



Technical teams no longer have to compromise when choosing the server with the right combination of components. Instead, they have the flexibility of a server that delivers the performance they need at the price they want.

Custom servers: The perfect balance of performance, value and functionality

Custom server solutions are the best of both worlds, enabling you to buy the components you want at a price that works within your budget



The Advantages of Custom Server Solutions

As an IT buyer, you have many choices when it comes to servers. One option that's frequently overlooked is a custom-built solution, as opposed to an off-the-shelf server. Many IT professionals assume that custom servers are more expensive, which isn't necessarily the case.

A custom server gives you the precise functionality and performance you need. In contrast, the limited range of off-the-shelf server options frequently forces buyers to make trade-offs.

Highlighting Your Options

The following table highlights some of the differences between off-the-shelf and custom-designed servers.

Custom Servers	Off-the-Shelf Servers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are ideal for customers with specific or unusual configuration requirements.• Are built to your exact specifications.• Do not require paying for components that you don't need.• Can be built to concurrently accommodate budget constraints as well as future expansion needs.• Often can be built to order in the US and shipped as quickly as just a few days after order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Come in ready-made configurations of components and software that fit some customers' needs well enough.• Are straightforward to purchase, especially if you already have a relationship with the supplier.• Can sometimes offer competitive pricing because of economies of scale and existing supplier contracts.• May be in stock in a warehouse in the US or Asia.

The Off-the-Shelf Compromise

Suppliers of off-the-shelf servers package what they believe are the most in-demand combinations of components into a small range of servers. In many cases, the components are selected to match specific price points in the market that still deliver profitability to the supplier.

These kinds of systems force buyers into accepting—and paying for—components they might not appreciate, while potentially not including components that could prove more valuable to buyers' specific needs.

In contrast, a custom server allows buyers to specify exactly what they need—and pay for nothing more. This is particularly useful in cases where the server will play an unusual role that no “mass market” off-the-shelf server configuration would perform adequately. In short, custom server solutions force no compromises.

How Do I Choose?

Some of the factors that go into choosing the system that's right for you include:

Purpose of the server.

Will this server be dedicated to performing specific tasks? For instance, is it for complex computational processing, storage, running a specific application internally, or serving applications from the cloud?

Whatever the purpose, what is the minimum hardware configuration that will accomplish those tasks at an acceptable speed or quality while remaining within your budgetary constraints? The amount and speed of memory, as well as the number of processors and cores and their processing speed, all play pivotal roles here.

Scalability needs.

Think beyond what you need today. How might your needs for this server change in the future? Newer applications, increased user demands, or unexpected spikes in traffic or load all can drive the need to improve the hardware platform in the short- or long-term.

To protect your investment, make sure your server can accommodate such contingencies. Might you eventually need more memory? More ports or bays? Larger hard drives? More blades?

Provisioning requirements.

Receiving a server that's ready to use out of the box can save you time, costs and headaches. Do you need an operating system or specific applications pre-installed? If so, a custom server solution may be your best option.

Form factor.

How the server will be installed often dictates the form factor you should specify. Options range from rackmount sizes of 1U to 9U, to blade, high-density servers with multiple nodes, or tower configurations. Power consumption and heat generation can be important factors, too.

Budget.

Cost is of course an issue in IT planning. As a general rule, you should spend as much as you can afford to get the performance you need today and into the foreseeable future. Some components can be easily upgraded later as your needs dictate, allowing you to purchase less expensive components initially.

Bottom Line

You might find an off-the-shelf system that meets most of your needs. Unfortunately, that may mean spending money on components you don't need, simply because they're part of the server configuration that most closely matches what you're looking for.

If your user and business analysis reveals the need for a different solution, a custom server may be the right approach for current and long-term success. You can bring the needs analysis you've already done to an expert to help you balance the scales between your business needs, budget, and the best that technology has to offer.

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Servers Direct is a premier provider of advanced build-to-order server and storage solutions for use in enterprise, data centers, education, government, and the private sector. For more than 10 years, IT professionals have relied on Servers Direct expertise to help develop custom matched solutions with uncompromised quality and support.

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