

WHEN DO YOU NEED A SERVER?

WHAT IS A SERVER?

A server is a high powered computer designed to manage, store, send and process data, 24 x 7. As such, servers need to be far more reliable than desktops/laptops. In order to achieve this, servers include things that the average personal computer does not such as:

- Processors specifically designed to handle the load servers endure such as the Intel Xeon® processor line
- Dual processors
- Redundant hard drives and/or power supplies
- Hot swappable components - this means that repairs can be made and parts replaced without even shutting the computer down
- Scalability - servers can often be upgraded to handle more demands, programs, users, etc.
- The ability to process data faster and more efficiently than regular PCs

BENEFITS OF SERVERS

Here are some of the benefits of servers:

- File and Network security
- Increased reliability
- Remote access to programs and data
- Centralized data storage and shared resources
- Antivirus/malware management
- Centralized backup

WHEN YOU REALLY NEED A SERVER

The reality is that you can achieve file and network security, remote access, centralized data storage, antivirus/malware management and centralized backup without buying a server. A server in many cases makes it easy, but there are other ways to obtain similar benefits. If you decide to use a program that requires a server, then you don't have a choice. There are many programs that frankly won't operate at all unless they're installed on a server (matter management, accounting and document/email management programs often require this).

The problem is that the bread-and-butter for many hardware companies is the sale, installation and maintenance of servers. As Abraham Maslow once said:

"I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail."

Above, I have indicated that there alternative methods for achieving the benefits a server provides. All of the ways in which that is possible would add another 4 hours to this seminar. However, here are some broad considerations and options:

SHARING FILES

There are many options for this. You can buy Network Attached Storage devices for a network, you can use a single PC's hard drive as the storage location for all data on your network, and you can use sync programs such as Dropbox.com. There are also cloud storage options like Microsoft's OneDrive service which comes with Office 365 subscriptions (or which can be purchased separately). There are also cloud document management systems like www.netdocuments.com.

CENTRALIZED BACKUP

Many of the options for sharing files include backup. You can also buy backup systems for networks which don't require a server and there are great online options like www.carbonite.com.

SECURITY

This is also built into many of the file sharing options. For email, there are encryption options like www.ProtectedTrust.com.

REMOTE ACCESS

Again, remote access is built into many of the file sharing options. If you need remote access to programs, then you can subscribe to software-as-a-service options like www.ActionStep.com for matter management & accounting. You can also rent servers (aka hosted servers) which means you pay a monthly fee to access a server via the Internet. Hosted servers also typically give you full access to all programs and data from any device connected to the Internet.