crash, or even worse, become unreliable. Or, it may simply be really annoying, such as when the Operating System refuses to shut down after being expressly ordered to do so.

[0012] Accordingly, one of the objects and advantages of the present invention is to provide a new method of providing a distributed computing system where the subscriber receives something of value in return for access to the otherwise unused computing resources on their Home Network Server running a robust operating system, in a way that preserves the subscriber's privacy, data security, and investment in hardware and software.

[0013] Further objects and advantages of my invention will become apparent from a consideration of the drawings and ensuing description.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0014] A Home Network Server is used in a home to network various clients such as PCs, sensors, actuators, and other devices. It also provides the Internet connection to the various client devices in the Home Network. The Home Network Server also provides a firewall to prevent unauthorized access to the Home Network from the Internet. The use of a Home Network Server, as opposed to the use of peer-to-peer networking, allows a robust operating system to be used. It also allows the users on the Home Network to add additional applications to their PCs without fear of jeopardizing the proper functioning of their Internet security program (firewall) or the distributed computing software. (Although a firewall is not strictly necessary, prudence dictates its use.)

[0015] The otherwise unused capacity of the Home Network Server is used for distributed computing which is controlled by a contracting company through the Internet.

[0016] In exchange for the use of the otherwise unused capacity of the Home Network Server for distributed computing, the contracting company provides the subscriber (nominally

the owner of the Home Network) something of value such as reduced cost of Internet service, free Internet service, or a net payment. The contracting company may alternatively or additionally subsidize the purchase costs of the Home Network Server or other equipment.

[0017] Since Home Network Servers may be located in widely different geographic areas, the use of Home Network Servers for distributed computing also distributes the load on electric utility companies.

[0018] In addition, as CPUs become faster and storage devices such as hard drives and optical storage devices become larger, and fast Internet connections become more widespread, the distributed computing system can also be used as a distributed server system, making large server farms (with their attendant demands on electric utilities) unnecessary.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] Fig. 1 shows a configuration of a home network server.

[0020] Fig. 2 shows a configuration of the invention with a firewall between the Internet connection and the Home Network as well as a firewall between the Internet connection and the Distributed Computing application.

[0021] Fig. 3 shows an alternate configuration of the invention with a firewall between the Internet connection and the Home Network as well as a firewall between the Home Network and the Distributed Computing application.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0022] In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. However, it is understood that the invention may be