

Why does Explorer sometimes show my server name in parentheses?



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A customer wanted to know why Explorer showed one of their servers in the folder list the normal way:

▣ servername

but another server showed up “where the server name is parentheses and the node name is in front.”

▣ nodename (servername)

“Where is Explorer getting that information, and why are the two servers showing up in different ways?”

It’s all in the server comment.

From the command line, you can view the server comment by typing `net view \\servername`. For example,

```
Shared resources at \\servername
Printer server next to the third floor bathroom
Share name  Type  Used as  Comment
-----
...
```

You can set the comment with the command line

```
net config server /srvcomment:"Printer server next to the third floor bathroom"
```

If a server has a comment, then the comment is shown to the user on the expectation that the comment is something that is more meaningful to the user than some cryptic server name. Microsoft’s own server names are hyper-cryptic, like TK5EX14MBXW603. Of course if you talk to a support technician, they’ll tell you that the name is clear as day. “The TK means that the server is physically in our Tukwila data center. The 5 means that...” (I never manage to stay awake long enough to learn what the 5 stands for.)

I guess this created more confusion than clarification, because the comment-name-followed-by-parenthesized-server-name convention appears no longer to be in use starting in Windows Vista.

Communications breakdown: When we provided this information back to the customer, the customer liaison simply replied back, “Thanks, we figured that out on our own.”

That was not a very clear reply. Is the customer liaison saying, “That’s the information we were looking for, thanks. We managed to figure that out on our own in the meantime.” Or maybe the customer liaison was trying to say “Thanks for the information, but we already knew that. We were looking for something else.”

I asked the customer liaison whether they needed any more information from us, and there was no reply. I guess that’s passive-aggressive way of saying, “No.”

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