

Router Hardware

An important requirement for establishing any peering link is to ensure that there is suitable router hardware available.

First Internet Link

For an organisation embarking on establishing their first Internet connection, a router will be required. The Peering Toolbox can't provide an exhaustive summary of all the options and combinations available but the key points to note are documented here.

Type

The Peering Toolbox is aimed at organisations who are or are planning to take part in peering. For this reason a consumer/home router (often erroneously called an “internet modem”) is not sufficient and cannot be recommended (even though there are some quite capable devices available).

The type that needs to be looked at need to be “enterprise grade” which means it is offered with lengthy warranty, a support contract (often required by enterprises), is usefully rack (or shelf) mountable, has redundant power supplies, and supports a command line interface suitable for human or automated tool use.

Alternatively, there are several software routers available which could be installed on a Linux container or virtual machine or small Linux appliance. These might be entirely suitable, as the software is usually fully featured (like the main stream vendor routers) and very capable.

Interfaces

The router needs to have internal and external interfaces to match the physical media in use.

Internal interface types are usually only Gigabit Ethernet today, at a minimum, even on the most inexpensive devices. The number of internal interfaces needed depends entirely on the organisational needs. Usually a single or dual interfaces are all that are needed, connecting to the organisation's core router, or routers.

External interface types can range from Gigabit Ethernet, SFP-based fibre optics, various coaxial or copper telephony wiring, to point-to-point wireless. Many of the enterprise routers come with a dizzying amount of configuration options - if the future trajectory for the upstream (and peering) physical media access is uncertain, perhaps specifying a router that has a range of upstream link options would be the most prudent choice to make.

Throughput

The router needs to be able to handle the throughput of the link being purchased, and leave sufficient

CPU and memory capacity for future upgrades.

Note that even if the router may have Gigabit or fibre optic interfaces, there is no guarantee that it can actually deliver Gbps rates. This is especially true for the CPU based routers which slow down with increasing traffic depends, packet filtering configured, and Network Address Translation. It is important to check with the vendor what the true throughput is in a realistic use case, not lab testing!

IPv4 & IPv6

If the transit provider uses both IPv4 and IPv6 on their network, the router must be able to handle IPv4 and IPv6 (dual-stack operation). Using IPv6 is advantageous as it means that content traffic will not have to traverse Network Address Translation devices in the upstream's network or use the NAT feature on the router, reducing the resource burden.

BGP

If BGP is going to be used, the router must be BGP capable, although it does not have to or need to carry the full BGP table (which is large and growing rapidly)

Private Peering Link

This router is normally dedicated only for peering connections, whether connecting to public peers at an IXP or private peers. If procuring a separate router is not a possibility, it is possible that an existing router could be used, so long as it meets the appropriate technical requirements for participating in a peering infrastructure (full support of BGP, sufficient controlplane memory and CPU capacity).

Public Peering Link

This router is normally dedicated only for peering connections, whether connecting to public peers at an IXP or private peers. If procuring a separate router is not a possibility, it is possible that an existing router could be used, so long as it meets the appropriate technical requirements for participating in a peering infrastructure (full support of BGP, sufficient controlplane memory and CPU capacity).

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