Take the Internet into your own hands



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It's easy to sympathize with people who report problems with their Rogers@Home service. Such interruptions are infuriating when the Internet is a big part of day-to-day activities.

Yet it's important to put things into perspective. It's not untypical for any Internet service provider (ISP) to suffer from major glitches.

And if you depend on the Internet, you should build some redundancy — or excess capacity — into your setup, so you aren't inconvenienced when problems occur.

Every ISP has its bad days. A case in point: Two weeks ago, I noticed that my Sympatico High-Speed Edition (HSE) seemed to disappear for three days, before it mysteriously returned.

So if you can't expect 100-per-cent reliability, be prepared with redundancy.

In my case, I'm set up with two connection services. I can instantly switch between Rogers@Home or HSE, although I'll admit to using Rogers@Home most of the time because it is faster where I live.

I've linked each service into a "gateway" that allows for the sharing of a single Internet connection among multiple computers. My Rogers@Home service is linked through a Netwinder from Rebel.com (**www.rebel.com**); the HSE connection through an e-Smith Manager (**www.e-smith.com**).

Such products offer much more than simple sharing of a connection — they provide further redundancy. For example, both products — each from Ottawa-based companies and using the Linux operating system — provide you with your own e-mail server. That way, if your ISP mail server is toast — you can send your own mail.

But there's an important point about this kind of thing — it's against the policy of both the high-speed services. You can get kicked off either for doing it. But give it a year or two, and competitive pressures will mean that such policies will have disappeared.

There are many other ways to build redundancy into your Internet activities. For example, consider your Web site. I find that many individuals or companies tend to use only one Web server, perhaps that of their ISP, and hence are at great risk when problems occur with the service provider. So why not spread your site around, and have the flexibility to instantly move it anywhere?

There are plenty of relatively inexpensive Web hosting alternatives out there. In my case, parts of my Web site are located in Toronto, Vancouver, the United States and somewhere in Australia.

And if there is a problem with any of them, then I use my real secret weapon — EasyDNS (**www.easydns.com**).

It allows me to instantly change the location of the Web server behind a domain address that I own. This means if one ISP has a problem, I can reconfigure things in an instant so that folks are sent to another copy of the site elsewhere in the world.

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