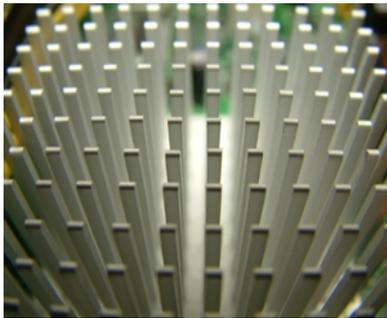


## Effective Network Management: Essence of Success

Written by Faiz Askari, Editor-Technology, Small Enterprise India.com  
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It is easy to deploy any cutting edge networking infrastructure. But what is more important is to manage it and run the show successfully.

The way of doing business has completely changed now. Staying connected is not just a requirement now, but it is necessity, and the most important surviving requirement for today's business.

Businesses are not only connected internally, but also externally well connected too with all their business ecosystems. So managing networking properly is something which is beyond just an infrastructure requirement. Of-course, when this business essential component brings technical flavour to the day to day business operations, the manageability aspect of this cutting edge networking comes into picture. That's the stage when a qualified and dynamic IT manager is required for the company.

Indian SMBs, sometimes believe that this job doesn't require a full fledged team of professionals working exclusively for them, then they tend to outsource this business critical component to the third parties. This is usually handled by system integrators, IT solution providers and so on.

Having said this, it is utmost important for the top management of the company to carefully look at the complexities involved in this conditional relationship with the third parties. That's the phase when managing the networks could become a pain and running business critical operations becomes even more disastrous.

“We cannot ignore any single aspect related to technology's growing role in our businesses. Be it the usefulness or its manageability aspects. Smaller and growing business like our's have to

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be agile towards the role of technology,” says, Arvind Kashyap, Co Owner of AK ProSoft International, a Delhi based Contact Centre and off-shoring software development centre.

While highlighting the fact that the slowdown has crushed many business during the last 12 months or so, “In today’s competitive scenario, the role of technology is extremely important as it has the tendency of both making or breaking. We need to have a dedicated person who can bring innovative, safe and cost effective technologies specially with regards to networking solutions for our business.” Kashyap added.

But the concern is how to ensure the availability of safe, reliable and cost effective network backend. One has to have clear roadmap and policy driven initiative for addressing this concern.

### Roadmap for Networking

Most of the bigger companies start with or implements a clear cut IT and networking policy. This should be a well drafted internal document with a detailed analysis of existing network and a roadmap of how to move ahead. This document could be treated as the law book for the users of technology within the company. People who manage their networks should be well informed with this document.

External consultancy could also be availed in order to avail the best possible results. The first and foremost objective of such policy should have to improve the company’s internal efficiency. Once this issue is achieved, then the IT department could think of starting a well defined and connected networking infrastructure for the employees. This connectivity should be used for both internal communications as well as external communication. It is important to acknowledge that the role of network infrastructure has grown over the years.

Communication and networking technologies are ever evolving objects. Mostly, new technologies are not just advancements over existing ones—they are disruptive too. In such situations organizations need to pick and choose carefully the best possible technology for their use.

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The role and responsibility of the IT department starts thoroughly with proper evaluation of the technology. A step-by-step evolutionary approach should be preferred. All this ensures that there is no wastage of existing resources. In case of networking and communications it becomes all the more important to keep a close check on the redundancy level of the networking solution.

### **MANAGING SLAs**

Getting the best value from the investments made on communications and networking solutions, the most common challenge in this is the Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

The biggest and most common lament with regards to management of cutting edge networking infrastructure, SLAs comes on the front row. IN most cases both users and solution providers are on the learning phase. SLAs act more like a background and what is really important is that both users and service providers should collectively work towards making things better.

### **Top management's understanding of technology**

In case of SMBs, CEOs and the top management are usually tech savvy people and are well aware of the cutting edge technology. Having said this, we cannot ignore the fact that majority still belong to the old school of thoughts in the case of small and mid sized businesses. They are those kind of old fashioned business people who do not understand the importance of IT and even don't recognize technology. In both the cases there is a huge requirement of a professional who should know the technicalities.

However, there are very few CEOs who really understand what IT means for business and what competitive advantages it offers. These are the kind of people who only can promote role and acceptance of technology in their businesses.