

AirDefense Heats Up Multi-Vendor Wireless LAN Management Market

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By Craig Mathias

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[This morning's announcement](#) from Motorola's AirDefense unit that they're getting into the multi-vendor WLAN management business removes all doubt that this capability is rapidly increasing in importance. Now, I know a lot of network operations guys and girls out there see a multi-vendor environment in the same light as a root canal, but, like said dental procedure, such is often a fact of life. Via mergers, acquisitions, decentralized purchasing, or simply seeking the best tool for the job at hand (as the result of a competitive bake-off, for example), many larger organizations are going to wind up with multiple generations of WLAN systems from multiple vendors, all eventually transitional but perhaps not for a few years. With the recession, the "not" part has become significant - the ethos at many a shop today is if it works, keep it, and hope for budget for a replacement or upgrade as better times arrive (and they are, if slowly).

Sure, each system can have its own management console as intended by the respective vendor, but operational costs can be reduced if at least monitoring and related functions of a management system can be centralized. Aruba's AirWave unit is by far the most visible player here, and, of course, was among the first to recognize the opportunity, and it's an interesting competitive move, in what is a highly-competitive industry regardless, for Motorola to fire a management shot across Aruba's bow. I've not used the new AirDefense product yet, but it sounds like the company is committing major resources here. AirDefense mentioned support for Cisco and Aruba (no surprise there) out of the box, but they also highlighted a plug-in architecture designed to ease the integration of additional vendors. And they also noted additions to their very capable Live RF monitoring capability to more rapidly identify radio problems, and new security and reliability features as well.

And what's really interesting here is that AirDefense is now to Motorola as AirWave is to Aruba - the source of all things management. And, again, management is going to become *the* differentiator in enterprise-class WLAN products, so the importance of this move, and today's announcement, cannot be understated.