

## The SMB SAN Consultancy

We asked Doyle about his success with SANs. On the question of “hunting versus farming,” he says that he doesn’t really go out looking for SAN work, but keeps it in his toolbox as an option.

*“To date, most of our SAN proposals have been to existing clients that are looking to significantly upgrade their network infrastructure and have an increased storage capacity or additional server requirement.”*

— Larry Doyle, Netforce Ltd.

“We built the National Concert Hall system as part of a five-year plan,” says Doyle. “We didn’t just show up and sell them something.” Netforce likes to create a technology roadmap for their clients. This allows the client and the consultant to share an understanding of where they’re going.

Very small companies tend to consider each project as a one-time deal. In reality, if an organization is going to stay in business for a long time, they need a long-term plan. It’s hard enough to make a five-year guess about where the technology’s going, so Netforce doesn’t try to do longer-range plans.

The five-year plan also makes the client feel that they have a real trusted advisor with Netforce. Again, many companies don’t really have a budget for technology. With a five-year plan, Netforce helps their clients to see what’s coming and figure out how to make it work financially. It also allows them to look backward and say “Aren’t we glad we did that?”

The next question was on technical support requirements. Does the presence of a SAN increase your support requirements significantly? Doyle says “I don’t believe it does. In fact it probably reduces support requirements as it is a highly resilient system in general has good management software.”

We asked whether Netforce has had to hire a different level of technician to support SANs. It turns out that they have no problem teaching technicians what they need to know. Netforce has not hired anyone new to manage the SAN networks, and they don’t see a need to.

As a general rule, Netforce gives a senior-level tech the job of investigating new products (including SAN products). After that tech has learned to install