

EDITOR'S NOTE

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COULD D-LINK BE A NEW DARK HORSE?

■ **Cisco Systems Inc.** dominates the areas of networking that matter to corporate buyers, but should not necessarily be the default vendor of choice.

Figures from Infonetics Research Inc. show Cisco had about three quarters of the Ethernet switch market, when measured by revenue rather than shipments, during the third quarter of last year. The only other vendors listed on an Infonetics pie chart are the ProCurve unit of Hewlett Packard Development Co. LP, Nortel Networks Corp., 3Com Corp. and D-Link Corp.

HP has since closed its acquisition of 3Com and Nortel's enterprise unit has since been bought by Avaya Inc. HP was top of mind at press time due to the closure of the 3Com merger and its agreement to acquire Palm Inc.

Although D-Link, which is based in Taipei, may be known in some circles as a consumer electronics company, it does sell switches and routers for businesses and has been for some time. At last month's Interop industry conference in Las Vegas, D-Link touted its new XStack Chassis series switches.

The head of D-Link's Fountain Valley, Calif.-based North American operations is Nick Tidd, former president of 3Com Canada. A long-time veteran of the networking industry, Tidd started his career in high school working on IT infrastructure at the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) offices.

Cisco may be the leader in Ethernet switches when measured by revenue, but Tidd said in February that D-Link is the No. 2 vendor in ports shipped worldwide.

If buyers took a look at the features of switches they actually need, and how much the hardware costs, D-Link may be an alternative worth considering. Of course it's not the only alternate. There is also Adtran Inc. of Huntsville, Ala. and Brocade Communications Systems Inc., the San Jose, Calif. storage vendor that got into enterprise switching and routing through its acquisition of Foundry Networks Inc.

Despite the success of Cisco and HP, D-Link is a potential dark horse in the networking market due to its leadership and success in the lower end.

If you're in the market for a switch or router, your company could benefit by taking a serious look at vendors other than those that dominate the market and the headlines.