

Financial Times Rates EmergeCore 5 out of 5

Paul Taylor: Personal technology

By Paul Taylor

Published: July 29 2003 18:24

EmergeCore Networks IT-100

Networking a home office, small business or branch office has pretty much become essential, particularly if you want to share a high-speed broadband internet connection, run a website or operate your own e-mail system. But networking has never been easy and most small businesses do not have access to a corporate information technology department.

What you really need is a complete out-of-the-box hardware and software system and that is what EmergeCore Networks, a small Idaho-based start-up, has developed in the IT-100. This \$1,395 IT-system-in-a-box is small but packs a host of powerful features that make it easy to build a wired or wireless network.

The IT-100 includes a 20Gb hard drive - not enormous but sufficient for file-sharing, running a small e-mail network or hosting a modest website. There are separate ports to connect a broadband modem and wired personal computers if required, a standard parallel port and two USB ports to hook up peripherals. The system includes a built-in e-mail server that also supports web-based e-mail, web hosting and the software needed to build and run a website.



The wireless capabilities of the IT-100 are particularly interesting because they make it relatively easy to build a network of PCs and hook them up to the internet without dragging Ethernet cables around or drilling holes in walls - a big benefit for small businesses that need flexibility in order to expand.

Other features include the ability to serve up files to remote users through File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and build a virtual private network so that users can access the network securely while travelling. The IT-100 provides these features cost-effectively by using a Transmeta Crusoe microprocessor and running the open source Linux operating system - although the user is unlikely ever to be aware of this because the system is configured using a series of web-browser-based point and click screens.

Unlike the claims of many rivals, the IT-100 is easy enough for anyone with just a minimum knowledge of networks to set up in 10 minutes or less. Perhaps just as importantly, the IT-100 is nearly maintenance free since it does not run other software so the chances of a system crash or conflict are minimal. It is also extremely quiet and cool - it does not need an internal fan and the notebook-style, dual-voltage external power supply keeps the heat down and enables the system to operate virtually anywhere.

Bottom line: The IT-100 is not the only network appliance aimed at the small business but it is the best I have come across. Its combination of ease of use, range of features and value for money make this system hard to beat - though I would have liked a bigger hard drive.

Rating: *****