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BRIAN LAVIOLETTE
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“I hope one day I will be able to help and inspire other students to achieve their goals, just as you have helped me. I will be attending NWTC and plan to pursue a career in construction. My goal is to start my own construction company, build homes, commercial structures and encourage young people to attend college.”

Daniel Vasquez Ortega
Ray Zimmerman Scholarship recipient
Green Bay West High School

When navigating a new install, consider the entire "climb"

Back in 2011, I climbed a mountain. There are plenty of lessons to learn from climbing a mountain, with themes including hard work, perseverance and preparation. For this column, I am going to focus on something that is a bit more on the nose, and use it as an analogy: The top of the mountain is only half way.

For the actual mountain, this is pretty simple. Don't burn all of your energy and resources getting to the top, because you still have to descend. Unless your plan is to setup shop and live there, the top was only halfway to your goal. Now, relating to the figurative mountains that we face, the key here is to be patient, disciplined and see tasks through to successful completion.

For example, when upgrading network hardware, you will have many steps and goals along the way, and preparation can take many forms. The skills you grow every day, by simply doing your job, are preparation for the complex projects of the future. Prepwork also includes researching proper hardware before ordering.

Your prep time should take longer than your install time. When you are in the middle of it, you won't rationalize steps. Prep time is cool and relaxed, and it is your opportunity to work through every scenario. If you prepare successfully, the climb (or the install, in this case) will go much smoother.

Prep includes the analysis of current configurations, review of new equipment specifications and mapping out a plan for install, which includes finding space in a crowded cabinet, cabling and contingency plans. Patience and discipline, perseverance and preparation are the what separates the professionally mature admins from the rush and react kids.

For the purposes of this scenario, the top of the mountain is getting that new network appliance installed. Testing connections and ensuring that everything works well and looks great is your top of the mountain dance. It's probably 8:00 PM on a Friday by this point and you are anxious to head out. Your cabling is attractive, your VLANS work and all devices on the network are accessing internal and external network locations. Top of the mountain reached and it's time to go home. Nice work.

But, the top of the mountain is only halfway. That anxious feeling that you can't escape is because you are going to spend the weekend sleeping at 10,364 feet above sea level. Oxygen is thin and your heart rate is elevated. While that is a mountain analogy, the reality is that you know the bottom of the mountain, and success, is when your business or client is able to use that network to perform their work on Monday morning.

Installing a network appliance is not the goal. The



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Technology

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Whatever your goals are, make sure that you consider the entire task and experience. A network appliance that works is the top of the mountain. A business that works and benefits from technology is the entire climb, from top to bottom.

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business working and benefiting from the upgrade is the goal. The decent down the mountain is the work that you put in, after the network appliance is installed.

As you work your way down the mountain, you take steps to ensure success. On Saturday, you remote connect to the network and confirm that all of your configurations are still in place. You know, from your research and preparation, that modern network appliances can pull configurations from other appliances on the network. The work that you did Friday night could have been overwritten overnight. It's unlikely, because you accounted for it, but it is possible, so you take the necessary steps to make sure.

On Sunday, you have a couple coworkers or client employees stopping by the office to test their equipment. Can their laptop reach the Internet? How about internal applications and documents? Did we test the phone; can we call internal and external numbers?

You are getting close to the bottom of the mountain as we roll into Monday. To finish strong, you are up early and onsite to provide any necessary support and confirm functionality. There is always something that slips through, and no IT project ever goes exactly to plan. Being there Monday morning ensures a successful completion to your project and your total mountain climb experience.

Whatever your goals are, make sure that you consider the entire task and experience. A network appliance that works is the top of the mountain. A business that works and benefits from technology is the entire climb, from top to bottom.

Scott Tornio is the president of HawkPoint Technologies