

Finding the Information You Need Is Elementary, My Dear Engineer

Bill Dwyer

Several years ago, the networking world was fairly static. NetWare 3 was king, and Novell was basically the only kid on the networking block. Networking was relatively straightforward.

But networking has changed dramatically in recent years, and now, nothing is more dynamic than the networking world. Far from the homogenous setups of the past, today's assortment of network and workstation operating systems do not always coexist well. In fact, the first question you need to ask before installing new hardware or software on your company's network is "Will this crash anything I'm currently running?"

Even if all of the components of your company's network seem to be working well together, trying to keep up with the constant, overwhelming flow of new technology is a daunting task. You need to do a bit of daily detective work just to keep up. For example, you may wonder where to get the latest drivers or where to find the best third-party programs. In a nutshell, where do you find the resources you need to do your job well?

COUNT ON NETWARE USERS INTERNATIONAL

NetWare Users International (NUI) is a good place to start locating networking information. NUI is a type of networking "Scotland Yard" where you can interface with other information detectives. By joining a NetWare user group, you can get the latest information about networking technology, and you can receive help in learning how to implement the technology.

Most NetWare user groups have a library of networking resources such as Novell Support Connection CD and *Novell AppNotes*. In addition, most NetWare user groups hold monthly meetings featuring presentations from networking professionals. For example, I am president of the Southern New England Network

Users Group (SneNUG). At SneNUG monthly meetings, we usually have a Novell or other industry engineer appear to present information about networking technology. Each meeting also features a "Members Asking Members" session during which attendees exchange networking questions and answers.

If you run into a problem that can't wait until the next monthly meeting, SneNUG has a listserver where you can post a question and get quick feedback. SneNUG also has a web site (<http://www.snenug.org>) that includes many resources, such as PowerPoint presentations from past meetings with numerous tips and links to networking web sites.

NAVIGATE THE INTERNET

What other venues are available for getting networking information? The best—and most convenient—place to look for information is the Internet.

For questions about Novell products, the Novell Support Connection Knowledgebase on Novell's web site (<http://support.novell.com>) is a good starting point. Another good resource is Novell's CNE Net web site (<http://cnenet.novell.com>), which provides CNEs with exclusive tools, white papers, tips, and forums. Also visit the Novell Consulting web site (<http://consulting.novell.com>). My favorite URL at this site is http://consulting.novell.com/toolkit/iw_tools.html#3rd, which contains Novell Consulting tools and links to third-party tools. And don't forget about Novell's Cool Solutions online communities (<http://www.novell.com/coololutions>), which contain tips, tricks, and feature articles about Novell Directory Services (NDS), GroupWise, and Zero Effort Networks (ZENworks).

Because many workstation issues in mixed NetWare and Windows NT environments can be traced to Microsoft, you should also check out Microsoft's Knowledgebase (<http://www.microsoft.com>).

You can find more networking resource sites by visiting NUI's web site (<http://www.novell.com/nui>) and checking out the web sites of individual user groups. Many of these sites (including the SneNUG site) provide links to other useful sites. (See "Recommended Sites" for additional networking web sites.) Bookmark the sites you like best. (Don't forget that you can rename your bookmarks to make them more meaningful to you.)

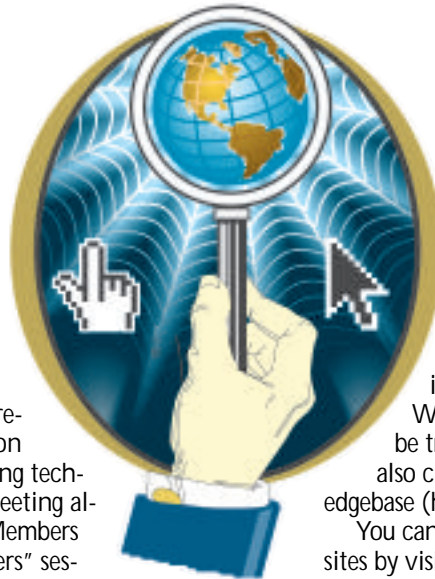
You can also use search engines such as the following to track down other web sites that feature networking information:

- <http://www.excite.com>
- <http://www.altavista.com>
- <http://www.hotbot.com>
- <http://www.yahoo.com>
- <http://www.lycos.com>

Other less well-known search engines can also be helpful in your search:

- <http://www.about.com>
- <http://www.dogpile.com>
- <http://www.google.com>
- <http://ftpsearch.lycos.com>

When typing in search terms, use all of your favorite networking words such as *Novell*, *NetWare*, *tips*, *solutions*, *computer*, *files*, and *network* to start your search. Be sure to read the search engine's help files for information about refining your search.



Recommended Web Sites

Visit the following web sites for additional networking resources:

<http://www.techrepublic.com>
<http://www.novellfans.com>
<http://www.pcguides.com>
<http://www.year2000.com>
<http://ciac.llnl.gov>
<http://www.cramsession.com>
<http://www.inpnet.org/html/tutorials.htm>
<http://www.netanalysis.org>
<http://www.extracheez.com>
<http://www.zennetworks.com>
<http://www.novell.com/cool solutions>
<http://www.cmpnet.com>

<http://www.sysdoc.pair.com>
<http://www.pchell.com>
<http://www.windrivers.com>
<http://www.files.com>
<http://www.conitech.com/windows>
<http://ctips.com>
<http://www.angelfire.com/tx2/ComputerTips>
<http://www.networkcomputing.com>
<http://www.bugnet.com>
<http://www.netperf.org>
<http://www.ots.utexas.edu/ethernet>
<http://www.nwfusion.com>
<http://www.certify.com>
<http://www.nist.gov/y2k>
<http://www.hitchhikers.net/antivirus/antivirus-dis.phtml>
<http://www.DataFellows.com>

SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEWS

Another information gold mine is news servers. I subscribe to a large news server called RemarQ (<http://www.remarq.com>).

Novell has its own news server called *Novell Forums*. You can locate *Novell Forums* on Novell's web site (<http://www.novell.com>), but I prefer to access *Novell Forums* through a newsreader program. My choice of newsreaders is Free Agent, which you can download from <http://www.forteinc.com>. To access *Novell Forums* through Free Agent, you must first download Free Agent, and then go to the options menu. Identify your user and system profile, and use the system tab to select *Novell Forums* (forums.novell.com). The news server then retrieves all of the newsgroup names, and you can choose whichever ones interest you.

One particularly good newsgroup is novell.community.usercontributedfiles. Here you can find descriptions of various freeware and shareware programs as well as instructions for downloading the programs. By visiting the web page from which the files originated, you can often find a good selection of additional useful links.

GET ORGANIZED

The Internet and news servers offer far more information than you can use. The best way to navigate the flood of information is to get organized. Build a collection of useful web sites and create information resource folders so that when you need answers, you can find them quickly.

In addition, you can establish several e-mail resource folders to classify your information. For example, when I receive useful information via a news server or tip

list, I place the message in an appropriately labeled e-mail folder. I can then search my e-mail messages quickly and efficiently.

CONCLUSION

The ideas and web sites discussed in this article should help you build a good collection of networking resources. By us-

ing resources such as your local NetWare user group, the Internet, and news servers, you can track down the information you need to ensure that your company's network runs as smoothly as possible.

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