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Things You Should Know About... MICROSOFT LIVE MESH

Scenario

Regina, a student in a Master of Science program in Professional and Technical Communication, has important files on several computers and mobile devices. She has a desktop computer in her home office where she works on her coursework. She has an iMac where she does her photo and video editing. And she has a laptop that she uses for her work as a Research Assistant. If she's out without her digital camera, Regina frequently takes photos on her iPhone.

Regina hates having her files spread out and inaccessible from one machine to another. She finds it wasteful to have to install the same software on her laptop as she already has on her desktop computer. It frustrates her to have to e-mail photos from her Mac to her PC. In her work as a Research Assistant, she frequently finds herself backing up entire directories to a thumb drive and transferring files back and forth, or running from one computer to another to make sure she has the latest copies of all her files in both places. There must be a better way to do this, she keeps thinking.

Then someone told her about Microsoft Live Mesh. Live Mesh is a synchronization framework that lets Regina synchronize the files on all of her devices so that she can always get to the most up-to-date files. Live Mesh also lets Regina connect to all of her computers so that she can run an application installed on any one of her machines no matter where she is. She can even use Live Mesh to share her research files with her team; Live Mesh notifies her whenever someone modifies a file.

Screenshots copied without permission from Microsoft: www.mesh.com, copyright 2009.

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What is it?

Microsoft Live Mesh is a free synchronization framework similar to Apple's MobileMe. But Live Mesh takes the idea of device synchronization even further. While MobileMe lets Mac users synchronize files between their Macs and mobile devices like the iPhone, Live Mesh gives users the experience of a remote desktop that links to all of their devices, including PCs, Macs, and mobile devices. When users sign up for Live Mesh, they get a personal Live Desktop that includes 5GB of free storage. By synchronizing their files to this Live Desktop, they can access them from anywhere using almost any web browser.

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Who's doing it?

Live Mesh is available in beta form, although the software is publicly available for download. With its versatile device linking capabilities, Live Mesh may become a powerful file sharing platform for any sort of collaborative effort, be it development, research, or even education.

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How does it work?

Users who sign up for Live Mesh receive 5 GB of space on the cloud to upload their files for synchronization or sharing with other users. To get started, users add the devices they want to sync and access remotely. The image to the right shows the device page from Live Mesh.

Users can invite others to access their shared folders in the cloud, making collaboration easy. Live Mesh notifies users when anyone makes changes to a shared folder, when someone joins or leaves a shared folder, and even when messages are posted to a folder.

If users have multiple Windows devices connected through Live Mesh, they can access any of those devices remotely. Even if they haven't synchronized all the folders on their PCs, through remote access they can get access to all their folders and also run applications that are not installed on their local computer. They can even copy and paste files between the two machines.



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Why is it significant?

In today's culture, people find themselves tied to a great many electronic devices. From mobile phones and digital cameras to laptops, netbooks and PCs, most people today have data spread out on multiple devices. Live Mesh addresses the difficulties and frustrations experienced by these users in trying to access all of their important data from a single device. How many times have we ourselves experienced the frustration of having someone's phone number on our computer but not on our phone, or having a file that we need on a remote

computer but we can't access it from where we are. Live Mesh is using the cloud to not only let us access our data from anywhere, but to even run our applications remotely, whether or not they are installed on our local computer.



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What are the downsides?

Live Mesh is currently still in its beta form, so bugs do exist. But Microsoft is working hard to eliminate the bugs as they are discovered, and anyone who signs up for Live Mesh has access to a knowledge base and the product team's blog, as well as a Live Mesh community forum. Obviously, with file sharing and remote access, there are concerns about security. Microsoft addresses these issues in their webpage Tips for a Safer Mesh.

Follow these tips to help protect the privacy of your mesh.

- ✓ Share folders with people you trust
- ✓ Be cautious about sharing confidential information
- ✓ Keep your remote computer's screen hidden when you use Live Mesh Remote Desktop
- ✓ Enable the sync enhancements and Live Mesh Remote Desktop
- ✓ Require secure login for computers running Windows Vista
- ✓ Sign out after using Live Mesh on a public or shared computer

Related topics

[Remove a member from a folder](#)
[See who has access to folders in your mesh](#)
[About folder permissions](#)
[Delete a folder](#)

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Where is it going?

Microsoft Live Mesh could not only redefine the concept of file sharing—it could reinvent how users feel about their devices. By achieving inter-device transparency, Live Mesh removes the concept of device altogether and gets to the heart of what those devices do—give people access to their data. Instead of having to worry about each machine, each with its own set of applications and file folders, users will have full data access on the cloud, seamlessly moving between their applications and information regardless of their files' physical locations. Users don't want to think about where their data is, they just want to be able to find it when they need it.



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Why does it matter to designers?

Imagine you're at a client sight. They love your new ad design but want you to change the phrasing in the ad copy. You don't have your image editing software installed on your laptop, but it's not a problem. You log into your Live Mesh account and, within seconds, you can access your client files and your editing software remotely from the client's site. You make the change and get approval to go ahead with the printing right then and there, instead of having to go back to your office, make the changes, e-mail them to the client, and then wait for their response.

What if you leave on a business trip but your team is still working on the final design? You arrive at your destination and access your Live Mesh shared folders to see that your team has posted a message that the files are ready. You can get to them no matter where you are with Microsoft Live Mesh.

Microsoft Live Mesh frees designers to work on their files from any location, to collaborate with other designers or team members remotely, and to instantly access updated files from any location and from any device.