

Re: why have a server?...advice needed

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<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Windows/microsoft.public.windows.server.general/2008-03/msg01248.html>

- *From:* "leew [MVP]" <useContactPage@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Fri, 28 Mar 2008 23:20:50 -0400
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Greg Peterson wrote:

Very good points, but allow me to respond....

Quick question – what is it this business does? Is it a real estate agency? A sales office? What? I don't need to know EXACT SPECIFIC DETAILS, but I'm being forced to generalize because I know nothing of what the business will do, other than it will have 20–30 users and many with laptops.

"leew [MVP]" <useContactPage@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message [news:47ed89c1\\$0\\$25019\\$607ed4bc@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:47ed89c1$0$25019$607ed4bc@xxxxxxxxxx)

1. Single Logon. In a domain environment, you can setup your computers so that each user has a logon that can be used on ANY computer. When they change their password, the change is effective on ALL computers that are a member of the domain. In a Workgroup, you must setup a user account on EACH computer the user will log on to – or use a common logon which means you have no way of tracking who does what.

Everyone will have one computer, and there will not be any need to use one another's computer. So I guess the Single Logon does not matter here.

Sorry, but in my experience, there's always a need, especially when you have 20–30 users. Even for you or your support people.

2. Centralized Management – you can control system settings on ALL systems from one system. For example, SBS will allow you to redirect everyone's My Documents and Desktop folders to a folder on the server. This is called folder redirection.

This is a good point, but what is the purpose of collecting everyone's "My Documents" and

Re: why have a server?...advice needed

desktop folders? Is it for backup purposes? If so, why not use an online backup tool for each computer (e.g. www.carbonite.com). Cost is about \$50/year per computer.

Ok... \$50/computer/year... that's \$1000 per year. How much data will you have? How fast will your internet connection be? Folder Redirection is also used when users move around. At one of my clients, they are packed in like sardines and by redirecting their folders, they can sit at ANY unused computer and when they log on, they have complete access to all their files without having to do anything. But that's not the only form of centralized management.

I assume you'll be getting Microsoft Office for this company? Or perhaps an Antivirus program? Both office and Antivirus can be deployed using Active Directory. Do you want to go around to each machine and install office manually? Or would you like to copy the source CD to the network, define the package, and then the next time each computer is booted, office and the antivirus program and possible other software is automatically installed. Ok... so you buy office with the computer... fine... what about upgrades?

Do you think you might want to be able to restrict what people do online? Servers can help you do that more effectively and administered all from a remote location. What happens if you have a custom software program that needs an update on each computer... with a small script, you can push that update to everyone's systems with about 20 minutes of work.

Perhaps you'd like to TRY to prevent your systems from getting infected with malware... well, you CAN go to each computer and implement policies manually – or you can setup one or more policies and apply them to all workstations from the server simply by placing the workstation or policy on the appropriate object in Active Directory.

How about setting up printers? Is everyone going to have their own? That seems like a waste... do you want to know who prints what? Maybe give someone priority so their print jobs ALWAYS print first (bosses usually like that). Maybe you want to add a printer to the network... Well, with a server, add the printer to an SBS system and the next time the workstation user logs on, they have access the printer... OR you could go around and spend 5 minutes on each computer configuring the printer manually... or instruct your users how to do it, I suppose...

3. I've used Gmail for an organization I'm in. I love google... but I HATE gmail. I've gotten so many important messages flagged as SPAM it's not funny. Maybe it was a config error on our administrators part, but I also don't like that I can't create (easily, if at all) sub folders. I would strongly advise against using the gmail facility at this time (I'm sure I'm in the minority).

Point taken.

4. Centralized backup. With Folder redirection, mentioned in #2, you can backup virtually all user data without concern by backing up JUST the server. (Your network, ideally, will be setup so that your users can use ANY workstation (or almost any workstation) and if one fails, it really won't matter; they can sit at another employee's desk and pick up right where they

Re: why have a server?...advice needed

left off).

See my response to point #2 above. If someone's computer fails, there will of course be some downtime given the time to reconfigure their computer and retrieve their backup, but that should be somewhat rare.

It should be – until they get infected with malware once a month (or more often) because that new employee likes to tweak EVERYTHING and downloads software illegally or maybe "stumbles" onto a porno web site with malware embedded in it.

5. Exchange Server, included with SBS, will provide shared and group calendars, e-mail, tasks, and contacts.

I have been using Gmail's group calendar and contacts and find them both very good.

I haven't used them so I can't specifically comment on them... but consider this – IF you buy a server, the obvious choice is Small Business Server (SBS). SBS is CHEAPER than a "Standard" copy of server AND it INCLUDES Exchange Server... so you might as well put it to good use. The capabilities of exchange are impressive (and occasionally frustrating – but you can say about virtually any groupware solution).

6. One of the best features of SBS (and Windows Server 2003 and later) is Volume Shadow Copy, not typically offered by any CHEAP NAS. This feature takes automatic, periodic backups that users can easily restore themselves by right clicking on a folder and reviewing the history of the backups. EXPENSIVE NAS units typically offer this "snapshot" feature, but they typically cost AT LEAST \$5,000 – usually more like \$10K plus.

The NAS would be used only for file sharing, not for taking backup images. An online tool like Carbonite would be used. Storing the data online (and offsite) makes sense in that it protects from fire, floods, etc.

Volume Shadow Copy is NOT the same thing. I assume Carbonite would run nightly? Volume shadow copy, as I configure it for most of my clients, runs every 3 hours from 7am to 7pm. At which point you can go back to any of the backup points – 7am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, or 7pm on a given day. And it's instantaneous (as instantaneous as a file copy).

Otherwise, in general, you are correct. Except that this is dependent upon your internet connection to some extent and the recovery time would be longer.

Also, how are you backing up the NAS device? What happens if it fails? Especially if you end up setting up a significant configuration, this could be HOURS of tedious work getting a NAS to replace it.

Re: why have a server?...advice needed

7. Remote access options with SBS include Remote Web Workplace, Sharepoint, and VPN.

This is a very good point, but with laptops being issued to many employees who travel, and using Gmail for e-mail and calendar features, I see the remote logon being less important. The only thing they'd need remote access to would be the local NAS, which we would probably set up with an FTP or something.

I hope you wouldn't use FTP. That's just inviting people to steal your data. FTP is an insecure protocol, user names and passwords are transmitted in clear text, meaning anyone who can catch a packet can determine how to access your files. This is not exactly difficult for a hacker.

What about accounting systems? Or maintenance?

I have a few pages you might want to review to get a better understanding of the SBS product and backup in general. You should also might want to review the link on Volume Shadow Copy.

<http://www.visualwin.com/VSS/>
<http://www.lwcomputing.com/tips/static/sbs.asp>
<http://www.lwcomputing.com/tips/static/backup.asp>

Thanks very much for taking the time to reply.

Couple of other tips –

Get an account rep with Dell (or some other major vendor – my preference is Dell) and for a business, stick to the OptiPlex, Latitude, Workstation, and PowerVault lines. These systems are relatively cheap, come with excellent warranties, and are GENERALLY highly reliable in my experience. EVERYONE can make a lemon... and everyone can make a BATCH of lemons... but in my experience, you have very good odds of NOT having too many lemons and when you do, getting them repaired quickly, when using Dell. (I despise HP – every time I've called their support for ANYTHING I get routed to India and get a different, lame suggestion as to how to repair something. Again, in my experience, 50/50 chance you hit the Dell India support queue... but that's a 50% better chance than you have with HP... and you can always call Dell back later.

When buying Laptops, get 3 year warranties AND 3 year accidental damage coverage. It's expensive (typically \$400–\$500 per laptop), but laptops travel MUCH more than desktops... things spill, they drop, etc. The warranty will protect against all that.

When buying a server, get a 3 year, 24x7x365 warranty with 4 hour response. MUST BE 4 hour response.

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The server runs the business. The desktop does not. Desktops can have 1 year warranties... but the server needs a FULL 3 year warranty.