

PRODUCTS

WHAT'S NEW IN HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

REVIEW

RATING:

The price is right for routers

Commodity routers, such as Patton Electronic's IPLink WAN Gateway, are a low-cost alternative for organizations that don't have deep pockets and can't afford to spend a lot on their networks

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THE UBIQUITOUS ROUTER IS THE GEAR THAT that makes Internet connectivity and communications possible. New price benchmarks are being set for low-cost routers as they are being commoditized. Commodity routers are fast, inexpensive and can handle a wide range of networking applications. I recently took a look at Patton Electronics' router, the IPLink WAN Gateway.

In Patton's gateway router family there are three main variants based on the installed WAN interfaces. Model 2603 is equipped with an integrated T1, E1, CSU and DSU for connection to full and fractional T1 and E1 services. The 2621 model is a DTE and DCE user-configurable X.21 version. The 2635 model is equipped with a V.35 interface.

They are designed for applications that need IP routing and bridging over a T1, E1, X.21 or V.35 network.

IPLink routers support PPP, Frame Relay and come standard with internal or external power supply, auto sensing full duplex 10/100 Base-T Ethernet ports and cross over switches (a useful feature).

The WAN ports are built in based on the model, so nothing is user swappable.

IPLink gateway router may not match the blistering high speed interfaces or the very high port density and feature sets of the goliaths in the routing segment of the market but it is a cost-effective alternative in small- to mid-sized networks.

There's a built-in firewall and security capability with support for DoS detection and protection, intrusion detection, log-

ging of session, blocking and intrusion events.

I looked at a pair of 2603 K-E1 configuration routers with RJ-48C (120-ohm) and dual-BNC interfaces (75-ohm).

OPERATIONAL TESTING

As I tried to understand how to set the IP address using the vendor-supplied RS-232 cable, I switched to the Web interface and the whole installation became intuitive. Within minutes the router was ready to do its job.

Thanks to the Web interface, I did not have to grapple with the command line interface anymore. The LED indicators convey at a glance the condition of the router power, WAN port-Link, Frame, TD and RD for Ethernet port-links. Once past the authentication stage, you get to the router home page where you get a bird's eye view of the router status. If the router



RATINGS (0-5)

- Installation.....5
- Features.....5
- Documentation4
- GUI.....4
- Overall Rating.....4

has any alarms they are conveyed using colour and text to indicate the severity of the alarm. You can then go to the alarm management Web page for more information on what triggered an alarm.

I went straight to the router services configuration and under that I clicked on LAN and WAN to set the required parameters for setting up a routed and bridged network. The T1 and E1 status Web page presented me with a detailed errors list, transceiver status and near end line statistics. These provide real-time performance monitoring of the E1 circuit.

The alarm management page is where I could modify, reset and clear the active alarms.

The alarm severity field in the alarm table can be configured by the network administrator. Here you get to define the alarm severity as major, critical, minor, informational or something to be ignored and colour-code them.

SUGGESTIONS

I would like to see features such as priority queuing and traffic shaping so that high-priority traffic has precedence over less

critical applications. For secure access it should support SSH and HTTPS, although it had the facility whereby I could restrict the router-based Web server access by setting the management IP address.

CONCLUSION

IPLink 2603 is a plug-and-play, easy to use, low cost router for those who do not have deep pockets and are looking at a lower total cost of ownership.

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