

DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING A SERVER

Having a clear idea of why you might need a Server is crucial to the success of the project, but before you get the chequebook out and leap down to the Prerequisites, let's look at some of the disadvantages and drawbacks that you are bound to encounter within a Server environment.

1. Increased Costs

The most obvious point about running a Server-based network is the increased cost. Servers are much more expensive than PC's to acquire and you will need to get used to increased prices for Server-based software too.

Servers don't last forever and are typically redundant after 5 years for all but the most basic of functions. Windows and Mac Servers are licensed 'per user' so as you increase the number of staff, these companies will want their share too!

Servers do need regular checking, updating and monitoring. It is likely that you will need to undertake changes in users, permissions, email addresses and this may require some detailed IT knowledge. Moreover, if Servers go wrong, they will be very costly to fix.

Whilst manufacturers often offer reasonably priced hardware warranties, they will wash their hands of any problem with the Software (even if caused by the hardware problem) and as ad hoc IT support will quickly add-up, many organisations choose to form some kind of contract with their Server suppliers/installers. This makes sense as the company that installed your system should be in a good position to be able to maintain it. Expect to pay a significant amount – perhaps even more than you paid for the installation - for a comprehensive support contract.

2. Single point of failure

In centralising your files and software in the manner described above, you cannot avoid creating a single point of failure in your network. If someone steals or loses the key to your shiny new 'central filing cabinet' your work will suffer tremendously.

Whilst a significant percentage of the cost of acquiring a Server goes towards ameliorating the risks of failure, the possibility of significant 'down-time' is always there. A regularly monitored backup system, *RAID* array and an uninterruptible power supply (*UPS*) should be considered as a bare minimum, but even then outages of various kinds can and do happen.

3. Transition

The process of transition from a non-Server network to a Server-based one can be troublesome and is certain to involve disruption to computer users as well as changes in the way they work. This is especially the case with a Windows based Server, as the relationship between PC's and Servers in a Windows environment revolves around a user account which will be different from the one you currently use.

At minimum this entails moving desktop settings as well as files, favourites and possibly email to the new account and may even involve reinstalling or reconfiguring printers, antivirus software and other programs too. When planning for a new Server then, it is important to itemise the features and software you will need to have in this new environment.

The disruption caused to your staff and other users is best minimised by keeping them informed on how things may change. This can be quite time consuming and needs someone within your organisation with some IT knowledge to handle it successfully.

4. Quality of support

Isolating the cause of a given issue is one of the most difficult aspects of ICT support. When a member of staff cannot get email for example, are they doing something wrong? Is there something wrong with their PC? Is there a network problem? Is it a problem with the Server? Perhaps the ISP is at fault? Or even the *hosting* company?

Adding a Server to your network adds layers of complexity and is certain to confuse these issues. It is vital then that you have access to good quality, comprehensive and knowledgeable *ICT* support. The supplier should be capable of diagnosing and resolving issues at any of these levels to avoid the nightmare of 'buck-passing' between different companies. Such support can be expensive and fraught with grey areas where responsibility is unclear. Make sure you read the contract!

Source: <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/gettingaserver>