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Why Virtualization Is A Good Idea For Your Small Business

Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

Server virtualization is the partitioning of a physical server into smaller virtual servers to help maximize your server resources.

In server virtualization, software is used to divide the physical server into multiple virtual environments, called virtual or private servers. This is in contrast to dedicating one server to a single application or task.

Server virtualization provides a small business with almost unlimited storage space. Let's look at some of the ways that server virtualization could benefit your small business.

Efficiency

Virtualization maximizes server space, which reduces the number of servers needed to store important company data.

Since multiple virtual servers reside on a single physical server, your infrastructure will require less space, saving occupancy costs.

Economy

Virtualization will cut down on your energy consumption, which will lower your monthly bill. Because you'll need fewer servers, you'll save on hardware costs, as well.

For a small-business owner, these savings can mean a lot in the long run, especially if energy costs are high.

Disaster Recovery

Fires, theft and natural disasters happen, often without warning.

What would happen to your business if all of your important files were stored on in-house servers that got destroyed in a tornado or fire?

With virtualization, that becomes less of a worry, especially if you conduct regular checks to ensure that your data is being properly backed up.

It is equally important that you take steps to ensure the data can be recovered if necessary and that when recovered, the data is usable.

Virtualization cuts down on the risk that an employee or thief could walk off with important company files, something that can happen if you back up company files on external hard drives.

Business Continuity

Unlike disaster recovery, business continuity is about quickly recovering from things like power outages and server crashes.

These two common occurrences could cost a small-business owner a lot of money depending on how long employees remained idle waiting for power to be restored or a server to be repaired.

With a virtualized server environment, server images are often backed up to the cloud - where they can be enabled in real time and act as a replacement server until resources are restored.

Virtual Desktop

This is a growing trend in the business world. Also known as client virtualization, desktop virtualization separates the PC desktop environment from the physical machine and operates in the cloud.

With virtual desktop infrastructure, employees can access the company network from their laptops, tablets or smart devices.

Virtualization has worked well for large enterprises for a number of years, and now the technology is affordable for smaller businesses.

Choosing virtualization for your company is no small matter. You'll want to make sure you use an experienced, trusted IT partner to make sure your project goes smoothly.

Need help? Call the Tech Experts 24 hour computer emergency hotline at (734) 240-0200.

The Benefits Of VoIP Over Traditional Phone Service

by Jeremy Miller,
Technician

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is the general term used for transmitting two-way voice communication over a network.

This can work on any network, whether it be at home or work, connected to the Internet. VoIP can also be used for internal communications and do not necessarily need to be transmitted out to the Internet.

Plain old telephone system (POTS) is the traditional phone service that everyone is used to, and it is commonly known as a home phone.

This system is designed to run on dedicated electronic circuits and is transmitted using analog signals where VoIP uses digital.

There are many reasons that you should use VoIP over POTS many of which include cost and expansion. Where ever you have a network connection, VoIP can be implemented. POTS often are much more costly.

As I said before POTS requires a dedicated circuit to transmit on. This means every time you add a new phone you would have to run a phone line and a network drop.

POTS can become quite expensive for an office building if you have to run phone lines to each person's office.

In the event of expansion POTS will require costly hardware upgrades and provisioning of new lines. VoIP will only require more bandwidth and possibly software upgrades which are generally inexpensive and very easy to do.

There is much more competition in the VoIP market. Where POTS may have a few providers to choose from in your area, VoIP will have hundreds to choose from on the Internet.

When using VoIP you have control over the traffic of the phone calls as well. This makes it easy to manage, record, and maintain all phone calls.

Many of the features such as call waiting, conference calling, music on hold, multiple extensions and voice mailboxes are all free with VoIP. These features have always come at a premium when using POTS.

VoIP does not limit you to what you can transmit over its call. For instance you can make a video call or a voice call using VoIP. While in your call you can send over an attachment which is quite similar to email.

There are downsides to using VoIP as well, but most of them can be mitigated. The first is unpredictable quality of service. You may not always get great sound or video quality.

This is usually dictated by the available bandwidth. If you notice your quality is not as good as you like, then you may need to upgrade your Internet speed or you network equipment.

VoIP may not always get you to the correct 911 responder in the event of an emergency. They are not centralized like POTS. The traffic could be routed around the world.

Since VoIP relies on the Internet and the Internet relies on electricity, you will lose your VoIP service if either Internet or electricity goes down.

This can be avoided by having a redundant Internet connection and battery backups for your network equipment.

You can also install an IP based private automatic branch exchang (PABX) which will allow you to integrate your POTS with VoIP so you can take advantage of VoIP and not lose the benefits of POTS.

If you are looking into VoIP or have any questions we would be happy to help.

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Need help? Call the Tech Experts 24 hour computer emergency hotline at (734) 240-0200.

Choosing The Best Option To Back Up Your Data

by Michael Menor,
Network Technician

We highly recommend that all computer users regularly back up their data in order to prevent losing information in the case of a disk failure.

We recommend at the very least backing up files that are frequently changed. A basic backup strategy involves copying important files to a location separate from your hard drive.

Having more than one copy of important data is insurance against the loss of that data in an event such as a hard drive or system failure.

To make your backup strategy more complete, you should try a trial restore of your backup so you will be comfortable enough with the process to use it before you experience the loss of data.

Flash drives that plug into a USB port are a convenient technology for backups. They do not generally require any extra software and are very portable and they can be reused many times.

Flash Drive

A flash drive can serve as an external repository for important data as a protection against an event such as the failure of your hard disk.

However, a single flash drive does not have the storage capacity to backup an entire hard disk or file system, and they tend be more expensive than other storage methods for the same amount of data.

Cloud Storage

You can access your data from any computer or mobile device with an Internet connection and you don't have to keep track of any extra hardware or external storage media.

There are many providers that offer free online storage. A few popular ones are Dropbox, Google Drive, and Microsoft SkyDrive.

Many of these are cross-platform applications that enable you to access whatever data you have stored

BACKUP

as though it were stored in a folder on your computer's hard drive.

CDs/DVDs/Blu-ray discs

CDs, DVDs, and Blu-ray discs are also an option for backing up data if you have an internal or external drive that can write to one or all formats:

- CDs: 750 MB
- DVDs: 4.5 GB (single layer) or 8.7 GB (double layer)
- Blu-ray: 25-100 GB

CDs, DVDs, and Blu-ray discs are among your cheapest backup options (per gigabyte), and they are also among the most durable (no moving parts to wear out or metal parts to rust).

However, while it is technically possible to back up your entire system to CDs, DVDs, or Blu-ray discs by spanning multiple discs, it would be a time-consuming process that would require many discs.

External Hard Drives

An external hard drive is often the same type of hard drive as found inside most computers, only in a stand-alone enclosure with a USB or other data port that is powered by your computer or a separate wall adaptor.

As such, it is possible to purchase an external hard drive that is as large or larger than your computer's internal hard drive, allowing you to backup your entire system to a drive that you can separate from your computer, carry with you to transfer your files, or set aside as a backup.

Most external hard drives have moving parts, however, making them more prone to wear and damage due to drops or vibration than some other backup options.

Also, some external hard drives do not operate cross-platform, which means that if your drive is formatted for use with Mac OS X, it may not be recognized by a Windows computer (or vice-versa).

External hard drives are available in sizes ranging from 100 gigabytes to many terabytes, and some are small enough to carry in a purse.

However, in whatever size you choose, external hard drives are the fastest and most versatile way to back up large amounts of data.

Outlook.com Tips And Tricks

Ever since Microsoft switched Hotmail to Outlook some users have had difficulty adjusting to the changes even though it is essentially still the same, and attaching photos and files is more simple than ever before.

There is however some simple tips for those who have found the changeover confusing.

The important thing to remember is that your email address has not changed and continues to end with hotmail.com. You can even add an alias account via http://windows.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows/outlook/add-alias-account.

The alias makes use of the same contact list, settings and inbox as your primary email address.

Those who don't like the default blue color scheme can also change it to suit simply by selecting the small 'cog' icon that can be found in the right hand corner of the Outlook window and selecting from the 18 available color schemes.

If you are writing an email that has turned out to be a mini-novel but don't have time to finish, just tap the button marked "Save Draft" on the colored Outlook menu bar and you can pick up where you left off.

This will save a copy to your Drafts folder and allow you to go back, finish and send it at a later time.

Blog Your Way To Success

Blogging is nothing new these days, but it's still a powerful tool for promoting yourself, your ideas, and your personal brand.

Blogs are easy to set up, but good blogs can be challenging to maintain.

Keep these tips in mind to create a blog that will make a mark on the Internet:

Stick to a clear theme

Select a broad topic to concentrate on. If your blog seems too scattered, people won't feel any compelling reason to read it regularly.

Know your audience

Think about who you're trying to attract. What are they interested in? What are their problems? What do they need?

Address these questions and you'll be able to create content that appeals to the readers you want.

Write powerful headlines

The first thing your readers will see when they visit your blog is the headline of your latest story. Give it some excitement and emphasis with action verbs and colorful language so they know what your item is about, and want to read it right away.

Engage with your readers

Don't let comments sit there. Respond with a thank-you, more information, or to correct misinformation.

Avoid fights, but make your points clearly and respectfully so your audience knows you're paying attention.

Keep at it

Many blogs start strong but then languish because their founders lose interest.

Remember that this is a long-term effort. If you're not getting the response you want, try tweaking your blog, but don't give up too soon.

MCHUMOR.com by T. McCracken

"Remember, Art, statistics, credits and debits are in the eye of the manipulator."