

MAKE IT EASY SHEET

BRAND-REX SMART Patch™

What is a SMARTPatch™ system?

SMARTPatch™ is a system that uses a combination of web-based software called SMARTPatch™ for the Enterprise (SP4E) and intelligent hardware, allowing the Infrastructure Manager to maintain an accurate, real-time connectivity database of active equipment and physical layer components. The system is designed to bring a traditionally inert network infrastructure under control and align it to other processes within the IT function. This gives an unprecedented level of visibility of network assets, how they are connected together and where they are physically located. An organisation may be good at managing and monitoring active equipment, but often neglects the "nuts and bolts" physical layer portion of the network infrastructure – a SMARTPatch™ system makes it possible for items such as patch panels, outlets and patch cords to be factored into an overall database that updates itself automatically with every change in physical connectivity.

Why do I need it?

So-called traditional methods of maintaining network documentation, like hand-written records or Excel spreadsheets, are dependent on manual updating if they are to be kept accurate. This is a process that is time-consuming, not real-time, and prone to human error. Particularly for large companies, or those with multiple network sites, this can become a major administrative challenge. Indeed, 80% of organisations admit that their records are inaccurate. This can result in a number of issues, such as extended periods of unplanned network downtime, high levels of asset wastage, reduced productivity and generally less value from an already constrained IT budget. A SMARTPatch™ system will streamline documentation processes and substantially reduce the operational costs of network ownership, bringing a much-needed focus to quality service provision. Provision for cabling administration is also a requirement of the Standards – this is referenced in BS EN 50174, BS EN 6701, ISO 14763, TIA 606 and BS 15000 (a recent standard for IT service delivery management).

What about the Intelligent hardware and software?

SP4E software is based on a Client/Server application on top of an SQL relational database. It works in combination via standard SNMP with a network topology of intelligent hardware (SPMax devices that perform scanning functions, and patch panels with LED indicators over each port) in order to control, map and monitor both the physical layer and active LAN equipment. SP4E includes a unique feature called P-LET (Proactive LAN Equipment Topology) that tracks end-to-end network connectivity from the Terminal Equipment (PCs, telephones, IP phones, printers etc.) through the connecting hardware, to the Network Equipment (LAN switches, PBXs, hubs etc.) SMARTPatch™ operates on a cross-connect topology and can be installed in Category 6 and 5e cabling systems, in either unshielded or shielded variants. Fibre options include SC, MT-RJ and LC. An intelligent patch cord with a 9th wire must be used between SMARTPatch™ panels in the wiring racks in order for connectivity to be managed and monitored. All patch panels are connected to an SPMax device that sends and receives real-time connectivity information to and from the SP4E management station. In some situations, it is also possible to retrofit the SMARTPatch™ technology into a legacy non-intelligent network.

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Doesn't this type of technology cost a fortune?

Assuming the customer is the right "fit" for the technology, the premium paid for SMARTPatch™ on day one is easily off-set by the savings achieved through process improvements and greater operational efficiency. Return on investment is typically realised after 12-24 months. It is vitally important to be able to demonstrate the ways in which savings will be made in addition to having a product argument. Support to build a compelling financial argument is available from either Mayflex or Brand-Rex. Using SMARTPatch™ for proactive rather than reactive infrastructure management can actually extend the life of an organisation's investment in their network.

Who uses this type of system?

Larger companies in general are more likely to see the benefit of using SMARTPatch™ – small organisations may be able to cope by just using off-line database methods. Companies that perform a large number of moves and changes, have immature processes, or who have multiple locations to manage, are often good candidates for intelligence. Sectors like banking and retail that are heavily IT dependent and conduct high value transactions, need a resilient network which is a benefit that a real-time system like SMARTPatch™ can provide. SMARTPatch™ is also a highly complementary tool for organisations adopting BS 15000 and ITIL best practices for process optimisation and service management. These best practice disciplines include, for example, processes for configuration management, capacity management, change management and problem management. There are clear and attractive synergies between the features of SMARTPatch™, and the disciplines set out in ITIL and BS 15000.

Sounds great, how do I become accredited?

SMARTPatch™ hardware and software is included in the Millennium warranty. Over and above warranting the components of the system, consideration also has to be given to other parts of the intelligent proposition such as system maintenance, delivery of software upgrades, hardware replacements and Day One services such as database build and system commissioning.

What about warranty and support?

SMARTPatch™ is only available to Brand-Rex Millennium Partners that undertake additional training to become SMARTPatch™ accredited. There are three types of accreditation, the choice of which depends on the technical capability and the interests of the installer. The three types of accreditation include Hardware Installer, Full Service Provider and Commissioning Specialist. Hardware Installers do not get involved with the SP4E software, and join forces with a Full Service Provider, a Commissioning Specialist, or Brand-Rex, in order to deliver a turnkey SMARTPatch™ system.