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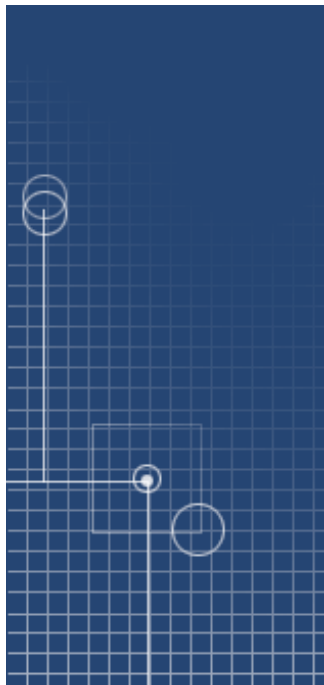
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Flexible Wireless Comes To SMBs



ZYXEL UTTERS TWO CONFIGURABLE ACCESS POINTS AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE

Wireless access points tend to come in three varieties. At the low end, you find consumer units from companies such as Linksys and Belkin. In the middle, there are more powerful, feature-rich products from Cisco or Proxim. And finally, there are full-fledged enterprise solutions from companies such as Avaya.

ZyXEL is making a move with its ZyAIR B-3000 and G-3000 access points to create a new tier that features the power of products offered by Cisco or Proxim, but at a lower price point.

"We tend to be a little less powerful than the Proxim or the Cisco products, as far as output power on the radio," says Shawn Rogers, wireless product manager for ZyXEL. "That's something that can be easily compensated for by the use of a higher gain antenna, although we're finding that people are tending to want lower power just because of all the interference."

■ Business-Friendly Features

Both units offer business-friendly features such as WDS (Wireless Distribution System) bridging, which allows up to six access points to bridge coverage over a number of buildings or in a large warehouse space. In addition, multiple ESSIDs can be assigned to a single physical unit, allowing for separate access policies to be set up without requiring multiple units. The units also support PoE, which means that a unit only needs a single Cat5 cable to provide both data and power connectivity.

The B-3000, available now for \$149, is an 802.11b solution. The G-3000, which will be released in July, will have native 802.11g support, according to Rogers. In addition, the G-3000 is expected to have a second radio capacity through a PCMCIA slot in the unit. This will allow the unit to use one frequency to communicate with end-user devices and a second frequency for bridging. As a result, the bridging traffic will not cut into the 54Mbps bandwidth of the end users.




Alternatively, Rogers expects the G-3000 to be able to use an 802.11a card in the second slot, providing access at both 2.4GHz and 5GHz. Rogers says that because the 2.4GHz spectrum is increasingly polluted with Bluetooth and cordless phone traffic, many businesses are moving into the 5GHz space to reduce congestion.

Dave Glawson, CTO for Premier Datacomm, recently installed 20 B-3000s at a resort in the British Virgin Islands. The installation, which provides Wi-Fi coverage over one and a half square miles, includes access points hidden in palm trees.

Glawson says, "[For the island project], I couldn't even get any of the other vendors to talk to me about it. I really want someone who is going to stand behind my product and help me with this. Putting 20 access points on an island 3,000 miles from where I am bothers me a little bit."

Currently, the products must be configured manually or via a telnet script. In late summer, ZyXEL plans to roll out a wireless management offering that will compete in the same space as Avaya, but again at a lower price point. Contact ZyXEL at (714) 632-0882 or www.zyxel.com. ■

by James Turner

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