SageTV Tip #1: What is SageTV?

SageTV is a Personal Video Recorder (PVR) software application that runs on a Windows or Linux PC. It provides not only excellent PVR function, but also integrates the management and playback of your Music, Photos, DVD's, and Video files. Read on to see just what SageTV is, and what it can do for you….

But what's a PVR? A is a program that simply captures video input from a variety of sources (typically Cable, Satellite, or OTA antennas) records them to a hard disk, and then provides a facility for you to playback the recordings either immediately (live TV) or at a later time (recordings). You can pause, rewind, and fast forward the recordings just like a with VCR, but unlike a VCR, you don't have to wait for the show to finish recording and rewind the tape before you can watch it. Also unlike a VCR, your recording capacity is not limited to the length of a single tape–it's limited only by your hard disk space. PVR's also provide various functions to help you find shows t record, and to manage those recordings.

Enter SageTV. SageTV provides all of these PVR functions plus many other advanced functions including sophisticated search capabilities, advanced scheduling options. And by installing some of the free "plugins", you can add Internet Movie Database lookups, remote control via a Web interface, Internet Radio, DVD burning, Caller ID, and a slew of other features and enhancements.

SageTV also tightly integrates playback and management of Music (MP3, WAV, FLAC, etc.), photos, and video files. And it can even play DVD's and DVD files. In one place, you can manage all of your diverse multimedia from your entire MP3 collection to the photos of your latest trip. SageTV also integrates several online features including updated weather reports and Google videos.

The SageTV PVR software currently comes in four flavors: SageTV Media Center, SageTV Client, SageTV PlaceShifter, and SageTV Media Extender. Each has its own purpose, and all work together in harmony.

SageTV Media Center
This is the "core" client/server product that runs on several flavors of Windows and Linux. This is the main application that runs on your Home Theater PC (HTPC) and manages all recordings, Electronic Program Guide (EPG) updates, and all "backend" processing having to do with SageTV. It includes a client

application that runs on the server which provides the user interface. SageTV Media Center is the essential SageTV application providing complete PVR functionality. If you purchase nothing else, you purchase this application. The remaining applications are "extensions" to this core that allow you take the SageTV "experience" to other locations.

SageTV Client
The Client application is run on another computer on your LAN. It connects over your local network to your SageTV Media Center server, and provides full access and control of your SageTV system. It can run on a desktop or laptop, and can be run wired or wirelessly. It's an excellent way to leverage a spare PC. Just like on the main HTPC, you can view Live TV, watch recordings, etc. The small cost of the SageTV Client inexpensively extends your SageTV throughout your house.

SageTV Client License for MVP
This client application runs on Hauppauge's MediaMVP box. This box is a small hardware device with an ethernet jack and video and audio outputs that connects directly to any TV in your house. The MediaMVP client lets you watch and manage SageTV over your LAN on another TV. The main difference between the Client and the MVP client is that the MediaMVP does not require a PC to run. The MediaMVP includes a hardware decoder providing excellent quality output. And connecting is typically as simple as plugging in a few cables and powering it on. So for about a hundred bucks, you can extend almost all of your SageTV capabilities to any other TV in the house without having to invest in additional PC's.

SageTV PlaceShifter
This is a remote, over-the-Internet, client that is similar to SageTV Client, but is designed to run remotely, putside your LAN and over the Internet. For example, say you are in a hotel room with your laptop. You connect your laptop to your hotel's wired or wireless Internet conenction, fire up SageTV PlaceShifter, connect to your home SageTV server over the Internet, and voila, you are watching Live TV, watching previously recorded shows, scheduling new shows to record, listening to MP3's, viewing photos, the list goes on! Because video compression is done to make the video more transporable over the Internet, the video quality is not as good as viewed on the Server, but it is very watchable. Though SageTV PlaceShifter is watchable fullscreen, I recommend watching it in a smaller window to make the video appear crisper.

Important Note About Clients
There is one important thing to understand about these client applications: They all interact with SageTV Media Center separately and independently from the Server's client application. This means that what you see on these client applications is is separate from what you see on the Server's client application. In other wirds, someone can be at home watching SageTV (live TV, a recorded show, a DVD, whatever) and you can be away watching a different recorded show through a PlaceShifter client, and it won't interfere with whoever is at home. There are some limitations based on how many tuners you have. That said, it's all very transparent and easy to use.

SageTV is not without its idiosyncracies, but it provides a solid, pleasant viewing experience thatcompetes very will with the competition. If you want specific details about SageTV's products, first checkout SageTV's site. Then, do a Google Search on SageTV and SageTV reviews. There are many excellent reviews and descriptions of SageTV.

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