

Remote Access for the Small Law Firm

by David Gracey of Network 1 Consulting



David Gracey is the founder and President of Network 1 Consulting, which he started in 1998. His mission is to provide clients with the best consulting services available. David can be reached at dgracey@network1consulting.com

We've all been there. You (or someone

else) are out of the office and need access to a file on the network or on your PC. How do you get to the PC or server that currently stores your file? There are a number of ways to accomplish this task. You can use a Web service to remotely control your PC, use remote terminal services or create a virtual private network (VPN) connection to your network. All these are viable solutions, but are they secure and easy to use?

Remote Control Service

Small law firms with fewer than 10 employees and no server may typically use a remote



control service, such as Logmein or GoToMyPC. These Web services provided by third-party vendors offer a quick and convenient way for attorneys and employees to access their office computers remotely. These services usually offer two types of connections: a free and a paid version. The free service provides the ability to connect to one desktop where you can run programs, edit documents, etc., while the paid version provides access to more than one PC and adds other functionality like hearing sounds from the remote PC, printing to a remote printer or transferring documents. Some services even have iPhone and iPad apps.

To use this service you first create an account on the service's website, setting up a user name, password and credit card information (if you choose to purchase the paid version). This is usually performed from the

computer you want to access remotely, also called the "host." You are then instructed to download and install the client piece that the website uses to create the remote connection. Once that is installed, the connection needs to be tested from another PC. It can be tested from inside the office, on the same network or outside the office.

To connect remotely, the user logs on to the service's website, and is presented with a link to connect to the desktop. Once the link is clicked, the user is asked to enter a code or password specific to that computer. Enter it correctly and an interactive screen of the desktop is presented. Run programs, open and edit files and even reboot the computer as if you are in front of it. Personal settings are present because you are actually looking at your desktop. Nothing is missing; it's simple and convenient.