

Startup Launches Fixed-Cost PC Support for SMBs

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A startup PC support service, PC-VIP, has launched in eleven U.S. markets and in two cities in Europe. The company hopes to turn PC support from a variable to a fixed cost, pledging to give support calls all the time they need.

PC-VIP, a new PC support company that will cater specifically to small and medium businesses, officially began offering its services here in San Francisco and ten other cities across the country on Monday.

The company, which claims to be the world's first true fixed-cost computer support service targeting the SMB space, will offer flat rate, per computer pricing support to small and medium-sized businesses both here in the U.S. and abroad said Jeff Yablon, president and CEO of PC-VIP.

While initially launching in only eleven U.S. markets, (including cities like Los Angeles, New York, Miami, and Chicago) and two in Europe, Yablon says he expects that PC-VIP will be available to as many as 85 percent of U.S. citizens as soon as the end of this year.

"If we're right about our ideas, execution, and business model, PC-VIP will turn out to be the 'Holy Grail' of computer support," Yablon said in an e-mail.

"We're doing it better, less expensively, and in a way that finally makes the elusive small and mid-sized business sector comfortable about their

up-until-now love/hate relationship with computers," Yablon added.

According to Yablon, the company will charge a set-up fee of \$350 per device – defined as either a Windows or Macintosh-based computer or server – and then a quarterly or annual fee for each additional computer a business operates. When anything goes wrong, from that point on, PC-VIP will fix it, Yablon said. The firm will also handle anti-virus and malware issues for small companies proactively as well.

PC-VIP says it will also tackle e-mail administration, backup, and firewall needs, as well as help businesses keep network configurations running smoothly. This includes both the company's off-the-shelf and custom applications, Yablon said, and PC-VIP will also keep the client's staff up-to-date on any new information they need them to have.

Pricing will be \$119 per month for unlimited support, time-wise, per device. If customers sign up for a year and pay quarterly, though, that \$199 price tag drops to \$100, making the annual fee \$24,000 instead of \$28,560 for a 20-device company.

"...We've found that you can reduce costs to businesses by 25 to 40 percent," Yablon said, in reference to his company's fixed cost support model.

"In our very quiet roll-out over the last several months, our experience has been that this model actually saves the typical customer notably," he added. "The 'we pay our guy with a hammer and a screwdriver by the hour' model has run these clients between \$24,000 and \$40,000 in annual costs with the 'average' in fact being an average... - of - \$30,000 to \$32,000."

Yablon said that in the financial realm, PC-VIP offers the unique ability to turn support services from a variable cost into a fixed one, "thus

making accounting for it a different animal," while also removing the adversarial situation that typically exists between a customer and a support technician in a "clock is running" situation.

"This is more about people support than computer support...almost as white-glove luxury item," Yablon said. "We're saving our clients money, and those that we are already working with tell us we're undercharging."

The one thing and one thing only that PC-VIP won't cover in its flat-fee pricing, Yablon said, is what the company refers to as "MAC," or moves, adds, and changes. For example, a MAC includes the installation of a new piece of software across a company's network. . Everything else is covered, he said.

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