

In D&D Parlance, Your Network is Already Converged.



Don MacVittie, 2010-15-11



For decades now, the game Dungeons and Dragons has suffered from what is commonly called “Edition Wars”. When the publisher of the game releases a new version, they of course want to sell the new version and stop talking about the old – they’re a business, and it certainly does make the ability to be profitable tough if people don’t make the jump from version X to version Y. Problem is that people become heavily invested in whatever version they’re playing. When Fourth Edition was released, the MSRP on just the three books required to play the game was \$150 or thereabout. The price has come down, and a careful shopper can get it delivered to their home for about half of that now... But that’s still expensive considering that there is only enough to play with those books if you invest a significant amount of time in preparing the game before-hand.

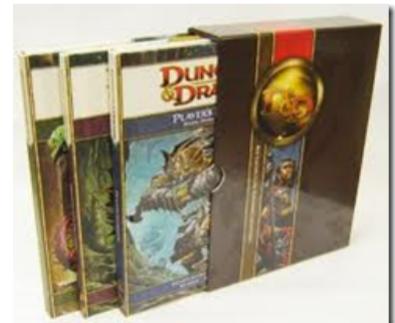
So those who have spent hundreds or even thousands of dollars on reference material for the immediately previous edition are loath to change, and this manifests as sniping at the new edition. This immediately raises the ire of those who have made the switch, and they begin sniping about your preferred edition. Since “best” is relative in any game, and more so in a Role Playing Game, it is easy to pick pieces you don’t like out of any given edition and talk about how much better your chosen edition of the game is. And this has gone on for so long that it’s nearly a ritual. New version comes out, people put up their banners and begin nit-picking all other versions. I have a friend (who goes by DungeonDelver in most of his gaming interactions) who is certain that nothing worthy has come out since the release of the original Tactical Studies Rules box set in the early seventies, and other friends who can’t understand why anyone would play those “older versions” of the game. For those not familiar with the industry, “threetard” was coined to talk about those who loved third Edition, for example. While not the worst flame that’s coursed through these conversations, for a while there it was pervasive.

And they all seem to miss the point. Each Edition has had good stuff in it, all you have to do is determine what is best for you and your players, and go play. Picking apart someone else’s version might be an entertaining passtime, but it is nowhere near the fun that actually playing the game is. Whatever version of the game.

Because in the end, they all are the same thing... games designed to allow you to take on the persona of a character in a fantastical world and go forth to right the wrongs of that world.

A similar problem happens almost daily in storage, and though it is a bit more complex than the simple “edition wars” of D&D, it is also more constant. We have different types of storage – NAS, SAN, DAS – different protocols and even networks – iSCSI, FCoE, FC, CIFS, etc – different vendors trying to convince you that their chosen infrastructure is “best”, and a whole lot of storage/systems admins that are heavily invested in whatever their organization uses for primary storage.

But, like the edition wars, there is no “right” answer. I for one would love to see a reduction in options, but that is highly unlikely unless and until customers vote definitively with their dollars. The most recent example is the marketing push for “converged networking”. That’s interesting, I could have sworn we were already sending both data (NAS/iSCSI/FCoE) and communications over our IP connections? Apparently I was wrong and I need this new expensive gizmo to put data on my network...



And that's just the most recent example. Some simple advice I've picked up in my years watching the edition wars... Look at your environment, look at your needs, and continue to choose the storage that makes sense for the application. Not all environments and not all applications are the same, so that's a determination you need to make. And you should make it vendor-free. Sure some vendors would rather sell you a multi-million dollar SAN with redundancy and high availability, and sure some other vendors want to drop a NAS box into your network and then walk away with your money. They're in the business of selling you what they make, not necessarily what you need. The what you need part is your job, and if you're buying a Mercedes where a Hyundai would do, you're doing your organization a dis-service.

Make sure you're familiar with what's going on out there, how it fits into your org, and how you can make the most out of what you have. RAID makes cheaper disk more appealing, iSCSI makes connecting to a SAN more user-friendly, but both have limits in how much they improve things. Know what your options are, then make a best fit analysis.

Me? I chose a [Dell NX3000](#) for my last storage – with iSCSI host. All converged, and not terribly expensive compared to the other similar performing options. But that was for my specific network, with characteristics that show nowhere near the traffic you're showing right now on your enterprise network, so my solution is likely not your best solution.

Oh, you meant the edition wars? I play a little of everything, though AD&D First edition is my favorite and Third Edition is my least favorite. I'm currently playing nearly 100% Castles and Crusades, with a switch soon to AD&D 2nd Edition. Again, they suit what our needs are, your needs are likely to vary. Don't base your decision upon my opinion, base it on your analysis of *your* needs.

And buy an [ARX](#). They can't be beat. No, I really believe that, but I only added that in here because I think it's funny, after telling you to make your decisions vendor-free. ARX only does NAS ;-).



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