



DESKTOP MANAGEMENT

NetSupport DNA

PRICE 100-249 users, £34 each (exc VAT)

INTERNET www.netsupportsoftware.com

SUPPLIER NetSupport 01778 382270

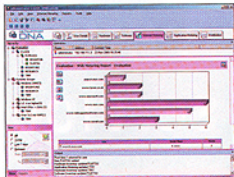
VERDICT While NetSupport DNA won't topple the established vendors in this hotly contested market, it does offer some unusual and useful features.

Arriving too late to be included in last month's desktop management software group test (see issue 112, p177), NetSupport DNA represents a markedly new direction for its developers. NetSupport has always had a strong presence in the remote-control market, with its NetSupport Manager 8 receiving a Labs Winner award in the last remote access software group test (see issue 104, p183). However, NetSupport DNA (dynamic network administration) moves the company into direct competition with a lot of tough customers, such as the PC Pro award-winning LANDesk Management Suite 8 and Altiris Client Management Suite.

Remote-control tools are a fundamental feature of desktop management, but there's a lot more to this than helpdesk functions. So how does NetSupport DNA measure up against the establishment? The base product provides hardware and software inventory, and teams

these up with software distribution and application metering. There's also Internet metering, an unusual feature that looks to have been taken from the company's NetSupport School software (see issue 107, p171). It allows you to monitor Internet usage and restrict access. Remote control is available too as two optional add-ons, with the basic package providing tools for remotely accessing and controlling workstations, or you can purchase the full NetSupport Manager package. However, this makes the total solution comparatively expensive.

Don't rush into the installation, as the first requirement is a SQL database that's ready and waiting. A remote console is used to access the database and only takes a few minutes to load, after which you can start installing the client component. Deployment is nicely handled: you can search the network by IP address range or domain and workgroup and



The tidy interface provides plenty of information about Internet usage in real-time.

push the client to selected systems. As with the competition, this only supports NT, 2000, XP and 2003 clients, so Windows 9x users must have the software installed either locally or from a shared directory. All clients are displayed in the main console window for easy selection and you can group them by department or use dynamic groups based on details such as the installed OS, hard disk space or processor type. This may be set to automatically update as new clients that satisfy these criteria appear.

We found inventory detail to be good, with all major hardware components correctly identified along with key installed applications, and a useful feature is the ability to list separately all Microsoft hot fixes for each client. Internet and application metering provide

a real-time view of which programs are in use and websites being visited and you can easily create lists of blocked and allowed URLs or applications. For the latter, you're able to approve use for individual clients and groups and restrict them for a specific period. Software distribution requires packages of pre-selected files, folders and parameters to be created and advertised for installation or they can be pushed to clients. Reporting is Crystal powered, which means plenty of information may be gathered from the database and exported into a variety of formats.

NetSupport DNA is a valiant first effort, which provides a good range of desktop management tools at a reasonable price. The Internet metering feature is unique, but there's not enough here to make us change our mind about the PC Pro awards handed out to LANDesk Software and Altiris.

DAVE MITCHELL

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

REQUIREMENTS Server: Pentium III or higher; 128MB RAM; 60MB hard disk space; Windows NT, 2000, Server 2003; MSDN, SQL Server 7 or 2000 database required. **Client:** Intel 80486 or higher; 64MB RAM; 6MB hard disk space; Windows 95 onwards.