

PEER-TO-PEER NETWORK WITH A PC SET TO SHARE FILES

The organisation has recently moved from having standalone PCs to a *network* and want to make it easier to back up their files by storing them all on a shared drive on one of the organisation's PCs. When users have their own PC they will usually arrange their files as they see fit – depending on their idiosyncrasies, organisational and computer skills.

Since Windows 95, a folder called My Documents has been the default location for storing files – the knowledgebase article Good Housekeeping deals with this and how to create folders and sub folders to make things easier.

The first job which needs doing is moving all the existing files from the individual machines to the *file server*. The temptation when moving from dispersed to centralised file *storage* is to keep everything as it is. You create folders with staff names and shift the files across the network to the shared drive. Simple. However, given that one of the reasons for having a network is file sharing, this may not make it easy for other members of staff to find files easily. How will the Director, for example, know who is keeping the files on the outreach projects when it's the shared responsibility of two members of staff? This is one reason why an organisational folder system is useful.

Several reasons exist:

- It is a more logical way of storing documents
- It makes it easy to share files
- Saving and finding files is more straightforward
- If all files are stored on one machine in one place then they can be backed up easier

- You don't end up with several versions of the same document on different drives
- It helps the organisation comply with Data Protection legislation

There are a number of ways of approaching this project – it is a project to arrange your files and it will need planning. You could have a go at sorting this out at a staff team meeting. Sit down with a piece of paper and list all the different areas of work that you hold information on – typically they will include:

- Finance
- Personnel
- Correspondence – general and specific
- Membership records (maybe a *database*)
- Case records
- Newsletters
- Information resources
- Staff meeting minutes
- Board meeting agendas and minutes
- Project work
- Team work
- Web pages

And so on... you get the idea. This starts to give us the bare bones of a structure for organising the files in folders. Let's take Finance to start with, as an example. We need a folder called, er, finance, for starters. Under that we will perhaps want to have subfolders for different financial years. We then want subfolders for budgets, cashflows, for payment records.

So we have something that looks like:

- **Finance**

- 2002/2003
 - Cashflows
 - Budgets
 - Payments
- 2003/2004
 - Cashflows
 - Budgets
 - Payments

What about resources? The organisation gathers all sorts of stuff from email attachments, the web, Acrobat files. How about (examples only):

- **Resources**

- Health
 - Reproductive
 - Male
 - Female
 - Smoking
 - Cessation Programmes
 - Substitutes
 - Drugs
 - Medicinal
 - Street
 - Recreational
 - Eating
 - Obesity
 - Anorexia
- Welfare Benefits
 - Housing
 - Children
 - Maternity

In addition you probably want to have a shared folder for organisational resources like letter and memo templates, time sheets, stationery order forms, petty cash claim forms, that sort of thing.

Lastly, staff will want to have their own area for documents which are personal – they might want to keep these on their own C: drives, but they do so at their own risk in that they are responsible for backing them up.

Windows allows password protecting of folders so that there is a minimal level of security – this is fairly straightforward under Windows 98 and more complicated under Windows 2000 and XP. Briefly, in Windows 98, after turning file sharing on for the PC you can just add a password to the folder sharing property - see this Windows Networking article for an example of how to do this.

Windows 2000 and XP are more secure - you need to set up staff *asusers* of the PC (under Settings, Control Panel, User Accounts or Users and Passwords) and then apply security permissions to the individual folders (right click on the folder and bring up Properties) by adding the appropriate users to that folder.

More information on sharing folders under Windows XP in this Practically Networked article.

Use *drive mapping* so that you can connect to a shared folder without having to navigate through Network Neighbourhood or My Network Places. A folder can be given a virtual drive letter – you might want to use S for shared for example. In that way when it comes to saving documents the S drive will appear in the list of system drives along with A, C, D etc. You might also want to set up Word and Excel to use the mapped drive as the default location for saving files rather than My Documents on the C drive – this is easily done through Tools > Options > File Locations > Documents.

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