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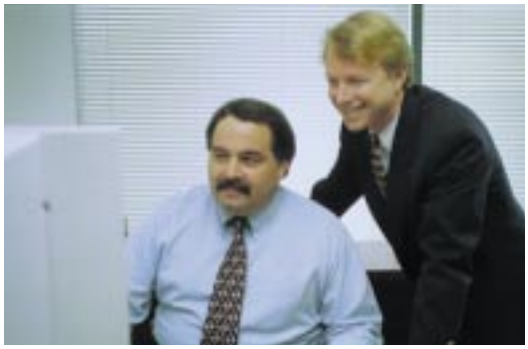
GeoNet Communications

User Profile

The Problem of Provisioning vs. Bandwidth

GeoNet has built a reputation for delivering reliable, high-speed Internet access to trade shows and conferences. The mission-critical nature of a trade show environment requires accurately determining individual bandwidth needs.

"You upset your customers if you don't provide enough bandwidth, and you don't make any money if you over-provision it," said David Belove, vice president of sales and marketing for GeoNet.



Bob Bell (left) and David Belove

At Comdex in Las Vegas, GeoNet created an aggregate bandwidth of 90 Mbps by using two DS3 lines to connect exhibitors on an Ethernet network to its Internet Point-of-Presence (POP) in California. Few trade shows have the bandwidth requirements of Comdex. Accurate provisioning for small- to medium-size events is even more critical, since the cost of a DS3 or even a DS1 can be cost-prohibitive. GeoNet needed a solution that scales up and down depending on its specific requirements. When faced with the problem of providing Internet services to SoftBank Expos' Hispano America event in Miami, GeoNet selected the MAX™ 1800 WAN access switch from Ascend Communications to combine multiple 128 Kbps ISDN lines.

A Portable and Cost-effective High-Speed Access Solution

At Hispano America, GeoNet installed an Ethernet network that connected 10 exhibitors and 45 computers to the MAX 1800. This was more efficient than dragging separate dial-out lines to each exhibitor, and most of them didn't have a local ISP to connect to in any case. Individual lines would also have limited each exhibitor to 128 Kbps, while six ISDN lines produced an aggregate bandwidth of 768 Kbps. Because of the bursty nature of data network traffic, exhibitors could generally avail themselves of the entire amount at any given point in time.

Like many new industries, the ISP arena is evolving from a general market into specialties as smaller providers seek higher-margin verticals to pursue. Each niche presents its own special challenges, and Redwood City, Calif.-based GeoNet quickly found that accurately anticipating bandwidth needs is the key to profitability when providing temporary Internet connections to tradeshows and other events.

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The Ascend Solution



MAX 1800

The MAX 1800 is a mid-range central site switch for organizations that need telecommuting, Internet access, remote office connectivity and video access. It can handle up to 16 simultaneous calls from analog, ISDN and Frame Relay users over eight ISDN BRI access lines.

"We were surprised at the responsiveness of the ISDN connection," said Bob Bell, director of GeoNet's ShowNet operations. "The latency of the network was quite good. The MAX 1800-based solution provided cost and performance benefits at the same time—a very unusual occurrence."

The aggregation of multiple lines also built fault tolerance into GeoNet's solution. If one line were to go down, customers would not be cut off. The exhibitors would still have 640 Kbps of bandwidth to share, more than enough for rapid remote access demonstrations.

GeoNet's engineers said the entire network was very simple to install, and they were particularly pleased with the configurability of Ascend's MAX 1800. They could set the minimum and maximum number of channels, and then observe how quickly the channels came up and how long they stayed on line before dropping off due to low usage.

Future Growth Means Providing Scalable, Affordable Remote Access

In the past 18 months, GeoNet has emerged as the leading provider of temporary Internet services to trade shows and other events. The company is the official Internet Services Provider for the major trade shows including Comdex, Seybold, Software Development and the NAB show. While these big, high-profile exhibitions will continue to be an important part of GeoNet's business, future growth depends on the company's ability to provide Internet services to the huge number of smaller events that are still relatively unconnected. With its mix of speed, reliability and scalability, Ascend's MAX 1800 provides GeoNet with a powerful tool for expanding into these new markets.

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