

How to Shop for Remote Device Management Tools

Remote device management is a complex topic because everyone's requirements for a solution are different. This makes choosing a remote device management solution challenging, as few resources reliably explain how those solutions meaningfully differ.

Here's how to shop for remote device management the right way.



Remote device management: A definition



Remote device management refers to centrally managing and controlling devices from a remote location — a company office, your WFH setup, or your laptop at a tropical destination. Remote device management software can enable remote configuration, monitoring, application management, and troubleshooting without requiring physical access to the devices. These tasks can be done remotely through a centralized management console or platform.

It's also worth noting that [MDM](#) (mobile device management) is the umbrella category you're shopping for. Almost all modern MDM tools are, in effect, remote device management platforms — because they all communicate over the cloud to function.

Pricing considerations when evaluating remote device management tools

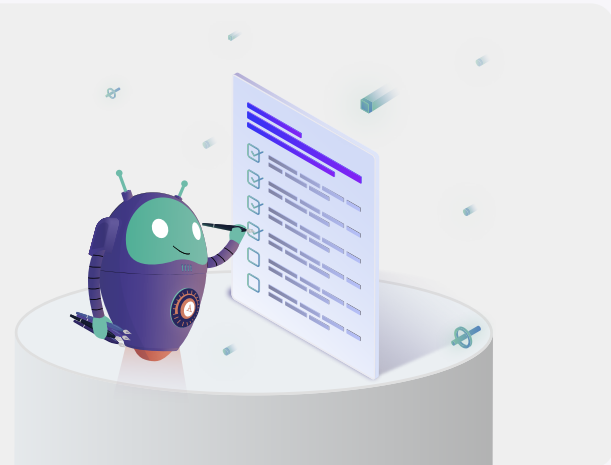
The cost of remote device management tools is usually measured in price per device per month and, on average, [works out to \\$3 to \\$9 per device](#).

These figures are based on actual operational cost, meaning there is still room for that cost to go much higher in outlier cases. Any given MDM solution's advertised cost does not represent much other than a paper contract value. The actual cost to your organization is the time it takes to set up that solution, deploy new devices, and support existing ones. Your MDM's billed cost is really just the first line item. Advertised MDM pricing can be anywhere from under \$1 per device to \$8 per device — or more.

Why is there such variation in solution pricing? How can one remote device management product be worth 200%, 300%, or even 1000% of the cost of another? Jumping from \$3 to \$6 per device makes a huge difference in budgeting! This is where being a savvy shopper counts: You know that being penny-wise and pound-foolish is a risk when selecting any kind of tool. The money you save today could quickly and uncontrollably be outsized by the operational cost of a bad-fit solution in production.

If you're new to MDM, finding a product that best fits your use case is challenging. That's why we put together a 10-question checklist to help you find the best MDM tools for your needs.

[Download the checklist](#)



Remote device management tool checklist

When evaluating the true cost of any remote device management solution — including those that pair hardware as part of their offering — you should look at that solution from the twin perspectives of scalability and suitability to purpose. There is no perfect answer to the "true cost" question, but you can tell a lot about how serious a given solution takes your operational costs by comparing features and functionality.



Remote control

Cost of viewer versus full control, device count limits, time limits, and ease of implementation all matter. Some MDM services don't offer any sort of remote control option, leaving you to integrate **yet another tool** into your strate-



Remote monitoring and telemetry

Is telemetry data provided? Are there telemetry limits? Make sure the tool allows access to all the data you need.



Remote debugging

Is remote debugging available? What kind? Can you stream logging? Visiting a site just to debug a device is not the best use of time or resources.



Streamlined provisioning

Does the solution provide a way to speed up or even automate the provisioning process? How much? What alternative provisioning options are available, if any? You can save yourself loads of time and money by implementing an automated provisioning process, which is especially crucial as you scale.



App and content management

How much content can be placed in your management cloud? How frequently can it be updated? The ability to remotely update apps, files, images, etc., at any time is highly recommended.



Application delivery

How are apps delivered? Do you need to provide your own infrastructure? Is Google Mobile Services (GMS) required? Storing apps and app data in the cloud is just one part of the equation here — how you get those apps to your end devices is equally important.



OTA updates

Is there infrastructure to deliver device OTAs? Operating system updates keep your devices secure and running smoothly. Not all tools offer a streamlined way to push OTA updates.



Custom device and firmware support

Does the solution support your hardware and firmware? Can it? How much engineering is needed? Some management tools only work with specific devices, leaving you high and dry if you need something more.

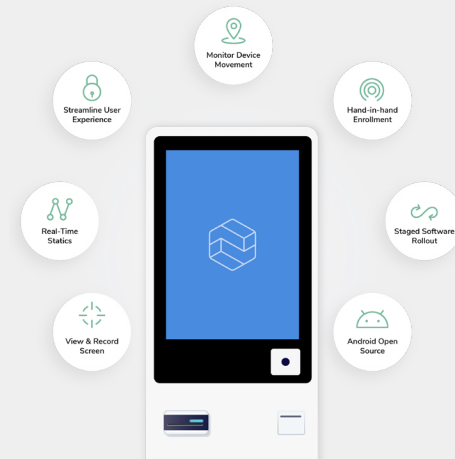
These questions have answers that do not neatly fit into a checkbox, and that is precisely what most MDM solution providers are banking on. There are so many ways a given solution may introduce unnecessary difficulty for your given deployment scenario, use case, or ongoing support and troubleshooting needs that it can feel impossible to get a handle on the landscape without intensive and time-consuming piloting initiatives.

However, this checklist gives you a head start: Many of the above features and functions are either not provided or are cost-added extras on top of per-device fees. Most of the pricing for these "extras" is not advertised, as they tend to be reserved for high device count customers in the enterprise space, where tools are budgeted at a much greater scale.

Cutting to the availability and cost of the features on this checklist (as applicable to your use case!) can give you a sense of how much a given solution actually values your time. If everything is an added extra or something "you don't really need, at least not yet," that's a pretty good sign you're looking at a solution that's just looking to outprice the competition.


No one should pay for functionality they don't need, but MDM solutions tend to be architected in the opposite way: Functionality frequently necessary to automate, streamline, or support your operations beyond the "basic" MDM feature set will cost you. Be a savvy shopper!


[Read more about Esper's features](#)





Remote device management and MDM tool red flags


When evaluating a remote device management solution for your use case, there are some potential red flags that should give you pause. Solutions that either explicitly or implicitly meet these descriptions could seriously limit your ability to innovate or lock you into a supplier or provider you don't actually want.

 **Limited hardware support:** If a solution requires you to pick from a highly curated list of approved vendors with no apparent technical limitation that validates such an approach, you may be getting into ecosystem lock-in (and if device prices go up, you may be priced out of your own management solution).

 **"All in one" hardware and management:** While "device as a service" (DaaS) platforms have their place, they are rarely a substitute for a robust device management solution. When buying hardware from your remote management solution, ecosystem lock-in is guaranteed, and the implications for your device strategy are inherently out of your hands: You're living on someone else's hardware lifecycle now. What happens if your current hardware is EOLed early, and you're forced to spend big on upgrades — or worse, drop the solution entirely?

 **Vague commitments on remote features:** How well does your remote control solution work? Does it work for all devices or just the ones you specifically validate? What about telemetry? Getting specific on the ability to use platform features with the hardware you want to deploy is crucial, and solutions providers are frequently loathe about building custom compatibility unless you represent a genuinely huge business opportunity for them.

 **Price first, features second:** Most remote device management solutions are set up to provide the minimum viable feature set at the lowest possible price to entice customers with entry level solutions. These basic solutions rarely meet anyone's device management needs, and the upsell for a la carte options or pricier service tiers happens quickly. The idea is to get you in the door based on low cost projections because you're paying for something much greater: The cost of your team's time implementing and using a tool. Your real device management budget is human, and that's rarely considered in the shopping process!

 **"Dedicated devices" gaps:** Dedicated devices like point of sale, kiosks, warehouse tablets, and more require dedicated infrastructure. Typical MDM tools are designed for BYOD (bring your own device) and COPE (corporate owned, personally enabled) devices that are used much more like traditional smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Dedicated devices are used in radically different ways and are often much more important to day-to-day business operations. Most MDM tools simply aren't built to support dedicated device fleets. Can your MDM solution explain how they're a "best fit" for dedicated? If they can't, that's not a good sign.

Discovering the disconnect between what an MDM can do and what you need often comes too late — primarily if you have dedicated devices. Our Definitive Guide to Dedicated Device Management is here to cover what MDM is, where it falls short for dedicated devices, and specific considerations for dedicated device management.

[Download the ebook](#)



There's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all device management solution — remote or otherwise. But that's precisely why Esper exists. We offer a better way to manage dedicated devices like tablets, point of sale systems, kiosks, digital signage, warehouse scanners, in-truck logistics devices, and more. We have customers across various industries, including restaurants, retail, education, healthcare, logistics, transportation, and hospitality. With Esper, you get everything you need in a single interface, with an intuitive console that is easy to use but powerful enough to do everything you need.

Esper is the world's first platform for dedicated devices. Cofounded by veterans of Microsoft, Samsung, and Amazon, Esper offers deeply dependable infrastructure, management, and automation tools for enterprises and other large scale dedicated device deployments. If you're looking for device management like you've never experienced before, Esper is the answer. Our intuitive product design and accessible automation make it immediately clear that Esper is a game changer.