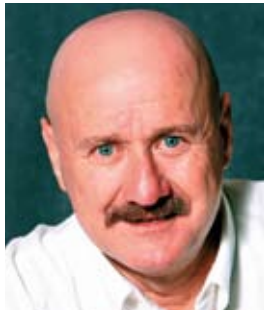


What's the Latest News on 802.11n, and is it an Approved Standard?

JOHN McHUGH



OPASTCO Technical Director John McHugh receives a steady stream of calls and e-mails from OPASTCO members looking for answers to their technical questions. McHugh & A shares some of these questions and answers with the OPASTCO Roundtable readership.

Time flies when you're having fun. Only yesterday, it feels like we were praising the introduction of 802.11a. Now, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) has hit a Wi-Fi milestone. It is more than halfway through the alphabet with the introduction of 802.11n. Congratulations are in order for the hard-working folks at the IEEE. It's amazing to think that only six years ago, companies such as D-Link were just beginning to introduce 802.11a products.

This latest version of Wi-Fi technology promises to double the range and speed of current systems. To accomplish this, 802.11n uses a new antenna system called "multiple-in, multiple-out" (MIMO), which is similar to DSL bonding as it takes multiple signals from or to the same source and combines them. By multiplying the signal, greater range and speed are accomplished.

This new standard also promises to replace existing 802.11a, b and g products currently in use. It has been designed to be backward compatible so that earlier Wi-Fi products can interoperate with new 802.11n products.

For those of you who need a very brief refresher course on "a," "b" and "g," here goes: "a" is faster than "b" and allows more users; "b" is less expensive, has a longer range and a lower frequency than "a"; "g" is faster than both "a" and "b," but shares some of the shortcomings of "a" and "b." Now n comes along, which is backward compatible to all three.

And where are the new 802.11n products? The latest and greatest of the 802.11 family, 802.11n, has hit the market—well, sort of.

Pre-802.11n products are rolling out now, but the IEEE has not ratified the standard, and is not expected to do so until late 2008 or early 2009. Who knows how far along the alphabet the IEEE will be by then.

For more information on 802.11n, visit www.wifialliance.com. 

Have a technical question about any aspect of your telco business? Your name will not be revealed, but please include it in your e-mail. Questions may be edited in order to provide more relevance to a larger audience. Send your question to roundtable@opastco.org.

“This latest version of Wi-Fi technology promises to double the range and speed of current systems... By multiplying the signal, greater range and speed are accomplished.”