



What Is Network Assistant?

Network Assistant is an application that manages standalone devices and clusters of devices from anywhere in your intranet. Using its GUI, you can perform multiple configuration tasks without using command-line interface (CLI) commands. You can apply actions to multiple devices and ports at the same time for VLAN and quality of service (QoS) settings, inventory and statistics reports, link and device monitoring, software upgrades, and many other networking features.

Network Assistant gives you two graphical views of a cluster:

- A topology view, showing devices that are eligible to join the cluster, link information between devices, and other connected clusters.
- A front-panel view from which you can monitor the real-time status of the devices and perform many configuration tasks. The devices and port LEDs in the view look like the physical devices and port LEDs.

A cluster can contain up to 16 connected, cluster-capable Catalyst devices. The devices belong exclusively to the cluster; they do not participate in other clusters. You assign an IP address to a device that will become the *command device*. The IP address is the single point of access that Network Assistant uses to configure, manage, and monitor the command device and the *member devices*.

The main reasons for creating a cluster are

- You can manage Cisco cluster-capable devices regardless of their interconnection media and physical locations. The devices can be in the same location, or they can be distributed across a Layer 2 or Layer 3 network.
- You can designate devices to take the place of a failed command device. Having *standby command devices* safeguards against a loss of contact with cluster members.

Network Assistant features can identify a device as the command device, add members to the cluster, and identify standby command devices. See [Chapter 2, “Network Assistant Features,”](#) for more information.

For information on setting up device clusters, see [Chapter 4, “Planning and Creating Clusters.”](#)

