

How a server will help streamline your data, storage, backups and extend the life of existing computer systems.

Today your business systems may be operating fine and everything appears to fine. Problems like hard disks filling up on desktops and laptops, data not being stored properly or in an always accessible place can quickly sneak up on you. Adding a small server to your small business is very cost effective and has many benefits.

A server will speedup computing and improve reliability. Peer to peer networks (networks where all computers can talk to each other but there is no central security or data storage) where one of the workstations is setup as the central file store location and there is a user who also uses the machine for day to day work activities is very risky. If the user accesses the internet or email on a daily bases you are putting your companies data at risk. Viruses or hackers have a much easier time compromising systems that are used for daily computing needs than server systems. Server systems sit on your local area network serve files and manage access to the network without requiring access to the outside world.

Adding a second hard disk to your server allows for "mirroring" which creates an exact duplicate of the data you use on your primary hard disk. In the event of hard disk failure recovering your server and company critical data is as easy. Simply rebooting the server and configuring it to use the secondary mirrored hard disk you server will be operational in a few minuets. On a peer to peer network with no central server data recovery is often very time consuming and data loss is much more of a risk.

Adding a server to your network stream lines work for your IT staff or consultants. Managing a network from a central server allows for automation of backups, system updates, security, and virus protection. Adding a new user, temporary or permanent access to the network from satellite or home offices is also very easy to configure and manage. This easy management will end up saving the company money on IT management staff or consultants. Ensuring one server is operating properly and all tasks are up to date is much less time consuming.

Below is a list of reasons published by Microsoft on why a central server is recommended.

Eight Reasons You Need One

Based on these analysts' feedback and others', here are eight reasons to buy a server for your small business, rather than doing without or relying on peer-to-peer networking.

- 1) **You can create order from chaos.** By centralizing data on a server, you can better manage business-critical information. Sharing files and other data across PCs becomes much easier, as does migrating data from one PC to another. And as Microsoft points out, older PCs can get new life if their files and data are off-loaded onto a server. "A lot of people are buying servers and opting not to dump their old PCs and laptops," she says.
- 2) **You can protect your data by making backups easier.** Two features of Windows Small Business Server 2003, for example, enable users to better protect their data assets by simplifying backups and the restoration of critical data. The features are the Backup Configuration Wizard and Volume Shadow Copy.
- 3) **You can collaborate better as a business.** Not only is data sharing easier with a server-based network, but Windows Small Business Server 2003 comes with Windows SharePoint

Services, which is software that enables your employees and other team members to collaborate via the Web. With SharePoint, you get a company intranet portal with a user-friendly interface to organize and share information. It comes pre-populated with help documents and resources. A server also is a must if you want to run line-of-business applications, such as accounting solutions from Microsoft Business Solutions, on multiple PCs.

4) **You can accommodate a mobile work force.** Servers enable authorized out-of-office workers to have remote access to your network, enabling data sharing among those who travel, telecommute or work in off-site locations. Through Remote Web Workplace, users of Windows Small Business Server 2003 can get access to server data via the Internet. Out-of-office workers also can connect to the company intranet via SharePoint.

5) **You can share high-speed broadband access.** "A real catalyst to server sales among small businesses is in providing high-speed Internet access across a network," says IDC's Boggs. "If I'm running a business now that has three or more dial-up accounts, it's time to get a server and go broadband." The return on investment will come quickly in the form of higher productivity, he says.

6) **You can set up new computers, add users and deploy new applications more quickly and easily.** Expect to grow? By managing your data from a central location, you can better coordinate the addition of new PCs, software licenses and software applications. You can also better manage firewalls and monitor threats to your data, and more easily deploy virus protection and intrusion detection.

7) **You can get more processing power.** A server can supercharge your network, storing large chunks of data, freeing up memory and enabling individual PCs to perform better. Small business today need that additional processing power to run Web services, manage Web sites, do e-mail newsletters, and use more sophisticated tools and applications, Microsoft says. (Boggs says he foresees more and more households buying servers to accommodate students using their PCs as educational labs and teenagers who buy online games and other sophisticated applications.)

8) **You can look more professional — and connect better with your customers.** Server software such as Windows Small Business Server 2003 enables you to consolidate your e-mail accounts (AOL, Yahoo!, Hotmail, etc.) into a single, company-hosted e-mail account, enhancing your image to customers and partners. "You could have several aliases from one root e-mail address". A server can make a lot of businesses look bigger than they are." Adds Microsoft, "It not only gives you more bang for your buck; it makes you look more professional to those you want to do business with."

How you know it's time to buy a server

- You have two or more dial-up accounts in your business.
- You need to centralize and organize your data (you can't always find what you need when you need it).
- You need to share hardware such as printers and fax machines for two or more PCs (peer-to-peer networks mean lots of cords and wires to trip over).
- You need to simplify backups to keep your data more secure.
- You have employees who travel, frequently telecommute, or work off-site, and want to connect to a network.
- You could benefit from an intranet (your employees who travel and telecommute don't always remember to tell you).
- You have high storage needs (and your loaded-down PCs wince and groan when you add more data).
- You'd like to run accounting software or other line-of-business application on more than one PC
- Your company's growing and plans to add new computers and employees (congrats!).
- You mean business: You want to look professional (and bigger than you are).
- Your PCs are old, old, old and you want to get rid of them. A server makes migration easier
- Your PCs are old or older and you want to keep them. A server takes load off your PC's.