



NETGEAR Switches

Review From A Customer



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WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?

We are a collaboration in AV design and integration company. The primary use for switches in our organization is anything AV related, control, streaming media, audio, collaboration, etc. Our company is only commercial. We don't do any type of residential services. Our company only deals in commercial. I personally only deal with those larger projects. We use NETGEAR switches with video wall applications, for high intensity, high bandwidth streaming applications, and in mission-critical situations. The amount of switches and displays depends on the size of the project. I just designed one that had five switches recently, but the amount can range depending on the size of the project and building. While it depends on the size of the project, NETGEAR's stuff is scalable to use with any size project. We don't necessarily have users in our company because we sell the solution. We have multiple clients throughout the country that we put the solution in based on their AV needs. We are using the M4300 platform.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

We have been able to standardize on a few of the major vendors. This has increased our efficiencies. We have been able to provide configurations on switches that we recommend. It's an easier configuration or setup process for our guys out in the field who are installing this stuff. Thus, we have been able to standardize on a grouping of switches, which helps speed up the process with our testing, quality control, and installation out in the field. Netgear is the only switch manufacturer with a marketing push into the AV marketplace. They are the only major manufacturer out there who is testing and looking at what the AV requirements are as far as streaming capabilities, high bandwidth, and some of the stuff with new AV technology. They are designing switches to better support this.

**WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?**

NETGEAR solutions are very easy to use. The command line language and structure are very similar to what Cisco has. They have a fairly intuitive GUI for their system. Also, their command line structure is very similar and straightforward in its programmability. The big winner for NETGEAR is their modular switch: the 96X version. That is something that you don't see in the market anywhere else, except for Cisco who has it at a high level for a high expense. The ability to customize your own switch with their modules is a big plus for what we do in the market right now. Instead of having to piece together standardized switches, trying to make something work, or fitting the design into the mold, the modular switches are aware that you can make a mark in the industry because you purchased one switch and design with different modules added and removed later on for functionality.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

They need to continue moving forward with their consulting in the AV realm to find out what is needed. There are some differences in the M4300 line and the larger M4500 line right now. They could produce a 1 Gigabit variety that could be a bit cheaper that might fit into that, since the majority of the projects that we see are still in that 1 Gigabit bandwidth threshold. Along with that, a great option would be if it would provide the same modular ability on a lower level. The only true con for NETGEAR is they are known more for residential applications, wireless routers, wireless pieces, etc. They don't have the reputation of a Cisco or Extreme on the enterprise side. That is the only real "X" against them right now. They have a business portfolio but they are not ranked as high as a Cisco or Extreme piece. They are working on this, as they don't have the name brand loyalty or recognition in the enterprise space that the other vendors have.

FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?

We have sold a number of NETGEAR switches in the past year. They have become one of our recommended switches in the last four months. I've been with the company for about a year. We have recently standardized our recommended switch manufacturers and platforms. NETGEAR switches have become the recommended switch for us in the last four months.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

The model is very stable. I have had one here in my own test lab for four or five months running different configurations, resetting, or loading new configurations. I haven't had one problem with the switch. Their switch compared to some of the other vendors is a lot quieter when installed. In an office space, it's a lot quieter than the Extreme or Cisco switches.

**WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?**

Countrywide, there could be 200 to 250 people performing different installs that may include NETGEAR switches. It just depends on the project and its requirements. We don't have NETGEAR in our internal organization. We do have some NETGEAR in our test lab. We have a lab with all of the vendors that we recommend where we do all of our own internal testing. We also have the same setup in some of our quality control locations for testing.

HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

NETGEAR's technical support on the ProAV side for the M4300 is very knowledgeable on the NETGEAR product. They also do their own independent testing with AV gear out in the marketplace to understand how it works. They are very intelligent and knowledgeable on how their product interacts with the AV marketplace and products out there. Their knowledge stretches beyond just their independent NETGEAR switches, going into the market and what those switches support. I have had the pleasure of meeting them and they are professionals with high technical capabilities. They have a standard warranty for what is on the market. Their support on the 480 side is exceptional compared to what is standard on the market right now.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

The initial setup is fairly straightforward. Depending on your company's individual standards, the unit can work straight out of the box if you want. It is very plug and play with little configuration. Depending on the size of the project and complexity, the GUI is very intuitive on setup. Also, the command line structure is very straightforward and similar to what people know from Cisco so they can do the setup via command line easily. They have their setup for little to no configuration on switches that does work well out-of-the-box. That is not our particular use case. For security reasons, when we are setting stuff up, we have our own network standards which are a bit more strict than what they do. For their setup, it is great. Their out-of-the-box solution with minimal configuration is designed for the majority of the AV world to build a high-bandwidth, streaming system rapidly.

WHAT ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM?

Deployment of this switch is fairly quick for us since we have base configurations that we use with all of our network standards. The switch can be deployed very quickly. The exact time frame depends on the size of the project. Single switches can be deployed in 15 to 20 minutes. Multiple switches can be deployed fairly rapidly, but it depends on the size of the project. For our implementation strategy overall, we have a set of standards that our company has used and approved. Those standards are already built into generic base configurations for all of our switch vendors. Therefore, whenever we receive the product, testing it, or setting it up in our quality control centers, our technicians onsite can use that base if they load it into the switch. Then, they can have that switch ready to go in 10 to 15 minutes max. Afterwards, they are able to test the traffic and streaming of the product outside of that, and we are able to test the function of the AV equipment without worrying about the switch configuration/function. Depend on the size of the project, depends on the level of IT expertise needed. NETGEAR has made it simple for non-IT experts

to deploy a single switch configuration rapidly without needing a lot of knowledge of switch configuration and terminology. For a single switch deployment, NETGEAR has made it easy for someone to deploy it without needing a certified network person to do it. When you get into the more complex and multiswitch pieces, then you will need either a network certified person to do that or lean on NETGEAR's pro AV support since those guys are fantastic in their knowledge and setup of IT stuff. They are always willing to help.

WHAT WAS OUR ROI?

Our customers see return on investment when going with NETGEAR. When you are looking at some of our multimillion projects, the cost savings on the front-end is a big deal with clients. When using NETGEAR over a Cisco, there is generally a large cost savings in the infrastructure piece. Our customers can see that initial cost savings. Then, having an enterprise-rated switch in their systems saves them cost over the long haul. If they go with a lesser name vendor or manufacturer in the market (and there is a number of them), the reliability is not there. Reliability adds value as well.

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

At its price point, nobody else can compare to what NETGEAR is doing at that 10 Gigabit bandwidth level. We are not seeing a lot of 10 Gigabit need right now in the marketplace. Though, we have done a few projects which have required it. We are still sort of at the 1 Gigabit requirement for the majority of our projects. Honestly, NETGEAR's 10 Gigabit offering has a better value than some of the other vendors' 1 Gigabit offering. Compared to other large names in the marketplace, the price of NETGEAR's product is extremely cost-effective compared to what Cisco or Extreme offer. NETGEAR as a product versus an AV matrix switcher is far cheaper in its design, but it is sort of an apples to oranges comparison.

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

I'm certified at the professional level in Cisco. I have also used Cisco series switches, Extreme switches, and Aruba/HPE switches. I am familiar with all four different manufacturers of switches. NETGEAR has a high-level enterprise product in the 4300 series. Comparable to the Cisco Catalyst platform and Extreme Summit platform, NETGEAR has a much higher value option. Therefore, you are getting the same functionality for a better price point than you would with a Cisco or Extreme switch. They also have dedicated AV support which neither of the other two vendors have. NETGEAR has a very high rating for price to performance compared to other vendors in the market. For example, Cisco's pricing is exponentially higher than NETGEAR for the same performance. The difference is NETGEAR is a very cost-effective solution with the same internal capacity that some of the other vendors have. Functionality-wise, the switch works just as well as a higher-priced Cisco switch or higher-priced Extreme switch. The reliability is there. NETGEAR is selling a variety of models and the addition of the modular switch is a huge advantage in the marketplace. Other vendors haven't paid attention to the required uplink needs for larger AV and streaming deployments. NETGEAR has a pretty good feel for the pulse of the industry as a whole and their development toward higher capacity uplinks and bandwidth is exceeding what the other vendors are doing right now. I am very familiar with Cisco Meraki. It is a great solution. The issue with Cisco Meraki as a solution in an enterprise is the cost and what's needed for the streaming platforms. Meraki isn't as focused on the uplink requirements for the AV collaboration industry like NETGEAR is. I'm familiar with Ubiquiti, but we don't use or quote them at all because we feel like they are more of a residential product than an enterprise product. Therefore, we don't quote them for any of our projects. There are some new vendors who are advertising in the market, like Luxul. These are new brands who have come from the residential side and are trying to push into the AV market. They don't have the name recognition that NETGEAR has and we have seen some issues with their reliability. Part of the reason that we recommend NETGEAR in our organization is their M4300 platform is equivalent to what Cisco produces in their Catalyst solution and Extreme produces in their Summit series, as far as functionality. The name, NETGEAR, is known worldwide; it's a big vendor with a large support base. It is a quality product because it has the name behind it.



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WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

I would tell anybody looking for switching solutions for their AV platforms to take a strong look at the NETGEAR M4300 platform, specifically their modular unit. It allows so much customability in the design and you are not stuck with trying to piece together multiple switches to get the functionality that you need. I really think that their modular switch is a game changer in the marketplace. In the marketplace, we are putting this product into a lot of our projects. As the need arises for network products, NETGEAR is one of our recommendations for our designers for the design of their systems for our clients. It depends on what the client needs. If clients are open to it, we will put NETGEAR in. Some clients are restricted in what they can use. The majority of clients, from what we've seen, will allow whatever type of AV network we recommend for them. The product is great. There is some room for improvement in some of their models. I would probably give the product line an eight and a half (out of 10). Their focus on the AV industry is long overdue from any vendor. As the AV technology moves towards being more IT based, which it has over the past five or six years, NETGEAR has been positioning themselves well to take a big piece of that. Their joining with SDVoE is a big deal as well, so their name is displayed prominently within that organization. The AV industry as a whole is taking notice of what they are doing.

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