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December 22, 2009

Product Review

Fluke Networks AirCheck

1 Product Review

I have been using the Fluke Networks AirCheck™ Wi-Fi Tester for a month now, and I am extremely impressed by not only how easy it is to use, but by how effective it is. In just a few moments I can obtain complete visibility of the Wi-Fi environment, including Wi-Fi activity and interference. Its interference measurement is particularly effective because it measures duty cycle, which is based on the percentage of time that the interference is actually present. This means that AirCheck shows how disruptive the interference is for actual communication. And by loading a profile of authorized access points, I can instantly see if there are any rogue devices, and then with a "locate" option, I can track down the device by watching both signal strength and listening to a tone that varies based on signal strength.

I cannot imagine any common wireless LAN issue that I would not be able to readily solve with the Fluke Networks AirCheck. Though there are some free utilities for laptops that perform some of the same functions, their capabilities are nowhere near as deep, and are oriented more towards monitoring than troubleshooting. Moreover, I've spent more than my share of time wandering around Wi-Fi coverage areas holding my laptop out in an awkward fashion. I'm glad to not have to do that ever again.

Like all Fluke Networks products, the packaging is solid. AirCheck fits and works nicely in one hand, with big buttons and a bright color display. Battery life is more than sufficient for even the most intense troubleshooting sessions.

Not only is the product itself great, but there is an easy-to-use PC-based management console where you can manage network profiles and transfer sessions data if you want to preserve your data. The session analysis has a particularly clever feature where you can selectively overlay session results to diagnose or detect issues and network changes.

I estimate that for many organizations, AirCheck can easily save one hour a week of either an employee's downtime, or an IT manager's time in tracking down Wi-Fi issues, meaning the tester will pay for itself in less than a year.

Solving Wi-Fi issues can be a challenging, frustrating, and sometimes bordering on impossible task. AirCheck takes the mystery out of the Wi-Fi environment, enabling practically anybody, regardless of their technical knowledge, to quickly diagnose and solve the most common problems. I highly recommend this product.

2 About Rysavy Research

Rysavy Research LLC is a consulting firm that has specialized in wireless technology since 1993. Projects have included analysis of technology capabilities, Wi-Fi network assessments, strategic consultations, system design, white papers, articles, courses and webcasts, network performance measurement, and test reports.

Rysavy Research, specializes in the capabilities and evolution of wireless technology. Peter Rysavy has written over a hundred articles, reports and white papers, and has taught forty public wireless courses and webcasts. Peter began training on Wi-Fi in 2002. Peter has also performed technical evaluations of many wireless technologies including municipal/mesh Wi-Fi networks, Wi-Fi hotspot networks, 3G networks, and wireless e-mail systems. Rysavy Research has worked for over 70 clients. Wi-Fi projects go back to 1999, and clients for Wi-Fi projects includes companies like AT&T, Datacomm Research, Intel, Nokia, Sprint, and T-Mobile. Peter is a testifying expert on Wi-Fi.

From 1988 to 1993, Peter Rysavy was vice-president of engineering and technology at LapLink where projects included LapLink, LapLink Wireless and connectivity solutions for a wide variety of mobile platforms. Prior to that, he spent seven years at Fluke Corporation where he worked on touch screen and data acquisition products.

Peter Rysavy is also the executive director of the Portable Computer and Communications Association (PCCA, <http://www.pcca.org>), a group that evaluates wireless technologies, investigates mobile communications architectures and promotes wireless-data interoperability. Peter Rysavy graduated with BSEE and MSEE degrees from Stanford University in 1979. More information is available at <http://www.rysavy.com>.