

Serving Your Needs

An Insightful Guide to Buying Your Next Server

New research from IDG Research Services reveals a clear, growing need for server deployment among small and midsize businesses. Whether your organization is buying its first server or plans to expand an existing deployment, this white paper, based on the IDG survey, provides valuable peer insight for companies looking to maximize return by optimizing server purchase strategy.

Appropriate technology management plays a key role in an organization's ability to compete effectively for market dollars while making the most of their own IT budgets. Strategic deployments can yield a host of attractive outcomes, including enhanced capabilities, desired flexibility and an uptick in productivity.

These benefits may explain why 56 percent of IT leaders at small and midsize businesses told IDG Research Services their companies are either in the market for their first server or have plans to expand existing deployments.

THE DECISION TO BUY

The IDG Research survey reveals that when it comes to making a purchase, it is important to form expectations that are in alignment with business objectives. For instance, as respondents aim to address specific business needs, they have either deployed or have plans to deploy a variety of servers: file servers (84 percent), application servers (73 percent), mail servers (68 percent), web servers (67 percent), print servers (56 percent), and proxy servers (27 percent).

When IT decision-makers prepare themselves with a solid perspective of organizational needs, it's easier to reap the benefits of a new solution. The best way to accomplish this goal is to assess existing operations, look at organizational growth patterns and gain a specific understanding of why the company needs a server.

INTENDED USE. Understanding how the business will use a prospective server is crucial. Before making purchase decisions, IT leaders should consider the importance of these factors to their organizations: efficiency of storing and sharing data files; the need to create and immediately post websites; the ability to share network resources such as printers; the ease of accessing corporate e-mail; and the ability to automatically log on to network computers without log-on information that is unique to each user.

Another important determination is whether existing operations require running a critical database that contains private or sensitive data. If so, decision-makers should look for a solution with full redundancy capabilities, as well as the potential to embrace extra security options such as Trusted Platform Module (TPM) hardware data encryption.

PHYSICAL PLACEMENT. Whether you intend to house the server on-site or off-site can also impact server strategy. If the server is off-site, or at a location without a technical person on-site, IT leaders should



look for systems with enhanced remote management. Remote sites may require a system capable of doing everything from basic powering on and off, to remotely deploying, controlling and troubleshooting the system.

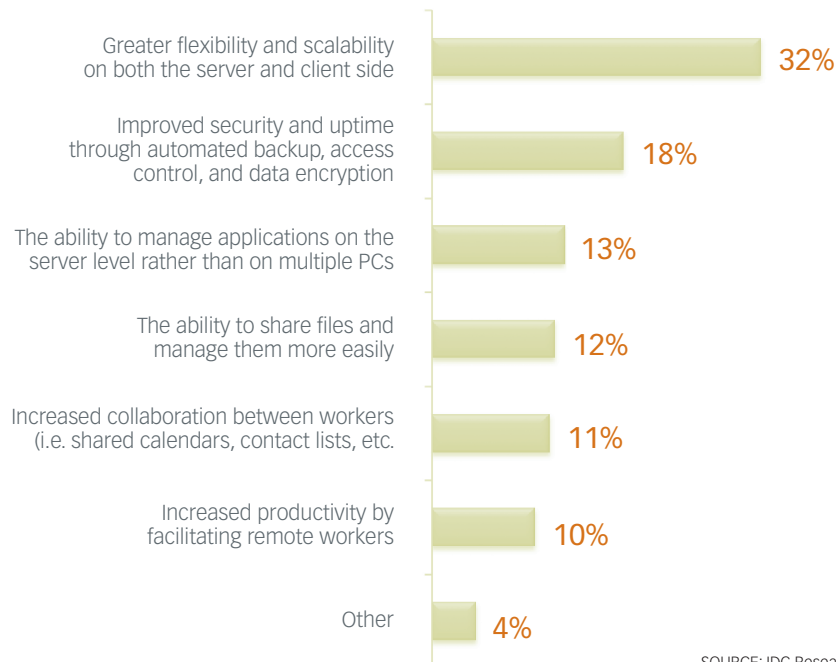
GROWTH PATTERN. Take a close look at how fast the business is growing, as well as growth prospects for coming years. Understanding growth patterns helps determine how much server flexibility the organization must expand as needs change. Today, for instance, the company may need only two hard drives, but think ahead and ascertain whether the system under consideration holds four times today's requirements—assuming that growth is in line with the anticipated life cycle for the system.

SECURITY AND BACKUP CONCERNS. Security and backup are crucial considerations, especially when running a 24/7, mission-critical environment. Well-designed servers will help a business step

beyond flash or PC storage options to higher quality hard drives, error-correcting memory, advanced features including redundant power supplies, as well as different RAID settings that control how data is written to the hard drive. Not all servers, however, are built equally, so it is important to ensure the server you select is built to run nonstop with higher quality parts, and memory that can catch errors without failing.

WEIGHING COSTS. No one wants to spend more than they should; however price should not become a focal point. One of the IDG Research survey respondents, Henry Jenkins, CIO of First Foundation Inc. in Irvine, Calif., says it is important to recognize there are step costs when you are looking at various server options. "Although the small starter server may have a low price tag, its lack of features often means you will need to add more servers or upgrade relatively soon, which can be taxing on the organization," says Jenkins. "The key is to look at the overall picture, rather than simply focusing on the upfront cost."

Most Important Potential Benefit when Purchasing or Considering a New Dedicated Server



SOURCE: IDG Research Services, June 2010

The HP Difference

Done right, server deployment harnesses the ability to help organizations move forward by embracing proven technologies. Partnering with the right server vendor can make the difference between reaping rewards or suffering consequences.

BRAND. There is a reason why HP has remained a technology market leader for more than 70 years. HP has more full offerings for entry-level servers than its competitors, and quickly scales its offering to include racks, blades, etc., capable of meeting the needs of any operation.

FLEXIBILITY. HP offers unparalleled flexibility via hardware and software with room to expand, including an entry-level server that allows up to 8 Tb of storage to support considerable growth.

SERVICE. HP moves beyond the traditional warranty by offering servers that come with award-winning service offerings, including faster time to repair through care packs, as well as scalable install and repair services.

PORTFOLIO. HP boasts the broadest offering of solutions for every customer. From a perfect first server like the ML110 G6, which provides basic security and flexibility for growth, to an enterprise server like the ML350 G6, which includes industry-best remote and system management, HP has the best server solution for your business.

VENDOR CONSIDERATION. Always take into account the vendor's ability to provide a complete solution. Not only should the provider be able to deliver what's needed now, but also what is needed in the future. This means looking at the vendor's full portfolio to avoid switching vendors as your company grows. Review everything the firm produces, and take the time to judge the quality. Can your vendor of choice give you the options, hardware and software to suit growth plans into the future?

ACHIEVABLE OUTCOMES

Well-executed server deployments offer business and IT leaders an array of benefits. According to the IDG Research survey, greater flexibility and scalability are cited as the top goal when considering the pur-

chase of a new, dedicated server.

Once they've purchased and implemented their servers, respondents say they have achieved the following benefits:

- ability to share files and manage them more easily
- greater flexibility and scalability
- ability to manage applications on the server level
- increased collaboration between workers

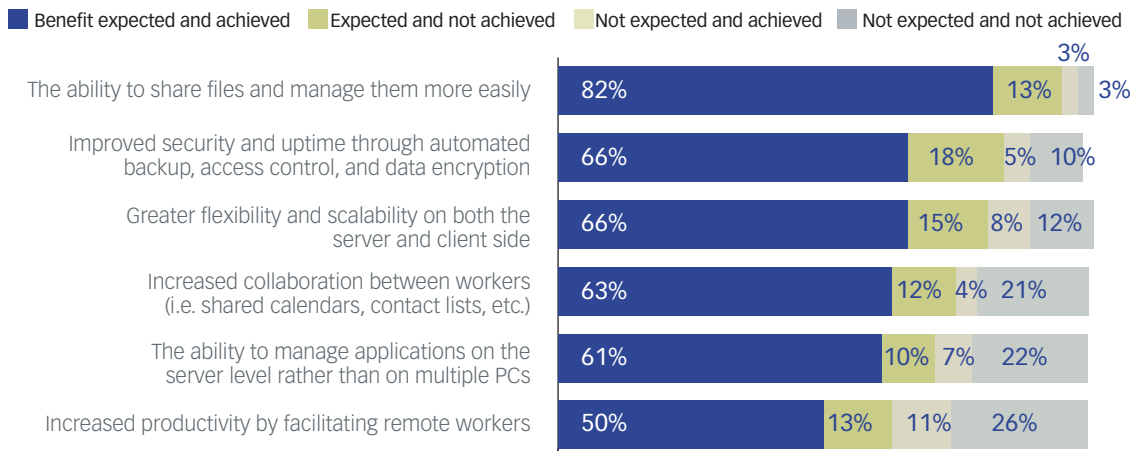
Interestingly, respondents say increased productivity is the benefit least expected, and least likely to be achieved from server implementation. Yet servers can score easy wins in the area of productivity—especially when it comes to the ability to share files and create an environment that enhances collaboration.

For example, without a file-sharing server in place, working collectively as a team to build a crucial document can be a complicated process. Without the file-sharing server, team members depend on e-mail to receive a file, make changes, and send to the next person. It's difficult to track changes, and if multiple versions have been created and must be merged there is suddenly room for mistakes and oversights—not to mention one person spending time to merge or collate files and changes.

With a file server in place, the file is stored in a central, accessible repository. One user at a time can open it, make changes and save it. When the next person makes changes, they are using the same version. The resulting single document is up-to-date, and the business eliminates potential human errors associated with merging changes.

According to Chris Quintanilla, a principal consultant with Middletown, Delaware-based Information Technology Advisory Group, the likelihood of achieving productivity improvements increases dramatically when an organization couples the technology implementation with end-user training. "As you add more resources to the computer network (file/print sharing, e-mail/collaboration software, web hosting capabilities), it is important to ensure end users know they have access to these resources, what they can do with them and how to use them properly," he says. "This can usually be accomplished by creating a guide for

Benefits of Server Implementation Expected and Achieved



SOURCE: IDG Research Services, June 2010

end users, but it is more effective to have instructor-led training sessions to give end users a chance to learn in a structured environment.”

Ultimately, a server enables increased collaboration and sharing, which enhances and increases productivity. The goal is to move beyond simply deploying a system with a set of features. Quintanilla points to a recent server deployment as an example. Staff members didn’t initially understand how the new tools—enhanced calendar sharing—could help them on a daily basis until they learned how to use features made possible by a connection to the server, he said.

PURCHASE DECISION

Whether buying a server through a value-added reseller, systems integrator, traditional retail outlets or OEM websites, IDG Research survey respondents say the final purchase decision comes down to several factors, with quality of the manufacturer’s hardware as the most important characteristic. Others include:

- reputation and quality of technical support
- price of server
- quality and length of the warranty

Aside from the most valued, individual characteristics, the ultimate purchase decision should be the cumulative result of comparing available options with

a well-developed, three-to-five year plan outlining the organization’s storage and data management needs, suggests Jenkins. “Having the future in mind is what led me to select a blade server capable of complying with power and cooling constraints, while also providing the flexibility to grow,” he says.

Jenkins says as he looks to the next set of servers, he also intends to keep standardization at the forefront. “We outsource various IT components, and we do not want to be in a situation where our service provider needs to learn completely new equipment and processes,” he says. “Fortunately, we have embraced a route that offers us a wide range of choices, and we can simply expand as needed. Having flexibility and easy expansion are wonderful benefits.”

If you are not comfortable making technology decisions on your own, Quintanilla suggests retaining a qualified consultant to assist with the server selection process.

“Be sure to seek out consultants who serve as true subject matter experts—not salespeople—since they provide sound advice, and typically save you money,” he says. ■

For more information, visit www.hp.com