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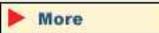
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Server Upgrade Savings
 Upgrading to more powerful servers can save you money by enabling you to do more with fewer machines. This calculator lets you estimate cost savings from combining services onto newer, more powerful servers. It assumes that all servers are configured the same, have the same load, and that cooling is 100% efficient. It also assumes a cost of \$.10/KwH. Number of servers (500W):

Number of upgraded servers (700W):

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All the Best, All For Free

The IT world is a better place because Ian Richards is in it.

Ian-Gizmo-Richards.jpg

A few years ago I stumbled across a website called "46 Best-Ever Freeware Utilities." It contained a fantastic list of software covering many of a PC user's basic needs ranging from tune-up utilities to security packages, office programs, multimedia and more. The site was the work of a man who called himself Gizmo Richards. I quickly became hooked.

Gizmo's site actually covered more than just 46 programs and his weekly "Support Alert" newsletter was a treasure trove of information about how to find free software that met or even exceeded the quality of commercial alternatives. For two years, it was the only e-mail newsletter I paid for.

Support Alert ended its run as an independent publication last July, when Richards became a Senior Editor at [Windows Secrets](#) and merged Support Alert into that organization's line of newsletters. But the mission that created the Web's best source of information about free software lives on at [Gizmo's Tech Support Alert](#), a moderated wiki that's carefully attended by Richards and a team of 60 volunteers.

I called Richards this week for his insight on the state of free software and found him to be quite unlike the person I imagined. Ian Richards is an affable 62-year-old Australian, a veteran of the mainframe world who found his calling in the early days of the microprocessor era and who stumbled upon celebrity when his informal list of freeware utilities assembled on a lark became a viral phenomenon. Tech Support Alert should be in the bookmark list of every PC enthusiast. [Its more than 20,000 citations on delicious.com attest to its popularity.](#)

Richards is passionate about giving his visitors a guide to all that is free and good in the software market. "Ninety-five percent of the software products that people need are available as a freeware version," he says. "Free" means different things to different people, of course, but in the Tech Support Alert definition, it refers to products that provide the kind of quality and functionality that users might otherwise expect to pay for. In other words, crippled or limited function products need not apply. "Before you buy a product, you should routinely consider getting a freeware version," he told me. [You can listen to my 30-minute interview with Richards here.](#)

Gizmo and his volunteers excel at finding sources of free downloads, sometimes digging through little-known download sites to find early versions of commercial programs that don't carry a fee. For example, in the category of free backup programs, they recommend WinBackup V1.86 from [Uniblue Systems](#). "Although it's no longer available from the vendor's site, the program file winbackupfreedr.exe can still be downloaded from a number of sites," the editors note. "The vendor is offering the older version for free with the hope that users might upgrade at some later time... However, the old program is good enough that most users probably won't need to."

Backup is one of more than 200 categories of software that Tech Support Alert lists. Its freeware database runs into the thousands of programs, which is actually only a tiny fraction of the products available. Richards and his volunteer team test every package they can get their hands on and recommend only the handful that they judge the best. Reviewers, "don't have to be technical geniuses, but they do have to be technically competent

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offering scaled-down versions of their commercial products that meet the needs of the vast majority of customers, they can sell premium versions to those who require the very best. Richards offers the example of [AVG Technologies](#), a security software company whose antivirus and anti-spyware utilities have been running on my PCs for over two years. AVG's giveaway programs meet the needs of most home and small business users, but corporations will probably want to pay for the peace of mind and support that they get from the commercial versions.

AVG and others like it are blazing trails of a new kind of marketing innovation. In the same way that America Online introduced hundreds of corporations to the power of the Internet, these companies are realizing that the technology that people use at home can create opportunities for commercial business. Tech Support Alert encourages this view by raising visitors' awareness of the low-cost options that are available to them. The site's 100,000 daily page views testify to its value.

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Server Utilization Carbon and Energy Savings
 This calculator lets you estimate cost and environmental savings from better utilizing existing servers. It assumes that all servers are configured the same, have the same load, and that cooling is 100% efficient. It also assumes electricity generated from coal.

Gizmo Richards is at an age when many people think about retirement. Instead, he's helping forge a new model for the software industry. We're lucky to have him.

[Listen to the interview.](#)

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Number of Servers:

Power use (in Watts):

500

Cost (per kWh):

.1

Current utilization (in %):

Target utilization (in %):

Servers actually needed:

Carbon not discharged (in pounds):

Savings (\$USD/year):

Calculate

Comments (3)

Edward A. Weissbard :
 Keep it up Gizmo! Great to see you here!

Posted by [Edward A. Weissbard](#) | [December 27, 2008 8:54 PM](#)

Posted on [December 27, 2008 20:54](#)

Frank Ortmann :
 Outstanding work Gizmo!

Posted by [Frank Ortmann](#) | [January 11, 2009 9:08 AM](#)

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Jack Miller :
 What is also amazing about the site is that there is no advertising or annoying pop-ups. How does he do it?

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