NetAlly EtherScope EXG-300

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NetAlly's EtherScope nXG bowled us over when we first reviewed it as this ruggedised handheld device delivers a stunning range of wired and wireless diagnostics features. Not content to rest on its laurels, NetAlly has launched the new and improved EXG-300 model which delivers full visibility into Wi-Fi 6 and 6E networks and supports all three 2.4GHz, 5GHz and 6GHz bands.

A feature that makes the EtherScopes very appealing to technicians and engineers is that they run an Android-based OS - anyone that can use a mobile will find the EXG-300 very easy to use. The large 5in. colour touchscreen presents a wide selection of icons for all tasks and the screen's FAB (floating access button) opens floating action menus offering instant access to further analysis tools related to the selected task.

The EXG-300 offers a wealth of wired cable testing and network diagnostics features and supports 10GbE copper and fibre, multi-Gigabit and Gigabit connections, plus it can uniquely display data gathered from wired and wireless networks simultaneously. It can analyse and report on PoE switch ports and supports the 802.3af/at/bt standards, all classes from 0 to 8 and Cisco's proprietary UPoE.

The device is, indeed, very easy to use and we started by analysing the lab's Wi-Fi 6 network using the AutoTest profiles. The default Wi-Fi profile includes a set of predefined tests covering areas such as SSIDs, channels, AP details, DNS connectivity and so on, and once we had connected it to our Zyxel WAX610D Wi-Fi 6 AP, the EXG-300 automatically created a new test profile for us which we started with one tap.

The test only takes a few seconds and the EXG-300 returned a wealth of wireless information presented as 'cards' in its screen, each with colour coding to indicate warnings or errors. Tapping on the SSID card revealed graphs and tables for signal quality, channel utilisation, retries and PHY transmission rates, while the Channel card confirmed that our AP's 160MHz channels were operational, showing all others in use and their frequency range.

All this is just to whet your appetite as tapping on the main WiFi icon reveals everything about all discovered internal and external wireless networks in your vicinity. Along with channel maps and overlap graphs, it shows all channels, their active SSIDs and the APs using them, every detected SSID and their security status and all clients along with their associated SSIDs and the encryption standard being used plus RF and traffic statistics graphs.

There's more, as the integral AirMapper app is provided for indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi site surveys and creating signal heatmaps. Copy a site map to the EXG-300, create a survey, add your datapoints and the results can be uploaded with one tap to the NetAlly Link-Live cloud portal for further analysis and sharing with colleagues.

We aren't done yet, as along with the Test Accessory iPerf server unit and a tri-band directional antenna, the EXG-300 kit option includes NetAlly's NXT-1000 dual-band spectrum analyser. We plugged it into the device's upper USB port, tapped the Spectrum icon and were presented with frequency spectrum heat map, historical waterfall and real-time signal level graphs - great for spotting rogue devices that may be interfering with your wireless services.

We didn't think it was possible to cram any more features into the EtherScope nXG - but NetAlly has proved us wrong. The compact and portable EXG-300 teams up an incredible range of wired and wireless diagnostics and troubleshooting tools with extreme ease of use, making it the perfect partner for network engineers - especially those tasked with installing and maintaining high performance Wi-Fi 6/6E wireless networks. NC