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DrayTek
VigorAP 903

A professional level wireless access point with mesh technology.

Aimed at businesses who want to expand their Wi-Fi coverage, the DrayTek VigorAP 903 is designed to be an easy to setup and manage solution. At the time of writing the VigorAP 903 is quite new so there aren't a lot of options for shopping around, but the price is still quite competitive at $280.

The access point uses AC1300 spec Wi-Fi, with two dual band radios and removable antennas. It can handle eight different SSIDs and two virtual LANs, to create different user groups with specific network rules. The AP also has a five port Gigabit switch built in, and supports power over ethernet. While the access point can also be plugged in normally, PoE is an important feature, as it means it can be installed in with just one cable. The VigorAP 903 also has a USB 2.0 port, that can be used to

drive a printer, or even monitor the temperature with a USB thermometer.

While the underlying hardware is solid, where the VigorAP 903 stands out is the software features. Impressively for the price, the access point includes the ability to create a mesh network of up to eight VigorAP 903s. We tested two units to get hands on with the feature, setting one AP as the root device via the web interface. It's then just a matter of powering up another AP in the desired location, then telling to network to add it as a new member using the existing configuration. In a larger network, this means you can quickly deploy an access point to fix a dead spot, or re-arrange the network. If one of the access points goes offline, the network automatically reconfigures to maintain the best performance. The VigorAP can have wired

LAN devices plugged in to connect them to the network, or link to other APs with a cable to improve performance. The VigorAP 903 can also operate as a standard access point, or range extender. It has all the in depth features you'd expect, such as load balancing, airtime fairness, band steering, assisted Wi-Fi roaming and scheduling.

Setup via a web browser, though there is also a mobile app and a Windows configuration program. The Android app is a big letdown, with instructions in broken English, and despite testing with multiple devices it simply would not connect to the access points. Fortunately the normal browser interface is excellent, and makes it extremely easy to configure and manage the routers.

With 867Mbps available

on the 5GHz band, and 400 Mbps on 2.4GHz, the router is aimed at creating a solid network, not outright speed. During testing we found it very dependable, but with fairly average performance. At close range we pulled 301 Mbps, and at 10m (with walls in the way) we managed an acceptable but not stand out 131 Mbps.

For a business that wants a robust yet easily managed wireless network, it's hard to go past the VigorAP903. It's affordable, easily expanded, and offers decent performance. ■
Lindsay Handmer

Verdict

Solid pricing, easy setup and excellent featureset easily make up for the staid Wi-Fi performance.

★★★★☆