

TAKING CONTROL

Remote management opens doors to new marketing insights

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Remote management for kiosks can reduce downtime, ensure customer satisfaction and, most importantly, open a whole new world of consumer intelligence.

With a remote-management solution, one photo-kiosk operator salvaged a potentially disastrous series of failures. When vacationers wanted to save treasured photos onto a CD at their favorite photo kiosk, all too often the CD burner was out of order. Disappointed customers walked away without being able to save the family snapshots from their trip. The kiosk operator was left to replace drives as fast as they failed.

However, remote-management software gave the operator a view inside the failing machine. Using Esprida Enterprise from Esprida Corp., the kiosk operator collected operational data that narrowed the root cause of the failure to a design flaw in the CD drive. The manufacturer replaced the CD drives under warranty. The kiosk operator was happy to find the cause of failures, and the CD-drive manufacturer benefited from uncovering the design defect.

REMOTE MANAGEMENT PROVIDES CONTROL

Basic remote-management functions are common, but robust solutions provide an advanced level of control over a wide range of intelligent devices via a Web browser. Software- and platform-agnostic programs can operate with just about any kiosk system on the market.

Esprida Enterprise provides information for preventive maintenance to avoid downtime and keep consumer satisfaction high.

"You don't want customers to come to the kiosk and it's always down. Usually, retailers don't even

know that it's down until people start complaining," said Yousif Hassan, Esprida Corp.'s director of product management.

REVEALING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

While keeping the kiosk up and running is all well and good, remote management can do more. Esprida's system lets operators get inside consumers' thought patterns and buying decisions, the Holy Grail of consumer psychology. Kiosk operators can collect data on what products people are buying and what other items they looked at before buying. The data can help retailers spot trends and respond to a surge of consumer interest in certain topics.

For instance, savvy grocery retailers using remote management-equipped product-lookup kiosks could have noted that when the Atkins Diet hit the news, searches for low-carb products such as protein bars went through the roof. They could then respond by quickly updating information on the kiosks and stocking items that consumers hungrily sought.

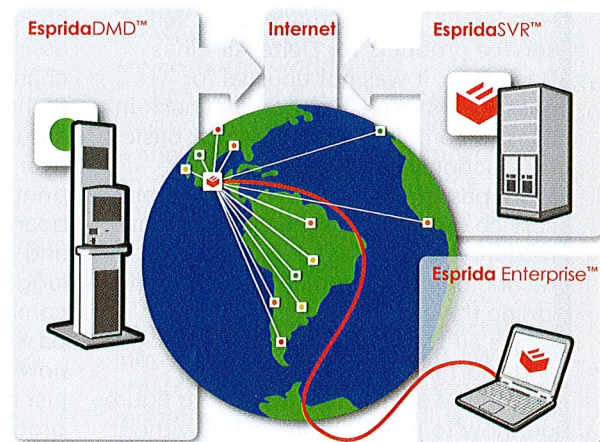
Hassan recalled one photo-kiosk operator that collected data monthly from kiosks in major retailers. Then the marketing staff would take a month or two to analyze the data.

"In the retail environment, three months is a lifetime," Hassan said. "It really helps the marketing department to have that data almost immediately." Esprida

Enterprise allows retailers to collect and analyze data in close to real time.

Once a marketing department analyzes consumer behavior, remote

management enables content distribution. No longer does a kiosk operator send a CD and hope someone in the store follows directions to install new content. An operator can add new graphics and text and change promotional offers simultaneously across all kiosks in the network. Retailers can stay on the leading edge of fast-changing customer trends.



"Analyzing that data helps you offer products that are more relevant to your end customers," Hassan said.

Unfortunately, remote management often is an afterthought to kiosk deployment. It usually becomes top-of-mind only after a deployment drastically increases the number of kiosks — such as from 10 units to 1,000. When faced with managing and updating a large number of units, remote management becomes a higher priority for deployers. It is only once updates are in hand that deployers begin to explore the full power of remote management and real-time usage tracking. But Hassan urges deployers not to wait so long.

"People need to think beyond the rudimentary functions of failure alerts to add value through marketing and sales information," Hassan said. "There are only a few companies taking full advantage of it." ■

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