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STRIX MAKES MOST OF WIRELESS MESH TECHNOLOGY

By Frank J. Ohlhorst

Wireless mesh networking is a hot topic for solution providers looking to extend wireless solutions over large areas. Whether wireless networks are needed on a college or corporate campus, government building or large warehouse, mesh networks can bring valuable data services to users in more places than ever, extending the secure, mobile workplace of many field workers.

Strix Systems' modular approach to wireless networking devices proves to be one of the most flexible on the market. The underlying technology is based on Strix's Access/One platform, which integrates intelligent routing with advanced wireless hardware.

Wireless mesh networking has broad appeal and eliminates many of the problems associated with traditional, centralized wireless solutions. A mesh network enables access points to communicate with other nodes without being routed through a central switch, eliminating centralized failures and providing self-healing and self-organization capabilities on the network. What's more, mesh networks are often cheaper to deploy than a traditional wired solution because there are no cabling costs involved.

Successfully building a mesh network requires a combination of hardware and software that effectively communicates via a Web- or mesh-based deployment, allowing access points



to communicate with each other, client devices or the network backbone. While that may sound complex, the Access/One solution from Strix automates much of the configuration and management of network communications protocols and wireless hardware. The modular approach taken by Strix makes for simple setup. An antenna module snaps onto an access point module, which then can be deployed on its own or can be attached to an Ethernet switch module for a wired connection. Installers can use Power over Ethernet (PoE) connections or the included power supply to energize each unit.

After snapping together the appropriate components, installers use the Manage/One applications through a simple browser-based management console. Manage/One uses auto-discovery technology to detect wireless access points on the network and then uses that information to build a graphical representation of the network. Administrators can click on each device to configure its options. In many cases, the factory default settings are adequate to get started, and security tuning can be performed later.

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able to add to an existing network, which helps to future-proof deployments.

Network performance—subjective at best with wireless—is modulated by Strix technology’s ability to automatically load-balance connections, preventing saturation of a particular access point. The mesh topology can be extended outdoors with Strix’s outdoor access points, based on the recently unveiled Access/One network OWS platform. OWS takes multiradio, multichannel and multi-RF capabilities outside, and these technologies could very well become the backbone of a large metropolitan or regional network. The OWS line also proves effective for college and/or corporate campuses.

Speaking of security, Strix can use WEP, WPA, MAC address filtering or access authorization via a RADIUS server. Integrators should combine these technologies to properly secure wireless traffic. Setting up RADIUS-based authentication can bring additional integration opportunities to integrators, while enhancing network security.

The modular technology means additional flexibility for mesh deployments. Integrators can mix and match wireless protocols including 802.11a, 802.11g and Bluetooth. As new standards are approved, such as the forthcoming 802.11n, additional modules will be avail-



PRODUCT SNAPSHOT

> **Name:** Access/One

> **Price:** Starts at \$500 (varies based on product configuration)

> **Distributors/Integrators:** Alliance Systems, Connectronics

> **Company:** Strix Systems
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