- You could email the files to your personal email account, work on them at home, and then email the changed files back to your work email account.
- You could get a laptop and use the Windows Offline Files feature to automatically synchronize files from your work network with files on the laptop.

Or you could set up a VPN that allows you to log on to your work network from home. The VPN uses a secured Internet connection to connect you directly to your work network, so you can access your network files as if you had a really long Ethernet cable that ran from your home computer all the way to the office and plugged directly into the work network.

Here are at least three situations in which a VPN is the ideal solution:

- Workers need to occasionally work from home (as in the scenario just described). In this situation, a VPN connection establishes a secure connection between the home computer and the office network.
- Mobile users — who may not ever actually show up at the office — need to connect to the work network from mobile computers, often from locations like hotel rooms, clients' offices, airports, or coffee shops. This type of VPN configuration is similar to the home user's configuration except that the exact location of the remote user's computer is not fixed.
- Your company has offices in two or more locations, each with its own LAN, and you want to connect the locations so that users on either network can access each other's network resources. In this situation, the VPN doesn't connect a single user with a remote network; instead, it connects two remote networks to each other.

Looking at VPN security

The *V* in VPN stands for *virtual*, which means that a VPN creates the appearance of a local network connection when in fact the connection is made over a public network — the Internet. The term *tunnel* is sometimes used to describe a VPN because the VPN creates a tunnel between two locations, which can be entered only from either end. The data that travels through the tunnel from one end to the other is secure as long as it's within the tunnel — that is, within the protection provided by the VPN.

The *P* in VPN stands for *private*, which is the purpose of creating the tunnel. If the VPN didn't create effective security so that data can enter the tunnel only at one of the two ends, the VPN would be worthless; you may as well just open your network and your remote computer up to the Internet and let the hackers have their way.