



*All these into one can go*

# VIRTUALLY ASTOUNDING

**Many leading firms are cutting millions from their IT budget through thinking virtually. Could yours? Robin Watts reports.**

In the past few years, the term virtualisation has become something of an IT buzzword. To many it's yet another bit of geek speak with seemingly little relevance to their business, but for those who've implemented virtualisation programmes it's been a way to realise seven figure savings in their enterprise and release valuable resources back to the business.

So what is virtualisation? Key to understanding the concept is the fact that most computer servers only utilize between 3% and 10% of their actual capacity. Yet organizations often have hundreds, sometimes thousands of servers, all requiring expensive floor space, power, software, and management. Virtualisation means running multiple server functions, such as a database server, a file server, a media server, and so on, from one physical machine, the whole array controlled by some very sophisticated software that keeps the various servers independent of one another and without incurring any performance penalty.

If you want a conceptual view of what server virtualisation means, imagine five of your employees making a journey to the same destination for an important meeting. Each of them could travel in their own car and carry out additional tasks on the way, for example, making and taking phone calls. However, you'll be paying for five times the mileage and running costs to achieve exactly what could be achieved with five people travelling in the same car. Each of them could still carry out their own specific tasks, and while you might need a slightly larger car to carry all of them, it would still be far cheaper than sending five cars.

Typical implementations of server virtualisation demonstrate around a 60% reduction in operational costs taking into account power, cooling, maintenance, licensing and personnel. In large

corporations the savings have been in the millions, plus most companies will see a 90%+ reduction in the number of physical servers deployed and the floor-space allocated to them. You can imagine the reduced environmental impact and what that means for the CSR agenda at your firm.

There are other cost-savings to be realised, as virtualisation solutions can provide a degree of automated recovery from hardware failure. In addition, the cost of providing Disaster Recovery capability and the time to recover services are greatly reduced in a virtualised environment, should the worst occur. This leads to greatly improved IT availability and with a range of hardware solutions coming to market which are customisable for virtual environments, opportunities for near mainframe-like availability are starting to become a reality.

There are many server and software vendors who will offer to carry out an initial evaluation of your environment to establish how server virtualisation could work for you. Typically, expect them to talk about anything between a 10:1 and 20:1 consolidation of your current hardware estate. However, bear in mind that vendors are in the business of selling you their solutions and what a particular vendor has to offer may not always be the most appropriate fit for your firm. There are several vendor-neutral organizations, and many of the most successful virtualization projects have been brought about by the engagement of such firms. A final note of caution, especially for those who are told by people in their organization that there is no scope for such savings; significant reduction in the number of machines requiring maintenance always means a reduction in the IT support headcount. This will not be popular, and can encounter resistance even at board level. After all, nobody likes to see their empire shrink. However, for the wisest companies, for those in the know, and for those already doing it, the business benefits of virtualization are far from virtual – they are real.

**Source: Robin Watts, CEO of Itegral [www.itegral.com](http://www.itegral.com)**