The Benefits of a Server
Enhancing business operations

John Gleeson
Director, iThink Technology
Email: info@ithink.ie

Last month I covered the basics of what a server has to offer you business. In this months article I shall cover in detail the benefits that Microsoft Small Business Server can bring to any business to enhance the way the business operates. Here is a brief outline of some of those benefits.

CENTRAL DATA STORAGE AND BACKUP:
Storing files on a server—rather than on individual computer hard disk drives—reduces the need for employees to back up files on individual computers. Without a server, if an employee's computer crashes and files are lost, it can take days to reconstruct the system and months to re-create the lost work. Maintaining control of document versions can also be a challenging, cumbersome task that can result in wasted time and a hit to your company's credibility if the wrong version of a document is released. With a client/server network, servers can be configured for centralized data storage, which makes it much easier for coworkers to access documents and work together on projects. Windows Small Business Server 2003 is designed so you and your employees can store, update, and share all your vital business information, such as customer contacts, financial records, and e-mail, in one central location.

REDUCE COST BY SHARING PRINTING, FAX AND INTERNET CONNECTIONS:
With server technology, you can reduce the number of printers and fax machines you need to efficiently run your business. The server can be configured to automatically route print jobs to your central printer, and incoming faxes can be delivered directly to each employee's computer. A single, shared Internet connection eliminates the need for various cable modems or DSL connections and multiple configurations that require support. Also the server-monitoring features let you track and control employee Internet use.
A server system can make sharing your business

Storing files on a server—rather than on individual computer hard disk drives—reduces the need for employees to back up files on individual computers.

assets across your network quick and easy, and will ultimately help you save money.

SECURE YOUR DATA:
Servers can enhance security by letting you control the access your employees and others have to the Internet. Firewall technology helps control Internet communication so that you can better protect your business from unauthorized users who try to access your company's computers through the Internet. Microsoft Small Business Server software provides a built-in firewall for enhanced security and offers tools for managing and monitoring employee Internet access.

STAY IN CONTACT WITH EMAIL AND CALENDARS:
While it is possible to outsource your e-mail to an Internet service provider (ISP), there are significant advantages to hosting your own e-mail system. Having an in-house e-mail system brings an element of professionalism and sophistication to your company communications while improving efficiency and organization. Hosting your own system allows you to:
• Create and remove addresses as needed. Personnel changes won't require a call to your ISP.
• Create multiple, custom e-mail addresses such as sales@yourcompany.com, which can be delivered to the appropriate person's e-mail inbox or distributed to a group of people.
Only a few servers for small business have an integrated, easy-to-use e-mail system that is reliable and will grow with your business.

Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 technology, a streamlined e-mail system, is part of Windows Small Business Server 2003 and gives your business a professional e-mail presence as well as offering your employees secure access to their e-mail on the Web. With Windows Small Business Server 2003, you also get Outlook 2003 for managing and organizing e-mail messages, schedules, and contacts.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SYSTEM:
Some server systems still require complex configuration to run smoothly; others can be simple and cost effective to administer. With Windows Small Business Server 2003, your administrator costs are greatly reduced as long as you ensure that it is installed correctly by a certified Microsoft supplier. For additional cost savings, a server can be configured to continually monitor itself. Some servers can even produce regular reports on the health of the network and system usage, with automatic e-mail alerts which save you a call to your consultant. Make sure your server system gives you the information you need to identify and solve problems quickly.

GROWTH:
Windows Small Business Server 2003 can grow with your small business, keeping pace with your changing demands. Because your data is managed from a central location, adding new computers and applications is a straightforward task. It's a good idea to consider your strategy for managing the growth of your business and your technology needs. Make sure you have a system that can grow with your business needs.

That's it for this month. In the next issue I will be covering how remote access and working from home can improve you and your employee's efficacy.

Should you require any further information or advice on any of the topics covered please do not hesitate to contact me at jgleeson@ithink.ie