a four-hour on-site maintenance contract with IBM, HP or Dell and they have a pallet load of these standard PCs in the warehouse today. Use them. Even with a new requirement such as High Definition Video support can be easily done with a PC today (with the right choice of hardware and software).

ANYONE CAN DO A PILOT, BUT DOES IT SCALE?

There are plenty of suppliers doing small pilot projects with brute force and ignorance (and sometimes SneakerNet), but what happens when you have to scale for real? Does the system really handle that well? What are the limitations? How many 1000 unit deployments has the prospective supplier been involved with? These are tough questions that have to be asked. Are the systems reliable? Do they operate 24/7? What happens if you only have dial-up connections? Does the system still scale? Can the system work in a hybrid of both high speed and low speed networks? What are the implications in terms of content to support this? Is it reasonable to assume that your chosen network can support this content in a reasonable fashion? There are lots of tough questions to ask your future suppliers. These are all very critical to the overall success of your network.

My hope is that this introduction has given you enough of the basics to get started with your own successful dynamic digital signage network. It's a very exciting industry and I wish you the best of luck.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Porter is Executive Vice President of Scala, Inc., the leading supplier of software solutions for dynamic signage networks. Mr. Porter has been employed by Scala in various capacities since 1994. Scala today has over 15,000 units deployed plus two networks of over 1000 units each. Scala's InfoChannel 3 software suite is an off-the-shelf solution for dynamic signage networks and is in its third generation release. Prior to Scala, Commodore International Limited employed Mr. Porter, where he was responsible for worldwide product development of the Amiga computer from 1984 to 1994. He previously worked for AT&T Bell Labs and The Eastman Kodak Company. Mr. Porter holds a Masters degree in Engineering from the University of Illinois and a BSEE from Purdue University. He may be contacted at jeff.porter@scala.com or by phone 610-363-3345. http://www.scala.com