

Review- NetSupport Notify: Desktop Alerting System

Summary

Desktop alerting is a new concept where information is sent to an application that displays its contents directly on the user's desktop. An electronic message is sent over a local network. The user doesn't need to take any action in order to receive an alert message.

NetSupport Notify (<http://www.netsupportnotify.com/>) is an emergency communications platform which allows instant delivery of notifications and alerts to Windows, Mac and Linux desktops from a Windows or Apple iOS administrator console. Although it is a desktop solution only and it doesn't work on mobiles, the IT Innovation Centre considers that there is value in investing in such a tool.

Product Description

Components:

1. Notification Server: manages connections to all desktop Agents and ensure immediate delivery of all messages.
2. Notify Agents: receive and are responsible for displaying notification messages. Notification Agents connect to the Notification Server on start-up and register their availability. When the console sends a notification message to all or selected departments it will be delivered to the connected Agents by the Notification Server.
3. Notify Console: creates and sends notifications to all agents or targeted departments in a matter of seconds.
4. Notify Deploy: provides the ability for the administrator to install and configure Notify on multiple workstations without the need to visit the machines individually.

Features:

1. Netsupport Notify can send messages and alerts across LAN or WAN.
2. The client (Notify Agent) can be installed on Windows, Mac and Linux desktops. It does not support mobile handsets.
3. Notify console can be set up on Windows PC or Apple iOS device. Notify Mobile Console for iOS can communicate with desktop users from an iPad, iPod or iPhone.
4. Messages can be customised with a company logo etc
5. Flexible delivery options – display for xx seconds, requires user confirmation, auto close and so on.
6. Log-off alerts - if a PC is logged off then the Alert will still be displayed on the Screen, if however a machine is locked this will not be visible until the User unlocks the machine

Implementation Requirements

System Requirements:

1. Notification Console: Windows 2000 and above. NetSupport Notify Mobile Console runs on: Apple iOS devices.
2. Notification Agent: Windows 2000 Operating System or Higher. Macintosh OS X 10.5.8 or later. Linux (Red Hat Enterprise, Fedora, SuSE, Debian and Ubuntu). Supports Terminal Server sessions.
3. Notification Server: Win 2000, 2003, Win XP, Windows Vista & Windows 7 desktops or Windows 2000, 2003, 2008 and 2012 server.

Security Requirements:

1. Notification server needs to be accessible from both the Console and Agent PCs. It must have a fixed or static IP address.
2. Authentication between Notification server, Agents and Console are protected by a “Gateway key”.
3. Access to console can be restricted to certain users, who will need to login with their username and password.
4. Notify integrates with Active Directory

Network Requirements:

1. Notify communicates over LAN and WAN.
2. By default, the Notification server uses Port 443 for communication and the agent PC confirms its availability by periodically polling the Gateway every 60 seconds. It is configurable.

User License Agreement and Cost

Pack Size	Prize (Pound)
2500 user pack	£1200
5000 user pack	£2000
Additional 5000 user packs	£1500

Prices are for permanent software licences, including the notification server software and unlimited messaging. The licence packs reflect the maximum number of computers that may be connected to the notification server to receive alerts at any given time. There is no restriction on the number of computers able to run the notification console software.

Annual maintenance is also available (providing unlimited technical support and free of charge updates to new version releases) priced at 20% of the permanent license cost, payable annually. This is an optional purchase but strongly recommended for peace of mind and future proofing your license purchase.

Competitors

1. DesktopAlert: <http://www.desktopalert.net/en/home/higher-education>
2. Alert Cascade: <http://www.alertcascade.co.uk/index.php>

Conclusions

3. NetSupport Notify is a desktop solution only, it doesn't work on mobiles.
4. It can send alerts to Windows, Mac and Linux desktops from a Windows or Apple iOS administrator console.
5. The IT Innovation Centre recommends investing in such a tool in the context of H&S regulations and emergency procedures.

Further Information

If you have any questions or comments regarding this product, please contact the IT Innovation Centre at itnnovation@contacts.bham.ac.uk