

Company Profile:

Headquartered in Sacramento, Calif., Think Smart Inc. is distinctively different from other IT support companies. Its flagship offering, Smart Managed Services, includes constant monitoring, managing, updating, and supporting of systems and users to help prevent and predict failures before they become disasters.

Website: www.thinksmartinc.com

Business Challenge: Recognizing that 24x7 visibility into customer IT environments is key to providing true managed services, Think Smart executives have been continually on the lookout since the company's inception in 2000 for a robust remote systems management tool. The only efficient way Think Smart could charge clients a flat fee for continuous monitoring of customer infrastructure was to build a centralized network operation center staffed by support engineers who could gain access to any system at any time, regardless of physical location. However, it quickly became obvious that Think Smart's current managed services solution from Level Platforms Inc. (LPI) could not support the remote capabilities it would need to realize its managed services vision.

Solution: Think Smart scrapped its use of LPI in favor of a remote and automatic managed service provider solution from Kaseya. In addition to being more robust than the previous solution, Kaseya provided Think Smart's support engineers with a reliable and automatic tool to streamline basic administrative tasks and ensure systems health and optimization. Now Think Smart is able to respond to IT issues remotely and quickly – a necessity for any true managed services provider.

MSP Pioneer Relies on Kaseya for Reliable Remote Access into Customer Environments

An early pioneer of the managed services business model, Think Smart Inc. has been providing IT services for a flat fee for years and has nearly a decade of experience and best practices to fall back on when signing new customers to the Think Smart family. However, shortly after the company's inception, president Rob Ross knew that technology would be the biggest inhibitor to pulling off the managed services business model.

Ross soon discovered that having 24x7 visibility into customers' IT environments from a centralized location is key for any managed services provider (MSP). He knew that if his support engineers could manage and monitor customer networks and workstations remotely, they could take more control over IT operations, ensuring availability and performance of mission-critical business systems. Through proactive management, he could potentially head off major IT issues before they occur, effectively eliminating unplanned downtime.

Ross also realized that a more efficient employee is a powerful side effect of remote systems management. By reducing costly on-site maintenance and by streamlining basic administrative tasks, Think Smart's engineers would be able to monitor more systems at the same time, allowing the managed service provider to grow and scale more efficiently.

"Giving our support engineers remote visibility into our customers' IT environments is absolutely critical to our managed services offering" Ross said. "Without the ability to remotely take control of our clients' systems we'd basically be back to square one. I couldn't imagine having to go on-site to manually manage everything. What a waste of time!"

Not One, but Two Swings and a Miss

Think Smart originally deployed Zenith InfoTech's SAAZ managed service provider solution to give its engineers remote systems management capability, but it soon became clear that the solution wasn't as robust as Think Smart would require. Nor did it offer a rich array of systems management and monitoring features. Ross then looked to Level Platform Inc. (LPI) and its Managed Workplace solution, however, yet again, the solution couldn't provide the level of reliability needed to ensure Think Smart's support engineers would have 24x7 visibility into its customer environments.

On two separate occasions Managed Workplace suffered major failures, preventing Think Smart's support engineers from gaining access to customer systems. In both instances, it took LPI more than three weeks to resolve the software bugs, leaving Think Smart – and its customers – in the lurch. As a result, Think Smart had to send its engineers to customer sites around the region to conduct basic administrative duties – tasks that they should have been able to do remotely from the company's Network Operations Center (NOC).

In addition, Think Smart had to staff its NOC 24 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure the company could respond to critical issues from its customers because the alerting system—notifications sent automatically to engineers – was connected through LPI. As a result, Think Smart engineers had to work overtime, costing the company more than \$1,000 a day. By the time LPI solved each software issue, Think Smart had to shell out an additional \$17,000 in payroll per incident.

"It was an absolute nightmare," Ross said. "Not having our managed services solution online effectively threw our business model out the window. We were essentially a manual, on-site operation for three weeks. We needed an MSP solution that was rock solid."

Reliable Remote Systems Management

Think Smart then deployed a remote MSP solution from Kaseya that gives its support engineers reliable access and control of customer environments from Think Smart's NOC. While agentless solutions like LPI require additional systems and network resources on the customer side to communicate with the remote management platform, Kaseya's solution forms independent TCP connections without the need for address management or implementation of mapping schemes. As such, the technology is more reliable, secure and simple. There is less that can go wrong and cause downtime. The Kaseya solution is also backed by world-class technical support that works with its MSP clients to develop reliable, powerful management technology.

"Kaseya has a vested interest in my success and is willing to truly understand my business," Ross said.

Kaseya Managed Solution Provider Edition is now deployed in 20 Think Smart customer sites on more than 1,000 systems. As a result of a more robust remote systems management capability, Think Smart is able to provide the level of managed services it promised its customers. They can be assured that Think Smart support engineers are proactively monitoring their IT infrastructure and ensuring that all systems are running optimally.

"Not only can we head off potential issues before they occur, but we're now able to respond quickly through Kaseya's reliable remote management technology. It's often that we have been alerted to problems and are actively working to fix them before end users are even aware there is an issue," Ross said.

Think Smart is now able to guarantee that his engineers will call a customer within 15 minutes after a ticket is issued to the help desk. After hours, when tickets are routed through Kaseya's mobile alerting system, customers are guaranteed a 30 minute call back. Ross is able to provide this service without having to staff the NOC between 7pm and 7am or pay hefty overtime to his employees. More times than not, the after hours engineer on call is able to log into Kaseya's Web-based management console and resolve the issue without changing out of his pajamas.

More Efficient Employees Affect the Bottom Line

Not only does the Kaseya solution enable Think Smart to provide its customers with a more powerful and proactive managed service, it helps the MSP's bottom line as well. By nipping IT issues in the bud before they lead to major problems or long-term downtime, Think Smart can avoid lengthy repair services and keep equipment in the field longer without having to replace it as often.

Support engineers are able to streamline basic and repetitive tasks like issuing a new Windows patch or rolling out a new software version. Without having a reliable connection, the engineers would have to go to each customer site individually and manually install the updates at each computer, a task that requires a lot of wasted drive time and could take weeks. Now, support engineers can simply make the updates remotely within minutes without having to leave the NOC.

Key Benefits

- Kaseya enables Think Smart's managed services business model, allowing the company to charge customers a flat fee rather than by the hour
- Think Smart's NOC does not have to be staffed 24 hours a day thanks to reliable alerting technology, saving the company on labor costs
- Support engineers are able to manage up to 1,000 desktops at one time, three times more than they could through the LPI solution
- Reliability of the Kaseya solution increases availability, saving the company \$15,000 per incidence of downtime
- Since implementing Kaseya, Think Smart has seen its revenue increase more than 150 percent year over year

"[Through Kaseya's reliable remote management technology], it's often that we have been alerted to problems and are actively working to fix them before end users are even aware there is an issue."

-- Rob Ross, president, Think Smart

Kaseya's automatic and remote capabilities allow engineers to do more work over the course of the work day. Now each engineer is able to manage more than 1,000 desktops at once, three times the amount the same engineer could manage through LPI's solution. More efficient employees also mean that Think Smart is able to scale more efficiently to meet customer demand. As its customers grow from small mom and pop shops to businesses with regional, national and global reach, Think Smart is able to cover new branch offices and a mobile workforce.

By using the remote management capabilities of Kaseya, Think Smart was able to add clients from other states to its portfolio. "Kaseya has enabled us to stop thinking locally about clients. We now have clients in many states and even one in the heart of Mexico," notes Ross.

Think Smart's business model and reputation for robust managed services has also enticed new customers. From inception Think Smart has grown more than 80 percent per year, and since implementing Kaseya has grown more than 150 percent year over year.

"As one of the first truly managed service companies we think we've found a comrade in arms with Kaseya," Ross said. "Like us, they understand the direction the industry is heading and are continually making it easier for us to service our customers and grow our business."