Configuring a server with Minimal Server Interface

The Server With A GUI option is made of two cumulative features in Windows Server 2012 that are built on top of Server Core. You have the option of installing only the first of these graphical features: Graphical Management Tools and Infrastructure, or Server-Gui-Mgmt-Infra. Doing so results in what is called the Minimal Server Interface, shown in Figure 1-10. This form is not available when you install Windows Server 2012, but you can configure it through Server Manager or Windows PowerShell. To configure a server with the Minimal Server Interface in Server Manager, begin with a full installation and then just remove the Server Graphical Shell feature by using the Remove Roles And Features Wizard. In Windows PowerShell, you can either begin with a full installation and remove only the Server-Gui-Shell feature or begin with a Server Core installation and add only the Server-Gui-Mgmt-Infra feature.
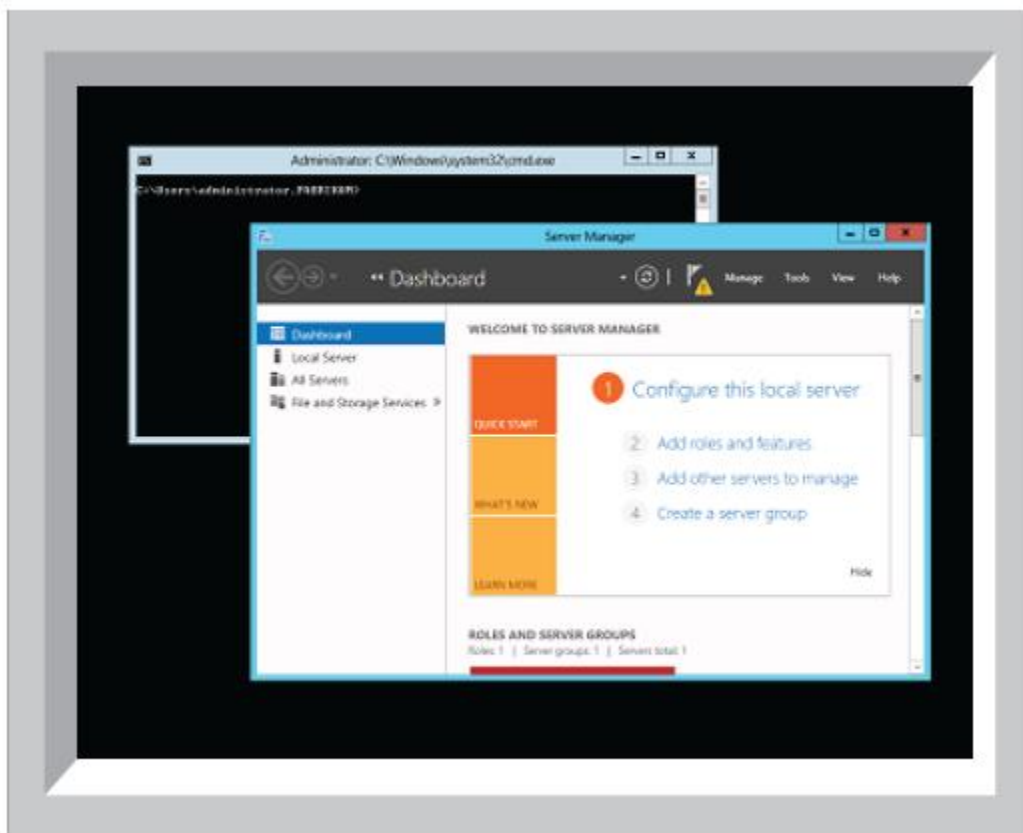
FIGURE 1-10 The new Minimal Server Interface option makes Server Manager and other administrative tools available without a desktop or Start screen.

The relationship between the Minimal Server Interface and the Server with a GUI installation levels is illustrated in Figure 1-11.
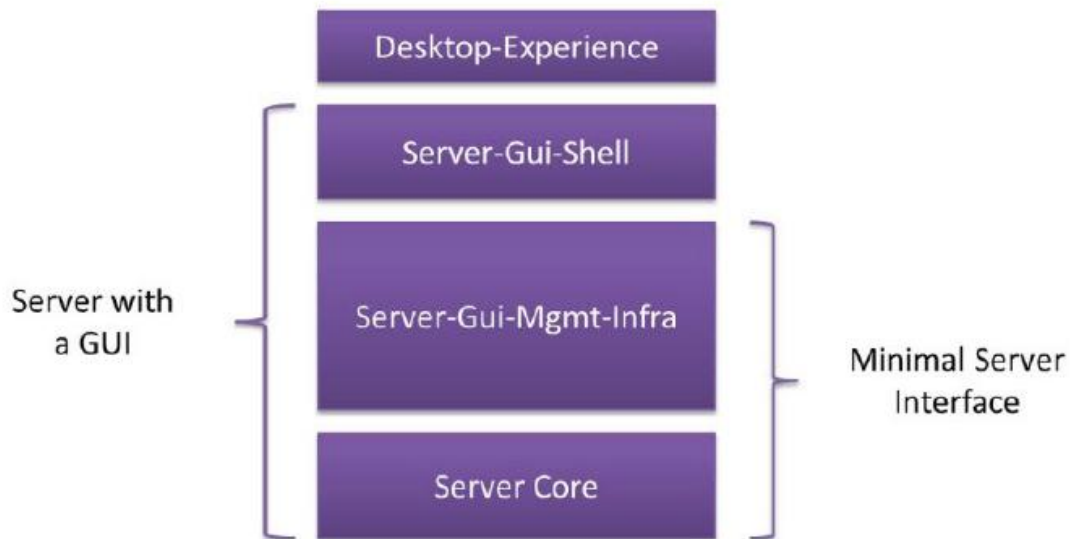

FIGURE 1-11 Server-Gui-Shell is the difference between Server with a GUI and Minimal Server Interface.

When you configure the Minimal Server Interface, the following elements are removed from the full installation:

- Desktop
- Start screen
- Windows Explorer
- Windows Internet Explorer

The following management tools *are* available in the Minimal Server Interface:

- Server Manager
- Microsoft Management Console (MMC) and snap-ins
- Subset of Control Panel

The Minimal Server Interface is a good option if you want to reduce the footprint of your installation but prefer not to be restricted to command-line-based management.