



NETGEAR Switches

Review From A Customer



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Review by a Real User

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Solutions Architect of Digital Media at a tech services company with 201-500 employees

WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?

We're an audio-visual systems integrator so our main use case is supporting AV systems. The main reason we're focusing on NETGEAR is for AV over IP solutions. The environment that it's deployed in depends on the system or the solution that the customer is looking for. It could be as simple as just a single switch that has multiple hosts attached to it, or it could be a more complex system that has multiple rooms where all of the room switches would connect back to a central core switch. We use NETGEAR for our customers' solutions. We don't have it deployed internally yet so there aren't actually that many people in our company who are using it on a day-to-day basis. They just configure it and get it set up and installed at the customer's site.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

The out-of-the-box IGMP functionality has improved our organization because it is such a time-saver for our technicians. It means they don't have to worry about the extra setup that most other manufacturers require on their switches. They're able to just power them on and to plug in and start configuring the AV devices, rather than worrying about configuring the network. Organizationally, that saves us a lot of time on how we deliver projects.

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

The most valuable feature is definitely the fully functional IGMP snooping and querier, out-of-the-box, that the switch provides. With most if not all switches that we've worked with previously, at a minimum you have to enable a couple of different options. With some switches there are several things that you have to enable. It can be cumbersome for AV techs who don't have much experience working with switches to configure those things, and difficult for them to troubleshoot. It's really a good feature to have that stuff enabled and fully functional out-of-the-box so that they don't have to worry about configuring any of that stuff. Overall, the switch is very easy to use. Because they have the IGMP fully enabled out-of-the-box, in most cases an AV technician won't even need to configure anything on the switch. But in the event that they do need to configure it, their switches have a really nicely laid out, consistent web user interface that I think is pretty intuitive and easy to use. The AV over IP works great as long, as the network is configured correctly. If you don't have the IGMP querier and snooping set up correctly, you can very easily flood the

network to the point where it becomes unusable. Also, especially when you use multiple switches, you have to be very aware of how much bandwidth you need to connect the switches together. The SDVoE also works great. It's just another type of AV over IP, so again, as long as you have all of the multicast stuff set up correctly, and the appropriate bandwidth between switches if you're using multiple switches, it works great. SDVoE is very easy to use. You get all of the value of being able to put AV on the network and all of the flexibility of it. So far it's been pretty easy for us. And the warranty is one of the most compelling aspects of the NETGEAR switches. Other manufacturers would charge a lot of money for the exact same warranty that is included in the price of the switch with NETGEAR.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

One thing I have asked for, something that NETGEAR lacks that I would love to see — and from what I understand it's in the works — is a REST API to programmatically interface with multiple switches. That would be a great feature.

FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?

We got this switch about six months ago.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

The stability has been great. I haven't experienced any issues.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

The scalability is another aspect of the NETGEAR platform that we find very compelling. The M4300, on its own, isn't super-scalable, although the M4300-96X is pretty scalable. But when you combine those with their 100 GB switches, it becomes extremely scalable and you can make very large systems.

HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

Technical support is excellent. I've only actually had to contact them once, and the one time that I did they were a pleasure to deal with.

WHICH SOLUTION DID I USE PREVIOUSLY AND WHY DID I SWITCH?

Before using the NETGEAR switches we used Cisco Catalyst and their SG small business series, as well as Extreme and Luxul. We still offer Cisco and Extreme, specifically when our clients request them. We went with NETGEAR because somebody from NETGEAR reached out to our director of engineering to set up a meeting. That was when they were first pushing into the pro-AV space. Our director of engineering brought me into that meeting. When they laid out the functionality of their switches and the price point, with maintenance included, we thought it was a great fit for the solutions that we sell. There are two things that jump out at me as differences between NETGEAR and Cisco. The first is the price. The NETGEAR switches that have all of the features

that we need are significantly lower in price than Cisco. And again, the maintenance is included for free, whereas maintenance has a pretty hefty price tag associated with it with Cisco. The second is that NETGEAR is putting an increased focus on supporting the AV integrator market, and that's something that we take a lot of advantage of.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

If you're deploying a single switch it can be done in a matter of minutes. You just take it out of the box, put it in a rack, and power it on. Once you start adding multiple NETGEAR switches, it's not any more or less complex than doing so with other manufacturers' switches. You have to follow basic guidelines for making sure the VLANs are consistent across the switches and making sure that the interconnectivity between the switches has been configured correctly. Our standard implementation strategy, when going into a new deployment, is that we have a set of base VLANs that we normally configure on the switches, and then a standard strategy of how we interconnect our switches. We try to replicate that as much as possible on each job. It takes just one good network engineer for deployment, at least for the network part of it, including configuration. And similarly, it takes just one for maintenance. If you're deploying a single switch, you definitely don't need to be an IT expert to deploy it. To monitor it and troubleshoot it you do need to have some amount of IT knowledge, but I don't know that you'd need to be an expert.

WHAT WAS OUR ROI?

The systems work reliably, and they work well, so that's a good return on investment.

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

The price-to-performance of the solution is very good. You get very high performance for a low cost per port. Compared to standard AV switching, NETGEAR is probably the best value out there.

WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

My advice would be: Don't be afraid to look at manufacturers who aren't the big names in networking. You can find switches that will meet your needs without having to pay a premium for it. What I've learned from using this solution is that it's possible to provide great features in a network switch without having to pay a ton of money for it. The 10 GB switching is something that we're starting to see more and more of, especially as the costs keep coming down. In our company specifically, we actually do a lot more of 1 GB than 10 GB. The 1 GB AV over IP solutions are primarily what we're delivering to customers. We haven't much need to use the 10 GB solutions. We use the switch as part of commercial AV large format displays, video walls, and high-capacity HD real-time displays. I don't honestly know, off the top of my head, what the number of displays would be. I typically just handle the network side of things so I'm not sure how large those installations have gotten. But once you move past having a single switch and you go to multiple switches, it does start to get increasingly complex to properly configure the network, as does the troubleshooting if the need arises. They do offer a network monitoring tool that we plan on looking into more. We just recently got it set up and installed. That is the next thing that we'll be looking into, to see how much we can utilize it. I would rate NETGEAR a nine out of 10. Once they get that REST API rolled out then it will be a 10.



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Continued from previous page

WHICH DEPLOYMENT MODEL ARE YOU USING FOR THIS SOLUTION?

On-premises

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