



# PREVIEWS



## A 'Shore' Thing

Shore's SM-2601F Gigabit Link Protector makes sure your vital gigabit links stay up BY LEE BADMAN

the primary link's devices. If the switch that feeds your critical server on the primary link needs maintenance, you can force the SM-2601F to activate the backup link, which will then connect the server to another switch. The transition should be swift enough at the rated 30-ms failover speed that most of the protected server's network applications won't skip a beat, and the desired tasks can be carried out on your now-offline router. Want even more protection? Run the redundant leg to a completely different switch.

You can order industry-standard LX (long haul) or SX (short haul) fiber interfaces as dictated by your topology, but fixed LC jacks are your only option for network connectivity. The protected server/router can use LC fiber or an RJ-45 gigabit port, and management is done through a simple 10-Mbps RJ-45 connection. A standard DB-9 console port, an alarm contact jack, well-thought-out indicators and a few control buttons round out the SM-2601F's user controls. A redundant power supply is available for greater reliability.

### Simple Interface

**Setup of the SM-2601F** begins with console connection or BOOTP dynamic assignment of an IP address. There is no GUI, but the same staff members that work the network routers would likely configure this device, so the command-line approach should be easy. You can enable or turn off telnet service to the box for security and accomplish the overall device setup in minutes if you know your desired configuration before you fire up the unit.

good

- Small footprint
- Reliable link failover
- Alarms on failure

bad

- Only LC jacks available
- Network-management port 10 Mbps only

### Network Computing Exclusive

the worst possible time. Shore's SM-2601F offers your critical resources, such as servers and routers, the benefit of two gigabit paths to the network: an active primary path, and a backup secondary path that will take over within an instant of a primary link failure. This means high reliability is possible at the physical layer, with the SM-2601F offering defense against the effects of cable cuts, misbehaving NICs and switch ports, errant disconnects and other network maladies that can take down your prized gigabit platform. With a growing number of lights-out sites and shrinking staffing levels as IT budgets continue to strain, the SM-2601F can provide an extra set of hands when it's needed most.

The SM-2601F stands guard between a server or protected switch/server combination and a router or switch. It offers the added benefit of management-forced switchover to the secondary path to allow for maintenance on

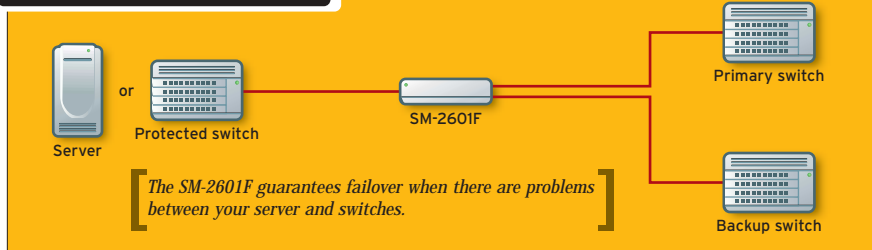
**T**here is little consensus regarding what constitutes a "critical" network link in the enterprise. But if a gigabit-link outage means loss of revenue or potential loss of life or property, that connection would be considered critical by anyone's standards. Shore Microsystems' new SM-2601F Gigabit Link Protector can provide the automatic redundant-link failover your devices need to stay connected despite network problems.

### Two Paths To Take

**Murphy's Law** guarantees when network trouble comes to visit, it will affect your most important devices at

For my tests, I connected my protected server through the SM-2601F version SX to two Cisco Systems Catalyst 3524 switches on GBIC ports. I had some odd negotiation problems between one of the switch ports and the SM-2601F, but a bit of switch configuration smoothed it out. The failover process worked as advertised—when I tampered with the primary connection, the backup took over without skipping a beat. I manipulated the physical connection and disabled the switch port in management to induce failover, and the panel alarms and SNMP trap notification went out as expected. After several dozen forced failovers, the only strange result was a single instance of slow link acquisition between the SM-2601F and the switch, but I couldn't duplicate it.

## Protecting Your Links



Every other time, the primary link took over seamlessly.

Two SM-2601F units can occupy a single rack unit and ensure redundant connectivity. The look of the SM-2601F is understated, with simple push buttons on its face and basic command-line and standard MIB controls that offer pretty neat protection. Automatic failover, local and remote control, failure reporting and configuration flexibility

make the SM-2601F worth a look for your important gigabit links.

■ **SM-2601F GIGABIT FIBER LINK PROTECTOR**, \$2,965 (SX version). Shore Microsystems, (800) 600-9656. [www.shoremicro.com](http://www.shoremicro.com)

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## » Multisystem Monitoring

SiteScope's target area is wide, but its accuracy is great BY LORI MACVITTIE

good

- Runs on Linux, Windows 2000 and Solaris
- Customized report options
- Monitors a multitude of applications and hardware, and makes use of SNMP

bad

- Awkward GUI navigation
- Extremely low response-time values in reports show up as hard-to-read exponential values
- Clunky parameter configuration for Web services

**W**hat runs on Linux, Microsoft Windows 2000 and Sun Solaris, works over the Internet, monitors LDAP databases, Web servers (URL and log files), Web services and network devices, and starts at the low price of \$2,995? Freshwater Software's SiteScope 7.6. After testing it in our Green Bay, Wis., Real-World Labs® I can recommend it for any organization without a monitoring infrastructure.

SiteScope's GUI isn't attractive, but its functionality more than compensates for its looks. The software monitors many devices and applications, including those from Cisco Systems, F5 Networks, Novell, Oracle, IBM and Sun. Additionally, it uses SNMP to monitor and report on devices and applications not directly supported. When it's using SNMP, the application displays a list of supported object IDs, letting you know exactly what's covered. SiteScope's alerts can be integrated with existing management systems, such as Hewlett-Packard's OpenView, and can be sent as SNMP traps or e-mail.

You control access using IP address and user name-password combinations: RADIUS, LDAP or even Active Directory Services authentication would add value. To make up for it, though, SiteScope lets you manage multiple SiteScope servers, so you can distribute monitoring duties across several

servers yet manage them centrally.

I tested a beta version of SiteScope on my Pentium 4, 1.8-GHz laptop running Red Hat Linux 8.0 with 512 MB of RAM. Within moments I was monitoring my Web server, Cisco switches, 3Com 802.11b access point, OpenLDAP Server and several Web services. To configure the system, I set up groups for the applications, services



SiteScope's dashboard offers an at-a-glance view of your application and network health.

and devices I wanted to monitor: DNS, Web, Web services and infrastructure. SiteScope lets you create subgroups to further organize your monitoring; I made two subgroups under infrastructure, one for switches and another for applications.

Adding services to the appropriate group based on function and test parameters was easy. Adding Web services to groups was more complex. I added a .Net Web service, an Apache SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol) Web service and a The Mind Electric Glue Web service; SiteScope monitored all equally well. Interoperability between the SiteScope agent and the Web services was smooth, but the method of configuring parameters is clunky.

First I named the Web services to be monitored, then entered the URL

of the WSDL (Web Services Definition Language) file. SiteScope retrieved the methods available for monitoring and let me choose from them. I selected the appropriate parameters (or arguments) for the method, such as ZipCode, Name or e-mail, and chose their types, such as integer or string. I then assigned values to each parameter or argument.

The types of parameters are listed in a text area in which you assign values to each parameter "For .Net." This can be confusing: You'll have to sort through the XML and find the tag representing each parameter before you can edit it. RPC/Encoded Web services are a bit easier to configure.

When specifying monitoring for groups, you need to go through a plethora of options to configure the setting of acceptable thresholds.

Then you must define test schedules and actions to take based on the results of each test. The basic monitoring report shows response time and status. More detailed information is available via reports set up in each monitoring report.

You can configure the monitors to perform tests at any second, minute, day or week interval. Success is determined in any number of ways, including content, status codes returned and response time.

■ **SITESCOPE 7.6**, starts at \$2,995 (available for a free 10-day trial), Freshwater Software, (303) 443-2266. [www.freshwater.com](http://www.freshwater.com)

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# » Xdrive Revitalizes File Sharing

Inexpensive utility solves many data-sharing problems BY STEVEN J. SCHUCHART JR.

good

- Easy to use
- Competitive price
- Low maintenance

bad

- Lacks security auditing
- Limited search function
- No virus scanning

**W**hen Xdrive called me, I was surprised the company was still around. The storage service provider market crashed a few years ago and I thought Xdrive was deader than the butterfly on the front bumper of my aunt's Buick. But, after weathering some financial trials, Xdrive has emerged with a competitive, secure, controllable, affordable file-sharing utility that presents minimal headaches.

The Xdrive service works on the premise that you need to share data but lack an easy way to do it. It lets you share large files from a link independent of your network—no more crashing your recipient's e-mail program or clogging the e-mail server and Internet connection.

Xdrive would be a boon for a sales department that needs to exchange data and quotes, an engineering department that wants to transfer large CAD files, marketing people who need to move customer data, an IT department that wants to issue software updates or presenters who need to share PowerPoint files. In all these cases, the size of the files may exceed company limits for e-mail attachments, and home-grown solutions to this problem are lacking: FTP sites are impractical and present a security risk, and Web sites can provide some of the needed functionality but require con-

stant monitoring for new content. Furthermore, it would take many IT labor-hours to duplicate Xdrive's ability to expire shared files after a predetermined length of time.

Xdrive technicians set me up with a workgroup account that includes 1,875 MB of storage and a maximum of 25 users, and costs \$99 per month. You can connect to Xdrive using the simple Microsoft Explorer-like Web interface or via the drive-mapping feature in all Windows clients. I logged in from NETWORK COMPUTING's Green Bay, Wis., Real-World Labs® as the administrator and established accounts for everyone in the lab. I set user names, e-mail addresses, starting passwords, amount of space allocated, employee numbers and employees' first and last names. Xdrive automatically e-mailed each person with an account, divulging his or her password and user name, and instructions on where and how to log on.

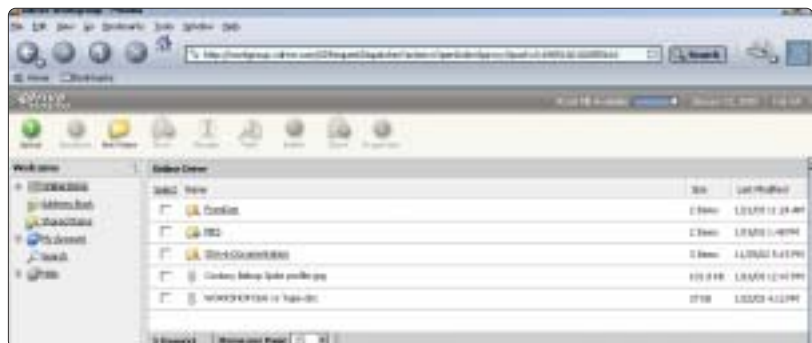
## Control Basics

The administrator can import new users from a comma-delimited CSV file to the Xdrive subscription. The service offers three reports: a list of inactive users, a list of users' disk quotas and the percentage of disk space used, and the number of pur-

chased seats used and how much purchased space has been allocated. The administrator can set lockout features, such as the acceptable number of failed logon attempts before a user is locked out and the duration of the lockout.

The first page a new user will see after logging in shows a list of folders the user shares, the amount of available storage and a handy tip of the day. To access or share a folder or a file within a folder, the user proceeds to the online drive. The clean, easy-to-use interface includes an action button bar at the top of the screen with the option to upload a file to your Xdrive server or create a new folder. A simple, level-based menu on the left of the screen offers a directory to the online drive, address book, shared items, my account, search and help features. You can open the Windows-like directory under "online drive" to view the shared folders; they also appear on the main screen, as do any stray files that haven't been put into folders. If you click on the folder or file from the main screen, you can move, share, view, rename, delete or change the properties of that folder or file, provided you have permission.

From the user profile interface, a user can change his or her first and



The Xdrive's user interface is clean and intuitive.

last name, phone number, default language, default signature and password. Each user has an address book that lists the other Xdrive users in the workgroup assigned by the administrator. The user can add contacts or create groups for easier mailing as well. The address book, however, cannot be shared between users or accessed by the admin.

To share files or folders that you've already saved in the Xdrive service, select the file you want and click the "share" button on the main toolbar. Then choose one of your saved contacts, a unique e-mail address (not an Xdrive user) or multiple recipients in any combination. Recipients outside the Xdrive service can be added to the address book. They will receive an e-mail with a

link to a downloadable version of the file. Other Xdrive users also receive an e-mail but will have the file in their shared-file section.

When you initiate a share you choose attributes such as read only, write only, execute, modify and share. You can change these attributes only if you're the initiator of the share. There's no accounting log, so your group members who share edit rights need to be careful not to override each other's changes.

You determine how long the shared file should remain viewable to the recipients. The default setting is for seven days but you can make it from one hour to four weeks. You can also choose to make files available in secure encrypted mode or fast mode, customize a small message to the

recipients, add a signature or send the message with your default signature.

Users can search for files using file names and partial file names but not using content clues. Xdrive will keep track of recent searches during the current session, but the log goes away at log out. In the future, I hope Xdrive adds the ability to search based on content inside Microsoft Word and other text.

■ **XDRIVE WORKGROUP**, starts at \$99 per month; **XDRIVE PLUS**, \$4.95 per month. Xdrive, (310) 586-7115. [www.xdrive.com](http://www.xdrive.com)

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## Quick Takes

### Foundry Networks 10 Gigabit Ethernet Module

Foundry Networks has introduced a 10 Gigabit Ethernet Module that offers the first two-port 10 Gig card. Using

Xenpak-based optical transceivers, the new module lets users of Foundry's BigIron, NetIron and other products upgrade to double-density 10 Gig Ethernet

connectivity via a single slot. In addition, the two-port module brings wire speed to 10 Gig Ethernet ring topologies and speeds failover for WAN and LAN environments, whether connected to the campus or accessed via broadband. Available: March. Starts at \$60,995. Foundry Networks, (888) TURBOLAN, (408) 586-1700. [www.foundrynetworks.com](http://www.foundrynetworks.com)



**Compuware Vantage 8.5** Compuware Corp. has added a Web interface to Vantage, its application-management suite, to allow for on-the-fly management of enterprise applications. Custom reports created in VantageView send information to readers on a need-to-know basis. Reports can be scheduled for display in a static snapshot, though administrators have access to previews at any time. The suite is managed from ServerView, which allows for all databases to be controlled from one console. Starts at \$19,000. Compuware Corp. (800) COMPUWARE, (248) 737-7300. [www.compuware.com](http://www.compuware.com)

**Information Builders WebFocus 5** Information Builders promises scalable, flexible and robust business-intelligence information gathering and reporting with WebFocus 5. The product's real-time information delivery gives customers, suppliers, partners and employees efficient access to data. Providing support for any Java-based third-party tool, WebFocus runs through IBM WebSphere and BEA WebLogic application servers and can run on more than 35 different platforms, including Microsoft Windows NT, IBM AS-400, Linux and Unix platforms. WebFocus 5 employs Java-servlet technology. Security has been enhanced with support for SSL and HTTPS. Starts at \$18,000. Information Builders, (800) 969-INFO. [www.informationbuilders.com](http://www.informationbuilders.com)

**FatPipe MPVPN 3.0** FatPipe Networks has released version 3.0 of its MPVPN device, providing both load balancing and failover for IP and VPN traffic across multiple connections. One of its features, Policy Routing, lets users select specific protocols for specific WAN ports, rather than having the device balance over all links. You can use this capability to send SSL traffic through a frame relay link and Internet traffic over all available lines. MPVPN 3.0 also includes a new "fastest route" load-balancing algorithm and full support for SNMP 2. Starts at \$6,500. FatPipe Networks, (800) 724-8521, (801) 281-3434. [www.fatpipeinc.com](http://www.fatpipeinc.com)

