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Autotask Forms MSP Consulting Service

BY DAN NEEL

Autotask is taking its IT services management expertise into the field with a new consulting service.

The Rensselaer, N.Y.-based company hosts IT services management software that VARs can leverage to help maximize their IT services revenue. The Autotask Web solution is particularly beneficial to MSPs because it can digest data from monitoring systems, field technician schedules, help-desk logs and other time-tracking systems and return a customer invoice that optimizes billing, said CEO Bob Godgart.

Using the Autotask service, "you map any work performed on the MSP contract, and we create a draft bill," Godgart said. Autotask has about 500 VAR customers that, by using the service, each average about a 15 percent increase in what would be lost billable hours, he said.

Now Autotask has launched a new Professional Services Group. Announced this week, the group was formed to take the tools of the Autotask Web service to the next level by delivering it as a one-on-one consulting service, Godgart said. The Autotask Professional Services Group aims to give VARs more detailed insight into business process re-engineering, help-desk best practices, project management best practices, and scheduling and dispatching, he added.

"The service is especially useful when you have multiple kinds of contracts with multiple types of customers. It's a more effective way of capturing hours that may have fallen through the cracks," he said.

Tim Johnston, CTO of NPower Greater DC Region, a Washington-based VAR that caters to the technology needs of nonprofit organizations, began using the Autotask Web service in November. Already, NPower has gotten "a much better handle on managing the business, including profitability," he said.

"It's clear that we've cut leakage considerably. And our average rate per hour is up 42 percent over the same time last year, while actual rates have risen only 6 percent to 7 percent," Johnston said.

Although NPower implemented the Autotask Web service without any professional services assistance, the VAR has engaged Autotask's new Professional Services Group "to help jump-start those users who needed some extra hand holding . . . and to learn how to get the most from the system as quickly as possible," Johnston said.

The cost of retaining the Autotask Professional Services Group can be customized according to the size and complexity of a VAR's managed services organization. Flat hourly rate consulting fees of \$150 are available. There is no long-term contract to sign to use the service, Godgart said.

Most of Autotask's VAR customers have begun offering their customers more comprehensive MSP services that include complete IT network management, according to Godgart. To assist with that move, the Autotask Web service has been designed to receive reports from most leading MSP monitoring platform vendors, such as N-able Technologies, Silverback and Kaseya, he said.

"We help VARs manage their managed services," Godgart added.

NPower's Johnson said Autotask helps the VAR save money on multiple fronts. "I can get a total picture of what we're doing and how people are allocated. Because the integration is so tight, compliance is also wonderful. Staff members can't record time without documenting the project work they're doing," he said. "Before, time and billing were completely disconnected from the actual ticket and project work. That put a heavy administrative burden on a staff that has to maintain high utilization. We were losing too much time that was pure overhead, and there was plenty of room for errors and leakage. Not now."

