

Title:

Software Designed Around Your Needs - Microsoft's New Small Business Solution

Word Count:

486

Summary:

Microsoft has a new service designed with the needs of small businesses in mind—businesses with 10 or less employees. If you've thought about taking your business online, Office Live makes it easy for you. There are three different versions of this software to meet the particular needs of your small business:

Option One—Basic

This first solution is Microsoft's core product and comes with several free services:

- a domain name
- web hosting
- email in your company n...

Keywords:

Article Body:

Microsoft has a new service designed with the needs of small businesses in mind—businesses with 10 or less employees. If you've thought about taking your business online, Office Live makes it easy for you. There are three different versions of this software to meet the particular needs of your small business:

Option One—Basic

This first solution is Microsoft's core product and comes with several free services:

- a domain name
- web hosting
- email in your company name

If, for example, you open a hair salon called "Anne's Coifs," your first step would be to log into <http://OfficeLive.com> and see if that name is available. If

it is, then Microsoft registers that domain for you, <http://www.annescoifs.com>. With your domain name, you also get a free email account for your business and a website which you can customize using a variety of templates.

There are easy-to-use tools for setting up your free website. And just because you're using templates doesn't mean your site has to look like a cookie cutter. According to Terra Terwilliger, Microsoft's worldwide business management director, "You get a tremendous amount of flexibility in those templates...You can have over 50,000 combinations just using the dropdown menus." You can also upload your own logo, text, and pictures.

Option 2—Essentials

This is the more advanced version. You get all the features of Basic and some others as well:

- Business management tools for managing your customer lists, company assets, projects, etc.
- The ability to go beyond the template format and design your website yourself, or hire someone if you choose.
- The ability to create password-protected shared sites. You can post documents and make them viewable to your customers, business partners, employees, or whomever. They can log in and see the status of your projects, review files and information, or see what tasks need completed. Depending on the level of access you give them, they can either view the site as read-only or they can edit those files to keep them updated.

Option 3—Collaboration

Collaboration gives you all the business applications without any web features. Says Terwilliger, "If you already have your own website, but you just want the business tools and the shared site, you can get that too."

Making It Work For You

Office Live is in beta right now, with about 75,000 customers signed up for the free trial version. Basic Office Live is and will always be free. The upgraded versions will charge a monthly fee when the final product is launched, but are still more cost-effective than a server. And because the software's in testing right now, all the services—including the subscription services—are free.

Microsoft plans to release the completed version in late 2006, possibly

November. In the meantime, users are encouraged to try all of the different features and give feedback to help make Office Live more user-friendly for small businesses.