



Atlanta Technology Force, Inc. **CASE STUDY**

Atlanta Technology Force, Inc. is a Managed Services Provider (MSP) offering computer and technology consulting, service, support, maintenance and monitoring. Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Kevin Gibson, and the rest of the team at Atlanta Technology Force help clients ensure productivity by implementing best practices, and maintaining advanced hardware and software tools. When Gibson and Atlanta Technology Force President, Todd Wahl, merged their two companies in 2008, they began tackling the challenge of developing a stable revenue stream that would enable them to pay employees and enjoy predictable cash flow. That meant moving away from a break-fix business model and focusing on managed services.

“Break-fix is where there is no agreement with a client. Clients call you when something breaks and you jump into action, go solve the problem, and collect from a time and material standpoint,” Gibson explains. “Managed services provide a monthly recurring revenue stream. The key to managed services is efficiency. If you’re a solutions provider and you maximize your efficiency and time, you’re going to make profits.”

Atlanta Technology Force developed their Unified Systems Management offering that includes all of the software and services required to protect and maintain clients’ networks, servers, workstations and laptops, including remote support, asset inventory management, virus protection and security, and real-time network monitoring, which Atlanta Technology Force delivers using the LabTech remote monitoring and management (RMM) solution.

Reducing the Cost of Remote Monitoring with LabTech

Prior to implementing LabTech, Atlanta Technology Force utilized Kaseya for remote monitoring, but it proved too costly and Gibson felt the customer support was lacking. “We would send a request, wait three weeks, and then get an email response back,” he recalls. “We used Kaseya for about 2 ½ years to the tune of about \$100,000 and it was a huge waste of money.”

“As I looked at the maintenance renewal, I realized that over the course of five years, we would pay in maintenance in year five what we paid in month one to purchase. That prompted me to do research.” Gibson reviewed many RMM solutions, including N-able, GFI, and Control Suite. Nothing seemed like a good fit. At the time, Atlanta Technology Force was also switching its Professional Services Automation (PSA) solution from Autotask to ConnectWise. Gibson learned about LabTech through a ConnectWise forum.

After a brief trial, Gibson was sold on LabTech. He liked how the tool took a different approach to remote monitoring and management than other solutions and found the customer support more responsive. He estimates “the support experience is ten-fold better than what it was at Kaseya.” And LabTech easily



Company:
Atlanta Technology Force, Inc.
Year founded: 2000
www.unifiedsysmgt.com

Challenge: To provide clients with exceptional services to clients and ensure smooth internal cash-flow by establishing a managed services business model.

Solution: LabTech Remote Monitoring and Management, with ConnectWise PSA.

Results: A campaign of automated monitoring and alerts earned Atlanta Technology Force an extra \$4,000 to \$6,000 per month in break-fix revenue and convinced some clients to move to managed services. Scripted automation delivers client services without adding to labor costs.



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integrated with Atlanta Technology Force's new ConnectWise PSA—a big plus for Atlanta Technology Force.

A New Approach to Remote Monitoring

Gibson explains that there are two ways that LabTech takes a very different approach to Remote Monitoring and Management than other solutions. First, most systems report every instance of a repeating alert or alarm, but LabTech produces only one ticket per item until the issue is remediated and the ticket is closed.

"LabTech's approach is different in that it collects the data, puts it in a database, and reports on an interval that you set—once a day, once every five minutes, whatever—but it only reports one instance. So if I have 2,000 alerts from a server, LabTech will only give me one ticket. Once it is closed, then LabTech will report it again if it reoccurs, so you're not running around trying to triage 2,000 tickets. Everything that comes in is important – there is no garbage.

LabTech is also different from other solutions in the way it helps remediate problems. Using LabTech, Atlanta Technology Force technicians can interact with a desktop computer or server without having to interrupt the user or take over the machine. In many cases, LabTech can resolve issues on its own through scripted automation. "A problem can occur, we can detect it and we can remediate from the back end either through automation or through human intervention," says Gibson. "There's no interruption whatsoever to the user. With Kaseya, you had to get the user on the phone, take over their session, interrupt their workflow and what they are doing, go fix their problem and then release the machine back to them."

An Innovative Approach to Upselling Break-Fix Clients

After Gibson saw what LabTech could do in terms of automation, he and the team created a new approach with an innovative marketing campaign using the technology to sell more service to break-fix clients and ultimately, help them move to managed services contracts.

"If we interact with your machine, we're going to put a LabTech agent on it. So for our non-contract, or break-fix, clients we had these agents that were installed and decided we would leverage LabTech as well as ConnectWise," Gibson explains. "We created 15 or 16 alerts that were around our mantra, which is Security. Stability. Reliability. We color coded all these alerts in templates and we notified the clients that we were providing free monitoring or alerting on these 16 things. We fully defined what each alert meant. And then we left it up to them to contact us back through the ticketing system."

The results were surprising—and profitable! "What we saw almost immediately after we implemented this was that we were generating 400 or 500 additional alerts per week. If they responded back, we would move it to another service board and remediate their issue. That transpired into about \$4,000 to \$6,000 in additional revenue per month from a break-fix standpoint," he continues.

The extra revenue each month is not the only benefit of this campaign. Automated alerts and the resulting higher spend rates go a long way toward convincing a client to move from a break-fix relationship to a full managed services contract. Contracts empower Atlanta Technology Force to do more for the client at less

expense. Gibson summarizes the campaign's results so far: "We have met with two customers who were hold outs when we moved from break-fix to managed services. In both cases, their spend rate is higher than it would be on a contract. One committed to moving to a contract and the other is expected to convert here soon."

Automation Handles the Extra Workload

Because LabTech contains an intuitive scripting tool, it's possible to build automation that takes care of many of the day-to-day services that MSPs provide their clients. Gibson is an experienced programmer, so he's taken advantage of the scripting tool. "I would estimate that we have about 55% of the things that we do on a routine basis automated through LabTech now. When we first took it out of the box, it had about 10 or 12 things automated. We thought outside the box. Every time something comes up, our techs are tasked with how to resolve it and if it can be resolved through some kind of repeatable means, then I go analyze and determine how to automate that."

Once a key process is automated, LabTech can perform the task without tech intervention. This means the problem is solved and the labor costs stay down. "Without increasing the workload for my tech, we're increasing the revenue by using an automated process through LabTech to remediate these things."

Demonstrating Higher Value Through Automation of Managed Services

Clients who are already on managed services contracts also have a lot to gain from Atlanta Technology Force's use of LabTech. After LabTech resolves an issue, ConnectWise can track the accounting and billing, so clients see the work completed and final results. And it doesn't cost Atlanta Technology Force anything extra to produce much more accurate reporting for clients that demonstrate the full value of the services they deliver.

"In the last three months or so, we've moved from just doing remediation to accounting for the remediation. So LabTech creates the ticket automatically, it takes action on our behalf to remediate then notates exactly what it does, adds billable time to the ticket, and closes the ticket out once it verifies that it did indeed fix the issue at hand. That's increased our unadjusted billable time and increases the value for our contract based clients. To the client, it doesn't represent any additional cost but from our perspective, it builds additional value because an average of six to eight hours of tasks per month per client are automatically remediated. All those things are remediated and billed without an employee being engaged or touching a thing.....thanks to LabTech"

By adding to the team's internal efficiency, automating oft-repeated processes, and providing clients with data that helps them adopt managed services, LabTech is making a positive impact at Atlanta Technology Force. With the benefits LabTech offers MSPs, Gibson is not surprised that so many companies are adopting the solution. Since Atlanta Technology Force purchased LabTech in early 2010, LabTech's partner base has greatly multiplied in size. "I think that because LabTech was developed by their own MSP business because they needed something to do their own business with, they have a very keen eye for our market space, like ConnectWise . . . and they listen very closely to what their partners have to say."