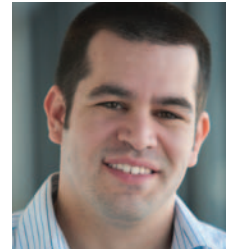




# Today's Network Is More Demanding Than Ever

## Learn How to Futureproof It and Stay In Control

» Upgrading your network can seem like a daunting task when you need to consider new demands like cloud computing, tablets, smartphones, and around-the-clock usage. In this Meet the Expert feature, Brian Conway, HP Networking Development Specialist for PC Connection, shares his insights about some of the challenges that surround today's networking needs.



**Q: Over the past several years, how have the demands on the network evolved and what new things are affecting today's networks?**

**A:** Today CIOs are interested in how an upgrade to their network will affect their business—how it will save them money, how it will save them time, and how it will increase their bottom line. There is a lot more going over the network now, like video. We used to tolerate a lag of a second or two when sending an email. Now there can't be any lag at all because the receiver will instantly notice it.

**Q: Many organizations are focused on cloud computing. What additional demand does cloud computing put on a network?**

**A:** The cloud has its own set of security risks because end-users are not physically sitting in the location where their data is stored. They have to trust that their data is going to the right place and that they will be able to access it at any time. With cloud computing, organizations need fail-safes like backup and disaster recovery systems installed on their network. Networks have to be faster because data has to travel over an Internet connection and be available at all times. Organizations will need to have people working around the clock at mission-critical times to be sure nothing goes wrong.

**Q: Consumers have embraced the cloud. Do you feel that IT has been playing "catch up" in this area?**

**A:** Absolutely. The demand is there, and the technology is there, but the question is, "Who is going to manage it?" Cloud computing is something that is new to everyone; with it we have much more storage and new ways to access data from anywhere. But it is difficult for an IT person because they have to find a way to manage it, make it work, and provide instant access.

**Q: Ultimately the job of a network, and of the IT supporting that network, is to ensure a high quality of service for everyone—this is a big challenge. What other challenges do IT administrators face today?**

**A:** Technology keeps getting faster and newer—quicker than it ever was before. The lifecycles of programs, products, and hardware can be obsolete within 6 months of introduction. Most of the time, IT administrators don't know how to install this new technology yet because the programmers haven't finished designing it before it has come out. That is one of the struggles. Another struggle is that today everything is done over the Web. This means that IT administrators need 24 x 7 management. They need to have line-of-sight to just about everything on their network at all times. Otherwise, there

will be a bottleneck and they aren't going to know where it is. This could affect someone's workflow, productivity, and ultimately the bottom line.

**Q: What are some of the top obstacles that IT departments face when trying to be proactive about their network?**

**A:** There are a couple of things that are very important. One is line-of-sight—being able to see everything on your network. An IT person may say, "I don't really know what's in my network. And I don't really know exactly how fast it is." This is where problems start to happen. Once they add new users and new hardware, they won't know where bottlenecks are coming from if they can't see everything on their network. Another big obstacle is that IT departments want to also use business hours to get work done, and nothing can get done when people are on the network all of the time. IT departments have to find a way to run updates and change out hardware while the network is running. There can't be any hiccup in the workflow of the day for the end-user.

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**Q: What are a couple top HP Networking solutions available for those who want to upgrade their environment to handle the diverse applications and new demands on today's network?**

**A:** Two or three years ago HP Networking acquired a company called 3Com. One of the things that came along with that acquisition was a product called Intelligent Management Center (IMC). IMC allows you to manage everything on your network from one single pane of glass. It is an intuitive product that is very user-friendly. It can manage your devices, show them to you on one screen, and show what is working, what is not, and where the bottlenecks are. This is very important to IT departments. It can save them a significant amount of money in time and manpower.

**Q: What feedback have you heard about IMC? Has it given users the insight that they have been craving? And what other concerns can you address?**

**A:** Absolutely, IMC is definitely a very good product. A lot of customers ask, "Why is HP sometimes more expensive than the competition, and what do they do differently?" If you look at a networking switch, the ports all look the same. HP puts their money into research and development to make their products work better and to design their products and software to work with other manufacturers. Sometimes the monetary costs are a little bit more, but the value is so much greater. Users save so much money in the long run. It becomes the ROI that they should look for, not the cheapest product available.

**Q: Keeping tight budgets in mind, can you give one or two tips to help IT departments get their projects started on the right foot? How can they set a good foundation and get their network to where it can handle all of the demands that we have laid out today?**

**A:** As everybody knows, no one has all of the same networking equipment in their network; it's mixed amongst different vendors. HP realized that and designed IMC so that it will work with every manufacturer. It is really a great product for the future. Things are going to evolve, IT departments are going to introduce new devices into their network, and IMC is always introducing new devices that it supports. IT departments can be confident in this product. Another tip would be to always futureproof your network. A lot of people choose "the least expensive as long as it works." I recommend that people remember that the core of their network is going to soon be their edge. Make sure that that you are able to reposition that core out to the edge rather than do a rip-and-replace and change everything at once. That just creates a whole new network when there doesn't need to be one. Make sure that when you buy something for your network it can be repositioned at another time.

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