



*On Demand Support for
On Demand Networks*

How Service Providers Can Leverage the “Tipping Point” of the Remote Product Services Market

A ComBrio Whitepaper



ComBrio, Inc.
info@combrio.com
www.combrio.com

How Service Providers Can Leverage the “Tipping Point” of the Remote Product Services Market

In sociology, the term “Tipping Point” is described as the “moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire.” While a single action can trigger a tipping point, in most cases a tipping point is reached through a culmination of events.

The recently coined Remote Product Services (RPS) market is an excellent example of the tipping point in action. RPS Solutions allow service organizations to remotely monitor product performance, diagnose part failures, trigger corrective workflows, and carry out repairs through wireless or Internet-based connectivity.

Industry analysts estimate the RPS market will reach \$290 billion by 2011. RPS providers such as Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), Value-added Resellers (VARs), and Independent Service Providers (ISPs) that offer remote support services are poised to take advantage of this rapid growth and can reap the rewards of improved services and customer growth.

The tipping point of the RPS market has culminated due to customers wanting increased availability of information and uptime of network services, companies contending with reduced in-house IT resources, and service providers wanting to differentiate their service offerings. This paper will explain the dynamics behind the RPS tipping point and how service providers can leverage this trend to their competitive advantage.

The RPS market is ripe for OEMs and VARs looking to replace revenue from products with diminishing margins and ISPs that are trying to find ways to increase customer adoption of service offerings. A recent Aberdeen Group study on the RPS market found that the majority of equipment manufacturers surveyed intend to deploy commercial RPS solutions in the next 12 to 24 months. The report also highlights that those currently offering managed services plan to modify their business processes to incorporate both preventative and proactive approaches to service delivery.

As more services move from “reactive” to “proactive” base models, service organizations that have previously followed the “break-fix” or “reactive” services model will quickly find themselves struggling to protect their customer base from competitive threats. One key countermeasure that service providers can do to combat this threat is to offer differentiated service level agreements that guarantee uptime and accelerate problem resolution through proactive management, maintenance and repair. To enable proactive services, RPS vendors must have an efficient and secure tool that enables remote connectivity between providers and customers’ managed devices.

When evaluating the available remote connectivity tools to perform the “remote support” element of RPS, service providers must consider several criteria:

- Does the connectivity tool include an efficient and secure means to connect to the managed devices at customer locations?
- Does the connectivity tool’s availability and throughput allow service providers to offer differentiated remote-based services?
- Does the introduction of a connectivity tool create disruption to either the customer’s or the service provider’s processes?
- Can the remote support tool be deployed at a cost point that supports the business case for remote service offerings?

Another fundamental requirement that service providers should consider is a connectivity tool's ability to constantly monitor the health of the targeted device or application for the purposes of identifying potential issues before they reach a critical state. Monitor-only solutions are helpful, but are limited by the service levels they offer since the solution still requires a "truck roll" to the customer site to address the problem. Monitor-only solutions still fail to sufficiently reduce the time from problem discovery to problem resolution, especially if the device or application is already in a fault state.

Some service providers have found success by combining remote monitoring tools with external remote access methods such as VPNs or dedicated circuits. However, these combined solutions add additional costs to service infrastructures since the costs associated with deploying, scaling and managing these combined solutions typically overlay the already deployed remote access solutions. In addition, these combined solutions may be unacceptable to customers because of the:

- *Security risks they introduce (i.e. requiring holes in firewalls)*
- *Additional costs that are passed on to customers*

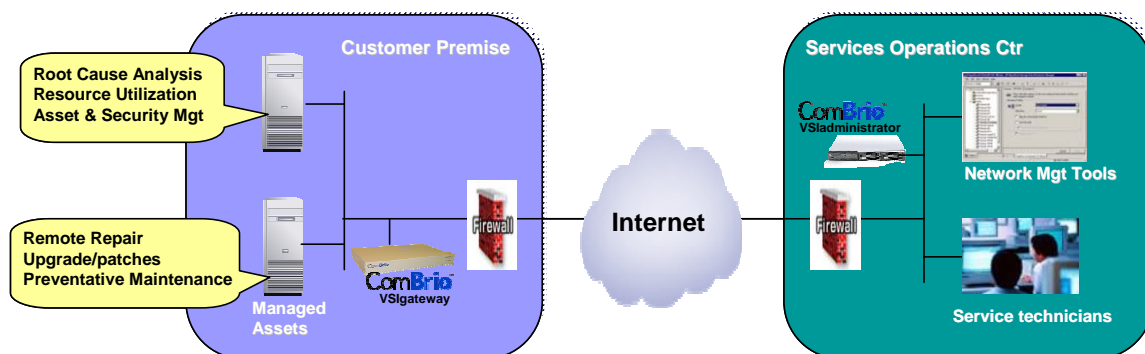
As the RPS market matures, there is a new breed of remote support tools for the RPS market that service providers should consider when looking to deploy new and differentiated services -- Virtual Infrastructure Solutions. These solutions enable service providers to offer on-demand IP-based remote monitoring and management services without the use of complex VPNs or agents at customer locations. A virtual infrastructure RPS tool creates an overlay management network that makes all the monitored devices appear to be on the same physical network as the service provider's data center, regardless of their actual location across the Internet. Additionally, these virtual infrastructure solutions allow customers to maintain security and compliance requirements when outsourcing IT management. By utilizing this new breed of RPS solution, service providers can concurrently offer proactive monitoring services and differentiated management services while leveraging existing investments in best of breed back-office management tools.

Virtual infrastructure RPS tools allow service providers to go beyond traditional remote maintenance, integrated remote access and simple remote monitoring. Service providers can use this new breed of RPS tools to leverage the embedded management capabilities of the devices and offer new differentiated services beyond performing immediate remediation when problems arise. These tools can leverage the best-of-breed network management tools and enable differentiated services such as:

- *Detail and performance metrics analysis*
- *Root cause analysis*
- *Asset and customer utilization*
- *Upgrade & patch distribution*

For example, service providers can offer more frequent **preventive maintenance** services at a lower cost than traditional preventative maintenance contracts using this model. By performing preventive maintenance activities remotely, service providers will save the significant cost of truck rolls while offering customers additional services.

With the proper virtual infrastructure RPS tools, service providers can offer all of the above differentiated services without requiring customer intervention.



Before finalizing a decision to offer remote services and selecting the best RPS tool, service providers must consider the issue of security. Prudent companies that are evaluating outsourcing options are concerned about security. Innovative service providers can address this concern by implementing an RPS tool that can perform remote product services while meeting customer internal security practices and regulatory obligations.

Successful service providers can increase the adoption of their remote product service offerings if they can:

- Demonstrate that their RPS tools do not introduce any security risks to customer networks
- Guarantee that remote access can only be established with devices or applications under contract
- Assure end-to-end security of the management data transported between the service provider and the customer site
- Maintain an audit trail of where, when, and by whom a remote management session was performed to comply with regulatory policies
- Deploy remote services without the need to pass any deployment costs onto customers, or require customers to modify their operational practices or network security in order to accommodate the service

Lastly, service providers must bear in mind that remote product services impact customer business practices. The transition from a “field-based” support team to a centralized support team can introduce significant changes to an organization. To mitigate this issue, service providers should look for a RPS solution that allows service technicians to utilize the same best of breed diagnostic and remediation tools that they are accustomed to. When service providers virtually gain remote access to customer assets they enable a smoother migration, eliminate the need for retraining, and minimize disruption for customers.

To capitalize on the surge of RPS demand that has driven the market to its tipping point, service providers are scrambling for ways to differentiate their service solutions to attract and retain customers. Virtual infrastructure RPS tools are enabling service providers to successfully add these critical differentiated services and leverage the tipping point for competitive advantage.



For more information on ComBrio's solutions for RPS, contact us at 1-800-905-9110 or e-mail sales@combrio.com