

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This is another article with Questions & Answers.

This month's question is another very interesting one. **Should I shift to a wireless LAN? What are the advantages and disadvantages?** Being able to access the computer resources at your business from a number of computers on a network (LAN) is very important for both business and practical reasons. Being able to have less shared devices such as printers and scanners make good business sense and being able to share these devices as well as files and internet access is practical and time saving.

The standard means of connecting computers in a network has been using cables or wiring. Recently, wireless networking has made great strides with more reliable, more secure and more affordable equipment. Because of this wireless networks are becoming popular and I would recommend them for most small business office applications as well as home networks. The advantages here are that you don't have to string cables throughout the office or locate the computers near walls. The disadvantage with wireless networks is that their speed is limited to about 1/10 the speed of a wired network. For small offices with a small number of computers on the network this is not a problem.

Because wireless networks use radio waves like cordless phones and cellular phones they are subject to the same interference. This is a major disadvantage for shop applications where operating machinery can make the network unusable. Although, you can have a mixed network where the office is wireless and the shop is wired.

I would recommend not switching wholesale to wireless but consider it if you're expanding your office or moving into a new office area.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.