

WHEN DO YOU JUMP IN ON 11AC?

The blogosphere is awash with speculation on how 802.11ac is going to transform the way we use wireless, and what the new WLAN will do for productivity. **It's great stuff, and needs to be talked up.** We see early releases of actual 11ac draft product, great whitepapers from the Big Guns, and even better blogs on 11ac from some of the best wireless minds in the industry. If you're not getting a working knowledge of 11ac by now, it's not for lack of available information.

Never has WiFi been more complex, more promising, and more confusing. I don't mean technically confusing; if you're a wireless professional, you'll wrap your head around the technical side of 802.11ac. Some of my own frequent talking points on 11ac:

- yeah, the standard promises up to 6.9 Gbps data rates. But 11n also promises up to 600, and we'll never see it. Real initial 11ac offerings are still going to be measured at speeds slightly better or even the same as 11n's best
- the 5 GHz-only thing is great for everyone, and will help de-congest the ugly 2.4 GHz band
- early client devices have to be watched- a 3x3 11ac Macbook pro will run circles around a TP-Link 1x1 USB adapter, but they both "are" 11ac. Real client throughputs on 11ac are going to be all over the place

- the Wave 1/Wave 2 thing is really gonna be a weird one for people who have to plan when to jump in, and killer features like Multi-User-MIMO don't materialize until the second wave
- Regardless of how 11ac plays out in the trenches, Ethernet needs to start being more aggressively marginalized. Limited budgets can't support competing access technologies, and mobility will become more of a trump factor when dollars get spent

This brings me back to my question- When do different organizations start migrating to 11ac? This is the part that is confusing.

the topic of life-cycle came up in relation to 11ac. If you have old gear and have to upgrade, first-wave 11ac might make sense in that you can skip right past 11n. But if you are like me, and have a fairly recent 11n build-out and no real performance pain points, it's just not as easy of a paradigm. Stop-gaps like Cisco's 3600 AP 11ac radio module help bridge the technological generation gap between 11n and 11ac deployments, but at an estimated \$500 a pop list price, may not be worth the cost. **Upgrading twice to 11ac for the first and second waves is a thorny proposition.**

For small environments, lesser AP counts do remove some of the complication. But when you have hundreds or thousands of access points, you can't help but scratch your head when it comes to thoughts of moving to 11ac.

Personally, I am hoping to see a first-wave AP emerge that is somehow upgradeable to a full-fledged second-waver. But I'm also aware of the complexity of putting these things together, and building a 4×4 AP that can “expand” to the likes of 8 streams isn't likely. Also, close monitoring of client device types in use (we're a huge BYOD environment) will be a must while we watch how new 11ac devices trickle in.

Source: <https://wirednot.wordpress.com/2013/04/24/so-when-do-you-jump-in-on-11ac-like-really/>