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RunAs Radio is a weekly Internet Audio Talk Show for IT Professionals working with Microsoft products. The full range of IT topics is covered from a Microsoft-centric viewpoint.

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Kevin Royalty Uses Home Server in Businesses!
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[Music]

Brandon Wenn: From runasradio.com, you're listening to RunAs Radio, the Internet audio talk show for IT professionals with Richard Campbell and Greg Hughes. This is Brandon Wenn, announcing show #151, with guest Kevin Royalty, recorded Tuesday, February 23, 2010. RunAs Radio is produced each week by PWOP Productions, providing professional media and podcasting services online at pwop.com. You can follow the boys on Twitter at twitter.com/runasradio.

Richard Campbell: Thank you, Brandon. This is Richard Campbell. With me as always, my co-host, Greg Hughes.

Greg Hughes: Hey, how are you?

Richard Campbell: I'm well, sir.

Greg Hughes: Good.

Richard Campbell: You know, getting by anyway. Spring has already sprung early here in Vancouver and so it's...

Greg Hughes: You sound a little stuffy.

Richard Campbell: Yeah. I'm a little -- dealing with the allergies. I've got a fistful of antihistamines in me but it takes a while for them to really kick in so we'll see how I do.

Greg Hughes: Well, that's a short-lived problem for you there, right?

Richard Campbell: I hope so. Yeah, a couple of weeks and then we'll be past that for a year.

Greg Hughes: Good. Well, it's been several 58 or 60 degree-days down here in Portland in the middle of February so it's been a pretty mild time.

Richard Campbell: Yeah, the northwest has got it light which figures since we're hosting the winter Olympics and all.

Greg Hughes: Yup.

Richard Campbell: But I think they went pretty well. I went to a bunch of the games and had a lot of fun. It's been crazy around my city and I hope everybody knows what a great place we've got up here now.

Greg Hughes: Very cool. I'm looking forward to next winter taking advantage of the massive amount of housing and stuff that was built that will be available at cheap, cheap prices. I heard Whistler was put on the auction block. Was that true?

Richard Campbell: Yeah. The parent company, which turned out to be an American company...

Greg Hughes: Go figure.

Richard Campbell: Yeah. Actually went bankrupt. They had financing problems and so I think they actually delayed the auction until after the Olympics.

Greg Hughes: Oh, I see.

Richard Campbell: But they're going to sell it off.

Greg Hughes: Alrighty. Well, next year I'm looking forward to a trip up there to do some winter sporting myself.

Richard Campbell: Sounds good. All right. Well, let's introduce our guest. With us today is Kevin Royalty. He's been an IT Professional since 1986 and today serves as the president of the Cincinnati Network Professional Association, president of the Cincinnati Small Business Server User Group, and a board member of Microsoft's Small Business Advisory Board. He's been a Microsoft MVP for small business servers since 2006. Kevin is a computer science graduate, a Microsoft certified systems engineer and is certified by Microsoft to support their Small Business Server products. Welcome, Kevin.

Greg Hughes: Hey, Kevin.

Kevin Royalty: Thank you.

Richard Campbell: So obviously you take Small Business Server very seriously. But do I understand you're promoting or demonstrating how Microsoft Home Server works for businesses as well?

Kevin Royalty: Yes, I am.

Richard Campbell: That's cool.

Greg Hughes: I have a Home Server; I love it.

Richard Campbell: Yeah. Everyone I know who has a Home Server adores it, just is thrilled to death. So for folks who don't know anything about Home Server, maybe we should start from the beginning.

Greg Hughes: What is Home Server?

Kevin Royalty: Well, if you'd like me to answer that I certainly can do my best at doing that.

Richard Campbell: All right.

Kevin Royalty: Home Server is a product that Microsoft kind of snuck onto the public, seen about 2-1/2 years ago at CES and it was a product that didn't really have any competition in the market when it was re-introduced. It is based on Windows Server 2003

R2 technology and it's normally designed to be a headless device. So you essentially buy the Home Server already built by an OEM such as HP, or IBM, or whoever and you drop it in place and plug it into your network. It has an internet jack and it has usually no video output, no keyboard and mouse.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: Sort of looks like a nice device. It is designed to be headless. Once you turn it on, there are some CDs that come with it. One is the Client Connector CD. You can load that into a computer, run the setup, it finds the server on your network and then it will let you then attach to it, then the client gets installed on up to no more than 10 computers on your network.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: And it's designed to be put on a peer-to-peer network. It's designed to be the first server for your house and I know a lot, myself included, who've had servers in our homes for years but we're geeks.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: That's what we do. But this is designed for Joe Average, your consumer market. What it does is it is designed to centralize all of your video, your music, your photos, and anything else you want to centralize on the server so you don't have to share it amongst multiple computers and have it spread out all over your network that has a huge plus.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Greg Hughes: Right.

Kevin Royalty: Let me tell you my wife not being a computer savvy person, that's my job, likes to know that when she clicks on a certain place that she can see all the photos we've ever taken. In the past, that meant putting it all in My Computer but if I've got My Computer off sites somewhere she can't see the pictures and not happy.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Greg Hughes: Right. I like the fact that iTunes can see it out there on the network. That's kind of cool.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah.

Greg Hughes: I also like the fact that media centers seem to be able to talk to it as well or at least pull stuff from it.

Kevin Royalty: Yes, it does and there's some really cool integration that have been added. Now the product has gone through three essentially service packs or they call them Power Packs that had added functionality at every single power pack. The most recent one of course adds Windows 7.0 support and of course adds tighter integration with Windows Media Center. So what happens is you'd install the connector on a Media Center computer and then what happens is when you launch media center it says hey, there's this extra add-in we can throw on here and what it does is it integrates all the storage locations for photos, video, and music into the media center interface and let's you see the health of the home server in the media center UI. Then the recorded TV can be stored on the Home Server instead of on a local hard drive. Now what is this going to do for you? Let's say you have more than one media center. If you tell all the media centers to store their TV in one place, then all media centers have access to the same recordings.

Richard Campbell: This is pretty cool. The other big strength I saw in Home Server was great backup solutions for your workstation.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah.

Greg Hughes: And it really works.

Kevin Royalty: That's the thing that's the coolest part of Home Server now. We talked about the geeky stuff and the stuff for Joe Average but this thing here, the backup technology is the hottest part and this is the thing that I focus on when I put Home Server in a small business. I mean, the shared photos are great but the backup technology is kick ass and what it does is it goes to each machine and does an image backup of each computer. Now normally that would take a lot of space, but what Microsoft has done here is they actually look at your hard drive and pull a cluster which is typically about 4k in size and then compare it to their database of the clusters that have already been backed up and if it's already there it says, oh, this machine needs this cluster if there's a restore. So I'm going to mark that machine that needs that cluster, but if the cluster doesn't exist in the database it sends that 4k cluster, stores it, and marks that that machine is the one that needs it. It repeats this process for every computer on your network. It backs up one machine at a time and usually the first machine of course has populated the database for the first time so that takes the longest. Then it goes on to the next machine and the machine until it's finished. When you're done, it's got this unique database that's only the clusters that are unique among all the computers.

Richard Campbell: And since you're limited to about 10 machines, that means your backup images is going to be the size of, or at least one of them, plus what? 25%?

Kevin Royalty: Not even that. Let's say you have a Small Business or even a Home, or use both in all of their computers, they're almost all the same model. They all have the same OS, they all have the same copies of software on them, all of that stuff are going to be backed up one time.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: The things that are unique would be your user profile, your registry, things like that and that doesn't take up all that much space.

Richard Campbell: That's very cool.

Kevin Royalty: It is really cool.

Greg Hughes: And the idea is that pretty much anybody can do it and it really works.

Kevin Royalty: Yes.

Greg Hughes: I mean, backup software is fraught with failures and gotchas and, well, it should have worked but didn't. But there are a lot of really great success stories for why my computer crapped up at home and I was able to magically just restore it and put it back.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. I just built a new Windows 7.0 Media Center and had it up and running for very short time and the hard drive started to fail. So I simply got another hard drive and put it in, booted it up with the restore CD, told it I want to recover that computer from a few days ago before the hard drive started failing and it restored the entire image in about 45 minutes and pulled that drive out, stuck it into the computer that it needed to go into which is the new Media Center and it booted up just fine. Windows 7.0 didn't need activation because I'd already done that before and it just works.

Richard Campbell: So the main thing here is these are quite inexpensive, aren't they? They come from Hewlett Packard.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah, yeah. I like the HP MediaSmart because what they've done is Microsoft has a vibrant community of developers that do these things called add-ins. Some charge, some don't and these add-ins can add huge amounts of functionality to the Home Server and what HP has done with their MediaSmart line for the consumer in the Data Vault side for the Small Business is they've packaged some of the most common and popular add-ins with Home Server and what they've done for the MediaSmart and Data Vault line is they've included an iTunes Server. So if you have and use the Apple products and you use iTunes it will centralize your library on the Home Server.

Richard Campbell: Cool. Now, are there add-ins for businesses as well?

Kevin Royalty: Yeah, there's add-ins for backups to send your backups into the Cloud and things like that. There are all kinds of add-ins out there. There's add-ins for UPSs so if you hook a battery backup up to your Home Server it will shut it down. There's add-ins for sending help alerts via email. For those of us that are managed services providers that want to maintain our customer servers, we can get alerts when there's an issue on that box which makes it easy for us to keep our customers happy. HP has also done some stuff where they include things that will re-encode video for portable devices. So you've got your Zunes and your iPods and your mobile phones that play MP4 video. You can record a TV show with a Media Center and then the MediaSmart can turn around and re-encode that in MP4 format so you can sync it with your portable device and take it with you.

Greg Hughes: That's pretty cool.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. It's pretty slick.

Greg Hughes: So for the casual end-user or the non-geeky type if you will, usability-wise they've done a lot to give it nice rounded corners and make it friendly and honestly it's kind of hard to mess it up.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah.

Greg Hughes: For those of us that are -- probably a lot of us that are listening are thinking, well, that maybe kind of cool to use at home. What if I have a laptop for example that is on a corporate or a work domain but I use it at home also, can I back that up to the Media Center?

Kevin Royalty: Absolutely. We've already done this for some of our customers that have work-from-home employees that have laptops that they take with them and I put Home Server in their homes. What you do is the Client Software sits on the system tray. It doesn't care if you're a domain member. It doesn't care if you're a worker member. It just backs the machine up.

Greg Hughes: I think I said Media Center a minute ago. I meant Home Server. Obviously you're not going to backup to the Media Center.

Kevin Royalty: Correct, you don't and it will backup Media Centers. It automatically skips the recorded TV folder but you can go back and include that manually if you want to store those TV shows on the Media Center but then back them up on the Home Server.

Greg Hughes: I'm going from memory on something here, but it seems to me that the username

and password on the machine you were backing up had to match something on the account on the Home Server. That might be a Legacy thing. I know I'm thinking back a little while here.

Kevin Royalty: It's a workgroup thing actually. You don't need to create user accounts if you're in a domain. In fact, Home Server doesn't even care. If it's in workgroup mode, which it stays in, you don't want to join it to a domain, you can set it in a business network, leave it in workgroup mode, load the Client software on up to 10 computers, it will back them up and it will not complain about no user accounts and stuff like that. It doesn't care.

Greg Hughes: Okay.

Kevin Royalty: But I do have clients that have the Home Servers at home that bring their corporate laptops home and I do backup those laptops onto that machine. I do clear it with their corporate to make sure it's okay.

Greg Hughes: Of course.

Kevin Royalty: Because a lot of times they have policies in place that say you don't load software without our approval. When I explain to them what I want to load and why, I've yet to be turned down.

Greg Hughes: Yeah. I guess maybe the one situation where you might get turned down there would be if for some reason there's sensitive information on that machine that should not be backed up outside of the corporate environment. I could see where that might be a case.

Kevin Royalty: Yes and those are conversations we've had and yes, it's a risk that some are willing to take and it's a risk that so far everyone has taken. But I'm sure I'll run across somebody that's going to say no, you can't back that up because of the data that they may contain.

Richard Campbell: So I'm looking at this from a small business perspective, a place with obviously 10 PCs or less are looking at having their first file server essentially and then they also got a backup server as well.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah.

Richard Campbell: All-in-one for less than $1,000 and that's pretty hard to argue about.

Kevin Royalty: It is. Now there's one piece that we haven't talked about, those are what I called micro business, the businesses that are 10 PCs and under that maybe can't spring for Small Business Server because of the cost and the home users can also use this feature. My area of expertise, as you said earlier, was Small Business Server. One of the features in Small Business Server that was actually borrowed from that and put into Home Server is the Remote Connectivity through a web browser. In the SBS world we call this Remote Web Workplace. What happens is you bring up a web page, a web browser has to be Internet Explorer because there's ActiveX controls involved, and you browse to the Home Server, this will be if you're outside the network, and if you want to see what it looks like open up Internet Explorer yourself and browse to kevinroyalty.homeserver.com and you'll get my actual Home Server web page to come up. You'll see it when it comes up and mine is the HP MediaSmart. So I has an HP branded page. What will happen is you can then click on one of the icons and you can actually login with a user ID and password if you know what they are and then you are using the web browser and then at some point depending on the user ID and password and the security levels I decide to give you, you can actually remote connectivity and connect to and control one of my PCs here at the house.

Richard Campbell: Wow.

Kevin Royalty: You cannot do this the Home operating system. So if you have XP Home, or Vista Basic, or any of the Vista Home skews, or any of the Windows 7.0 Home skews, the remote desktop connectivity pieces are not included in that OS.

Greg Hughes: Right.

Kevin Royalty: But if you're running Vista Business, XP Pro, Win 7.0 Business, that connectivity is there and that's what it takes advantage of.

Richard Campbell: Okay. So really all that the Home Server piece in this is doing is providing the connectivity through to the remote desktop on the workstation.

Kevin Royalty: Yes. It's a piece of software they borrowed from Small Business Server. It works extremely well, but it does use an ActiveX control so you must use IE to get in.

Richard Campbell: And do you have to install anything on the Home Server to make that work?

Kevin Royalty: No. It's built in. What you have to do though on the PCs that are on your home network is you have to bring up the properties of My Computer and you have to enable remote desktop.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: That's all you have to do.

Richard Campbell: So then all of a sudden if you've got decent internet connection in your office, or

you mean there's obviously a DNS entry involved there as well to be able to get to that machine.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. The cool part is Home Server comes with a free domain name at homeserver.com.

Richard Campbell: Really.

Greg Hughes: Yourname.homeserver.com.

Kevin Royalty: You can call it whatever you want. I chose my name, but you can call it whatever you want.

Greg Hughes: Sure.

Kevin Royalty: I've got some micro business customers that are using their business name homeserver.com ad that's how they get into their network at work. Now, they still have a domain name which isn't the same that they use for their business website.

Richard Campbell: Right, which is probably hosted in an ISP.

Kevin Royalty: Yes, it is.

Richard Campbell: Any other features I can add to Home Server that would be useful for business?

Kevin Royalty: There are a few other features. One of the things that we talked about earlier is the backup of the workstation computers. What I do is, as a business owner myself and protecting my business assets, I want to backup that backup database. So there's an add-in called WHS or Windows Home Server, BDBB, written my Alex Kuretz who happens to be a Home Server MVP and former HP employee, and I use that utility, that add-in, to back-up the backup database onto an external USB hard drive.

Richard Campbell: It's something you can take off site.

Kevin Royalty: Yes, something you should take off site. And then there's also, built into Home Server when Power Pack 1 came down, is a way for you to backup all of the shares on the Home Server to an external disk. I use that plus the BDBB add-in to backup the entire Home Server on to that external disk. My customers I've trained them on how to do it so they backup their Home Server themselves.

Richard Campbell: And hopefully just take that drive home with them so that if you come back to the office the next morning, there's a smoke in a hole and a ground where your office used to be, it doesn't matter that you have backup tapes, they're burned too.

Kevin Royalty: Yes.

Richard Campbell: It's the thing that you have off site that matters.

Kevin Royalty: Yes and that's the thing. I can take that disk and take another Home Server and get them back up and running in a short amount of time. I'm just limited to the amount of time it takes to copy the data back really.

Richard Campbell: Well, and lay hands on another Home Server.

Kevin Royalty: Yes and the good part is they can be bought just about anywhere. The only one you have to order from a distributor would be the Data Vault which is the business queue from HP but you can go and get the HP MediaSmart and some of the other brands at your local Best Buy and places like that, or you can order from Amazon or whoever you prefer and you could build your own as well.

Greg Hughes: So original Home Server from HP, it was a little while there. Is it still the case where the newest software maybe isn't available for it? What are they doing there?

Kevin Royalty: Newest software. Oh, you mean for the older models. Yes. Right now, the HP software that comes with the current models, the 490 series and the native of all which is the X510 series, I believe it's version 3.5, that software will not load on the older units. They are working on an upgrade of the software that will be available for the older units. In my conversations with the HP product manager, he told me that they're currently targeting the end of this month or beginning of next month for the release of that software.

Greg Hughes: Well, I'm looking forward to that because I have one of the older units. So that's the reason I was asking.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. I have an older 470 which is the first one and that one I plan on taking down to my parents and putting it into their house to backup their laptop and desktop.

Greg Hughes: One of the things that I don't think we've mentioned yet but I've thinking of here is the way the storage works, like the disk storage and the disk array, is really pretty cool on these systems.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah, they have this really cool technology called Drive Extender that has a lot of patents that Microsoft filed for the technology in Home Server, the backup technologies. One of them is the Drive Extender technology is another cool technology. Normally in the business world, those of us geeks, we know how to build RAID array and we know how to do stuff like that, but this product being designed for

Home users doesn't have that and being built on commodity hardware you won't have an RAID controller and Home Server tech doesn't like RAID controllers today.

Greg Hughes: Right.

Kevin Royalty: It doesn't mean that it won't in the future, but today it doesn't like RAID controllers. The way it works is you pop in another disk into a Home Server and the HP and ACER units that I know of, that I have touched, are hot swappable. So you don't even need to turn off the unit off. You just put the drive in the tray and slide it in and what will happen is you'll remote in to the Home Server through its console icon and then it will say, hey, you've connected in your disk. Would you like to add it to the disk storage pool? And you answer yes and it will automatically take care of partitioning and formatting the drive and all of a sudden your drive pool gets bigger.

Greg Hughes: Yeah and it's just like this auto-magical thing. There's not like a RAID reconfiguration and you can add and you can also remove stuff.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah, right.

Greg Hughes: I mean it just do a little work to remove stuff but you can do this on the fly through...

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. It dynamically decides where to store stuff. It doesn't ask you any questions. It will spread out the data among multiple disks. Now, another cool piece of technology that another patent was done for is in RAID it strikes the data across all the disks. With Home Server they have this thing called Folder Duplication and it's at the folder level or the shared level. So let's say you have some important stuff in your My Pictures and that definitely qualifies here at the house. Our pictures are very important to us.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Greg Hughes: Sure, sure.

Kevin Royalty: So we have a multiple disks in Home Server and this feature is available only if you have more that one physical disk and you tell it you want to duplicate that folder. What it does is it makes a copy of that entire folder in its content on both physical disks. So if one of it fails, the other disk has it.

Greg Hughes: Yes. So if you have backups for example, or maybe you decide backups are important but you have some pieces of data that you're going to stick over there but you're not really worried about it from if I lose that it's the end of the world standpoint, I can choose based on the content that's important to me to duplicate just that content.

Kevin Royalty: Exactly, exactly.

Greg Hughes: That's a pretty cool stuff.

Kevin Royalty: The cool part is like I said if one of the disk fails, the other disk has the copy. You don't lose it. Now I'm still super paranoid from my clients so I still backup their Home Server on this and make them take outside and rotate them.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Greg Hughes: Sure.

Kevin Royalty: But that's just me. You may not do that in a Home environment. You may just trust that it will work, and it does. It does work very well. During the early beta testing of Home Server, I did have -- just taking random hard drive I've got a laying around the workbench from upgrading computers, I would slap them in add them to drive pools. I had all kinds of disks at it. One of those disks actually was starting to fail so I got to test the ability for Home Server to make sure that the duplicates were protected and I did test that and it did work.

Richard Campbell: That's very cool.

Greg Hughes: Very cool.

Kevin Royalty: So I didn't lose anything. And then of course you've mentioned earlier removing a disk takes a while. Well, as Home Server decides where to store the stuff, on what disk, if you say, well, that disk has got to go and you tell it you want to remove that disk from the pool. It tells you this could take a while depending on how much data you have but we're going to take all the data on that disk and move it off to your other disk and then we'll let you know when you can remove that disk. And it does work, I have done that.

Greg Hughes: It's nice to be able to go out and you can buy, you know, you just find a good deal on some 1 or 1-1/2 terabyte drives, shove them into the four slots that are in this machine that I've got, this HP machine, it just sort of takes care of it for you and then you can just kind of forget about it almost. I mean, literally you can. I guess like you're saying the only problem with maybe not taking your backups off if you do duplicate your data is the scenario where your house burns down or somebody steals your server, then in that case you've lost your data. But otherwise it's a pretty good system.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah, it is very good system.

Richard Campbell: So Kevin, what's the progression -- and so I've got a small business here, they've got less than 10 machines on Home Server.

Our first file servers are backup solutions. What happens when I get to 11 machines or 12 machines? What's my progression to the next level?

Kevin Royalty: Typically when you hit 11 machines you're actually ready for something like Small Business Server, but let's say that you really like the backup technology and you don't want to lose it. We don't remove the Home Server. We actually leave it there. It still does what it does before but we've moved all the file shares and the major work over to a Small Business Server. We leave the Home Server in place as the backup medium for those workstations. We then can add another Home Server and still backup up to 10 more computers.

Richard Campbell: I see. So you keep Home Server around for the backup solution but Small Business Server becomes the new file server?

Kevin Royalty: Yes. And because Home Server has the same remote capability that SBS has, we move that job over to the SBS box which is more secure: domains, group policies, all that good stuff and tighter security, everything else. We just relegate the backup role to the Home Server.

Richard Campbell: That's very, very cool. What about getting into the full scale stuff? So when you start talking about domains and your sort of classic server infrastructure.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. Home Server still -- as long as you leave it in a workgroup mode, you're not going to break the box and you can then put this in like different departments, backup departments, you could put them in multi-sites small businesses. The company that I own with a business partner, we have two locations. It happens to be both of our homes.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: So we have a Data Vault tier that we use to backup the business stuff and then my partner also has one. I can remote into his and he could remote into mine and all of our data is protected at both sites. You could do the same thing in any small business. Just put on in each office.

Richard Campbell: Yeah. It feels to me like even the infrastructure I'm running in my place with domains and so forth, I ought to have one of these as a backup solution for the workstation. It's just too good at it not to do it.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah, exactly. There are a couple of caveats though. Never join the Home Server to a domain.

Richard Campbell: Oh really.

Kevin Royalty: It breaks the EULA and it breaks the Home Server.

Richard Campbell: Okay.

Greg Hughes: What does it break on the Home Server? What actually happens?

Kevin Royalty: What happens is it will start shutting down every hour. It's not supposed to be in a domain. It doesn't handle group policy. A lot of the driver extender technology or the backup technology relies on it being on a workgroup and when you join it to a domain a lot of sockets are blown away.

Greg Hughes: And that's what Small Business Server and what-not is for.

Kevin Royalty: Yes, exactly.

Richard Campbell: And it is a violation of the EULA.

Kevin Royalty: It is a violation of the EULA which is important so you don't want to do it. I had a gentleman in my user group try it just to see what will happen and he said, yeah, it's not a pretty site.

Richard Campbell: You don't want to do this.

Kevin Royalty: You don't want to do that. Let me tell you a funny story. The HP units, the early models, the 470 series when I first got it, when I was beta testing I had built my own box for testing in which I had a keyboard, monitor, and a mouse and I got to see the process to install it. Well, HP, it's a headless device. So the install process, should you have to ever go through this, is completely different than loading it on a box yourself. There are no optical drive in the HP.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: The first thing I did at that time was I brought the box up, connected one workstation to it so I could get the box to remote desktop, the terminal services, and I remote it into the Home Server and I went to set a static IP on the NIC because the way I do things at my house is if it's a server it gets a static IP, if it's a workstation it gets the HTP.

Greg Hughes: Sure.

Kevin Royalty: So I was going through this process and right clicked on the NIC while I was remoting into the box and my finger slipped and I hit disable.

Richard Campbell: Oh, oh no.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. At first I wasn't sure if I hit disable so I'm like, well, it did immediately disconnect me but it took a while for the time out to happen but when it finally came back and said you're not connected. I'm like there's no monitor board, how in the heck am I going to fix this.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Greg Hughes: Yeah.

Kevin Royalty: But then again there wasn't anything on it yet. I just essentially named it and gave it a password and joined one machine to it. That's all I did. So the icon on my system tray went from green to gray which means I'm not connected. Of course I lost I lost my TS session and I'm like, well, I get to try the HP Disaster Recovery scenario now.

Richard Campbell: Yeah.

Kevin Royalty: And it was actually kind of interesting. You take a machine that either isn't part of the Home Server network that doesn't have the Client Software installed or you uninstall the Client Software from a workstation, then you put the DVD that comes with your kit in; and it pops up and it says, hey, are you going to try to recover your Home Server? And you say yes, and then it tells you exactly what to do. It tells you to go to the HP box and you have to turn it off and then you turn it back on and you use a paperclip to hit almost like, you know, on a CD driver you have the emergency eject, you can use a paperclip to do it...

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: There's a reset button on the front of the HP that's hidden behind one of those little tiny holes, you hit it and it boots up in a certain process and it looks for that DVD mounted in a workstation on your network.

Greg Hughes: Huh, interesting.

Kevin Royalty: And then the workstation says, hey, I found your Home Server. What kind of recovery do you want to do? Do you want to do a server reinstall or do you want to do a complete wipe and reload? The complete wipe and reload blows away everything on the Home Server and all drives. So in this case I can pick either option because there was no data on it, but the server reinstall option only reinstalls the OS on the C partition. You still have your backup database and you still have all your data but you don't have any user accounts or any computer accounts so you have to go back and set those up again. So I think it took 30 minutes maybe to rebuild that box over the network.

Richard Campbell: Wow.

Greg Hughes: That's pretty cool.

Richard Campbell: And at least you had a path that didn't involve putting the machine back in a box.

Kevin Royalty: Yes.

Richard Campbell: Even if it's going to take a little longer, as long as I can get it back I'm pretty happy.

Greg Hughes: And it also didn't involve one of those phone calls to HP tech support.

Richard Campbell: Yeah.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah.

Greg Hughes: I've been really happy with my Home Server. It's done a lot for me. It saved my bacon once on a restore. I know, you know, Richard, I mean Scott Hanselman run Home Server forever and he's done some restore on his. I know it's made a difference in his life.

Richard Campbell: Yeah, without a doubt. It's just this idea of Home Server in a business for $500 or $700. It's cheaper than an average workstation and a better solution for centralizing storage and backup.

Greg Hughes: Exactly.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah. Let me give you an example of one of the things that I've started to talk to IT Pros about with Home Server. Typically in a business environment. You're ordering machines in batches.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: But say for example my church. We order machines usually once a year. We order two or three to five at a time. So we order all identical models and they show up and you typically -- if you've been in the IT business you want to make an image of one of those machines for future use if you ever need to take it back to the factory default because how machines actually come with Recovery Media today?

Richard Campbell: Yeah.

Kevin Royalty: Very few. Also very annoying, very hot point issue with me with the vendors saving three cents by not giving the Recovery DVD. Hello. Not worth it, in my opinion. So first thing I do is I take one of the machines, log the Home Server connector and do a complete backup manually of that machine.

Richard Campbell: Okay.

Kevin Royalty: All right. So now we can only store 10 backups of 10 unit of machines on a Home Server.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: How do we keep this image? Because we probably are not going to have a room for it.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: So here's what you do. This is a cool little tip. Take another hard drive that you've got lying around and if you don't you have to buy one obviously. But I carry in my kit of tools, or the toy box as my wife calls it, a USB to IDE/Data/laptop adaptor.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: So you grab one of those, you hook up the hard drive to it, your spare hard drive, you then plug it into a workstation that already have the Home Server connector installed, you go to the C, Program Files, Windows Home Server Folder on the C drive and if you look in that folder you'll find an executable called Client Restore Wizard.exe. That is the same Restore Wizard that's on the CD you boot from if you want to recover a PC. You run that, you connect your disk and then you essentially restore that image that you just made on to another disk.

Richard Campbell: Okay.

Kevin Royalty: After you've done that process you can then take that disk and label it and then store it on your shelf and then once you've done that you can test it by putting the drive and booting the machine to make sure it boots up. Once that's done, you can then delete that backup off the Home Server freeing up a slot.

Richard Campbell: Awesome. Yeah. And if you ever need to revert to it, you always have the drive.

Kevin Royalty: Right and if you're ready to update that image, let's say as soon as you get the PC, you realizes, oh, it make Service Pack 1.0 for Windows 7.0 which we know is not out yet but let's say that we know that it's out and we need to patch the machine before we do anything else to it. So you might patch the machine first, then do your image backup.

Richard Campbell: Right.

Kevin Royalty: And then down the road you'd go, oh, Service Pack 2.0 is coming out. Maybe we should make a new image or update our images with a new Service Pack plus Office Service Pack, blah, blah, blah. You could pull drive off the shelf, take one of the machines, shut it down, pull its drive out, put in your image drive, boot it up, patch the machine, re-back it up, pull the drive out, set the drive on the shelf, put the original disk back in, boot it back up, it's back on the domain and everybody is happy. You now updated an image.

Richard Campbell: Cool.

Kevin Royalty: So little things like that. The other thing that's cool is you can take that Recovery disk that comes with Home Server and you can turn it into a flash drive.

Greg Hughes: Ah, yes.

Kevin Royalty: Because you have laptops and netbooks that don't have optical disks.

Richard Campbell: Cool.

Kevin Royalty: And then some of the other cool things with that is if you ever look at your backups on the Home Server you'll find a folder on the C drive of every backup called Windows Home Server Drivers for Restore. If you take that folder and you drag and drop it onto a flash drive, you now have all the drivers for that machine in one place.

Richard Campbell: Nice.

Kevin Royalty: So if you have to do a recovery with the CD, you boot the CD and it goes, hey, I don't have a driver for your disk controller, I don't have a driver for your network card. You then take that flash drive, plug it in and then say re-scan devices. It finds the USB, loads the drivers and says, up, I've got all I need now, we're ready to continue.

Richard Campbell: And just goes on.

Greg Hughes: That's cool.

Kevin Royalty: It just goes on.

Richard Campbell: Clever.

Kevin Royalty: And then if you turn the Recovery CD into a flash drive, you'll need two flash drives, one for the recovery and one for the drivers, because I tried putting them together and it doesn't see it.

Richard Campbell: Right. Kevin, I think we're just about out of time. Any final words, places people should be looking for more info about Home Server.

Kevin Royalty: Homeserver.com would be the first place to go.

Richard Campbell: Yeah.

Kevin Royalty: A couple of other sites, wegotserved.co.uk is run by Terry Walsh, a Home Server MVP. It's probably the most popular Home Server site, and if you have one of the HP units, mediasmartserver.net run by Alex Kuretz, the author of many of the add-ins out there.

Richard Campbell: Excellent.

Greg Hughes: Very, very cool. That's some great info. Thanks for joining us.

Kevin Royalty: Yeah.

Richard Campbell: Kevin, thanks so much for coming on the show.

Kevin Royalty: Not a problem. Anytime, guys.

Richard Campbell: And we'll talk to you next week on RunAs Radio.