

Project Database Co

Developer of
ExhibitOffice + ManagEvent

Remote Access

What viable Database remote access options are available?

There are five viable solutions to remotely access your Database software; remote access software, Microsoft's Terminal Services, Citrix MetaFrame and Virtual Private Network (VPN) solutions. Each of these will allow a remote user in the field to connect to and run the Database software exactly as though they were in the office. However, there are advantages and disadvantages to each. A detailed discussion for each is offered in this area. Depending on the number of remote users needing to connect simultaneously to the office, and cost, will dictate which solution is right for you.

- (VPN) Virtual Private Network
- Apple Remote Access
- Remote Access Software
- Terminal Services
- Citrix Metaframe

1. Remote access using Virtual Private Network

VPNs (Virtual Private Network) is an alternative to consider, but it will provide the poorest performance; it is very slow. You're going to be best off if you have a high-speed connection at both locations, since actual data is being passed between the client and the server (unlike all the other solutions, where only screen refreshes are sent to the client). Good VPN solutions exist for not much money. Mac OSX servers have VPN built-in, as do Windows 2003 servers. Check with your IT consultant for the solution that will fit your needs best.

2. Remote access using Apple Remote Access

Database users are reporting that Apple's Remote Access is a reliable alternative to Timbuktu, and is far quicker and smoother.

3. Remote access using Remote Access Software

If you are a small number of remote users, consider buying inexpensive computers (PC or Mac) dedicated for remote users (you can get a suitable one for \$700 - \$1,000 these days). Install PC Anywhere (Windows), Timbuktu (Windows and Mac), or the free VNC software (Windows and Mac). The dedicated computer in the office will always need to be connected to the Internet (don't worry, it is secure with password protection), and remote users would need the remote access software installed as well (commercial versions are sold in 2 packs for about \$200). The remote user would then launch the software on their machine and connect to the dedicated workstation in your office over the Internet. This works well, is fast, secure, and allows a single remote user to be connected to the dedicated workstation back at the office.

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(add more dedicated machines as your needs dictate). If you need to accommodate more than 5 - 10 remote users simultaneously, than consider the VPN, Terminal Services, or Citrix MetaFrame solutions discussed in this area.

4. Remote access using Terminal Services

Terminal Services is a product developed by Microsoft and runs on a Windows 2000+ server that is connected to the Internet. It allows remote users (up to 20 or 30 per server; only Windows clients can connect - Mac users need to consider Citrix) to be connected simultaneously to your network and run any software you make available to them. It is relatively inexpensive, fairly easy to implement (get your network consultant involved), fast, secure and very reliable.

- To learn more about using the FileMaker Pro Server with Terminal Service download the Filemaker Server Terminal Services Guide

5. Remote access using Citrix MetaFrame

If you have more remote users who need access to the system (more than 10 need to be connected at the same time), consider the CITRIX MetaFrame solution. It is the fastest, the most secure, with the most available remote clients (including Mac, Linux, Windows CE and web browser clients), and can handle about 20 - 30 users simultaneously connected at one time per CITRIX server. Unfortunately, it is expensive, a qualified CITRIX engineer must be used to install the system and complete the setup.

- To learn more about using the FileMaker Pro Server with Citrix MetaFrame, download the Filemaker Server Citrix Guide.