



Laplink RemoteAssist

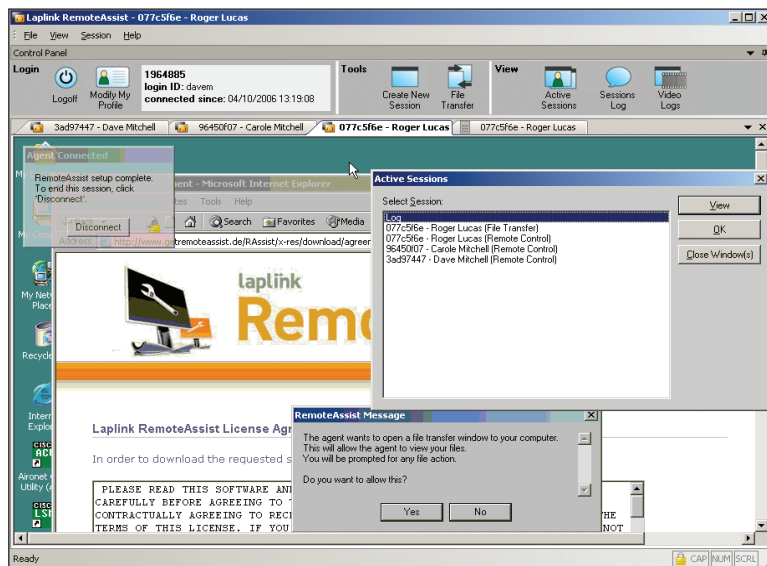
Plain-and-simple hosted remote access, but the pricing structure makes it very good value

With such a strong pedigree in the remote access software market, Laplink has been unable to resist the allure of hosted services. RemoteAssist was launched a number of months ago, but Laplink wanted to focus on establishing itself in the US market first. With hosting servers running in Germany, it now makes RemoteAssist available to the rest of us. RemoteAssist takes a radically different approach to services such as the PC Pro Recommended NetSupport 24-7 (see issue 137, p154), as it has a vastly reduced feature set. Laplink advised us that it opted to go in this direction after surveys indicated that many businesses wanted a simple, low-cost service with a shallow learning curve. To this end, RemoteAssist offers just remote control and integrated file transfer. Unlike NetSupport 24-7, you can't download a 30-day evaluation but have to fill in a web request form,

and it takes Laplink around 24 hours to respond. It emails you with a download location for the RemoteAssist agent utility, which comes preconfigured to log on to the hosting server in your area. Every hosted service has a different modus operandi, and the support process for RemoteAssist goes like this. The user contacts the helpdesk by either phoning or emailing them and recounting their IT-related woes. The support staff member, or technician as Laplink likes to call them, loads the agent, logs into the hosting server and creates a new session. The technician then needs to relay the download location for the RemoteAssist client utility to the user and provide them with a one-time password generated by the agent. The client is installed in memory only and after a session has finished it cleans up after itself to leave no traces behind. Laplink does offer another version

that's installed permanently on the user's workstation and is aimed at scenarios where regular support access is required. With either, the user has the power to stop the session and disconnect at any time they wish.

After loading the client, the user inputs the password and their name and decides whether to require permission for file transfers. Two connection methods are available: the basic screen-sharing option allows both sides to access the workstation simultaneously, while the Remote Desktop connection logs the local user off and hands full access over to the technician. The agent interface is a simple affair that's also very easy to understand. You can quickly fire up a file-transfer session with a selected client, and a row of tabbed folders makes it easy to keep track of multiple sessions. Both client and technician can request that session logs be created. This could prove particularly useful where regulatory guidelines require records of these transactions to be maintained. RemoteAssist creates an AVI file of the proceedings, but we found on playback that the level of detail was poor, with text virtually unreadable. RemoteAssist's pricing structure does look very good value because it's based purely on the number of technicians, and there are no restrictions on the number of simultaneous client sessions each one can run. NetSupport 24-7 is still our favoured approach, but businesses with a minimalist approach to hosted remote access and on a tight budget will almost certainly find RemoteAssist a worthy contender. Dave Mitchell



The agent interface is simplicity itself and provides easy access to multiple active sessions.



REMOTE ACCESS

PRICE

1 technician, £400 per year (exc VAT)

SUPPLIER

Laplink
0870 2410 983

INTERNET

www.laplink.com

UPGRADE

Included in licence

REQUIREMENTS

Agent: Windows 2000/2003 • Client: Windows 98 onwards

PERFORMANCE



FEATURES & DESIGN



VALUE FOR MONEY



OVERALL

