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SNEAK PREVIEWS:

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Shore's backup system for 1000BASE-T links may be the insurance policy your network needs.
By Lee Badman

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Shore Microsystems SM-2508 Protects Your Critical Gigabit Ethernet Links

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You never want to see certain network connections go down. Losing a critical server can be just an annoyance or the kiss of death, depending on the affected applications. And while most of us spend resources for network climate control, UPS systems, data-backup facilities and the like, perhaps not as many enterprises consider investing in hardware that will provide redundant network links as a weapon against downtime. Virtually any Gigabit Ethernet device can benefit from deployment of Shore Microsystems' new SM-2508 Ethernet Link Protector.

SHORE MICROSYSTEMS' SM-2508 HAS NO EQUAL IN PROVIDING REDUN-
DANT CONNECTIONS FOR UP TO EIGHT GIGABIT ETHERNET LINKS.

Adding to a well-established product line specializing in redundant connections, Shore Microsystems enters the higher-stakes Gigabit Ethernet arena with the rack-mountable SM-2508. Shore Microsystems' SM-2508 provides reliable 1000BASE-T-connection backup to eight devices. 100BASE-T and 10BASE-T models are also available. Each "port" is made up of three connections: the server RJ-45 jack, the primary network connection jack and the backup network jack. Any critical network box would be suitably placed on the server port.

An Invisible Worker
The Shore Microsystems SM-2508 is transparent to the network and does not add to connection loss or repeater budget. In the event of disruption due to cable cut, errant disconnect, switch failure or any other interruption, failover switching to the backup port is automatic. Switch time is 1.8 seconds, with LED and SNMP alarms generated as network or server-port signal status changes. With the primary link running Gigabit Ethernet, lower cost 100BASE-T or 10BASE-T can serve as an economical backup.
Upon restoration of the proper primary signal after the fault condition clears, Shore Microsystems' SM-2508 will re-establish the primary network path. Network managers can also force switching back and forth between primary and backup paths, allowing flexibility in maintenance and configuration by way of provisioning for hot spares.

A Better Approach
Despite some heavy competition, Shore Microsystems stands alone with the SM-2508. Not only is the SM-2508 the first to market with protective Gigabit Ethernet redundancy, but the switching technology is also unique. In using relay-based circuitry instead of chip-based switching, which is the norm for such boxes, Shore Microsystems' product avoids becoming a potential failure point by assuring that the signal will still pass through the Shore SM-2508 in the event of AC power failure.

Flexible Network Management
Network management of Shore Microsystems' SM-2508 is done through a 10BASE-T network port via SNMP or telnet. Although easy and flexible, configuration is not quite intuitive and could benefit from a simple GUI interface, which is not provided in the product. Local and serial modem control occurs through the panel-mounted variable-band RS-232 port, and panel LEDs do a good job of reflecting system status.
Front-panel controls can be locked out for security, and password protection safeguards network access to configuration.
During my tests in the Network Computing Real-World Labs® at Syracuse University, in New York, the Shore Microsystems SM-2508 performed well in a predominantly Cisco Systems/3Com Corp. NIC environment. With several configurations under test and interrupted, I could not induce a single operational problem. Local and remote configuration, failover, and alarm functions performed as they were expected in a variety of scenarios.
The SM-2508's network control and security features are right on the money as well. System-status indication relies heavily on the front panel's LED field, which is well-thought-out and effective.
Gigabit Ethernet breeds many new network concerns, as well as incorporating traditional worries. Shore Microsystems' SM-2508 might just be the insurance policy that many network managers would like to have.

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