

Telecom Reseller

Mertek EVO6: Why didn't I think of that?

By Ray Horak, Technology Editor

Every once in a while I run across something that makes such perfectly good sense and adds such great value at so little, if any, cost that I have one of those Why didn't I think of that? moments. You know what I mean. Consider the intermittent windshield wiper or the gasoline vapor recovery system built into every car and truck sold in the last however many years.



Jon Sholtis of Mertek Industries sent me one of those the other day. No, I don't mean an intermittent windshield wiper or gasoline vapor recovery system, but a Cat 6 patch cord. What puts the EVO6 patch cord in the Why didn't I think of that? league is the addition of programmable silicon chips and LEDs built into the RJ45 plugs on each end of the patch cord and a couple of 30-gauge copper wires between them. You can press a little black button on either end of the cord and the LEDs on both ends flash for 20 seconds. You can press the little black button twice or hold it down for a second or so and both LEDs flash for 45 seconds unless you press the button again to deactivate them. The LEDs are powered by tiny lithium batteries that are good for 1,000 activations or 10 years. The form factor is about the same as that of a plain patch cord, meaning that the outside diameter of the cable is about the same and there is not much difference in the physical form of the RJ45 plugs, although they are a bit longer in order to accommodate the chip and LED. Sholtis explained that the total weight is only very slightly greater and the bend radius is not impacted. Since we at Telecom Reseller labs sometimes get so enthralled with the technol-



ogy that we risk forgetting to explain the all important applications, I had best move on.

If your data center, switch-room or wiring closet is typical, you have wires and cables of all sorts carefully arranged and rearranged over the years to resemble what is known in the trade as a rat's nest. In order to determine which patch cord is connected to which server, mux, switch, router or other piece of gear, you tug on one end of the cord to see which cord moves in the riser bundle, then get on a ladder and tug again to see which cord moves in the cable tray and so on. If the patch cord in question is in the middle of a tightly wrapped bundle, it may not move at all and you couldn't see it if it did. If the patch cord goes under the false floor or up into the false ceiling.... You get the idea. With the EVO6, there is never a need to tug on a patch cord. You just press the little black button and look for the flashing lights. If it is a real long patch cord and you can't get to the far end within 45 seconds, you may

need to enlist the services of a co-worker to look for the flashing light. The EVO6 comes in standard lengths of 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 20, 25, 50 and 100 feet. If that doesn't suit your application, Mertek will make you a custom cord. As for the cost, Sholtis explained that the EVO6 is competitive with a plain Cat 6 patch cord (i.e., one with no cool buttons or LEDs), which means that it can be slightly more or slightly less expensive, depending on the specific manufacturer, length and other factors. Mertek is a Nortel OEM/ODM and they make a number of other specialty cords and wiring harnesses. For more visit mertekjes.com.

Disclaimer: Telecom Reseller really doesn't have a lab, but we wish we did. ☺

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