

THREE DECADES OF INNOVATION

3Com Corporation 1979–2009



From modest beginnings as a technology consulting firm, 3Com has evolved over the past 30 years into a networking powerhouse that has improved the security, ease-of-use and performance of networks around the world. Today, 3Com customers enjoy unrivaled value—robust, future-proof architecture they can rely on, unsurpassed global services and support, and designs that dramatically lower the cost of owning their business-critical networks.

3Com was founded in 1979 on the premise of combining “Computers, Communication and Compatibility” by computer networking pioneer Bob Metcalfe, who invented Ethernet in 1972. The company shipped its first product, an Ethernet transceiver and adapter, in 1981, and later that year, the nascent networking company appointed L. William Krause as president.

Under the guidance of Krause and Metcalfe, 3Com began developing hardware and software networking components—including the world’s first commercial network operating system, Etherseries—to provide a complete portfolio of networking solutions. Since then, 3Com has consistently delivered customer-driven technology innovations in every aspect of computer networking—security, management and IP telephony among them—that lower the total cost of ownership for enterprises large and small.

As the 1980s came to a close, 3Com focused on developing workgroup-enhancing products; among them was the world’s most successful 10BASE-T adapter card, the 3C501. Further strengthening its position in the market, 3Com acquired Bridge Communications, Inc. in 1987. The combined company was the largest independent networking manufacturer at the time; the following year, 3Com was recognized as the computer networking industry leader.

On the heels of 3Com’s meteoric rise, Krause in 1990 established and implemented a “New Renaissance Plan” to focus the company’s various divisions on developing open

standards-based solutions that would operate in multiple vendor’s networks. Once this strategy had been laid out, Krause handed the reins to Eric Benhamou, 3Com’s new president and COO, and a co-founder of Bridge Communications. Benhamou was at the helm when 3Com introduced stackable hubs and its SuperStack® line of stackable Ethernet switches to much fanfare at Interop, and developed Power over Ethernet (PoE), a deployment-facilitating and expense-reducing technology that delivers power and data over a single cable.

3Com soon began a series of acquisitions to extend its market reach and solidify its ranking as the industry’s premiere provider of networking solutions. The timing couldn’t have been better—3Com was expanding just as the public became aware of the Internet’s potential. The company benefitted immensely as the demand for computer networking equipment was approaching its zenith. In 1997, to guarantee it could best respond to the needs of its customers, 3Com acquired U.S. Robotics Corporation, then one of the world’s leading modem manufacturers.

That same year, as bandwidth demand from an ever-increasing number of public and corporate network users grew and showed no signs of abating, 3Com broke new ground in expediting data flow with the development of Ethernet over DSL and dual-homed multipath trunking.

Increasing throughput led to further technological innovations—3Com debuted the first IP PBX in 1998 and received international acclaim for its CoreBuilder® 3500 Switch, which garnered a “Hot Product Recognition” nod from Data Communications. Impressed with what he saw and enthusiastic about the potential of the company’s future, Bruce Claflin left his post at Digital Equipment Corp. to become 3Com’s president and COO.

3Com’s IP PBX breakthrough was the first of many in voice-over-IP communications. The company purchased NBX Corporation, a maker of IP telephony systems in 1998, and the combined intellectual capital and R&D resources made 3Com the trail-blazer of complete networked phone systems it is today.

The 21st century would be an exceptionally active one for 3Com. Under the aegis of now-CEO Claflin, the company premiered XRN® Virtual Chassis Stacking Technology, created the first pure SIP PBX, and was recognized for its achievements and ranked “Most Innovative Networking Vendor” on the InformationWeek 500 list. It also relocated its global headquarters from Silicon Valley to Marlborough, Massachusetts.

Most important, however, were two fundamentally strategic acquisitions. Recognizing the significance of security as networked connectivity became a mission-critical element of an organization’s success, 3Com purchased TippingPoint Technologies, Inc., an intrusion prevention system company, which had developed an industry-first digital vaccine. Also, with China’s Huawei Technologies Co., 3Com entered into a joint venture, now a wholly owned 3Com subsidiary.

3Com’s strategic, China-based R&D resources continue to lower the cost of developing a portfolio of open standards-

based, core-to-edge networking solutions fundamentally different from the proprietary and more expensive products on the market; this innovative portfolio has gained leading market share in China and is now powering enterprise networks around the world.

Today 3Com is led by CEO Robert Mao, a former 3Com executive vice president of corporate development, and by COO Ron Sege, the former president and CEO of Tropos Networks. Their inspiring, visionary blueprint for 3Com’s future is based on the company’s comprehensive “one company, three brands” portfolio: H3C® enterprise solutions, TippingPoint® security solutions and 3Com® networking solutions for mid-market and smaller enterprises.

With a solid, forward-thinking leadership team supported by more than 2,700 engineers worldwide, 3Com is poised to lead the networking industry in the coming decades with ever more intelligent, powerful and affordable solutions and incomparable levels of services and support.

3Com Corporation, Corporate Headquarters, 350 Campus Drive, Marlborough, MA 01752-3064
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