**A Feature-Based Analysis & Comparison of IT Automation Tools:**

**Comparing Kaseya to LabTech**

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**1. Introduction**

**Overview**: LabTech Software offers an all in one managed service provider (MSP) solution that encapsulates all of its services and included features that are designed to aid in the management of any size IT department. Their software services and features include but are not limited to the following categories: remote control and troubleshooting, managed service deployment, information and reporting, people and process management. Although the price of using the software is dependent on how many machines that will be managed, a 30 day trial with full program access is available upon registration on the www.labtechsoft.com website.

 At first glance the services and features offered by LabTech look very familiar to those offered by Kaseya, the I.T. automation service provider studied in the I.T. Automation course taught by Dr. Sadjadi at FIU during Spring 2010. Within the remote control and troubleshooting category, LabTech offers “remote desktop and server control, background troubleshooting, network sniffing…” and many others which help to access remote machines and quickly diagnose an issue or concern. (LabTechSoft.com)The managed service deployment offers “networking monitoring and alerting, advanced scripting, patch management, software deployment, backup and recovery management…” which are only a few of the features used to literally manage and automate common tedious and critical tasks with ease. (LabTechSoft.com) The information and reporting options include “inventory, asset, information management, advance searching, license management, contact information…” as some of the useful ways of tracking and maintaining company records and keeping accountability of actions, machines, and software. (LabTechSoft.com) To make sure that everything is reported and handled correctly LabTech offers outstanding “ticketing, scheduling, dispatching, time keeping, technician tracking, advanced security…” to keep everything organize and running smoothly and timely. (LabTechSoft.com)

 Overall, LabTech has support and functionality for the most important needs of any I.T. department or system administrator. From remote management, monitoring, logging, troubleshooting, backups, and reporting, to security there are plenty different mission critical features incorporated within one package that would grab the attention of any size company seeking to increase production through automation and managed services.

**Background:** Greg Buerk and Jim Bell founded LabTech in July 2005. Their intention was to design and implement a system that would be able to support many different sites from a central location. (LabTechSoft.com) The two system administrators hired Josh Bucher to aid in the actual coding of the application. Their scope was originally to help small companies, however, after releasing the first version of their software in January 2007 they realized the capabilities and power of the system they had created had way more potential they had first conceptualized. Accordingly they expanded their scope and reach in the market by hiring Matt Nachtrab and Don McCallum into the team.

 Their companies mission “is to become the standard tool used by IT professionals internationally…at a price all businesses can afford.” (LabTechSoft.com)Thus far the company has had bountiful success with over “100 partners are using LabTech Software” and even an “international office in the UK to deal sales for the European region.” (LabTechSoft.com) The LabTech website has support for many languages and regions available with just the click of a button. The ease of installation, product availability, cost, and support make it very alluring. As customer Brian Shuffler, CEO of Shuffler.com says, “To go forward, Shuffler.com needed the right tools to do the job. With LabTech, we found the right tools at the right price- the software is great, support is terrific and we now are able to take our business forward into a MSP offering that truly differentiates us in the marketplace.” The LabTech software is created by System Administrators designed to target the System Administrator with an application designed to look and feel familiar to the everyday tasks they experience managing Windows systems, which has proven successful.

 Currently LabTech has not listed any clear competitors; however, it can be concluded that any MSP not currently teamed up with LabTech can be considered competition. As such, Kaseya would be a likely rival company providing IT automation and MSP support. In reference to any partners, they would not disclose any information. It is apparent through use of their program and some of the features that they may be partnered or working with backup software ShadowProtect, LabVNC, anti-malware companies SpyBot and McAfee.

 LabTech has a strong professional base that adds to its overall quality. The company is not afraid of taking advice or community based problem solving. In fact, the nature of LabTech revolves around System Administrators coming together from all over the world with the purpose of solving issues. Their website features a forum with access to help services from LabTech and other System Administrators. One especially interesting feature is a Suggestion Box where users can toss around ideas on how to improve the software or user experience and find new ways to manage their systems and devices.

The company provides many different educational sources to learn all about their product technology and how to implement and use it. The company offers instructional web seminars twice a week which only require registration with the website, and registration for the event on a first come, first serve basis. There is also a support section dedicated to helping users. It is full of demos and other instructional videos to help users set up, and resolve issues. The most helpful and educational resource used throughout researching the company was the wiki located at <http://www.labtechsoft.com/wiki/>.

Additional information about the company can be accessed via the Internet by visiting their website, [www.LabTechSoft.com](http://www.LabTechSoft.com), by calling their telephone number 1-877-LABTEC-3 (522-8323), or via snail mail by addressing your questions to LabTech Software LLC. 321 Perry St. Toledo, OH 43604.

**OS Coverage:** LabTech is designed to run on the Windows platform. It can be installed on Windows 2000, Windows XP (32 and 64 bit editions), Windows Server 2003 (32-bit only), Windows Server 2008 (32-bit only), Windows Vista, and Windows 7. It is very important to take note that the software will not install on any Windows Server Edition that not the 32bit edition. Unlike Kaseya, the software does not have support for the Macintosh platform.

**Grouping Managed Devices:** LabTech groups manage devices using the LabTech Control Center to provide an overall snapshot of any type of managed device. All assets are organized under their assigned locations, which are tied to a specified router. Each router has its own settings that can be linked to specific administrative passwords and remote backup setups. Managed devices can be added to groups that allow view filtering based on many different options. Creating groups and adding machines to manage is much easier than in Kaseya where one would have to go to System, and then manage, to create or modify the groups. In LabTech one would simply right click and create a group and the device with an agent would automatically join a group specified by the agent package used to install it or by the IP address used to push the installer to the device from the Control Center.

**Functional Coverage:** The scope of this research paper has been narrowed down to comparing the proceeding features of Kaseya to LabTech.

**1.1 Architecture**

LabTech has an agent-based architecture similar to that from Kaseya. Both can install agents via a web browser or by pushing the install file to a specified network address. While Kaseya must perform a "LAN Watch" to do this, LabTech uses a similar feature called "Network Probe." LabTech must be installed on a "Master" machine in order to begin installing agents. Basically, the LabTech Control Center (comparable to the web based Kaseya administration page) must be installed on a machine in order to begin finding or installing agents to devices.

**1.2 Auditing & Asset management**

Information concerning hardware and software configuration can be obtained under the Auditing tab in the System Dashboard. The application can audit everything from CPU usage and memory usage to the motherboard model, manufacturer, and bios version. A long listing of audit actions are available such as: emails that failed to send, remote commands, service logs, alerts, tickets, login, logout, and modifications to most of these actions just to name a few more. Although Kaseya can also audit, more information was readily available using LabTech’s Control Center.

**1.3 Remote Control**

LabTech includes LabVNC (see glossary) as a Remote Control solution. It can be setup to use any other Remote Control application as well by using redirectors which allow you to see what the client see’s (see Glossary for more advanced explanation). The interface has several features that you can use such as the Command Prompt, MSTSC, Telnet, SSH which appear through the Control Center exactly as they would if you were logged into the clients’ pc, which adds to the familiarity of the application feel. Kaseya offers similar features, however, does not allow the use of any other Remote Control application.

**1.4 Automation**

LabTech supports automation through the use of predefined scripts. It also offers the ability to use custom scripts and set schedules to run them. Kaseya has the same offering but the visual display is much more user friendly.

**1.5 Monitoring**

LabTech includes several built in monitoring tools. It is managed through the navigation menu under the managed machine. The monitor setup wizard allows you to monitor event logs, system information, performance counters, services and processes, files or directories, WMI query, and the results of an executable. Kaseya can monitor machines that don’t have agents installed and offer better group monitoring setups

**1.6 Patch Management**

LabTech also offers patch management, under its Hotfix Template Settings menu. Patches can be deployed on a specified day and time to needed computers. LabTech downloads its updates directly from Microsoft similar to Kaseya. Hotfix settings can be configured using a template setup as in Kaseya.

**1.7 Backup & Disaster Recovery**

LabTech offers a remote backup feature under its Computer Management. The third party application is called ShadowProtect and it can be installed on client machines to allow for full monitoring, scheduling, and control of remote backups. The Remote Backup feature allows you to backup data of selected file types to any specified directory.

**1.8 Endpoint Security**

LabTech does not include the level of security that Kaseya does. Security is accomplished through packet encryption and compression before transmission with the option of using SSL for added VNC security. LabTech contains SpyBot scripts and McAfee cleaning tools; however, these are in response to attacks and not as preemptive as Kaseya’s’ KES model

**1.9 User State Management**

LabTech allows administrators to create default group policies, group templates, and most importantly it provides scripts to automate this feature. It also allows for using group templates and there is no limit to the level of customization of state management. LabTech is on the same level with Kaseya however, Kaseya requires the KDPM feature to be bought an as add on.

**1.10 Help Desk**

LabTech features a Help Desk Ticketing System driven by an email-based support ticketing system. Although clients have the ability to send in emails for support the software is designed to promote preemptive work allowing the technicians to respond to tickets created automatically through audits and monitoring. The HelpDesk in LabTech also allows for the technician to bill directly from their ticking info. Tickets are much more customizable in LabTech. There are 6 levels of priority where as with Kaseya there are four. LabTech makes it easier for tickets to automatically go to technicians where as with Kaseya you have to establish a group, and filters for specified clients.

**1.11 Reporting**

LabTech has integrated Information and Reporting which can also be customized as can be done with Kaseya. LabTech uses a combination of data stored MySQL tables with the Crystal Reports software to provide detailed information on any and all system data. Any reports that are custom created are stored in the LTShare and can be accessed directly from the web. The reporting features have different set ups but operate almost exactly the same between the two applications.

**1.12 System/User/Admin Management**

LabTech allows for the creation of different roles from Administrators, Technicians, and Clients or any other user policy desired. New users and roles can be created simply with a right click and then customized from the same window. Access can be restricted in any multitude of ways between different admin users. There really isn’t any hard process to create a user; one just has to be mindful when setting their access rights.

**1.13 Usability**

LabTech is very accessible. It features both a Control Center that can push agents as well as a web based platform created by the server hosting the software. It has a friendly user interface following the Windows menu theme so it is very easy to follow visually. It is quick and easy to learn especially with tons of tutorials and online help. After having used Kaseya and then LabTech, it is amazing how much longer it takes to become familiar with Kaseya and memorize where all of the features hide. The platform is intelligently designed with features integrated into the Control Center as is the same with Kaseya.

**1.14 Reliability**

As far as testing is concerned, LabTech proved to be reliable under our isolated experiments. It requires very little network bandwidth or processor power unless doing a backup which was very thorough and well organized. The disaster recovery tools could be better as well as some alerting capabilities to catch a potentially malicious script from any disgruntled employees. Otherwise it seems very advantageous Antivirus is left to System Administrator discretion instead of forcing use of any particular malware suite.

**1.15 Performance**

Overall performance of LabTech was impressive.  The installation process was very quick and the system was ready to go as soon as agents installed.  The wait time between commands was near null.  Smooth functioning of all tested feature with nearly instant feedback.

**1.16 Supportability**

LabTech provides very quick response time with immediate support available from support@LabTechSoft.com.  Help is freely available from the FAQ section posted on <http://labtechsoft.com/support/e107_plugins/faq/faq.php>.  You will also gain access to the community of LabTech administrators and plenty of online documentation is available through the LabTechSoft wiki at <http://www.labtechsoft.com/wiki/index.php?title=Installation_and_Setup>.

**2. Comparison and Discussion**

**2.1 Evaluating and Discussing LabTech**

Both LabTech and Kaseya are great products; however, from the research conducted it was found that LabTech provided a better overall user experience than Kaseya based on several features. The biggest considerations were the layout of the features, how those features interacted with the client side computer, gathering data on devices, providing help desk options, reporting, and then overall system, performance, and supportability. The only ‘downfalls’ so to speak could be considered its Backup and Disaster Recovery center, which used a third party application to work, which could potentially cause problems. Also, since there was no way to test how the software would handle a strain of devices attached to it we could not completely test its reliability under peak loads. It is certain though that at peak loads Kaseya seems to buckle, lags, and sometimes hangs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Architecture**Rating: 5** | The LabTech Control Center is agent based and very familiar. |
| 2 | Audit & Asset Mgt**Rating: 4** | LabTech’s ability to quickly and constantly gather data on a connected system and the systems installed components allows for reliable auditing and asset management.  |
| 3 | Remote Control**Rating: 5** | Monitoring in LabTech is very easy. The moment a connection is established with a server or workstation the console instantly begins reporting and refreshing at specified intervals.  |
| 4 | Automation**Rating: 5** | The ability to add custom written scripts or use premade scripts within LabTech and schedule tasks to occur on a repeating basis make automation a breeze. |
| 5 | Monitoring**Rating: 5** | Monitoring in LabTech is very easy. The moment a connection is established with a server or workstation the console instantly begins reporting and refreshing at specified intervals. |
| 6 | Patch Mgt**Rating: 5** | Patches come directly from Microsoft or can be hosted in a local folder, which works exactly like Kaseya.  |
| 7 | Backup & Disaster Recovery**Rating: 4** | Backing up files is possible via ShadowProtect and it gets the job done although Kaseya seems to have more detailed information in terms of visual displays to indicate progress.  |
| 8 | Endpoint Security**Rating: 1** | LabTech leaves endpoint security up to the System Administrator. The only options it provides are to scan for spyware and viruses in a reactive manner rather than protect against them in the first place. |
| 9 | User State Mgt**Rating: 5** | User state management is easily accomplished like most things with just a right click and addition of a new user and permissions can be instantly set for that role.  |
| 10 | HelpDesk**Rating: 5** | Help Desk is very easy, requiring users to simply send in an email request for help, which creates a ticket for a technician to respond to.  |
| 11 | Reporting**Rating: 5** | LabTech has outstanding reporting features which allow custom reports to be sent with generic or very specific information once, or on reoccurring basis.  |
| 12 | System**Rating: 5** | The System itself is very easy to use especially after having used Kaseya. There is nothing to dig through in order to accomplish a task. Everything is right in front of you at all times so finding features is simple. |
| 13 | Usability**Rating: 5** | The LabTech Control Center is very easy to use. Its all in one design with tabs for every feature are very useful. The visual design of the console mimics windows form themes which is familiar.  |
| 14 | Reliability**Rating: 3** | It would not be fair to access the Reliability because given the circumstances there were no strains on the server or chance for anything to possibly go wrong.  |
| 15 | Performance**Rating: 4** | Performance seemed great with our setup, however, there is room to question what could happen as more machines are added and more users access the network bandwidth.  |
| 16 | Supportability**Rating: 5** | LabTech does a great job providing live web seminars, forums, and constant support making it very supportable.  |

**2.2 Rating Results Explanation/Discussion:**

*Individual Solution Comparison Rating System Table*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | ***Kaseya*** | ***Your Assigned Solution*** |
| 1 | Architecture | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Audit & Asset Mgt | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | Remote Control | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Automation | 5 | 5 |
| 5 | Monitoring | 3 | 5 |
| 6 | Patch Mgt | 5 | 5 |
| 7 | Backup & Disaster Recovery | 5 | 4 |
| 8 | Endpoint Security | 4 | 1 |
| 9 | User State Mgt | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | HelpDesk | 5 | 5 |
| 11 | Reporting | 4 | 5 |
| 12 | System | 4 | 5 |
| 13 | Usability | 4 | 5 |
| 14 | Reliability | 2 | 3 |
| 15 | Performance | 2 | 4 |
| 16 | Supportability | 5 | 5 |
|  | **Total** | **63** | **71** |

Overall, LabTech scored higher due to its design layout following the Windows Menu style, the audit and asset management that is quickly available without waiting for data to be collected, and the speed at which the program responds since it is not web based so the Remote Control, System, Usability, and Performance sections are reflective. The machine built to act as a server was capable of supporting the application and running it smoothly although it is very possible to have installed the software on a much less sophisticated machine which is also why it scored higher. LabTech also scored higher in monitoring because information is quickly available. Both products were usable, however, LabTech is believed to be more System Administrator friendly especially because it is more responsive and one does not have to dig for features or wait for the Web based side to respond.

**3. Glossary**

**MSP** – Managed Service Provider

**Control Center** – Comparable to the web based Kaseya portal to access features

**Redirector** -The redirector is a program built into the LabTech system that will redirect any single port TCP application from the LabTech client program to the remote service. With this you can telnet directly into a mail server behind the customers firewall with the connection origination from the clients machine. This way you can see exactly what the customer sees.

**LabVNC** - a cross-platform, open source utility that uses the open-source VNC protocol to allow you to instantly turn any VI into a Java applet which will allow you to do remote control over the web. No programming or modification of your VI code is necessary**4. Acknowledgements**

—**Mike Inzerillo – Providing Demo CD Key**

Regional Sales Manager, Labtech Software LLCOffice: 877-LabTec-3 Ext.222

**5. References**

www.LabTechSoft.com – Used to research product and gather general information.

[www.LabTechSoft.com/wiki](http://www.LabTechSoft.com/wiki) - Used to select proper diction for naming.

[www.Kaseya.com](http://www.kaseya.com) - Used to remember where many of Kaseya’s features were hiding.

[1] <http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=remote-control-and-troubleshooting>

[1]<http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=remote-control-of-servers-and-desktops>

[1]<http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=network-troubleshooting-2>

[2]<http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=information-and-reporting>

[3] <http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=network-monitoring-and-alerts>

[4]<http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=patch-management>

[5] <http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=backup-and-recovery>

[6] <http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=advanced-security-and-rights-management>

[7]<http://www.labtechsoft.com/index.php?page=people-and-process-management>

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