

8 Reasons your Business Needs a Server

Today, server-based networks can be found in more than 43% of the U.S. small businesses with more than one PC, a percentage that continues to grow, analysts say. What's more, servers and networks have even moved into businesses with fewer than five PCs, as users see the efficiencies and better productivity of a shared network, analysts say.

The words *server* and *network* used to conjure images of big computer rooms tucked inside the bowels of corporations, and managed by tech specialists in windowless offices.

Thankfully, times have changed. Whew!!!

And who are the people who manage these server networks? If you run your own business, it might very well be you. Or maybe it's your office manager, marketing specialist or finance officer everyday businesspeople with enough tech smarts to run a successful business.

Eight Reasons You Need One

Below, I outline the reasons your small business needs a server (*servers are computers that provide services, commands and centralized management to workstation computers, called "clients"*).

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. In addition, older PCs can get new life if their files and data are off-loaded onto a server.*
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. If you are running a business 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.
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.*
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.*
A server can make a lot of businesses look bigger than they are. A server not only gives you more bang for your buck; it makes you look more professional to those you want to do business with.

In short. . .

- 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, old, old, and you want to keep them. A server takes a load off the PCs.