



A centralized computing system can help companies of almost any kind work more efficiently and be more productive. Here's how a server could benefit four different types of small businesses.

Buying a server is a logical step for many companies that want to better organize their data and improve access to shared resources. In fact, servers are the second most important IT focus for small and midsize businesses in 2013, according to research¹ by the software development company Spiceworks.

How a server can deliver for your business

These four examples show how a server can help companies in various industries. Use them to visualize how your own business might use a server to gain an edge.

Business consultancy:

- Collaborate more productively

Medical practice:

- Help protect sensitive data

Restaurant:

- Simplify scheduling and file storage

Sporting goods wholesaler:

- Improve information access

1. Business consultancy: Collaborate more productively

A small business consultancy needs an efficient way to store, share and track client-related files. In the past, documents and spreadsheets were stored on different computers, making it hard to find files when they were needed. The firm invested in a server to:

- **Improve access to files and software.** With a server, staff members now have a central location for storing files so it's easier to find them and keep them organized. Having centralized storage also helps with version control. Staff members who need to work on the same file simply retrieve the one they need and re-upload it with the date when they're finished. In addition, centralized project management and time-tracking software makes it unnecessary to install programs on separate machines.
- **Automate data backup.** A server gives the company a single point for backing up important data and keeping it secure. When files were stored on individual computers, backups to external hard drives happened infrequently. Now, files stored on the server can be backed up automatically.
- **Make printers sharable.** Employees often need access to a printer so they can print out client documents and lists. A server lets everyone use the same device, so staff members no longer need to ask colleagues to print out files from their desks.

2. Medical practice: Help protect sensitive data

A doctor wants to make the data and email communications for his practice more secure. He also wants to restrict access to certain files to employees directly responsible for them. He uses a server to:

- **Protect email.** Employees previously used different email service providers, exposing the practice to security risks. Thanks to email software on the server, the firm can now keep sensitive communications in-house. Strong anti-spam and anti-virus protection boost security even more.
- **Control access to files.** The doctor uses the server management console to create accounts for individual users, allowing him to restrict file access to certain employees. This way, only he and the firm's accountant can access financial data, while managers and physicians are the only ones who can view patient records. As the practice grows, the doctor can assign permissions to new employees.
- **Minimize data loss.** The server helps protect important files by replicating data across multiple drives. If one drive fails, copies of the information on it reside elsewhere, so that work can proceed with minimal disruption.

3. Restaurant: Simplify scheduling and file storage

The owner of a restaurant with two locations wants an easier way to coordinate employee scheduling. She also wants a single, secure location to store important files. A server can help her:

- **Streamline management.** She can create a monthly schedule and place it on the server, allowing employees to access it at either restaurant. They can post notes on the

document if they want to swap shifts. The owner can update the schedule on the fly, knowing everyone can see the latest version.

- **Centralize storage.** The server provides a single repository for inventory lists, employee records and other files that once were scattered among different computers. This makes it easier to retrieve records when the restaurant orders products or reviews employee performance. Centralization also makes it easier to back up files.
- **Host a website.** The owner also places the company's website on the server. She no longer needs to pay a third-party hosting service, and she has instant access to the site whenever she wants to make a change.

4. Sporting goods wholesaler: Improve information access

A sporting goods wholesaler wants to improve efficiency and share information more effectively with customers and manufacturers. A server can help it:

- **Share applications.** Employees can use the company's enterprise resource planning system on the server rather than having the software installed on their computers. This gives them faster access to inventory data, order tracking and financial reports. It also saves time, as they can make updates once on the server rather than on multiple computers.
- **Improve remote access.** Centralized file storage on the server gives employees easy access to documents when they're away from the office. This helps them work more productively while traveling and lets them get up-to-date information while visiting customer sites. The company uses a virtual private network — a dedicated channel between the server and employee devices — to help keep the data secure.
- **Host an extranet.** Employees can post large files to an extranet hosted on the server, enhancing communication with people outside the company. For example, they can share product catalogs with customers easily and provide product images to manufacturers to help make sure orders are filled correctly.

Want to learn more? This [article](#) and [worksheet](#) can help you explore the capabilities of a server in more detail and think through your specific needs.



The power to do more