



The power to do more

Having multiple unconnected computers and other tech equipment may be costing you time, money – and customers. A server could be the answer.

As small businesses grow, many reach a point when their computing systems falter. A company with only a handful of employees can usually get by with disconnected computers and software packages. But as you add desktops, laptops and other devices to support an increasing headcount, the system can become so cumbersome that productivity and customer service start to suffer.

If you face this situation, it may be time to get a server.

A server does what the name implies: It serves the information needs of you and your employees from a central source. For the price of a well-equipped laptop, you can turn a tangled mess of computing tools into a streamlined, easy-to-use infrastructure.

Benefits of having a server:

Is it time to get a server?

1. Centralize important files
2. Share resources and collaborate
3. Improve data security
4. Enable remote access
5. Drive company growth

Here are five ways a server can help your business:

1. Centralize important files

A server provides a single location for accessing files, eliminating the need to search through separate machines or email documents back and forth. Employees can make changes to files and re-upload them to the server so everyone has access to the latest versions when they need them.

Storing files in one place also makes data backups much easier. Look for a server that provides automatic backup so you know your data is protected and can save time better spent on running your business.

2. Share resources and collaborate

Servers simplify your use of shared resources, such as software applications and printers. Instead of buying software for individual computers or separate printers, you can provide access to centralized resources for everyone in the network. A server can also help improve collaboration by providing the same email, instant messaging and calendaring applications to everyone on staff.

A small business might try to gain these capabilities by upgrading an existing PC, but this is usually not a good idea. Unlike PCs, servers are designed to support multiple users, so you can expect fast, consistent performance even if several employees access the same resource at the same time.

3. Improve data security

As a company's devices proliferate, the chances of data loss and hardware failure increase. A server can help solve this problem in a variety of ways, including:

- **Data replication.** Some servers have mirroring features in which data is written to a hard drive and copied on a second. If one drive fails, your information stays safe.
- **Virus protection.** A server can deliver antivirus software and other malware protection to all the computers in your network. This way, security isn't dependent on employees' individual settings.
- **File permissions.** If you don't want all your employees to have access to certain files, you can use individual and group accounts to set permission levels. For example, you might want to restrict financial records to a bookkeeper and employee files to a human resources manager while giving yourself access to all files.

4. Enable remote access

A server can be a boon if you have employees who work offsite or need access to company documents while on the road. Consider setting up a virtual private network (VPN), which is a highly secure connection between your company's network and the devices using it. This can give you a safer and more reliable way to share files than emailing them or passing around USB flash drives. Many server operating systems include easy-to-use tools to create a VPN.

5. Drive company growth

A server can provide a good foundation for expanding your business. If you have up to a dozen employees or so, a single server will probably accommodate growth easily.

Once you reach 25 employees, you may want to think about upgrading the server's memory and processing speed — typically an uncomplicated matter — or adding a second server. Either way, this centralized approach gives you a simple way to scale your business. And new employees can start using shared software and hardware as they come aboard, giving them a running start.

Before you buy a server, consider how you'll use it. These **examples** show how different types of companies might use a server, and this **worksheet** can help you think through your specific needs.

Dell™ offers a range of servers suited to small businesses, as well as expert setup assistance and technical support.

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