

Fun houses

Four digital enthusiasts who share entertainment content of all types on their home networks share their experience and expertise.



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What's on the network?	Wired: three PCs (one is a server), two printers; wireless: a laptop, Xbox, PlayStation, Tivo, Pocket PC	Three PCs, one of which is controlling a home automation system. Each PC can control the speaker systems — including the wireless ones out on the deck side of the house — the lighting systems, even the irrigation system.	2 Windows-based PCs, a Linux server, a PC laptop, Replay TV, Nintendo Game Cube, Turtle Beach Audiotron, VoIP	Three computers, a desktop and two laptops, two Tivos, Palm Tungsten C, printers
What pleases you most about your network?	"I don't think a lot of people hook up their Tivo to see their pictures and listen to their albums."	"I can retrieve information from any PC in the home and not have to run up and down stairs."	"The Linux server. I basically can do all my own e-mailing and web serving without having to rely on another company. Except my Internet connection, of course."	"I think the entirety of it, the freedom of not having to worry about where you are to get something done."
How much money have you spent?	"The networking part of it, probably close to \$300 or \$400 over time."	"Probably \$150 to \$200 total, including the router."	"Probably a total of \$250 or \$300 over the last two or three years."	"I've probably spent about \$600 [over three years]. You could do the very same network for \$300 today, if not less."
How much time?	"Probably 40 hours over a month's time."	"A weekend."	"Probably about 24 hours total over the last three or four years."	"At least 20 hours over all that time."
Key advice for new networkers:	"Whatever you purchase, make sure you have a good technical support line. Home networking, while it can be very easy, has a lot of variables that you'll need help on unless you're experienced."	"You need to have the most secure set-up you possibly can, 100 times more if you have a wireless network. If you're ever going to upgrade any software or hardware, it would be your anti-virus and firewall systems."	"I can't think of any one piece of information that would be super important. With wireless, you want to be sure you're using security. If you're building a house, you probably would want to previre your house while it's being built."	"Take the time to learn about setting up security properly."
Toughest part of the process:	"Financially, I really don't have much money to spend on it. The way I fund it is to sell stuff I don't need anymore on eBay."	"Getting the PCs to talk to each other through the firewall."	"Probably the running of wires, where I've needed to."	"Initially, there were a lot of differences between manufacturers, even if they said things would work together."

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