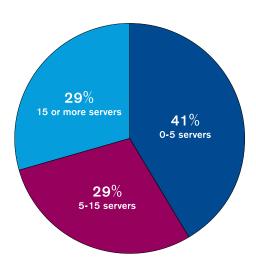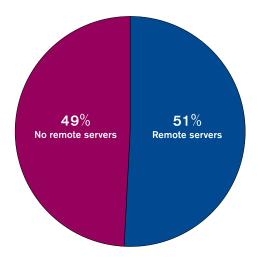
Server management

The average business with fewer than 1,000 employees manages 9.9 servers at their current location.

Number of servers at current location

29%
15 or more servers

41%
0-5 servers

29%
5-15 servers

More importantly, just over half of these businesses now have remote servers. Of these respondents with remote servers, 93% indicated they have the ability to remotely manage their infrastructure. What these questions show is that more and more small businesses are facing the unique issues of managing servers remotely in addition to locally.

Percent of companies with remote servers

49%
No remote servers

51%
Remote servers

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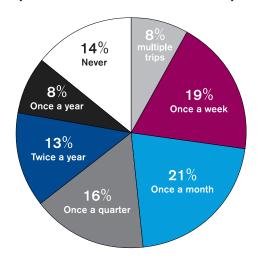
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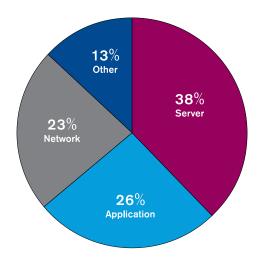
Off-hour trips to the server room

More than one-fourth of small companies reported that they have to make off-hours trips to the server room on a weekly basis while only 14% said they never need to make these trips. As we'll see on the following page, these trips represent a major difficulty for businesses.

How often do you or someone in your organization have to make off-hours trips to the server room to fix a problem?

These off-hour or "midnight" runs tend to be due to some combination of server (38%), application (26%) or network (23%) problems.

Types of problems that require "midnight" runs

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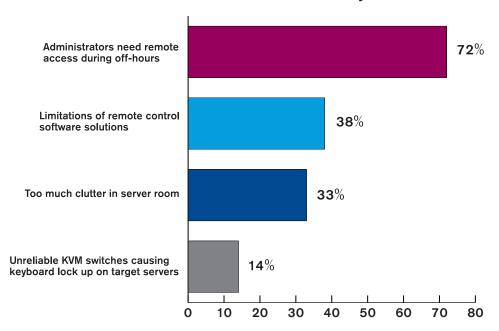
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Server related areas of difficulty

When asked about whether they were having difficulties in specific areas related to managing their servers, respondents overwhelmingly pointed to the off-hours visits as a pain point. Close to 3/4 of respondents said this was a difficulty while fewer than half pointed to the other difficulties.

Server related areas of difficulty

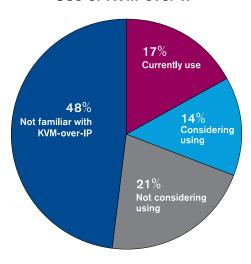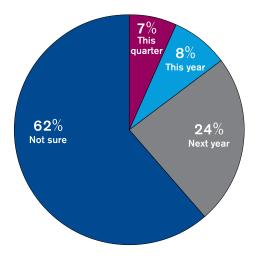| Category	Percentage
Administrators need remote access during off-hours	72%
Limitations of remote control software solutions	38%
Too much clutter in server room	33%
Unreliable KVM switches causing keyboard lock up on target servers	14%

Use of KVM-over-IP

A full 31% of smaller businesses surveyed are currently using or considering using KVM-over-IP. For the purpose of this study, we also surveyed large businesses to see how their situations compared. The 31% for small businesses surprisingly almost matches the adoption/consideration rate for large businesses at 33%, showing that small organizations are starting to embrace the technology.

Use of KVM-over-IP

17% Currently use

14% Considering using

48% Not familiar with KVM-over-IP

21% Not considering using

Among those who are familiar with KVM-over-IP, we asked when they were thinking of adopting the technology. Many of these people are unsure when they will take the plunge, but roughly 39% are planning to purchase KVM-over-IP this year or next year.

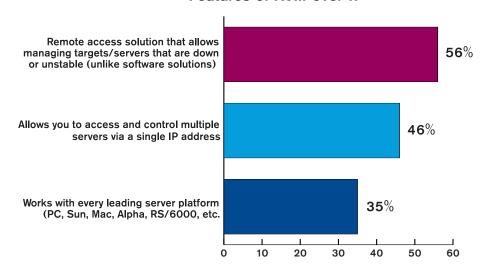## Timeline for purchasing KVM-over-IP

7% This quarter

8% This year

62% Not sure

24% Next year

Use of KVM-over-IP *(continued)*

Those repondents familiar with KVM-over-IP were also asked which features of the technology they were aware of.

Features of KVM-over-IP

Remote access solution that allows managing targets/servers that are down or unstable (unlike software solutions)	56%
Allows you to access and control multiple servers via a single IP address	46%
Works with every leading server platform (PC, Sun, Mac, Alpha, RS/6000, etc.	35%

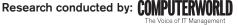0   10   20   30   40   50   60

Conclusion

Overall this survey showed that many smaller businesses are beginning to face the issues that come with managing remote servers. One of the biggest issues faced, whether they're managing just local servers or local and remote servers, is the need for making off-hour trips to the server room. This takes significant staff time and resources, and it is why respondents to this survey singled it out as their biggest pain point.

In terms of solutions for remote infrastructure management, some smaller businesses have already turned to KVM-over-IP and others are considering the technology. The biggest benefit they've identified is the fact that KVM-over-IP allows you to manage targets/servers that are down or unstable. Software solutions do not have this capability.

Roughly 39% of server managers who were familiar with KVM-over-IP indicated they'd be purchasing a KVM-over-IP solution either this year or next. The key for these server managers will be to find a solutions provider that understands the unique needs of smaller businesses when it comes to server management. KVM-over-IP solutions are not cookie cutter – you can't take a solution for a Fortune 1000 company and necessarily apply it to a 12-person business. The provider must have solutions geared specifically to small companies.

Whether KVM-over-IP becomes the default solution for smaller businesses to manage remote servers remains to be seen. However, this survey showed that a good portion of the influencers in this market see some promise that KVM-over-IP will make their lives easier.

About Raritan

Raritan, Inc. is a leading supplier of solutions for managing IT infrastructure equipment and the mission-critical applications and services that run on it. Raritan was founded in 1985, and since then has been making products that are used to manage IT infrastructures at more than 75,000 network data centers, computer test labs and multi-workstation environments around the world.

From the small business to the enterprise, Raritan's complete line of compatible and scalable IT management solutions offers IT professionals the most reliable, flexible and secure in-band and out-of-band solutions to simplify the management of data center equipment, applications and services, while improving operational productivity. More information on the company is available at Raritan.com.

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