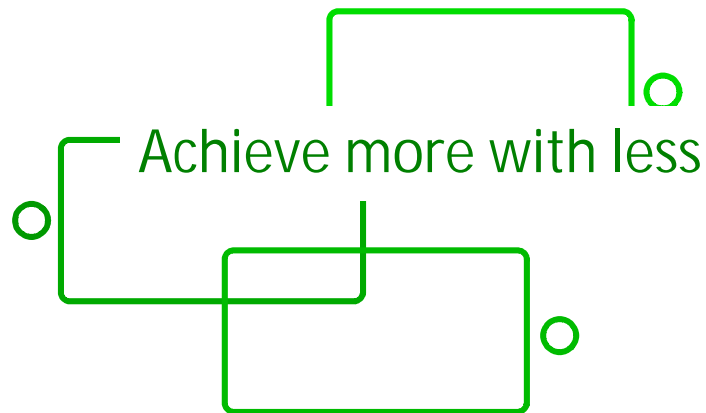


## Fax Servers vs. Fax Services

- Which is better for your organization? -

Whitepaper



- ✓ Fax Server performances
- ✓ Fax Service performances
- ✓ Small companies vs medium to big companies
- ✓ Decision tool

## Introduction

If you are a buyer who is interested in a fax system for your small or medium-sized business or large enterprise, you have a choice to make: use a fax server or a fax service. First you need to understand what you are using the fax server/service for.

You need to remember that you need to send/receive faxes for official documents, invoices, orders, contracts. You also need to think at the size of your organization: how many employees use faxes, how many of them receive more than send and you need to calculate the number of sent and received faxes/day.

Next, you need to understand what you are going to do with your document flow. Do you have an automated flow and need to integrated the fax sending/receiving (e.g SharePoint integration)? How important is it for you to find fast the faxes that contain a certain paragraph or certain keywords?

After you have answered these questions you can go further in making the comparison between the two alternatives.

Some have started arguing that using an online Fax Service and having the fax server somewhere "in the clouds" is the next trend. We say that it is, indeed, an option. However, we shall prove that this is an option only for very small companies with low sending/receiving faxing activity. And even in these cases there are other options as well.

People talk about hidden costs with fax servers. We shall argue that.....

Either way, either choice, using an automated fax system has the primary benefit of enabling you to better manage your fax activity. For example, it enables your users to send files directly from their desktops, without having to walk to a fax machine, saving big dollars in direct costs. Moreover, it means that every file your workers fax can be automatically archived and directly managed, ) a key requirement of many compliance regulations like the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act). Also, one can directly tag-and-search any file stored on your server (by using SharePoint, Active Directory etc).

## Fax Servers

A fax server is made of a server software that runs on a server and a client software that runs on desktops.

The client software is what end users see and use (at receiving and/or sending). Typically, this client software is rolled-out from a central point on the entire network. There is no need to install a separate client on every desktop.

Normally, just like any software on the market, there is conventional client software (that runs as any application, from your desktop) and then there is web fax software. Client software allows users to send faxes and to receive them, as well as manage tag them,

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archive them and, usually, search them (of course, together with a TIFF iFilter). The client software allows users to send from personal applications in the same manner as printing (word documents, excel spreadsheets etc), and, also, allows users to use their email interface to fax their documents (by simply introducing a fax number into the address field).

Receiving faxes is done, usually, in the inbox. They can be stored in different file formats: PDF, TIFF, JPG etc

The Web fax client software is simply a web site that users access and use for sending/receiving faxes. A web fax client will not have every feature that a desktop client has. However, normally, new features are available every day and, in the near future, web clients will be able to use every single facility that desktop clients have.

Fax server software handles the management and maintenance of a company's entire fax inflow. Server software

typically is compatible with leading server operating systems and enterprise email systems. The fax server should be able to support integration with SharePoint, Active Directory, SAP, Oracle and any CRM/SLA compatible with any of these systems.

You, as a purchaser, have to make sure you know all the requirements and the needs of your company before purchasing the software. You need to make sure that all the internal requirements are satisfied before purchasing a fax server. For instance, Visendo Fax Server, can be integrated with SharePoint 2010, Active Directory and any other Microsoft enterprise Application.

There are other features that fax server support, so you need to make sure you understand each of them before making a purchase. Here's a list with these features:

- Powerful Versatile Native Fax Engine
- Supports ISDN Devices, Modems, Media Gateways, Fax over IP
- Fax over IP (FOIP) support
- DID Routing Support
- Compatible with a range of fax boards (ISDN, Modems, and Routers)
- Secure & Dynamic Archiving
- Print-to-fax, Fax scheduling
- Convert incoming faxes to wide range of Documents formats (PDF, Tiff, JPG)
- Automatic client updates
- Multiple language support
- Log and reporting all Fax activities
- Email Server integration (POP3, SMTP, and SharePoint)

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## - Administration Tools (Web Admin, Management Console)

Here's a list of questions that you need to ask yourself before purchasing a fax server.

- Does the server software integrate well with ERP programs?
- Is the server software compatible with your email gateway or email server?
- Is the server software compatible with your installed operating systems?
- Does the server software support the inbound routing technique that you want to use?
- Do the management capabilities allow you to easily determine whether a fax transmission has been successfully completed?
- Are there reports that show the status of each fax transmission?
- Is it easy to add new users and lines to your system?
- Does the fax server support Internet faxing?
- Is the user interface friendly?
- Is faxing system easy to administrate?
- Can sent and received faxes be automatically archived?
- Can you send multiple, mixed file attachments?
- Is there a way to use the faxing system differently for different users?
- Do I need to use virtual servers and integrate the fax server into a FoIP environment?

Of course, there are people who argue that there can be hidden costs (fax boards, PBX ports, training time, maintenance etc). I would argue differently: most of the companies offer free support for their customers (we, at Visendo offer such support for 2 years after the purchase), in terms of usage, installation etc. Fax Boards are needed only if you are not willing to use FoIP. But again, if you already have these boards, there are no auxiliary costs.

## Fax Services

Internet fax services don't always offer all the capabilities as fax servers. You can't configure the network exactly as you need it, so that you attain a certain balanced level for your efficiency in terms of document management. Moreover, if you are used with using fax machines, there is no real reason to turn towards Fax Services.

With these services, businesses get the ability to send and receive faxes, the capability to manage their fax activity and, with a few providers, the ability to integrate fax with their enterprise applications. However, you will be dependent on a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider and on certain limitations (in terms of sending/receiving faxes). And the prices, usually, sum-up to more than the price of a fax server. Of course, if your company only uses faxes occasionally, you'd better choose a fax service.

The questions you need to ask yourself before choosing a fax service provider:

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- Does the service provide your company with all the functionality your business needs and does it provide rock-solid reliability?
- Does it integrate well with any enterprise or desktop as that you use? Is it possible to automatically archive each sent and received fax?
- Have you used faxing systems before (fax machines etc)?
- Do you need to totally deploy your actual hardware equipment?

Here's a table that could help you in making the right choice in choosing between the two solutions:

	<b>Fax Server</b>	<b>Fax Service</b>
<b>Pros</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tight integration with local applications(SharePoint Exchange)</li> <li>• Control over in-house fax server</li> <li>• High customization capabilities.</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Usable by users that are already used to faxing</li> <li>• Virtual capabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low upfront investment</li> <li>• Optimal for occasional fax sending</li> </ul>
<b>Cons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be complicated and costly for occasional fax users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has certain limitation based on the number of sending/receiving faxes</li> <li>• It may not allow integration with other document management systems</li> <li>• It is dependent on a 3PL</li> <li>• There are no advanced settings (routing, out-of-the office reply etc)</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

While making the choice between a fax server and a fax service you have to have a clear situation of your company's needs in terms of: fax sending/receiving activity,

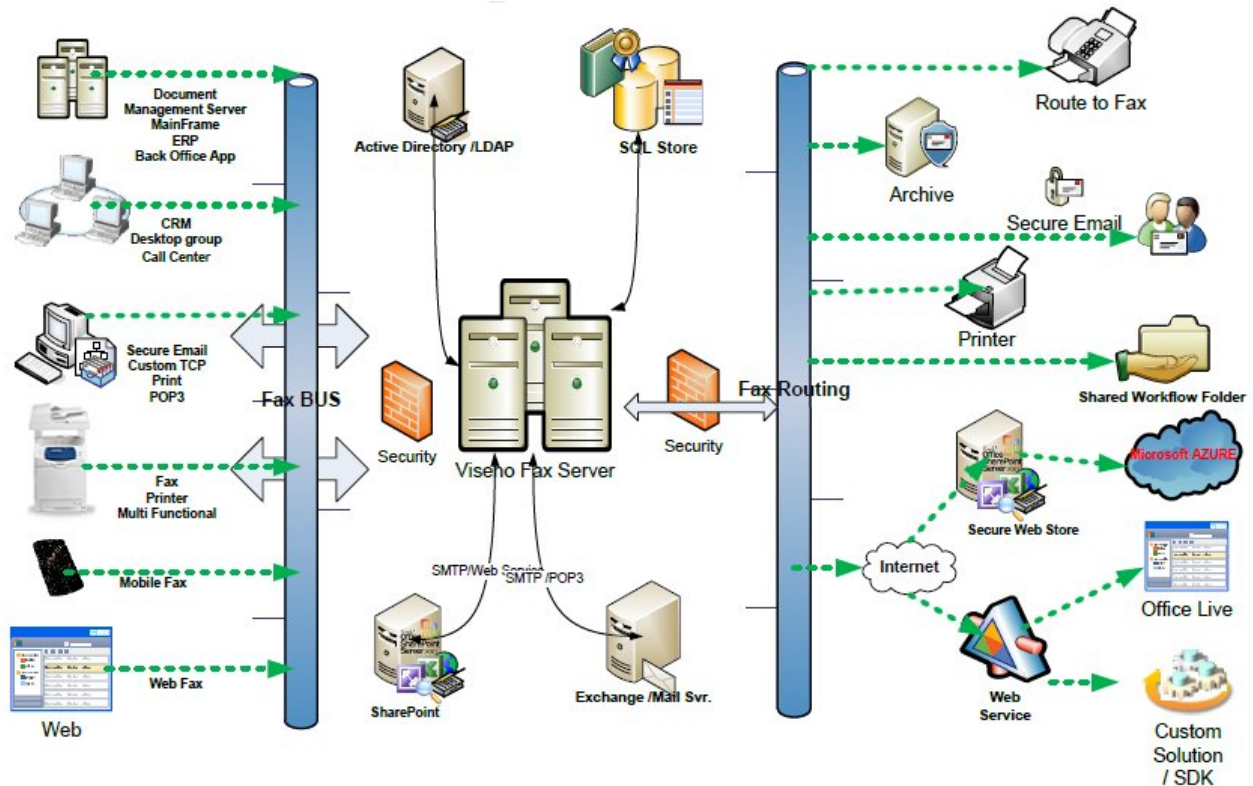
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costs, number of employees, resources available, security needs and, of course preferences. The situation is somehow, similar to choosing a webmail client or your outlook. So far webmail clients haven't made it as reliable solutions. Let's see what happens next with faxes in the "clouds"

## Visendo Fax Solutions Overview



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## About Visendo

We are an Independent Software Vendor (ISV) specialized in internet systems integration on Microsoft technologies. We have always been one of the top 3 companies on the markets we entered. We were one of the first three Microsoft gold partners in e-commerce on the German market: this is the highest level for a Microsoft partner. Hence, you, as a potential customer, will benefit on our experience and quality of services that guarantees your investment.

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