



How to Conquer Best-of-Breed IP Networking

When considering a best-of-breed solution, it is important to set realistic goals and expectations. List your goals and choose your partners carefully. Properly implemented and managed, a best-of-breed solution will deliver significant operational and financial benefits to your business.

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Introduction

Traditionally, companies looked to a single vendor for complete integrated network solutions to keep their systems up and running. Companies believed that limiting the number of technology vendors whose products sit in their network infrastructure would simplify installation, management and support as well as reduce the potential for finger-pointing.

However, in recent years, CIOs have developed an intuitive understanding that adopting a best-of-breed approach provides their business a far superior system performance and limits the potential for over-dependence on one vendor while eliminating the possibilities of a single-point-of-failure. Organizations are now going to different network equipment manufacturers to reduce costs, gain flexibility and access specialized network devices that efficiently meet or exceed business objectives.

This approach enables firms to obtain best-in-class networks and avoid trying to find a single network vendor to meet all their requirements.

Changes in the Market

The market for internetwork solutions has seen notable technological changes over the last five years. With the adoption of VoIP, RFID, Mobile IP, IPTV, Storage Networking and other technologies in an all-IP, always-connected world with legacy non-IP based network solutions gradually approaching obsolescence.

At the same time, the entire networking marketplace is also undergoing huge changes. The era of single-sourced network equipment of the late-'90s is coming to an end. A whole host of new, and agile network equipment manufacturers have emerged, creating niche innovative solutions that fit business needs. In the past, decision makers had to choose from a short list of monolithic companies using proprietary operating system software and protocols on proprietary networking platforms. All because of the old saying "nobody ever got fired for buying...."

Leaders of Today's IT infrastructure choose independently from various software applications, hardware platforms, storage solutions and other devices, then integrate them to create seamless solutions. Nobody would dispute that the internetwork marketplace has transitioned from the one-vendor model to the best-of-breed model.

Why Best-of-Breed?

Many organizations are taking a best-of-breed approach to IP networking because it provides the best opportunities for performance, scalability and cost savings. Other reasons why companies are adopting this approach include:

- Robust infrastructure availability beyond 99.999%
- Faster Time-to-Deployment of cutting-edge technologies
- Reduced need for network over-engineering

A successfully implemented and managed multivendor network environment can offer increased flexibility, better pricing and improved performance.

“ Best-of-Breed approach provides businesses a far superior system performance and lists the potential for overdependence on a single vendor. ”

“ The internetwork marketplace has transitioned from one vendor model to Best-of-Breed model. ”

Implications of Best-of-Breed

The decision to multi-source network equipment involves a number of implications for organizations:

- Complexity of the Internetwork environment increases exponentially as multivendor environments introduce complex interactions between vendors.
- Integration becomes challenging because vendors have to cooperate to integrate their disparate systems.
- Problem resolution becomes difficult because it is hard to determine the point of failure and the responsible vendor. This can result in finger-pointing between vendors.

Best-of-Breed Strategy

Organizations that rely on mission-critical network infrastructure are all powered by best-of-breed multivendor network solutions. The following is a list of some of the leading manufacturers of best-in-class network hardware:

Core Routers	Cisco, Juniper
Enterprise Switches	Force10
Wireless	Aruba
Telephony	Avaya, Cisco
Enterprise Security	Netscreen (Juniper), Checkpoint
Layer 4-7 Switches/LoadBalancers	F5
Storage	Brocade, Cisco, McData
Edge Routers	Cisco, Juniper
Web Conferencing	WebEx, Microsoft
DSLAMs	Alcatel
RF Technology	Lucent

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Since equipment manufacturers are primarily hardware companies focused on selling more products, CIOs looking to successfully implement a best-of-breed IP network infrastructure should look for an IP network service provider that has the needed skill sets to objectively advise on what equipment and technologies would best serve stated business objectives. Such a service provider will have to meet the following criteria:

1. IP network services must be its core-competency.
2. It must not be a resell channel partner of any of the equipment manufacturers.
3. It must possess robust multivendor network expertise internally

Summary

Multiven - with its sharp focus in multivendor IP networks - meets all three criteria and is ideally positioned to help businesses plan, design, implement, operate and optimize the best-of-breed networks needed to compete and excel in a 21st century world.

With the IP network sustaining business-critical applications, CIOs should start taking the necessary steps to ensure that their network infrastructure is empowered to deliver beyond 99.999% availability thus securing their competitive edge in today's always-on world.

About the Author

Peter Alfred-Adekeye is the Chief Engineering Officer of Multiven. Peter's insight in best-of-breed technology is shaped by nearly two decades of service in global technology leading companies.

Prior to Multiven, Peter spent five years in Cisco Systems' \$5 billion per annum services organization based in San Jose California, where he excelled in various technical and nontechnical leadership positions. These include leading the Core-Architecture Solutions group which was responsible for all indepth hardware (ASIC-level), software (source code-level) and technology concerns raised by Cisco's service provider, large enterprise, commercial and government customers worldwide, for all platforms. Peter also served as the escalation point for high-end routers such as the 7200, 7500, and the Gigabit Switch Router - GSR 12000 and added value to the new flagship CRS-1 – Terabit Switch Router.

Prior to this, Peter served as a senior consulting engineer within Cisco's Advanced Services group in London covering EMEA for strategic clients with individual install-base of between US\$100 million and US\$1 billion e.g. Level 3, UUNet/WorldCom, Global Crossing, to name a few.

Before Cisco, Peter held various engineering positions at IBM Global Services and AT&T Global Network Services based out of the United Kingdom.

Peter holds a Bachelor of Science degree with honors in Civil Engineering from the University of Ife, Ile-Ife and has completed executive development education programs in leadership, strategic planning and management, business development and entrepreneurship at Stanford University. He is a certified Kepner-Tregoe Program Leader and a master-troubleshooter.

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