

TECH CHOICES



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WLAN Solutions Scorecard Summary: ProCurve Networking By HP

Key Findings From "The Forrester Wave™: WLAN Solutions, Q4 2005"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ProCurve Networking by HP has a strong vision and should be considered for WLAN solutions — even though it does not have a WLAN switch product available yet. Today, ProCurve offers a distributed WLAN approach with thick access points (APs). However, ProCurve is included because it has a large and growing wired install base that provides enterprises an alternative to Cisco at a reasonable price point. This suggests that ProCurve can have success in selling wired clients wireless switch solutions, once available. ProCurve has a clear wireless/wired strategy and is already integrating parts of its distributed, thick architecture with its wired switches as a proof point. ProCurve has the best support across any vendor evaluated, with a lifetime guarantee of equipment and some of the lowest prices.

PROCURVE IS BEST SUITED FOR COMPANIES THAT WANT THE BEST SUPPORT

Even though ProCurve is behind other vendors in offering a robust WLAN switch architecture, it has the capability to catch up. Its focus on the customer is commendable, with low prices and lifetime guaranteed support. ProCurve has a clear vision of wired/wireless integration and plans on tighter integration with management products like HP's own OpenView.

Forrester evaluated ProCurve's current offering and strategy for WLAN solutions against 44 criteria (see Figure 1). ProCurve has a strong strategy and the capability to leapfrog other vendors if its WLAN switch solution comes to market soon. ProCurve's product is an especially good fit for buyers that:

- **Want advanced customer support.** ProCurve is redefining support. It offers a lifetime warranty on the vast majority of its products, including the 420 and 520wl APs and the Switch xl Access Controller Module. This includes free phone support worldwide. Extensive support packs, including 24x7 one-hour response, are available for an additional charge. ProCurve anticipates offering similar support on its WLAN switch solution — once announced.
- **Are or will be ProCurve wired clients.** ProCurve is now second to Cisco in number of managed Ethernet ports — although Cisco is much farther ahead. Companies that are moving toward a ProCurve wired networking infrastructure can help ease wired/wireless integration in the long term with ProCurve wireless products. What to do now, since ProCurve does not have a WLAN switch solution? Ask ProCurve for a clear evolution plan on how you can upgrade already- or soon-to-be-deployed thick APs to a switch architecture at minimal cost once it is available. The vendor has demonstrated early commitment to a wired/wireless infrastructure by already offering a wireless controller module for its APs that physically integrate with its switches.

To see how ProCurve Networking by HP stacks up against six other competitors, see the Forrester Wave™ evaluation of the WLAN solutions market.¹

Figure 1 ProCurve Networking By HP WLAN Solutions Evaluation Overview

CURRENT OFFERING	
Breadth of offering	ProCurve Networking by HP offers a thick AP solution, not a WLAN switch solution — but it has near-term plans as well.
Scalability and performance	ProCurve, as an independent architecture used with controllers, is highly scaleable. But it does not have a centralized solution (until it launches it in 2006).
Reliability	The ProCurve system is highly reliable. The current APs support a link integrity feature that periodically checks for connectivity. Controllers can be deployed in a mesh fashion for redundancy and backup. However, because it is not a switch solution yet, reliability of the overall network cannot be coordinated.
Security	ProCurve has solid security support, and its overall security framework can ultimately be integrated with its WLAN solution. It has partnerships for client integrity with Sygate and Zone Labs/Check Point Software Technologies.
Management	ProCurve has a management tool for its WLAN and wired network. It has near-term plans to enhance its management suite with the Mobility Manager. ProCurve has the best support in the business and offers a lifelong guarantee.
STRATEGY	
Vision, strategy, and value proposition	ProCurve's vision of a wired/wireless integration is dead-on. It has the market momentum with its wired switch portfolio to leapfrog once it announces its WLAN solution.
Technology strategy	ProCurve has a good technology strategy and has a unified wired/wireless vision.
Cost	ProCurve has one of the lowest prices relative to other vendors (and is expected to continue that trend).
MARKET PRESENCE	
Client base	ProCurve has a relatively large install base for its thick access points and controllers.
Financials	ProCurve does not disclose its networking numbers. Forrester estimates ProCurve to have a healthy revenue stream.

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.



Go online to download additional in-depth data and scores for this vendor and other vendors included in this Forrester Wave evaluation.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Online Resource

The underlying spreadsheet for Figure 1 is available online. The spreadsheet includes more detailed data and scores for this vendor.

This detailed data and scores for this vendor are also available online through an Excel-based vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings.

Forrester Wave Methodology

We conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors that meet our criteria to be evaluated in this market. From that initial pool of vendors, we narrow our final list to those presented here. We choose these vendors based on: 1) product fit; 2) customer success; and 3) Forrester client demand. We eliminate vendors that have limited customer references and products that don't fit the scope of our evaluation.

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we develop the initial evaluation criteria. To evaluate the vendors and their products against our set of criteria, we gather details of product qualifications through a combination of lab evaluations, questionnaires, demos, and/or discussions with client references. We send evaluations to the vendors for their review, and we adjust the evaluations to provide the most accurate view of vendor offerings and strategies.

We set default weightings to reflect our analysis of the needs of large user companies — and/or other scenarios as outlined in this document — and then score the vendors based on a clearly defined scale. These default weightings are intended only as a starting point, and readers are encouraged to adapt the weighting to fit their individual needs through the Excel-based tool. The final scores generate the graphical depiction of the market based on current offering, strategy, and market presence. Forrester intends to update vendor evaluations regularly as product capabilities and vendor strategies evolve.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ WLANs are being used or considered by more than 60% of the North American and European enterprises that Forrester surveyed in May 2005. These WLANs help herald in the mobile enterprise — where work is done continuously, anywhere. To assess the state of the WLAN solution market and see how the vendors stack up against one another, Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of top WLAN solution

vendors across 44 criteria. The result: Cisco Systems leads the market by far with a strong current offering, market presence, and strategy. Aruba Networks, Trapeze Networks, and Nortel Networks follow close behind as strong technology leaders with solid strategies. All WLAN switching vendors' products are strong — differentiation is primarily on emerging applications, management, and wired infrastructure integration. However, the WLAN market is far from mature. Nortel and 3Com's strategic position are tenuous, as both have OEM deals with Trapeze, which can be acquired at any point. That would leave one or both of them with no solution. Included in this report is an interactive vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings. See the October 19, 2005, Tech Choices "The Forrester Wave™: WLAN Solutions, Q4 2005."

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