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Microsoft Small Business Server has changed the way numerous small organizations administer Windows networks. Each new version has introduced important changes. For example, Exchange 2003 services debuted with the 2003 platform, and Hyper-V licensing with the '08 iteration. These changes have significantly affected small businesses and the IT professionals that support them. Windows Small Business Server 2011 continues that tradition with many important changes of its own.

1: It's out

Microsoft has released [Windows Small Business Server 2011](#). As of this writing, it's SBS 2011 Standard and the optional SBS 2011 Premium Add-on. Microsoft lists the release date for SBS 2011 Essentials as 1H 2011.

2: Two editions exist

According to Microsoft, two SBS 2011 editions exist. However, most IT professionals will view the SBS 2011 lineup as including three versions. That's because Microsoft considers the SBS 2011 Premium Add-on (at \$1,604) to be just that: an add-on component (to the \$1,096 Windows Small Business Server 2011 Standard platform) and not a separate edition. The other edition, the \$545 Windows SBS 2011 Essentials package, has a 25-user limit.

3: Premium adds SQL

The SBS 2011 Premium Add-on adds SQL to Microsoft's Small Business Server platform. Larger SMBs and home offices that must run centralized databases will require the upgrade if they want to leverage line-of-business applications needing SQL Server. With the add-on, the SBS platform receives SQL Server 2008 R2 for Small Business, which has the same capabilities as SQL Server 2008 R2 Standard but is for specific use within the SBS 2011 environment.

4: Additional servers require Premium

Organizations needing to deploy additional servers within their SBS environment must purchase the SBS 2011 Premium Add-on. The add-on includes a Windows Server 2008 R2 Standard license, which enables deploying a second server on a Windows Small Business Server 2011 network. The Premium Add-on also enables adding virtual servers running within a Hyper-V environment in an SBS 2011 network.

5: Downgrade rights are complex

SBS 2011 downgrade rights are complicated, at least at first glance. Beginning with SBS 2011 Essentials, no downgrade rights exist.

Moving to SBS 2011 Standard provides full package product (FPP) and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) customers with the option to downgrade to SBS 2008 Standard. But SBS 2011 Standard FPP/OEM customers must have access to SBS 2008 installation media and product keys when doing so. Volume licensing customers

10 things you should know about Microsoft Small Business Server 2011

(VLC) are eligible to downgrade to SBS 2008, but they can obtain installation media and product keys through the Microsoft Volume Licensing Service Center (VLSC).

Microsoft encourages customers to explore volume licensing when purchasing SBS 2011. That's clear when viewing SBS 2011 Premium Add-on downgrade rights, which don't exist for FPP and OEM customers. However, SBS 2011 Premium Add-on licenses purchased through Redmond's volume channel are eligible for downgrade to Windows Server 2008 Standard, with media and keys available through VLSC.

6: SBS 2011 leverages Exchange 2010 SP1 engine

Thanks to the power of Microsoft's Exchange Server 2010 Service Pack 1, email services included in SBS 2011 are robust. Included Outlook Web Access (OWA) services mimic Microsoft Office Outlook more than previous versions. An improved Microsoft Exchange Management Console provides a single location for administering user email. The power of Exchange 2010's advanced retention policies and deployment rules, and new archiving options, all become available on the SBS platform with the 2011 edition, as does automatic mailbox and database corruption detection and repair.

7: SBS 2011 offers WSUS 3:0 SP2

Many IT professionals and business owners were confounded by original versions of Windows Server Update Services, which among other issues, had a tendency to consume gigabytes of disk space, often on incorrectly partitioned C volumes. SBS 2011 benefits from WSUS 3.0 Service Pack 2, which simplifies patch and update management. Windows 7 support is included, as is BranchCache, which enables storing file and Web server content at branch locations to reduce WAN traffic. Numerous other performance enhancements and bug fixes are also included in the SP2 version.

8: SBS 2011 Essentials requires no CALs

Windows SBS 2011 Essentials requires no client access licenses (CALs). Yes. You read that right. SBS 2011 Essentials requires no CALs. Microsoft must have discovered that small offices don't track CALs well and are simply confused by the concept. SBS 2011 Essentials includes those costs within its server OS license, further simplifying deployment and administration within small organizations.

9: SBS 2011 Essentials maxes at 25 users/PCs

Proving there are almost always catches, the SBS 2011 Essentials platform supports only 25 users or PCs at any one time and no more. While CAL requirements are eliminated within the SBS 2011 Essentials edition, the platform can't be used in larger offices. Interesting, SBS 2011 Standard and Premium Add-on CALs suites are not concurrent, meaning separate CALs are required for every user accessing the SBS 2011 server. Microsoft has an excellent [FAQ](#), providing more licensing information, on its Web site.

10: SBS 2011 leverages SharePoint Foundation Services 2010

Many organizations depend upon the SBS platform to enable collaboration among their teams. The SBS 2011 release includes [Microsoft SharePoint Foundation Services 2010](#) to fuel secure online internal communication. The newest SharePoint version helps organizations reduce costs by consolidating multiple sites on an intranet administered locally, which makes it easier to share files and coordinate calendars. It also includes native monitoring, alert, and administration tools.