

How Healthy Is Your Data Center?

Hospital IT Pros Employ AccessIT for Vendor-Neutral, Secure, One-Click Remote Access Management of their Healthcare Data Centers

A Minicom Feature Article

How long does the glue on post-it notes last? If you're the top IT pro in a hospital data center, you're probably chuckling because you actually know the answer to that question. Even the most organized healthcare CIOs and IT managers have innumerable sticky notes papering their walls and a host of homegrown spreadsheets dedicated to organizing the long lists of IP addresses, passwords, and multi-vendor equipment information you need to run your IT department smoothly on a daily basis. And that makes perfect sense – those IP addresses and passwords are things you need at your fingertips on a moment's notice – no time to search for them when something goes wrong.

Because IT is the backbone for a healthy medical network, patient data is your responsibility, and in a way, that makes your job more important than any single doctor or nurse – without that data, critical life-saving decisions cannot be made. If that data isn't available when and where it's needed most, lives could be at risk.

Running an efficient, secure data center that gives medical personnel 24/7 access to the crucial healthcare data you store and secure on their behalf is a serious job that can leave you feeling like a juggler who can never rest, hoping none of the balls already in the air drop and result in a disaster. Every day, you think, "There must be a better way" ... and there is.

Stop the Juggling

In hospital data centers, like any other large IT infrastructure, changes happen on a daily basis. Multi-vendor equipment is added at an astounding rate to geographically disparate locations, all of which has to be managed in a remote, efficient, secure manner that doesn't leave you relying on the glue on the back of a post-it note to be able to find critical information in the event of an IT emergency.

Remote access tools are the clear and most widely accepted solution today. But even managing the tools themselves is a sizeable job. In every hospital IT environment, there are a variety of remote access tools that have been purchased departmentally or have come into the data center or network closet as a result of the preferences of different technical teams who've chosen – and don't want to relinquish – these tools to accomplish specific tasks. All of this brings significant complexity to the overall management process.

➔ **With massive mixed network environments, long lists of remote access protocols and applications, multiple user interfaces, and what may feel like way too many tools, IT pros managing hospital infrastructure environments are increasingly searching for more complete solutions that give them a combination of in-band and out-of-band, vendor-neutral management capabilities that are efficient and secure to use as well as cost effective to deploy.**

➔ But while an in-band remote access solution may be the tool of choice for everyday use, combining in-band software with out-of-band access gives you the best of both worlds.

Avoiding Code Blue in the Data Center

When you need quick access to IP addresses and passwords, with a homegrown spreadsheet or custom database, both speed and security become very clear and immediate problems. What would HIPAA regulators say about IP addresses and passwords that give people access to patient data being stored in non-secure spreadsheets or – even worse – post-its on your wall? Even if your spreadsheet is secure, it may not be the most efficient way to access the required information to remediate problems as they arise.

Chances are, you've been through this nightmare scenario before: IT is notified of an issue. The first course of action is to open the spreadsheet, locate the name of the server, and copy and paste its IP address, password and user name info. This can require opening and closing numerous browsers and applications – something that takes dozens of mouse clicks and many minutes – before a device can be found and accessed. Once the device is located, you've got to fix the problem. You may try an RDP solution and fail, attempt a KVM fix, or even worse – need to force a reboot through the PDU, each of which starts the copy and paste process all over again. This kind of downtime adds up. Over a typical shift, the wasted minutes can easily turn to wasted hours of valuable work time just searching for the right information.

What you need is a central console, a singular control panel, where you can see and capably manage all of your hospital's computing resources no matter where

they are physically located – from the hospital network closet to an on-campus or off-campus data center to a co-location facility in another city or state.

What Kind of Remote Access Do I Need?

Savvy IT managers are coming to rely on in-band remote access software – apps like RDP, VNC, SSH, and Telnet – to dramatically cut the time needed to access and control servers and devices – increasing productivity, reducing downtime, and saving money. These and other in-band tools are reliable, low-cost or free and are already in popular use today.

But while an in-band remote access solution may be the tool of choice for everyday use, combining in-band software with out-of-band access gives you the best of both worlds.

➔ **Beyond just running your applications, you need to be able to control critical equipment with a single click, troubleshoot OS and below-the-OS BIOS-level issues, turn power off and on, and switch between various servers while working on others all from a single remote location whether or not you have the dreaded “blue screen of death” staring you in the face.**

The limitation of in-band-only solutions is that they can only access computers that are working properly with an operating system that is up and running. RDP, for example, can't view, let alone fix, a Windows server that has crashed.

To go beyond the limits of in-band software, hardware devices are required. Combining in-band remote



access software with KVM switches, console servers and PDUs give you both remote access and control over multiple computers via the Internet when things go wrong. And it is the ability to combine the two that makes the difference between a true remote management solution and a more simplistic remote management capability that works only in uptime situations crystal clear.

All too often, the advantages of an out-of-band solution are either brushed aside or considered an add-on that can be addressed “at a later time.” Unfortunately for some hospital IT administrators, the realization of why an out-of-band solution is a necessity, not a luxury, comes at their expense in the midst of a computing nightmare. When you’re faced with downed systems and are in a somewhat helpless state, having a solution that can give you the ability to access, troubleshoot or diagnose a problem and remediate that problem remotely over the Internet can be the difference between an ordinary workday and one that leaves you anxiously scrambling for answers and wasting precious time.

Fast, Secure, Trouble-Free Access

There are alternatives, though. One unique option is AccessIT from Minicom, a Web-based management solution that offers a fast, secure, trouble-free way to maintain and monitor servers, network equipment and power devices, regardless of vendor, all from one dashboard with one-click remote RDP, VNC, SSH or Telnet access. With AccessIT, you can easily assign multiple in-band and out-of-band remote access applications to your servers through a system that is vendor neutral, adding any brand of

IT equipment – PDU, KVM switch, console server, or other network device in an unlimited array of vendor options. When things go wrong, and even when the gut-wrenching blue screen appears, you’ll have one-click KVM over IP access to restart your crashed servers and minimize downtime. In short, AccessIT is the kind of remote management solution that tops hospital IT pros’ wish lists.

Because AccessIT supports a variety of access methods from a single pane of glass, each data center operator, administrator or leader can continue to use the tools they find most effective and comfortable, but they can do so in a more efficient and more secure environment – something that is of the utmost importance in a hospital setting where patient data is required to be guarded as carefully as gold at Fort Knox. AccessIT is a centralized portal that authenticates users with your organization’s active directory. Each user is given a user name and password according to profile and task assignment. That means better security for your hospital IT data center and the critical – and regulated – data it

AccessIT ...

- **Supports a wide range of vendors**
- **Integrates in-band and out-of-band access**
- **Combines access and power**
- **Manages access & control of heterogeneous environments**
- **Maximizes tools that have already been deployed**
- **Overcomes implementation challenges**
- **Increases operational efficiency while maintaining security**

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processes and protects. It's the difference between access management and just plain access, and it's the cornerstone of a successful – and secure – hospital IT environment.

“Hospital data centers are changing rapidly because of new government regulations to digitize and store patient information,” explains Rami Sasson, executive vice president of Minicom. “CTOs and IT managers are coming to us to help them solve the problem of having 24/7 access to their servers and equipment that are no longer in the room next to them, but are now in a separate building across town. Minicom not only gives them secure, out-of-band access to their servers with our IP KVM switches, we help them gain greater IT efficiencies with our remote access management system, AccessIT, by managing all the software and hardware tools they need to control their data centers.”

AccessIT in Action

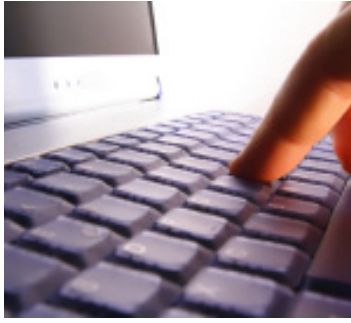
In the healthcare arena 24/7 isn't just a bullet point on a list of wants for the IT pro, it's a can't-live-without-it necessity and it's something IT pros are starting to think about up front when virtualizing, relocating or expanding their IT environments. Case in point: Tift Regional Medical Center is a full-service hospital campus serving 12 counties in south central Georgia. The hospital had employed a business and process technology consultancy, Data Center Environments, to help them with a complex, multi-year consolidation of two large data centers into a new single off-campus location. “In healthcare, we're seeing larger and larger data centers, sometimes consolidated with multiple partners,” says Data Center Environments' principal, John Williams. “Hospitals are migrating

many of their services to outpatient-type services performed in doctors' offices that are outside the hospital itself. But the hospital is still responsible for the records and the associated data processing for those services. New systems are constantly appearing, and everything has to go online. The IT staff may not always be located in the data center. They may be down the street or even across the country.”

As a result, Williams knew Tift needed a responsive, cost-effective remote access management system and chose a combination of Minicom's KVM IP switches and AccessIT remote management software to provide remote access and control of servers and devices via in-band software (i.e. RDP, VNC) and out-of-band tools including KVM over IP server access, console servers, PDUs and service processors (i.e., iLO, DRAC, and IPMI). The hospital started with a demo system, and the IT staff said they not only liked it, but they didn't want anything else.

Wade Brewer, Tift Regional's director of Technology-Infrastructure Services, was impressed with Minicom's affordability, scalability and efficiency. “The cabling structure is simple, and the software is very user friendly. I like the platform's scalability. And the management tools – I was very impressed that it can tie in and monitor everything, from the rack level to what's happening with all the applications,” he says. The AccessIT software provides unified access and control for KVM, serial, and power. “It makes maintenance issues a whole lot easier. It's more manageable,” Brewer adds.

According to Williams, the hospital examined competing solutions and found that Minicom's



AccessIT and KVM IP switch option was a full 30 percent less than other offerings. With some vendors, Williams says, the more servers you have, the higher your ongoing maintenance costs will be, but with Minicom, no matter how many servers you add, the price stays the same. With budgets already stretched tight, ROI on the purchase – as well as the implementation – was a major factor for Tift. In addition, when it comes to the hidden, but very real, costs of space and energy for powering and cooling the racks of equipment, Tift's Brewer says, "Minicom is saving us significantly in space. The system is all bundled in one solution. We don't need as many modules as we would with other solutions. It requires a lot less space and consumes less power."

Proven Solutions for Everyday Use

"With AccessIT, hospitals can integrate their KVM over IP, iLO, IPMI or other service processors, and PDUs and console servers from all the different vendors in each of these categories so that all the equipment that has been acquired over the years will continue to function and return on the investment already made in them," says Eran Kessel, Minicom's vice president, marketing and products. "It allows each individual department manager to continue as they are, yet also gives you the freedom to adopt new tools as you move forward without being locked into a single vendor system." This is the difference between an access management system and an access tool,

and it is what made AccessIT the perfect solution for Nashville General Hospital, which serves the greater Nashville metropolitan area, and the Metropolitan Nashville Hospital Authority (MNHA) that governs it.

When the hospital decided to relocate its data center – with approximately 200 servers – to a new co-location facility, the organization was forced to take stock of the considerable mix of different products that provided access to those servers from within the existing data center facility. Additionally, the hospital did not have an out-of-band remote access solution in place, though it clearly needed one.

The hospital's IT administration chose Minicom's KVM over IP switches to give them complete remote access to their servers in the new co-location facility, and they implemented AccessIT to give them a single-pane-of-glass approach to monitoring, accessing and maintaining their servers and networking equipment without abandoning the many different software programs and hardware tools they had already become accustomed to using. With AccessIT, the hospital reports, they have been able to increase IT efficiency, secure access to critical patient data, and fix problems considerably faster when they do occur.

In these kinds of medical IT environments, hospitals employing an AccessIT solution can reasonably see a reduction in downtime of up to 70 percent with a six times faster response time for issue identification and remediation. That 70 percent reduction in

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downtime can easily mean a cost savings that equals up to 200 hours of an IT administrator's work time in a large hospital system like Tift or Nashville General, which, when examined in terms of the cost of 200 salary hours, translates into an incredibly fast return on investment for a Minicom AccessIT solution.

"AccessIT gives our healthcare clients a single pane of glass to manage their hospital's IT infrastructure, regardless of vendor, in a secure, efficient manner with a fast ROI that helps improve the department's overall bottom line," Kessel explains. "One user interface, one url, and one set of security rules. It's a hospital IT manager's dream – secure remote access made simple."

➔ **Minicom's Real Needs™ Approach**

The basic philosophy of our Real Needs approach is to make sure that you have the most efficient solution for your data center requirements without wasting your IT budget on equipment that you don't need. We utilize the infrastructure, installation, and training that you already have and add the elements that are missing. This philosophy applies to all of our product design at Minicom. Our goal is to deliver solutions that make sense technologically and economically.

And if that's not enough, just think how nice your wall will look without all those post-its on it.

➔ **About Minicom**

Minicom is a global leader of IT management solutions for data centers, server rooms and rack environments. With an established track record of pioneering innovative solutions, Minicom is synonymous with IT infrastructure efficiency and shortening resolution time in data centers. Because of our consistent delivery of secure, reliable solutions, Minicom enjoys long-term relationships with customers and resellers.

Since 1988, we have provided solutions for some of the largest rack environments in the world. Our solutions are used daily to manage millions of servers.

- See us explain AccessIT in a 1 ½ -minute video [here](#).

- Want a bit more info? Try a 3-minute video complete with AccessIT screen shots [here](#).

- What is AccessIT? Read our product description and specifications [here](#).

- Take the next step: Visit Minicom's dedicated AccessIT for Healthcare Web site [here](#).

- To see first-hand what Minicom and AccessIT can do for you, [click here](#) for a live demo.



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