5 easy ways IT teams can support effortless virtual meetings using ThinkSmart Manager

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*ThinkSmart Manager is not currently supported in Russia or China.

Organizations spend about 15% of their time in meetings, with the average worker attending at least eight meetings per week. For the typical executive, that number goes up to 12 meetings a week — unless they're a CEO, and then it's closer to 37 (constituting roughly 72% of their time).

By 2025, more than half of these meetings will take place virtually. However, in today's hybrid workplace — where 72% of workers still come into the office at least part of the time — "virtual" meetings are really hybrid, too, with some participants joining remotely and others dialing in together from an on-site conference room.

To keep business running smoothly, many companies are investing in video conferencing devices and software that enable hybrid collaboration around the globe. But how can busy IT teams manage and troubleshoot their distributed conferencing devices when they themselves are working from home, a different office or a different city?

For IT teams who use ThinkSmart devices, the answer is ThinkSmart Manager, Lenovo's purpose-built management software. ThinkSmart Manager enables IT teams to manage devices remotely from a single dashboard, anywhere in the world. Teams that need more advanced features can upgrade to ThinkSmart Manager Premium to add capabilities that increase management control and reduce overall management time and effort.

If you're in charge of managing your business' ThinkSmart devices, or are considering deploying ThinkSmart devices, this paper will help you uncover 5 low-effort, high-impact procedures to ensure seamless and secure hybrid collaboration using your ThinkSmart devices.

The rise of video conferencing technology

Frost & Sullivan's State of the Global Video Conferencing Devices Market, Forecast to 2025, found that by 2025, the number of video conferencing devices on the market will be six times as high as it was in 2021, reaching 12.5 million units. Even companies that are already using conferencing devices may find themselves investing in additional devices in the coming years.

As far as workers are concerned, this is a positive trend — 55% of workers think using video conferencing technology promotes better collaboration, and the same number believe conferencing technology will be as important or more important than robotics or automation in the coming years.

However, conferencing technology is only useful when it's functioning correctly. Almost half of employees say that at least two of the virtual meetings they attend each week are disrupted due to technical issues. From the IT perspective, this means answering frequent, frantic calls that disrupt an already-busy workday. In addition, when hybrid collaboration isn't happening in a seamless way, business productivity can slow down, resulting in lost revenue, unhappy customers and missed opportunities.

5 IT policies to optimize ThinkSmart device functionality and reduce help desk calls

ThinkSmart Manager makes it easy for IT teams to quickly address common device issues from almost anywhere in the world* — or avoid them entirely. By establishing a few key policies within your organization, you can keep your ThinkSmart devices running smoothly without needing physical access to the devices.

1. Give key IT team members access to advanced monitoring and control function.

When you're managing hundreds of conference rooms engaged in dozens of meetings per day, there may be times technical support is needed. Sometimes understanding what's going wrong with a device requires taking remote control to see and interact with the device's interface. Other times, it can be beneficial to restart a device or run other commands directly on the device's terminal.

Team members with an Owner or Admin role and with a device enabled with a ThinkSmart Manager Premium license can remotely control ThinkSmart devices that have Intel® vPro™ onboard. This powerful feature gives authorized users access to view details on vPro-enabled machines, including their power and connectivity status. It also gives them the ability to perform actions on the endpoint including waking it, putting it to sleep, powering it off or restarting the device.

Further, authorized team members will be able to remotely view the device's screen as well as the screens of any displays the device is connected to. They can use the control + alt + delete function to restart the machine or connect directly to the terminal to run other commands as needed.

It's a good policy to ensure more than one team member has access to these premium features so that these tasks can be attended to when needed.

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2. Disable USB access to conferencing devices.

Recent years have seen a meteoric rise in USB-borne attacks.

The 2022 Honeywell Industrial Cybersecurity USB Threat Report found that 52% of malware is specifically designed to utilize removable media, up from 32% the previous year and more than double the 19% reported in 2020.

In the first half of 2023, researchers identified a threefold increase in USB-borne malware, led by two major espionage campaigns that leveraged the SOGU and SNOWYDRIVE malware variants. Both variants are spyware used to gain access, view and steal corporate information.

A 2016 study famously showed that as many as 50% of employees will insert a flash drive they found in the parking lot into their company device to see what's on it. And as USB-powered devices proliferate, the threat has expanded beyond flash drives into peripherals and other gadgets, which can sometimes be compromised at the point of manufacturing.

One way to limit your company's exposure to USB-borne threats is to disable the USB ports on your conferencing devices. ThinkSmart Manager gives you the ability to remotely block USB ports to significantly reduce this risk and strengthen the security of the device.

You can also disable the ability for ThinkSmart devices to boot from a USB drive, further limiting the chances of a breach due to human error or bad actors.

3. Schedule weekly, after-hours bulk restarts.

Like many technology solutions, conferencing devices benefit from occasionally being restarted. Restarting these devices flushes the RAM, clears temporary cache, stops background tasks and closes any programs that may not have closed properly. If you're already using conferencing devices, chances are you've found the key to most technical issues is to restart them.

To pro-actively reduce interruptions to business and improve the speed and health of your devices, you can schedule ThinkSmart devices. A ThinkSmart Manager Premium license enables you to set this rule with a couple of clicks and perform manual bulk restarts when desired.

4. Perform daily analytics checks

Udemy found that technology issues were one of the top four disruptors of meetings. These issues not only affect business productivity — they can be burdensome to busy IT teams.

Pro-active IT teams want to stay on top of the health and productivity of their devices, but when you don't have physical access to the devices, it can be difficult to predict issues that may arise during the day.

ThinkSmart users can get ahead of these issues by receiving real-time notifications as well as viewing the devices' analytics at any time. In ThinkSmart Manager, you can quickly see whether any devices are experiencing overheating, disconnected network or peripherals, and other common issues, so you can report or fix the problem before it stalls workers' meetings and productivity. In addition, IT team members can export any issues into the IT Admins tooling of their choice for further research and manipulation. Ensure that one of your team members starts each morning with a quick analytics check to flag and get ahead of any issues that might arise throughout the day. Preventive maintenance can save you the stress of emergency help desk calls down the road.

5. Manage ThinkSmart devices from anywhere using mobile access.*

Today, 85% of tech workers are either fully remote or in a hybrid role, with 48% of tech workers working fully remotely. Some IT team members may also travel between offices and may perform many of their tasks using a smartphone or tablet.

When collaboration is disrupted by a basic technical issue, it can't wait for IT team members to get back to their workstations. So it's vital to ensure remote and mobile IT team members have easy, reliable, persistent access to managing conference room devices from their mobile devices.

ThinkSmart Manager provides a mobile app for quick access and additionally is readily accessible through the browser for anytime-anywhere management, monitoring and control. As a matter of policy, ensure your team members are set up to quickly access ThinkSmart Manager when help is needed, no matter where they are.

Upgrade to ThinkSmart Manager Premium

Your conferencing devices are an important part of your overall technology fleet. Having a simple, cost-effective, purpose-built tool for managing them makes your job easier — and your colleagues happier.

Every ThinkSmart device comes with a ThinkSmart Manager Basic license included. Upgrading to a ThinkSmart Manager Premium license delivers a few additional benefits:

• Access to **Intel**® **vPro™** features that improve monitoring and control

• Ability to perform bulk restarts

• Ability to integrate third-party software such as Logitech Sync and ServiceNow

• Historical room meeting analytics

Virtual meetings are the lifeblood of today's hybrid companies, and conferencing solutions will begin to play an even larger role in the coming years. ThinkSmart Manager can help you pro-actively predict and address technical challenges to reduce help desk calls and ensure meeting uptime.

Ready to try ThinkSmart Manager Premium? Start a free trial.

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