


A We Got Served Step by Step Guide



Get up to speed and get going
with Microsoft's latest small
business and prosumer server
platform.

Terry Walsh & Jim Clark

Using Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials

eBook Edition

Published by We Got Served Ltd.

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Jim Clark is a frequent contributor to We Got Served, a website established by Terry Walsh in 2007 to cover the Windows Home Server platform. Since then, the site has grown to cover a wide range of digital home, consumer electronics, and small business product categories but retains at its core the mission to help users make the most of technology.

When Jim first heard about Windows Home Server, he developed an immediate interest in this new platform as a centralized storage product for the home. We Got Served became an outlet to document his experiences with this Microsoft product, review software written specifically for the Windows Home Server platform, and review hardware related products for use in the digital home. His interest in Windows Home Server and the digital home continues to this day.

Jim was born and raised in Marion, Iowa. Except for short stints in Cedar Rapids and Waterloo, Iowa, he has remained true to Marion. All four of his children have graduated from the same high school he went to. Jim has a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Iowa and has spent his entire career in various design engineering positions in the manufacturing industry.

Jim's interest in computer technology started with the original IBM PC. PCs have been an integral tool at work, and a hobby for over 25 years. Jim has been awarded Microsoft's Most Valuable Professional Award for Windows Home Server each year since 2009 for his work with Terry on the We Got Served website.

Jim is the co-author of *Windows Home Server 2011 Step by Step*, *25 Essential Windows Home Server Projects*, *25 Essential Windows Home Server Projects Vol 2*, and the author of *Using Windows Server 2012 Essentials* and *15 Essential Windows 8 Projects*.

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Since then, the site has grown to cover a wide range of digital home, consumer electronics, and small business product categories but retains at its core the mission to help users make the most of technology.

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Born and raised in Liverpool, England and now living in Silverstone with his wife and two sons, Terry has been awarded Microsoft's Most Valuable Professional Award each year since 2008 for his work on We Got Served.

Over the last two years, Terry has authored a number of Mac and Windows home server guides, including *Using OS X Mavericks Server at Home*, *Windows Home Server 2011 Step by Step*, *Using OS X Lion Server at Home*, *Using OS X Mountain Lion Server at Home*, *25 Essential Windows Home Server Projects* and *Building a Windows 8 Home Server*. He has also edited a number of titles, including *Using Windows Home Server*, *25 Essential Windows Home Server Projects Volume 2* and *15 Essential Windows 8 Projects*.

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About We Got Served

We Got Served is a popular technology news and community site which was founded in February 2007. It is written, edited and moderated by a dedicated and knowledgeable team of technology enthusiasts across the world who are focused on bringing you the latest news, reviews, tutorials and support for the products you're using today and tomorrow. We created We Got Served as a place to learn about new technology, help readers make the most of the products and services they use, and most importantly to create a community where readers can learn, discuss and share their experiences and knowledge with others in need of support. However you use the site, we hope you enjoy it.

Other We Got Served Guides by Terry Walsh & Jim Clark

We Got Served publishes a wide range of guides for Windows and Apple Mac OS X. Click the titles below to view online or visit <http://store.wegotsserved.com>.

- 25 Essential Windows Home Server Projects
- 25 Essential Windows Home Server Projects Volume 2
- Build a Computer From Scratch
- Building a Windows 8 Home Server
- Building a Windows Home Theatre PC
- Manage Your Music and Video Metadata
- Using OS X Lion Server at Home
- Using OS X Mavericks Server at Home
- Using OS X Mountain Lion Server at Home
- Using Windows Server 2012 Essentials
- Windows Home Server 2011 Step by Step

Using Windows Server 2012 Essentials Reviews

A big thank you from the authors to every reader who takes a couple of minutes to share their feedback on the book. Writing these books is a labour of love, with a few busy months invested in each title, so your thoughts and suggestions are always welcome - wherever you choose to express them!

Outstanding Investment

For only a couple of bucks, this book provided the necessary information to get Server 2012 up and running with some real value-added functionality. The tag line is 'written by non-IT people; for use by non-IT people' and it is absolutely true. In short order anyone can follow the steps provided and get a home network on a backup schedule, monitor updates, start serving web pages & media.

A Great Book to Get You Through the Initial Setup

Windows Server 2012 Essentials takes a little more time to setup. The book provided me with the needed instructions to get me through the build. Detail was good for the things that I needed to set up. I loved all the pictures of the different screens, that really helped to be sure that I was in the right place. Once completed everything has worked flawlessly. This is a great resource for future work on my server.

Perfect for a Newbie

I found this guide to be just what I needed for my first experience configuring a new server for the church where I volunteer. The level of detail was just right for me.

About this Book

Back in January 2013 we launched our seventh Home and Small Business Server eBook, *Using Windows Server 2012 Essentials*. Whilst following a successful formula perfected over the course of previous releases, this guide was somewhat of a watershed for We Got Served - principally as it was the first guide covering the "Post Windows Home Server era".

Windows Server 2012 Essentials, and its update, known as Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials are both server platforms fully targeted at small business users. That said, we know there are tens of thousands (if not hundreds of thousands) who are actively using the platform in the home - such was the allure of Windows Home Server that any close kissing cousin of that product is going to be gobbled up by the WHS community.

So, that meant the eBook had to cater to two distinct audiences with overlapping, but often differing needs, and would need to introduce new concepts to the WHS crowd - Active Directory, Windows Server Update Services and more. Jim did a great job with the original book, which continues to be a best-seller one year on.

Then there's the cloud and the concept of the "hybrid server". Microsoft continues to build out a range of cloud-based subscription services for small business, including Office 365 and Windows Intune, that they hope will appeal enough for you to spend your money on. Integrating "off-premise" services with "on-premise" server features offers enhanced power and flexibility for sure, but is it right for you and your organisation?

That is where we come in. For those new to Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, we'll walk you step by step through your first few weeks with the platform. More experienced hands will get the low down on what's new, what's hot and what's not. But you can be sure we'll explain everything clearly with illustrative screenshots to help you configure your own server.

We hope this eBook helps you get up and running and on your way to a successful first implementation of Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, or indeed a smooth journey from the previous release.

Written by non-IT people; for use by non-IT people.

Terry Walsh & Jim Clark
March 2014

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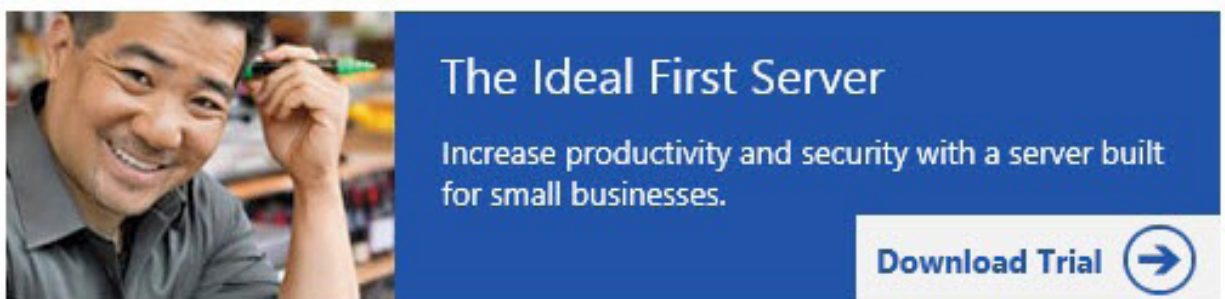
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Introduction

“Welcome to Using Windows Server R2 2012 Essentials. Essentials is touted by Microsoft as the “Ideal First Server” for those small businesses, with less than 25 users, who want to focus their time on running their business, and not have to become an IT expert or rely on an IT consultant to maintain their server. ”



If you are an advanced home user (sometimes known as a “Prosumer” to the Marketing *cognoscenti*), Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials provides you with a robust media and central storage platform that can grow as your home network grows. If you are a SOHO (Small Office, Home Office) user, Essentials provides you with that same robust platform providing a central storage unit and the ability to back up and restore data to and from any client computers you have, alongside advanced remote access capabilities.

In writing this book, we believe you’re going to be in one of four camps:

For those of you upgrading from the previous release of Windows Server 2012 Essentials, you’ll have a good understanding of the platform, so we’ll walk you through the key changes and improvements in the R2 release, and walk you step by step through your migration choices - unlike Windows Home Server and common client platforms, it’s important to consider and plan your upgrade carefully.

If you are new to the Windows Server platform, we hope this book will help you quickly discover how easy it is to install, configure and use Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, and how useful its

features are in both the home and small business environments.

If you are migrating from the Windows Home Server platform, you will find a few changes that will require some new methods to join and access your Essentials server. You will also find quite a few similarities to the WHS feature set. Different, yet similar; perhaps even familiar.

If you're visiting from the Windows Small Business Server platform, and in particular SBS 2011 Essentials, you will find many similarities and the removal of various complexities in the SBS feature set which make it as simple and easy as possible to set up and maintain 2012 Essentials server.

Whether you are interested in Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials:

- As a file server
- To stream music, video and photos around your home/business and beyond
- As an easy way to share files with friends and colleagues
- As an application server
- Or you're simply looking for an easy way to protect your PCs and Macs

or all of the above, you will learn that your First Server can indeed play an "essential" role at the heart of your network.

We assume, however, that you are more than just passively interested in the technology behind Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials. If you're reading this book, you may be either at the purchase point or you have already pulled the trigger to buy. Whether you're moving from another Microsoft Server platform (such as Windows Home Server or WHS 2011), an Small Business Server platform, or this is your first venture into the server world, our goal in this book is to guide you through the first few weeks of life with your server. The decision process of matching hardware to software, the installation/migration process, deployment, and other basics of getting Windows Server R2 Essentials up and running. Once set up, we will demonstrate the capabilities of Windows Server 2012 Essentials and what you need to do from a maintenance perspective to keep things running smoothly.

When we talk about *deployment*, we're referring to both *clients* and *users*. A server, whether in the home, small business or a large corporation "serves" no purpose without clients (devices that connect to the server, such as PCs, printers and other devices). If you are a home user, you may want to know how to set up the media features of Essentials and connect such devices as an Xbox One, or

other game console. If you are a SOHO user, you may want to set up Remote Web Access so that you can access your computers from anywhere you might find yourself. If you are running a small business, you may be interested in Line of Business (LOB) applications and Cloud services. No matter which profile you fit, you should most definitely be interested in connecting users and configuring their access to information stored on the server.

Why Would You Want to Read This Book?

When writing a guide such as this, it is useful to envision who will be reading and why. My assumption is that you will have at least heard of Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, or in more general terms, servers and network attached storage devices. You are interested in finding out what a server can do for your home or business. Whilst each of you will have specific areas of interest, your basic needs are the same: provide a central storage device from which to serve data and a means to protect that data.

You may have tried storing your growing collection of files on an external hard drive, but find it difficult to share files around the home or business. That hard drive is filling up, and you're wondering what to do next with your data. You may own or work for a small business with up to 25 PCs and/or Macs being used around the office, and have need of a server that can backup and protect your vital data with ease, and allow centralized file sharing, user account management and remote access.

You may know a lot about computers, you may know just a little - but I am going to assume that your home or business includes more than one PC, that you have a growing mass of data to look after, and you are interested in knowing if Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials is right for you. If you're coming from the Windows Home Server or the Small Business Server world, I'm sure you have a pretty good idea of what a server can do for you, and the features you need.

My job is to help you get started with Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, but more importantly, prepare you with the knowledge you need to begin your own adventures with the platform, at home, at work, or on the road.

Just Who Am I to be Talking About Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials?

I am that home computer enthusiast that started many years ago with one computer. As my kids grew, that one computer became multiple computers. As the world started becoming more and more digital, I found more of my information and media going on to my computer. No more CDs, no

more printed pictures, no more home videos on VHS tapes. I soon figured out that if those digitized pictures or home videos got lost, I was not going to survive the repercussions. I needed to protect that data. I also wanted a central “device” from which to serve all my media to any computer, or other media device, in my home.

About that time, Windows Home Server came to market. This was the perfect solution for my situation, and it included an array of additional features that I soon found quite useful, or essential. WHS was specifically designed for the consumer and for home use - inexpensive, with modest hardware requirements. Over time, I became an expert of sorts, began writing about my experiences with Windows Home Server on the We Got Served (<http://www.wegotserve.com>) website, all of which eventually led to my selection as a Microsoft WHS MVP (Most Valuable Professional - Microsoft’s award program for technical expertise in the community).

As a computer enthusiast, I am always looking forward to the latest and hopefully greatest thing coming from the computer hardware and software, world. With the demise of Windows Home Server, my attention turned to its replacement - Windows Server 2012 Essentials, and subsequently this new “R2” release of the platform.

The gist of that last paragraph is I am most definitely **not** an “IT person” and this is not a book for geeks (well, not *hardcore* geeks, anyway!). Corporate servers are an area in which I have had minimal interest or expertise. As a small business server replacement however, Essentials is being touted as the server for a business without an IT department. Install it; configure it; deploy it; job done; no experience required - if that’s good for business, then it’s good for home.

So, the challenge is to determine how true a statement that is. If I can do all that, so can you. The goal of this book is that it can become your guide on the ABCs of how to get you up and running with Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials. It’ll be easier if you know *something* about computers, in general, but hopefully this book can get you there regardless of your level of expertise.

Just remember, this is a book *written by* non-IT people; *for use by* non-IT people. With that said, let’s dive in!

Please Register This Book

Whilst the concept of registering a book may sound a little strange, I heartily invite you to do so! Registering your email with us allows us to inform you of updates and amendments to the book, and let you know about new books we're writing as well as some offers on our other titles.

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What's New in Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials?

"Before we start our journey to install Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, for those of you who are familiar with its predecessor, we should take a brief look at the additional features included in the new version of the operating system"

I'm going to let you into a little secret. In this release of Windows Server 2012 Essentials, Microsoft haven't been fully focused about adding features for prosumers and small business owners - sure, as we'll see there are certainly a number of enhancements and the usual "under the hood" fixes that, as users, we'll never really be told about. But the big, strategic push with Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials is all about extending the platform for use in larger businesses and Enterprises.

That's right, "the little server that could" has been enhanced to become "the slightly larger server that most definitely can".

That said, despite Microsoft drive hard into Enterprise and Cloud environments, there's still a lot to interest regular users with "on-premise" servers. Let's walk through the bigger changes that brings the new version of Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials to life:

Windows Server 2012 Essentials Experience Server Role

Whilst Windows Server 2012 Essentials has done a great job supporting and protecting small businesses and prosumers since release, its features have not been available to all. Enterprise IT administrators have jealously watched from the sidelines as we've enjoyed all of those unique features that they could access on the more advanced Standard and Datacenter versions of Windows Server they use.

So, Microsoft has created a new server role called the *Windows Server Essentials Experience* (sounds like the name of the world's worst rock band, right?) which enables all the features and dependent services and roles of Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials on Standard and Datacenter releases of Windows Server - without all of the locks and restrictions that Microsoft place on the cheaper Essentials product. In short, Windows Server Standard and Datacenter users get every feature they need, including the Windows Server Essentials goodness.

That means Enterprise admins can now install a Standard or Datacenter edition server running the Windows Server Essentials Experience role as a domain member rather than as the root domain controller as well as the possibility of adding the Essentials Experience role to an existing domain environment with multiple servers running Windows Server. Up to 200 devices and PCs are supported via the Essentials Experience role on Standard and Datacenter.

Good for them you're probably thinking - but there are some benefits for Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials owners. If your needs grow and you want to move up to Microsoft's Windows Server Standard or Datacenter releases then you'll have an easier upgrade path and can retain all of the features you love about your current server, with the added features of the bigger products.

If the above means nothing to you yet, then don't worry, we'll explain some of these terms a little later!

Virtualization Enhancements

Whilst Virtualization (running one or more instances of the Windows Server operating system on one physical piece of hardware) is all the range in the Enterprise, take-up is slower in small business (and certainly in the home). Now, that may well be because there's less financial benefit to smaller operations from Virtualization, but Microsoft are guessing that it's also because configuring and managing virtual environments is also pretty complex.

So, with Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials, they're seeking to make Virtualization easier. You can now create a Windows Server Essentials guest virtual machine (VM) on a Windows Server Essentials host server - so, you get two servers for the price of one. Hurrah! Setup, configuration and management of client PCs is conducted via the guest operating system.

Run Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials in the Cloud

Microsoft's march to the Cloud continues, and manifests itself in Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials with improvements to how the operating system can be run via a cloud-hosted (Azure-based as well as other private hosting solutions) virtual server, rather than utilising your own hardware. That takes away the headache of managing hardware and network performance and have your server hosted with commercial SLAs in place.

In this release, Microsoft have tweaked configuration options for hosted environments - features like PC backup and Storage Spaces are disabled by default as moving large slabs of data to the cloud on a regular basis would be slow and expensive.

To further convince you, the user, of the need to rush to the Cloud you'll also see additional Cloud-oriented features and services integrated into the Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials Dashboard. They include:

- **Windows Azure Active Directory** - allows single sign-on and password synchronization between the local Active Directory and cloud services such as Office 365. User Group management and synchronisation have also been enabled.
- **Microsoft Office 365 Enhancements** - Deeper integration with Office 365 in the Dashboard - again targeted at larger environments (with hundreds of users - remember, Enterprises can now use the Dashboard, right?). These include the ability to create and manage email distribution groups, mobile device management (MDM) features such as remote wipe, policy and access management. There's also a new SharePoint Online Library Management feature which will allow you to create and manage SharePoint libraries for your organisation.
- **Windows Intune Integration** - that's right, you can now buy and use even more Microsoft Cloud Management features directly from your Dashboard! Windows Intune is a cloud-hosted solution for managing client PCs. You can manage devices, security configuration, endpoint protection, patch and application distribution and much more. In Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials you can manage users, security groups, and licenses for Windows Intune services. Find out more about Windows Intune here: <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/server-cloud/products/windows-intune/>

Connect Mobile Devices to Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials

Alongside PCs and Macs, you can now connect mobile clients to Windows Server 2012 Essentials. Supported platforms include Windows Phone, iOS devices such as iPhones and iPads, plus Android devices. With Office 365 integration (as mentioned earlier) you can enable management features for those device including remote wipe et al.

Connect Clients From Remote Locations

If you want to connect a client to your server, you can now do so whilst you're out and about. Simply point the client to your server's Connect virtual folder using Remote Web Access and the Connector will kick in.

The Connector Gets Slimmer and Fitter

Talking of the Windows Server 2012 Connector, the new release improves performance in this area too, reducing the client connector's memory and CPU usage.

Create and Manage User Groups in the Dashboard

A much needed feature arrives at last - you can now create User Groups and add user accounts to those groups from the Dashboard. With that enabled, you can easily manage permissions for multiple users simultaneously.

Updated Apps for Windows 8 and Windows Phone 8

You may remember Microsoft releasing an app called My Server for Windows 8 and Windows RT, which allows access to key features of the server from (Microsoft) mobile devices and desktops. A new release of the app - My Server 2012 R2 - is available for Windows 8 and Windows Phone devices from their respective app stores.

Funnily enough, the new release enhances Cloud services with the ability to access and manage Office 365 documents on both local, on-premises servers and on SharePoint Online in the Cloud. The Windows release also enables access to the server via Remote Web Access.

You'll find enhancements to server alerts and user management - activating/deactivating network users and account password reset are now supported on mobile devices, allowing you to manage the server from anywhere.

Media Streaming Separation

Not so much a new feature, but an important change for media enthusiasts. Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials gets less fun! Media Streaming features have been removed from Windows Server 2012 Essentials and now have to be downloaded and installed separately. Here's the link to the Windows Server Essentials Media Pack (<http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=40837>)

Downloading and installing the pack enables:

- Streaming of media (photos, music and videos) to DLNA-compliant receivers

- Smooth streaming to HTML5-compliant browsers by using Remote Web Access and to web service applications
- UI elements associated with the configuration of media streaming in the Windows Server Essentials Dashboard

A More Touching Remote Web Access Experience

Plug-in haters rejoice! Microsoft Silverlight is out and Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials' Remote Web Access experience has been fully rebuilt in HTML 5. That brings improvements in consistency between browsers (particularly with regard to improving mobile browser support), and importantly allows you to control your RWA experience using touch on compatible devices.

Yes, and it looks a lot like SkyDrive - erm, I mean *OneDrive*.

Launchpad is Closed By Default

There must be someone somewhere who loves Launchpad, but I'm yet to meet anyone who lives to see the Launchpad window pop up when they boot their PC. Perhaps noting that the World hates the Launchpad, Microsoft now ensure it's closed by default.

Stay Connected to the Office via VPN

A neat enhancement to VPN features allows your PCs to stay remotely connected to your main office network over VPN. You can trigger auto-VPN dialing which will keep you connected at all times.

Health Monitoring Now Included

In Windows Server 2012 Essentials, you needed to install an add-in to enable health monitoring features. That's all now included in the new release. The server monitors its own health and that of client computers running Windows 7, Windows 8, Windows 8.1, and Mac OS X version 10.5+.

You'll hear of any problems related to backups, server storage, low disk space, and much more. You can generate reports on a regular schedule or ad-hoc basis, email them out to administrators and other interested parties and view them on a range of devices, including mobile hardware.

Server Folder Management Improvements

New to Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials is the ability to specify space quotas on your Server Folders - once a folder grows beyond that quota, you'll be hit up with an alert. Also new is the ability to create server folders on a second server in the network whilst keeping the same UNC path prefix.

File History Gets More Granular and Restore Options Improve

File History Backups are now configured per user rather than per device, allowing much more granular configuration of preferences. Files can now also be restored to new computers using File History - handy (read: essential) in the case where an old computer is decommissioned/breaks and you need to get a new one set-up. The first time you log on to your new computer in the network, you are prompted to restore your files from your File History backups.

Client Full System Restore

Client Full System Restore is now supported by Windows Deployment Services (WDS). That means you can create a client restore service using the **Set up Client Restore Service** task and perform restores over the network with WDS instead of using an image saved on DVD.

Phew! That's actually quite a few enhancements - obviously, not every new feature, bell and whilst whistle will be relevant to every reader and, as you can now see, improvements have been definitely weighted towards opening up Windows Server Essentials to larger environments and pushing Cloud Services. But it's clear that, thanks to the success of Windows Server 2012 Essentials, Microsoft are continuing to invest in the product with R2 and that's good news for existing and new users alike.

Shall we get Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials installed and see what the fuss is about?