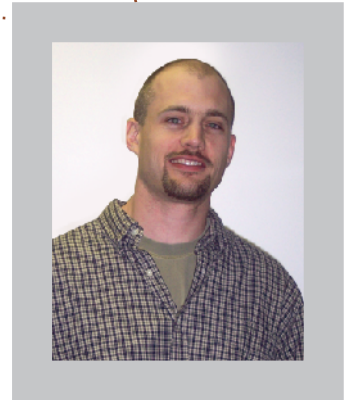


Lock It Down

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The Reluctance of Using MCE

There is no doubt that Windows Media Center deserves consideration by CE professionals. It is thought by many to be the ultimate entertainment convergence platform - and with good reason. Few systems can offer the plethora of easy-to-use, upgradeable features under a single device and user interface. Okay then, with all that it offers, why isn't everyone and their brother jumping on the Media Center bandwagon? The most prominent reason, "It's a computer." Over the years, we've all experienced the woes of the computer world. We've learned to love'm and hate'm at the same time. With most of us, there is a certain feeling of mistrust when it comes to computers. If this is the case, how can

"a computer" be a viable entertainment platform? Entertainment is serious business. To the CE professional and their customers, there is no tolerance for any malfunction. Ease of use, rock solid performance, and reliability is a requirement. Rock solid performance? Reliability? Add the word "Secure" and you'll be describing a corporate enterprise server. This is why a Windows Media Center system can be a viable entertainment platform that can meet the needs of the most demanding customer. A properly administered, mission-critical server will run without a hiccup for years and years. This can be the case with a media server as well - particularly a Windows Media Center media server.

A Windows Media Center SERVER

The question now becomes, "how can a Media Center system perform more like an enterprise server?" This sounds complex, but is it? Not really. It's done every day in the corporate world. One just needs to ask, "what makes a server stable and reliable?" The answer is simple and comes down to three factors: one, the physical environment in which the unit is located; two the hardware makeup; three, the operating system configuration.

THE ENVIRONMENT

As with any high-end piece of electronics, the optimal condition of the environment is important to the longevity of the equipment. Proper cooling, humidity, and airflow are a necessity.

THE HARDWARE MAKEUP

As we know, the A/V industry is transitioning from an analog world to a digital one. A new thought process must be adhered to. Certain precautions must be considered when dealing with digital media vs. analog. Unlike its predecessors, most media servers actually store the media they play in the digital format. Digital media is more susceptible to loss or corruption. For example, an entire history of personal photos, videos, or music library can be destroyed by a single power surge. Thus, it is extremely important that preventive equipment, such as protected storage (RAID), surge protection, and power conditioners, be designed into the system and installation.

THE OPERATING SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

All media servers have an operating system. For example, systems produced by Kaliedescape, Escient, ReQuest, and others, all have fixed operating systems that provide functionality specific to that system. The Windows Media Center operating system is a bit different in that it is not fixed. It is an open platform that can be heavily modified. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that it is extremely flexible meaning both hardware and software can easily be modified and upgraded. The disadvantage is that, if not properly administered, it can be corrupted and become unstable. Also, since a Windows Media Center system can be used as a general purpose computer, all of the vulnerabilities associated of this type of use are a risk of instability. This risk can be avoided by locking down the unit so that it can only be used for the desired entertainment features. A knowledgeable IT person will be able to strip out all non-essential functions of the operating system, set security access to the system at its highest level to prevent outside infiltration, and remove the ability for the end user to tamper with the configuration. Performing these tasks creates a secure, stable, and fixed environment and removes the vulnerabilities. At the same time, when new entertainment features are available, the user does not need to purchase a whole new system. A qualified technician will simply unlock the machine, add the new features, and then lock the system down again.

THE INTESET ADVANTAGE

The environment factor is a concept all CE professionals understand. However, finding the right media server with protective hardware, such as RAID storage, can be a challenge from both an availability and cost perspective. In addition, not every A/V installation company has IT staff who specialize in configuring the detailed security aspects of the Windows operating system. Inteset understands this situation and offers a full, simple-to-administer solution. From a hardware standpoint, an Inteset Denzel server comes with the highest-capacity, internal protected storage on the market. Media content (pictures, videos, music, recorded TV, etc) is also physically separated from the operating system so that if the operating system is corrupted, it will not destroy the media. To prevent operating system corruption, Inteset offers its **Secure Lockdown™ technology** that allows a CE professional to lock down the Windows operating system with one button press.

Now the CE professional can get the best of all worlds - an upgradeable, reliable, secure Windows Media Center server that is simple to configure and support.

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