# What a Network Administrator Does

A network administrator "administers" a network: installing, configuring, expanding, protecting, upgrading, tuning, and repairing the network.

A network administrator takes care of the network hardware (such as cables, hubs, switches, routers, servers, and clients) and the network software (such as network operating systems, email servers, backup software, database servers, and application software). Most important, the administrator takes care of network users by answering their questions, listening to their troubles, and solving their problems.

On a big network, these responsibilities constitute a full-time job — or a staff of full-timers. Large networks tend to be volatile: Users come and go, equipment fails, software chokes, and life in general seems to be one crisis after another.

Smaller networks are much more stable. After you get your network up and running, you probably won't have to spend much time managing its hardware and software. An occasional problem may pop up, but with only a few computers on the network, problems should be few and far between.

Regardless of the network's size, the administrator attends to common chores:

- **Get involved in every decision to purchase new computers, printers, or other equipment.**
- **Put on the pocket protector whenever a new computer is added to the network.** The network administrator's job includes considering changes in the cabling configuration, assigning a computer name to the new computer, integrating the new user into the security system, and granting user rights.
- **Whenever a software vendor releases a new version of its software, read about the new version and decide whether its new features warrant an upgrade.** In most cases, the hardest part of upgrading to new software is determining the *migration path* — that is, upgrading your entire network to the new version while disrupting the network and its users as little as possible. This statement is especially true if the software in question happens to be your network operating system because any change to the network operating system can potentially impact the entire network.

  Between upgrades, software vendors periodically release patches and service packs that fix minor problems. For more information, see Chapter 19.

REMEMBER