

## SMBs should look to SMBs for IT management, Oct 2007

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The fact that most SMBs are investing in ever more complex IT infrastructure is an opportunity for resellers in its own right, but if IT fails to deliver the relationship between reseller and customer can turn sour. Any resellers wanting to build good long term customer relationships needs to make sure the infrastructure and applications they sell are well managed. To this end it is necessary to also make sure their customers have good management tools in place or better still provide the services to do it all for them.

A recent Quocirca research report highlights the extent to which small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) are now reliant on technology. More than half of SMB workers are PC users and the majority have multiple locations to manage these users across. Furthermore, almost two thirds of SMBs now open up their IT systems to external users, be they consultants, partners or customers.

This reliance means the cost of IT failure can be expensive. Yet, Quocirca's report shows that a little over a quarter of SMBs are satisfied with their IT management capabilities. It is worrying that so many feel they have so little control over such a fundamental resource.

Day to day the things that frustrate SMBs most are keeping peripherals like printers available, but on a weekly or monthly basis, software updates, reliable internet access, maintaining PCs and general access issues are all causing headaches. This is compounded by a lack of internal skills, many SMBs have no dedicated internal staff to fix such problems. Consequently they often rely on self taught individuals who undertake IT management as a secondary task who then become diverted from their primary responsibilities.

IT management tools help to alleviate these problems. It is not surprising that one third of SMBs who say they have no tools in place are the least satisfied with their IT management capabilities. Those using "home grown" tools are a little happier, but it is only those who have

used tools designed for the job that really seem to be getting control of things, be they commercial packaged applications or open source tools.

Some of the happiest are those with a mixed bag of tools, suggesting that, for SMBs at least, few management tools currently provide all the functions they require. But the happiest of all are those who outsource the problem to a third party, generally speaking this will be a value added reseller (VAR). Currently about 25% say they do this, and the larger the SMB is, the more likely they are to do so.

There are good motivators for doing this. VARs can provide in-depth technical expertise that it is impossible for most SMBs to have in house, they can invest in sophisticated "enterprise" management tools which can be used to serve many customers and they can do much of it from remote locations; such external access is already accepted by the majority of SMBs.

So why is the take-up for such services still relatively low? One problem is the service level agreements being offered, the majority of SMBs feel they are carrying all the risk in such partnerships. This risk should at least be shared, but those VARs that have the confidence to take on risk for their customers, and face penalties if they fail, will inspire the most confidence.

But as big a problem might be availability of such services. Only 42% of VARs surveyed for Quocirca's report said they offered IT management services. Although this might seem high, perhaps it could be a lot higher - as SMBs become as reliant on IT as their enterprise counterparts they will increasingly look to those that sell them the products to help manage and maintain them. Perhaps IT management services need to become a ubiquitous part of the supply of IT infrastructure and applications.

Quocirca's report IT Management for Small Businesses is freely available at [www.quocirca.com](http://www.quocirca.com).

## About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, Dell, T-Mobile, Vodafone, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at <http://www.quocirca.com>