

Small Business Technology Report

All Hooked Up—Installing A Computer Network

By *Frank Muehleman*

(NAPSA)—There's good news for those who find the thought of designing and installing a computer network intimidating.

A basic understanding of the technology and the right tools can make the process manageable—even if you are not an expert.

Here are three key steps to help you get a handle on installing a network for your business:

Assessment

It's important to understand the number of people who will use the network now and what your future staffing requirements will be. From there, determine what computers, software applications and peripherals will make up the network.

Design and Planning

Remember to include room for expansion during the design process. Identifying future needs now, such as adding employees, integrating applications, or adding remote access to the network, will be less expensive and time-consuming than replacing an inadequate network later.

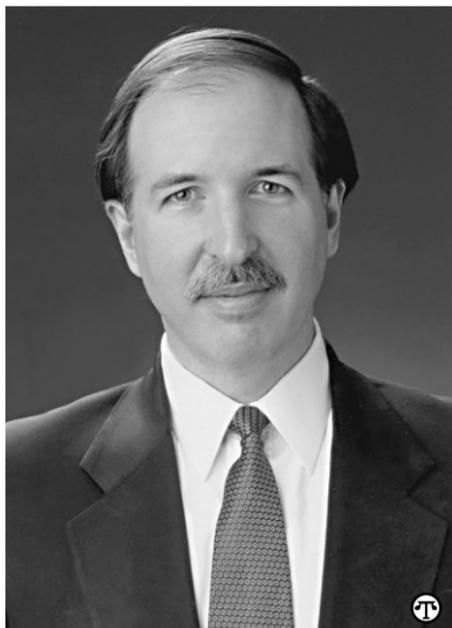
Be sure to address network security during the planning stages, otherwise it can be very costly to resolve issues that may arise. Common security precautions include changing passwords on a regular basis, updating virus protection programs, deploying firewalls, and encrypting data.

Also, consider how to physically secure the network, servers and data by creating a controlled-access computer room.

One of the keys to good network design is how to place desktop and notebook computers in relation to servers.

Deploying the Networked Solution

Many factors influence the way a



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server-based network is deployed. Here is a list of considerations:

- **Central network backbone location:** Identify a secure location to place the central network infrastructure, and only allow access to authorized personnel.
- **Cabling:** If cables need to run through the floor, wall or ceiling, check local building codes before pulling these cables or consider hiring a professional installer. Labeling both ends of the cable as they are installed will help with connecting the right devices and troubleshooting later on.
- **Setting up the network:** With the cabling in place, it is time to connect switches and computers to the network. After you install and turn on the network switches, connect the computers.

For more detailed information about small business networking, please visit www.dell.com or call 1-800-917-DELL.

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