



# THE RHODENIZER REPORT

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## DO I REALLY NEED MY OWN SERVER?

More small business owners are asking this question today because they've been led to believe that the answer to getting chaos under control is to put everything on a network server. While this makes sense in some situations, the setup and ongoing maintenance of Microsoft Windows Server can be a costly financial burden to those with no in-house IT staff.

While faithful readers will recall my previous harping on the concept of "centralize before you can organize", the means by which we achieve this does not have to cost thousands of dollars. In most cases, small

groups of about 5 people or less can accomplish their goals nicely without making such a large capital investment. In fact, many can actually save money by getting rid of the server they've been maintaining for years.

How? If the needs of your team are confined to simple file sharing and e-mail, there are other choices that may be perfectly adequate at a much lower cost.

For example, if you have your own Windows server running Exchange for e-mail, your annual costs for proper security and maintenance can easily reach into the thousands. It's



hard to justify that across a workforce of just a few people. Even harder if your people are only using it for e-mail. Cost justification can sometimes be found in the advanced features of shared Calendars, Contacts, and Public Folders, but only if your people actually use them to be more productive. One alternative is to (CONT. P. 2)

## THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- There are alternatives to a costly server.
- Choices for antivirus protection explained.
- Tips for cutting your IT expenses this year.
- Free anti-phishing toolbar download for your web browser.

## KASPERSKY ANTI-VIRUS 7.0 RANKED #1

ConsumerSearch.com ranks Kaspersky Anti-Virus 7.0 as "the best all-around antivirus program" of the top 5 reviewed. According to comparison tests, they claim Kaspersky is better than the bestselling Norton AntiVirus in all respects: "... fast and light, won't slow your computer down as much ... higher level of user satisfaction than with either Norton or McAfee.

**My take on this:** There are a handful of good antivirus pro-

grams out there. Everyone has their favorite. If you look long enough, you'll find each one being hailed as #1 by somebody somewhere.

My personal requirements are: A). I can get English-speaking tech support on the phone without having my credit card charged, and B). It doesn't slow down my computer.

I've used Kaspersky AntiVirus several times to remove viruses

that other antivirus programs could not. I've also worked with their tech support people in Boston on occasion and I have no complaints.

A good website for reading the most objective research is [www.av-comparatives.org](http://www.av-comparatives.org), an Austrian website dedicated to independent antivirus testing.

Regardless of your choice, check often to ensure updates are downloading automatically.

## MONEY SAVING TIPS FOR 2009

Here is my short list of tips to help you save money and cut your computer-related costs for the coming year:

**1). Buy refurbished desktop PC's instead of new.** For typical office work, you really don't need the latest and greatest machines. There are some great deals out there on refurbished XP Pro PC's for less than \$400. If you keep these free from spyware and unnecessary clutter, they will perform with all the speed you need for common everyday computing tasks. Availability changes daily so just e-mail me for specific recommendations.

**2). Use free software utilities For D-I-Y maintenance.** The best way to increase performance and prolong the useful life of any computer is to start with the best malware remover I've tested so far:

**MalwareBytes.** It removes most kinds of spyware, trojans, and other nasty programs that your antivirus program may not detect. I also highly recommend **TuneUp 2009** which is a free download that works for 30 days without restrictions. It cleans, optimizes, and makes a few recommendations for being proactive against future problems. You can buy it after the trial period expires, or just stop using it. There's no obligation. The last thing to run is **JKDefrag**, a free disk defragmentation program that's better than the disk defragmenter that comes with Windows. It will organize the remaining data on your PC in a way that makes no visible changes to the user, but enables it to run faster.

**3). Use laser printers instead of inkjet printers.** Mainly be-

cause toner cartridges will last forever if kept dry. Ink cartridges have expiration dates on the box for a reason: They dry out and clog even if not opened. That's around \$30 or so wasted each time you don't get around to using them in time.

**4). Use free Open-Source software alternatives.** Instead of buying Adobe Acrobat to create .PDF files, download one of the free alternatives like PrimoPDF or TinyPDF. Don't spend money on WinZip when you can download FreeZIP to do the same job. And, save hundreds of dollars on Microsoft Office by switching to a free alternative like OpenOffice.org or Lotus Symphony.

You can find the links to all these free goodies on the "Cliff's Picks" page of my website.



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## DO I REALLY NEED MY OWN SERVER? (CONT.)

(CONT. FROM P. 1) use shared Exchange hosted mailboxes provided by an online service provider such as MailStreet. For about \$10 a month per user, they handle backups, SPAM and virus filtering, and all the necessary upgrades.

For simple file sharing, a NAS (network attached storage) device such as the 1GB Buffalo TeraStation Pro can be found for less than \$600.00

(e-mail me for more info). It's easy to set up and requires no maintenance.

Lastly, there are web-based hosting services such as OmniDrive, Box.net, Xdrive, and IDrive, which offer multiple features for online file sharing and workgroup collaboration for a low monthly subscription.

For those on a tight budget and with few concerns about

security, look into the free online file sharing services being offered by Google Docs and Microsoft Live.

If your goals for the coming year include cutting your business IT costs, a one-time planning session with an experienced IT pro can help you determine which solutions are the most appropriate for your organization and will save you the most money in the long run. - C. R.

"... many can actually save money by getting rid of the server they've been maintaining for years."

## QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

**Q– “My laptop connects to my office wireless network with no problem. But, when I connect using my docking station it keeps dropping the connection and giving me errors. What would cause this?”**

A– It’s most likely because your laptop is connecting to the network using both interfaces at the same time. If your wireless connection remains active after you connect via the docking station, your laptop will have 2 active connections going at the same time. That can cause problems. Disable your wireless before connecting via the docking station so you only have one active connection at a time.

**Q– “I like Dell PC’s but don’t understand the difference between the desktop product lines they have on their website. Which do you recommend?”**

A– The Dimension is their low-end consumer line, and the Vostro is a little more oriented toward small business with no frills. The high-end performance line for demanding applications is called Precision.

I prefer the Dell Optiplex line because they are more “heavy duty” for business and run extremely quiet. I’ve recently seen some great deals on Optiplex 755’s with

Core 2 Duo in the “Dell Outlet” website. You can still get many of these with XP Pro (my preferred choice) instead of Vista and save a few hundred dollars.

**Q– “I’m dealing with a website company that is offering to create a website for me at a very low price, then \$29 a month to host it and make whatever changes we need. But, if you cancel you can’t take the site with you. Is this a normal practice?”**

A– It’s not unusual for a company that builds and hosts websites to do that. They can discount the initial website work to appear market competitive, then make up the difference with higher hosting fees over the long run. Some use server-side website builder programs which makes it impossible for you to copy if you decide to leave when their rates go up. They don’t need contracts with that kind of leverage.

The advantage of having a website written in HTML is that it’s portable. You can host it with whoever offers you the best deal. If they go up on their rates, you can take your website and leave. It costs more upfront to build, but you can host it for about \$4 a month in the current market.

Which is the better choice? It depends upon how often you

want to change it. If you plan on making frequent updates to your website, and they will cover that at no extra charge, you may get your money’s worth over the long run – if they don’t raise their rates.

If you don’t plan to change the site, your only recurring expense over time is the monthly hosting fee. A difference of \$25 a month adds up to \$300 a year in savings. In that scenario, an HTML website pays for itself in 3 years.

**Q - “We have a HP Pavilion laptop that’s still under warranty. All the lights come on but nothing appears on the screen. We can send it to HP, but I’m wondering if this is something you might be able to fix. Or, are we better off sending it back?”**

A - First, try removing the battery and unplugging the power supply cord. Wait a few minutes, then plug the power supply back in and try to turn it on. If you still get no response, it has a hardware problem and should be repaired under warranty.

However, if there are important files on it that you need to have before then, I can remove the harddrive and retrieve the data before you ship it off.

**E-mail your questions to:**  
[questions@rhodenizer.com](mailto:questions@rhodenizer.com)



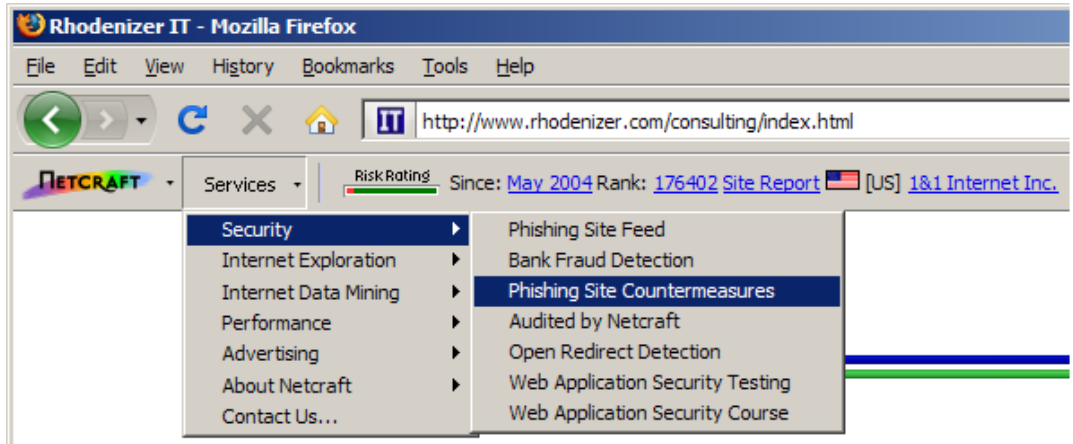
**“The advantage of having a website written in HTML is that it’s portable. You can host it with whoever offers you the best deal.”**

## FREE WEB BROWSER SECURITY TOOLBAR

Netcraft is a British Internet security services company that has developed an anti-phishing toolbar that plugs into your web browser and gives detailed information about any suspicious web-sites you may visit.

The toolbar displays website location, including country, helping you evaluate fraudulent addresses (e.g. the real "wachovia.com" is not likely to be hosted in China).

It enforces display of navigational controls (buttons & address bar) in windows that pop-ups attempt to hide. It also traps suspicious URLs



containing characters which have no common purpose other than to deceive people.

I've been using it for years as a tool to investigate suspicious websites and deter-

mine their true purpose. I highly recommend it for use on all computers in your home and office. Best of all, it's free. You can download it from the "Cliff's Pick's" page of my website. - C. R.

## ABOUT RHODENIZER IT

We are a different kind of IT service provider. We don't resell any hardware or software. We find the best deals on what you need and pass the savings along to you.

Our mission is to help small businesses reduce expenses, increase productivity, and safeguard private information.

It's about more than just fixing computers. We also

provide IT consulting and services that include finding the best solutions to your business problems.

We work with clients to prepare disaster recovery plans that ensure their critical data remains safe, yet easily accessible. Additional benefits include money-saving ideas for managing your computer resources and planning for future business expansion.

We have the training, experience, and know-how to provide the right solutions for your needs, and your budget.

Just call to schedule your **free initial consultation with no risk, and no obligation.**

Tell me about your computer needs or IT issues. I'll recommend a course of action that makes sense for your situation at no cost to you. What have you got to lose?

**Rhodenizer IT**  
Information Technology Services

P. O. Box 768122  
Roswell, Georgia 30076

(404) 202-8657

[www.rhodenizer.com](http://www.rhodenizer.com)

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