



Lee H. Badman

Network Computing Blogger

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Motorola Launches 802.11ac APs

Posted by [Lee H. Badman](#)

May 15, 2013

Though the 802.11ac wireless standard is not yet official, some vendors are bringing pre-standard consumer and [enterprise products](#) to market. As per the [IEEE's latest timeline](#), we should expect 11ac to be ratified in November. This close to the finish line, it's not unusual to see WLAN vendors crossing early.

Motorola is one of those early arrivals. The company [announced a set of 802.11ac APs](#) last week at Interop in Las Vegas. I caught up with Motorola at the conference for a briefing. Motorola aims for the same 11ac-related targets as Cisco, Aerohive and other vendors, but its new products have a couple of unique twists.

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Motorola announced three new 11ac access points: the AP 8232, AP 8222 and AP 8263. They're designed for different spaces, from office settings where aesthetics count to outdoor mesh applications.

The 8232 is the most interesting of the bunch. Like Cisco's 3600 AP, the Motorola 8232 accommodates optional modules, including wireless intrusion prevention (WIPS), but that's where the similarity ends. For instance, Cisco offers an LTE-extension module, but it requires specialized back-end mobile carrier integration to be useful. By contrast, Motorola offers a backhaul-enhancing module that lets an AP use the mobile carrier network for WAN



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connectivity back to the corporate network.

Another unique module targets industrial, retail and hospital customers. The 8232 has an

environmental sensing module that can actually control WLAN functions. Consider this scenario: A retail chain has AP radios turn off after stores close. But during a big sale with extended hours, the environmental sensor sees that lights are on outside of normal hours, and keeps the WLAN up until the lights go out. There are a lot of use cases for environments that can't rely on manual intervention for every operational change.

Motorola has also bumped up its WiNG code to 5.5. Like most enterprise WLAN players, Moto is big on application optimization; with WiNG 5.5 the focus seems to be video delivery. App acceleration and content caching options mean WiNG 5.5 can act as an Akamai-style mini-service, where companies can push their own frequently used video without needing to expand WAN links. By contrast, companies such as Cisco key in on specific apps and prioritize traffic based on policy. They're different ways of getting the same results.

Motorola also updated me on the company's AirDefense suite. I thought AirDefense was an RF security overlay, but it has been revised with each new WLAN version, and provides roughly the same "support" functionality for WiNG 5.5 as does Cisco's Mobility Services Engine (MSE) and the client-specific troubleshooting tools in Cisco's Prime Infrastructure.

While Cisco is the big dog in enterprise wireless, Motorola beats Cisco hands down in "virtual client" functionality, in which an AP can act a client and exercise key system functions on nearby APs. (I've been asking Cisco for this feature for years.)

The big question for enterprise customers is whether to adopt 802.11ac in the near term or wait for the so-called Wave 2 enhancements, which will further improve the performance and throughput of 11ac devices but won't be available for a year or more. If you've got a solid 11n environment today, it might make sense to wait. As you can guess, Motorola disagrees. The company argues that its 11ac products are cost-effective and have a compelling feature set that will spur migration. If you're looking for early 11ac products, Motorola is worth a look.

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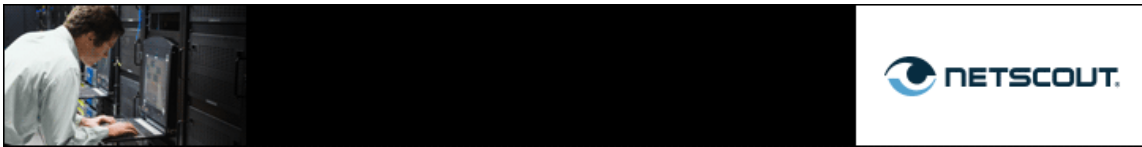


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