

No More 'Wired' Thoughts...Go Wireless!

Written by Faiz Askari, Editor –Technology, Small Enterprise India.com
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Wireless Networking is gaining popularity across business verticals. SMBs are most attracted towards cutting edge networks and being wireless is clearly their mandate.

As networks become more advanced, the complexities attached with them grow too. The dependency on day to day office computing also reaches sky high. However, these factors collectively will play a much larger role in the entire IT backend network.

While talking about network complexities, advancements or so, one of the much discussed and growing trends is --wireless technology. People are extremely enthusiastic about this, especially the small and mid sized businesses which are struggling with space, real estate issues, find this technology an answer to their problem.

In the wireless space, the growth is expected from increased spending by SMBs and within SMBs segments like -- education, IT/ITES, and organisations working along with government, are among the front runners who are exploring wireless projects to improve broadband connectivity. India is one of the fastest growing markets for unified communications. Advanced technologies such as security, unified communications, and wireless offer great potential in the Indian market.

With nearly 80% of the market share or we can also say having dominance over this market in core technologies, Cisco Systems has identified unified communications, network security, wireless, and storage as advanced technologies, and is in a leading position in many of these areas. Apart from Cisco, companies like Juniper, ProCurve, D-link and many others are targeting SMBs in an aggressive manner.

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Networking and Connectivity

SMBs in India will invest more than 500 millions USDs on servers and networking hardware with two-thirds of their spending going towards network-related hardware purchases alone. This means that SMBs are getting very serious towards organized set up of IT. SMBs see investments in servers and connectivity as critical in the competitive Indian market, and only 15 per cent of PC-owning SMBs currently deploy a local area network (LAN). This area leads to a great unfurling opportunity to many networking vendors like Cisco, Juniper, DLink etc . Small businesses account for a relatively smaller portion of the total networking expenditure. This particular segment's contribution to the overall SMB spend is set to rise in the future as Indian Small Businesses try to catch up with their larger counterparts.

While examining the usage patterns of a typical small and growing business type environment , it is found that the server usage is much lower among small businesses as compared with mid sized businesses, where servers are widely deployed. Of the total SMB server spending in India, approximately two-thirds come from mid sized businesses. The AMI survey which focussed only on the SMB market, found that more than one out of ten businesses indicated that they plan to buy new servers in the next twelve months.

As for networking, routers and hubs/LAN switches made up a large majority of the Indian SMB annual spending on networking hardware. Wireless LAN and other networking hardware like networking interface cards, cabling, etc, are following closely. SMB Wireless LAN spending is expected to more than double in the next twelve months though the current figure in absolute terms is relatively less. Wireless LAN access is also growing due to easy availability of wireless LAN connectivity at many public hotspots.

More and more businesses are embracing the benefits of high-speed Internet connectivity. Cellular phone penetration is also nearing saturation. Thus, networking capability is almost a 'must-have' for every tech-savvy enterprise in the country for sustaining their increasing communication needs. The SMB segment is witnessing an overwhelming growth. This growth has created a need for better connectivity and communication.

Internationally and in India as well, the bandwidth cost has considerably come down and fallen right for the pockets of Small businesses. At the same time, the workspace requirements are also getting more and more bandwidth-intensive with business applications have been widely available and in-place. But growth in adoption comes mostly when access speeds and usability

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through devices have improved. The initial movement toward high-speed links among businesses is already visible in India as the primary access methods move from narrowband to broadband. Options like leased Line and DSL are very much available to the all sorts of business sizes. They are increasing the market share of Internet driven businesses and enhancing the role of Internet in the overall business eco cycle.

As mobility gains momentum, companies are discovering that it is a challenge to build and deploy applications for the wide variety of devices in use. While a large number of applications are available to customers, their major hurdle is ease of use and accessibility "on the move". But SMBs are looking at this area as a big opportunity to save captive resources.

Some of the major business drivers for small business mobility are reduction in operational costs, reduced missed revenue opportunities and shorter turnaround time. Both mobile workforce and collaborative technologies feature in the four top priorities for CIOs in today's priority list. Moreover, the highest level of priority is to optimize the efficiency of employees and existing infrastructure. In this mandate as well, IT managers are opting for better networks, mobility and wireless or on the go, computing brings some noticeable value for the businesses.

Advances in technology have also been instrumental in driving adoption. The changing trends demonstrate that once initial challenges have been overcome, applications will seamlessly extend to the mobile environment, making access to reliable mobile wireless connectivity expected universally.