

Here are some general thoughts to keep in mind while you create your network plan:

- » **Don't rush the plan.** The costliest networking mistakes are the ones that you make before you buy anything. Think things through and consider alternatives.
- » **Write down the network plan.** The plan doesn't have to be a fancy, 500-page document. If you want to make it look good, pick up a small three-ring binder. This binder will be big enough to hold your network plan with room to spare.
- » **Ask someone else to read your network plan before you buy anything.** Preferably, ask someone who knows more about computers than you do.
- » **Keep the plan up to date.** If you add to the network, dig up the plan, dust it off, and update it.



TIP

“The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley, and leave us naught but grief and pain for promised joy.” Robert Burns lived a few hundred years before computer networks, but his famous words ring true. A network plan isn't chiseled in stone. If you discover that something doesn't work how you thought it would, that's okay. Just change your plan.

## Being Purposeful

One of the first steps in planning your network is making sure that you understand why you want the network in the first place. Here are some of the more common reasons for creating or upgrading a network, all of them quite valid:

- » Everyone in the office needs access to the Internet. Probably the most common reason for setting up a small network is to share an Internet connection. And even in larger networks, shared Internet access is one of the primary benefits of the network.
- » My co-worker and I exchange files using flash drives just about every day. With a network, it would be easier to trade files.
- » I don't want to buy everyone a color laser printer when I know the one we have now just sits there taking up space most of the day. So wouldn't investing in a network be better than buying a color laser printer for every computer?
- » Business is so good that one person typing in orders eight hours each day can't keep up. If the sales and accounting data existed on a network server, I could hire another person to help, and I won't have to pay overtime to either person.