

MY WEIRD PROMPTS

Podcast Transcript

EPISODE #151

Why Your Gigabit Internet Feels Like Dial-Up: Mesh vs. Wired

Published January 04, 2026 • Runtime: 24:52

<https://myweirdprompts.com/episode/mesh-wifi-7-networking-guide/>

EPISODE SYNOPSIS

In this episode of My Weird Prompts, Herman and Corn tackle the "gigabit bottleneck" facing modern renters and power users. They explore why consumer-grade mesh systems often fail to deliver promised speeds and how the arrival of Wi-Fi 7 and Multi-Link Operation (MLO) is fundamentally changing the game for wireless backhaul. The discussion dives deep into the physics of signal degradation, explaining why a standard dual-band setup can slash your bandwidth by eighty percent before you even open a browser. The brothers provide a comprehensive roadmap for moving from basic setups to prosumer powerhouses, comparing the user-friendly power of ASUS ZenWiFi, the enterprise-grade control of Ubiquiti UniFi, and the premium performance of Netgear's Orbi 970 series. From isolating "sketchy" smart bulbs with VLANs to managing the invisible war between Zigbee and Wi-Fi on the 2.4GHz spectrum, this episode is a masterclass in home network architecture. Whether you are currently stuck in a rental or planning your dream wired home, Herman and Corn offer the technical insights needed to banish buffering and future-proof your digital life.

DANIEL'S PROMPT

Daniel

What Wi-Fi network would you recommend for a rental property where installing wired access points isn't feasible? I currently use a TP-Link mesh system, but I'm experiencing significant speed drops and latency when working from home. I have several smart home devices and IP cameras, and my current system doesn't allow for multiple SSIDs or VLANs for IoT management. I'm looking for a robust, future-proof mesh system that supports modern Wi-Fi standards. Which systems or manufacturers should I look into, and what price points should I expect? Also, in the long run, are access points always preferred over mesh systems for a reliable connection?

TRANSCRIPT

Corn

Hey everyone, welcome back to My Weird Prompts. We are coming to you from our usual spot here in Jerusalem, and I have to say, the energy in the house is a little high today.

Herman

That might be because our housemate Daniel has been pacing the hallway muttering about signal interference and packet loss for the last forty-eight hours.

Corn

Exactly. I am Corn, and joined as always by my brother, the man who probably knows more about network protocols than is strictly healthy for a social life, Herman Poppleberry.

Herman

Herman Poppleberry at your service, and yes, I am ready to dive into this one. Daniel sent us a voice memo that I think is going to resonate with a lot of people, especially those who are renting and cannot exactly start tearing open walls to run category six ethernet cables everywhere.

Corn

It is the classic modern dilemma. You pay for a gigabit connection, you get the fancy router, and then you sit down at your kitchen table to actually work, and suddenly you are back in the era of dial-up speeds. Well, maybe not quite that bad, but Daniel mentioned a drop from a gigabit down to two hundred megabits per second. That is a massive loss of performance.

Herman

It really is. And for Daniel, it is not just about browsing the web. He is dealing with multiple internet of things devices, IP cameras for baby monitoring, smart switches on the two point four gigahertz band, and he is trying to manage them all on a consumer mesh system that just is not cutting it anymore.

Corn

Right, he is using a TP-Link system right now, and while those are great entry-level kits, he has clearly hit the ceiling of what they can do. He is looking for multiple SSIDs, VLAN support for his smart home stuff, and a way to future-proof his setup in this brave new world of twenty twenty-six.

Herman

There is a lot to unpack there. We are talking about the difference between consumer-grade mesh and what we call prosumer gear. We are talking about the physics of wireless backhaul, and the big question of whether mesh can ever truly compete with a hard-wired access point.

Corn

So, let us start with the immediate problem. Why is he seeing that huge drop-off in speed? Two hundred megabits per second is only twenty percent of his total bandwidth. Where is the other eighty percent going?

Herman

This is the fundamental trade-off of most mesh systems. In a standard mesh setup, your nodes are talking to each other wirelessly. This is called the backhaul. If your mesh system only has two bands, let us say one two point four gigahertz band and one five gigahertz band, the router has to use that same five gigahertz band to both talk to your laptop and talk to the other mesh nodes.

Corn

So it is like a bucket brigade where the person in the middle has to stop, turn around, hand the bucket back, and then turn back to receive the next one?

Herman

Precisely. It effectively halves your maximum theoretical throughput right off the bat because the radio cannot transmit and receive at the same time on the same frequency. Now, better systems use a dedicated third band, a tri-band system, specifically for that backhaul communication. But even then, you are dealing with environmental interference. Walls, mirrors, microwave ovens, even your neighbor's Wi-Fi can chew into that signal.

Corn

And Daniel mentioned he has a lot of IoT devices. Those are mostly on the two point four gigahertz band, right?

Herman

Yes, almost exclusively. And that band is incredibly crowded. It only has three non-overlapping channels. If you have five IP cameras streaming high-definition video and a dozen smart switches all fighting for airtime on those three channels, your latency is going to spike. Daniel mentioned the connection feels sluggish, and that is often a latency issue rather than a raw speed issue.

Corn

So, if he is looking to upgrade and wants to stay in the mesh world because he cannot run wires in a rental, what is the state of the art here in early twenty twenty-six?

Herman

We have moved firmly into the era of Wi-Fi seven. If Daniel wants to future-proof, he should not be looking at Wi-Fi six or even six E anymore. Wi-Fi seven, or eighty-two point eleven be, is the new gold standard. The big jump there is something called Multi-Link Operation, or MLO.

Corn

I remember we touched on this briefly a few episodes ago, but how does MLO change the game for a mesh system specifically?

Herman

It is huge for mesh. Traditionally, a device connects to one band at a time. With MLO, a Wi-Fi seven mesh node can use multiple bands simultaneously to talk to the main router. It can aggregate the five gigahertz and the six gigahertz bands into one massive pipe for the backhaul. This significantly reduces latency because if one band is busy or experiencing a spike in interference, the data just flows through the other one instantly.

Corn

That sounds like exactly what he needs for a reliable connection. But he also mentioned a very specific requirement: multiple SSIDs and VLANs. For those who do not know, a VLAN is a virtual local area network. It lets you isolate your sketchy smart light bulbs from your main computer where you do your banking. Most consumer mesh systems, like the TP-Link Deco series Daniel is using, do not really allow for this, do they?

Herman

Most do not. They might give you a guest network, which is a very basic form of isolation, but that is usually it. If you want true VLAN tagging where you can say "this camera can talk to the internet but not to my NAS," you have to step up to prosumer gear.

Corn

Which brings us to manufacturers. Who should he be looking at?

Herman

If he wants to stay in the mesh ecosystem but get professional features, I think ASUS is one of the strongest contenders right now with their ZenWiFi Pro series. Specifically, something like the ZenWiFi Pro ET twelve or the newer Wi-Fi seven models. ASUS is unique because their consumer-facing software actually includes a lot of advanced networking features that other brands hide. You can set up multiple SSIDs and map them to different subnets relatively easily.

Corn

What about Ubiquiti? I know you are a big fan of the UniFi ecosystem. We talked about their gateway strategies back in episode thirty-eight. Can you do a mesh setup with UniFi without running wires?

Herman

You absolutely can, and it is probably the most robust way to do it, though it requires a bit more setup. You could get a UniFi Cloud Gateway Ultra or the newer Max version as your primary router, and then use their U seven Pro access points. UniFi access points have a feature called "Wireless Uplink." You just plug the secondary access points into power, and they will find the main one and form a mesh.

Corn

And the advantage there is the software, right?

Herman

Exactly. UniFi is built for this. You can create ten different SSIDs if you want. You can put your cameras on a separate VLAN, limit their bandwidth, and even set up a firewall rule that prevents them from "phoning home" to servers in other countries. It gives you total control. The downside is that UniFi access points are designed to be ceiling-mounted for the best signal, which might be tricky in a rental.

Corn

Although, you can get creative with 3M command strips or just placing them on top of a bookshelf.

Herman

True. Now, if Daniel wants something that is a bit more "plug and play" but still high-end, he should look at the Netgear Orbi Wi-Fi seven systems. The Orbi nine seventy series is incredibly powerful. It has a dedicated ten gigabit backhaul. But, and this is a big but, the price point is eye-watering.

Corn

How eye-watering are we talking?

Herman

For a three-node Wi-Fi seven Orbi system, you are looking at somewhere between fifteen hundred and two thousand dollars. It is professional-grade hardware at a professional-grade price.

Corn

Wow. That is a lot of money to fix a kitchen table dead zone. What about the ASUS or Ubiquiti options?

Herman

The ASUS ZenWiFi Pro systems usually run between six hundred and eight hundred dollars for a two-pack. Ubiquiti is actually surprisingly affordable if you piece it together. A gateway and two U seven Pro access points would probably set you back around six hundred dollars.

Corn

That seems much more reasonable for a home office setup. But let us talk about the "long run" part of Daniel's question. He asked if access points are always preferred over mesh systems. If he eventually moves into a house he owns, should he ditch the mesh?

Herman

In a heartbeat. Look, mesh is a brilliant solution for when you have no other choice. It is a workaround for the laws of physics. But a wired backhaul—connecting your access points with an actual ethernet cable—will always, always be superior.

Corn

Why is that? Is it just the raw speed?

Herman

It is the consistency. A wire has zero interference. It has near-zero latency. When you wire your access points, you free up one hundred percent of your wireless spectrum to talk to your devices. You are no longer using your precious Wi-Fi airtime just to move data between the nodes themselves.

Corn

So even if he buys a high-end mesh system now, he should make sure it has ethernet ports on the back so he can wire it up later?

Herman

Absolutely. Any "prosumer" mesh node will have at least a two point five gigabit or even a ten gigabit ethernet port. My advice to Daniel would be: buy for the mesh capability you need today, but ensure the hardware supports a wired backhaul for tomorrow.

Corn

That makes total sense. Now, before we get into the nitty-gritty of how to actually set up those VLANs and handle the Zigbee interference he mentioned, let us take a quick break for our sponsors. Larry: Are you tired of your neighbor's Wi-Fi stealing your precious airwaves? Do you feel like your digital privacy is leaking out through your windowpanes? Introducing the Signal-Shield Faraday Curtain. Made from a proprietary blend of lead-infused polyester and recycled space-blankets, the Signal-Shield doesn't just block sunlight—it blocks everything. From cellular signals to radio waves to the very thoughts of the people passing by your house. It is heavy, it is slightly radioactive, and it is the only way to ensure your home is a true digital fortress. Note: do not use near pacemakers or sensitive electronics. Signal-Shield Faraday Curtains—because if you can't see the internet, the internet can't see you. BUY NOW!

Corn

...Alright, thanks Larry. I am not sure lead-infused curtains are the solution Daniel is looking for, especially if he wants his Wi-Fi to actually work inside the house.

Herman

Yeah, I think Larry might be getting his product ideas from old spy novels again. Anyway, back to the real world. Daniel mentioned another interesting detail in his prompt—he is using Zigbee for his home automation.

Corn

Right, and he is worried about how that interacts with his Wi-Fi. For those who aren't familiar, Zigbee is a low-power mesh protocol used by things like Philips Hue bulbs or IKEA smart sensors. And it shares the same frequency range as Wi-Fi, right?

Herman

It does. It lives right in that crowded two point four gigahertz band. This is a huge source of "invisible" lag. If your Wi-Fi router is blasting on channel six and your Zigbee hub is also trying to use channel six, they are going to scream over each other.

Corn

So how do you fix that? Can you just change the channel?

Herman

You have to be strategic. Wi-Fi channels one, six, and eleven are the only ones that do not overlap in the two point four gigahertz spectrum. Zigbee channels are narrower. Usually, if you set your Wi-Fi to channel one, you should set your Zigbee to channel twenty or twenty-five to keep them as far apart as possible.

Corn

That is a great practical tip. But Daniel also mentioned the IP cameras. High-definition video streaming over Wi-Fi is a lot of data. If he has multiple cameras, is that what is killing his kitchen table speeds?

Herman

It is definitely contributing. Video is a continuous stream. It does not "burst" like a web page. It just constantly occupies the airwaves. This is why the VLAN suggestion is so important. By putting those cameras on their own virtual network, he can manage the traffic better. But more importantly, if he gets a Wi-Fi seven system, he can put his laptop on the six gigahertz band, which is completely empty and far away from the two point four gigahertz noise of the cameras and Zigbee devices.

Corn

It is like moving from a crowded city street to a private highway.

Herman

Exactly. The six gigahertz band introduced with Wi-Fi six E and expanded with Wi-Fi seven is really the "secret sauce" for anyone living in a crowded apartment building or a rental with lots of neighbors. It does not penetrate walls as well as the lower frequencies, but in a mesh setup where you have nodes in different rooms, that is actually an advantage because it reduces interference from the neighbors.

Corn

So, let us talk about the specific recommendation for Daniel's "rental-friendly" setup. If you were in his shoes, living in that house here in Jerusalem, what would you actually go out and buy this afternoon?

Herman

If I wanted the best balance of power and ease of use, I would go with the ASUS ZenWiFi Pro ET twelve or the newer Wi-Fi seven version, the B E thirty thousand. It is a two-node system. I would put one in the living room by the fiber entry point and one halfway between the living room and that kitchen table.

Corn

Why ASUS over the Ubiquiti setup you mentioned?

Herman

For a rental, the ASUS nodes are designed to sit on a shelf. They look like little futuristic towers. They have excellent internal antennas. And most importantly, the "AiMesh" software is very good at handling wireless backhaul. It will automatically use the six gigahertz band to connect the two nodes, leaving the five gigahertz and two point four gigahertz bands free for his devices.

Corn

And what about his VLAN requirement? Can the ASUS handle that?

Herman

It can. ASUS has a feature called "Guest Network Pro" on their newer models. It allows you to create multiple "Software Defined Networks." You can create one for "Work" on the five and six gigahertz bands, one for "IoT" on two point four gigahertz only, and one for "Cameras." You can even set it up so the IoT network is isolated from the rest. It is not quite as granular as a full UniFi setup, but for ninety-nine percent of users, it is more than enough.

Corn

And price-wise, he is looking at what, seven or eight hundred dollars?

Herman

Around that. It is an investment, but if you are working from home and your productivity is being capped by your network, it pays for itself in avoided frustration within a month.

Corn

I totally agree. There is nothing worse than being on a Zoom call and having your video freeze right as you are trying to make a point. Now, what about the "future-proof" aspect? We are in twenty twenty-six. Is Wi-Fi seven going to last him the next five years?

Herman

Yes. Wi-Fi seven is a massive leap. It supports three hundred and twenty megahertz channels, which is double the width of Wi-Fi six. It has four thousand ninety-six QAM, which basically means it can pack more data into every radio signal. We are looking at theoretical speeds of up to forty-six gigabits per second. Even if he only gets ten percent of that in the real world, it is still faster than most wired connections today.

Corn

So even if he gets a two gigabit or five gigabit fiber connection in a few years, this hardware will handle it?

Herman

Easily. The bottleneck will be the internet service provider, not his home network.

Corn

That is a comforting thought. Now, I want to go back to the "no wires" constraint. Daniel mentioned he cannot run cables. But are there any other "stealth" ways to get a wired backhaul in a rental? What about those Powerline adapters or MoCA?

Herman

I am glad you brought that up. MoCA, which stands for Multimedia over Coax Alliance, is the "sleeper hit" of home networking. Most rentals, even older ones here in Jerusalem, have coaxial cable jacks for TV in almost every room.

Corn

Right, the old "yes" or "hot" cables.

Herman

Exactly. You can get a pair of MoCA two point five adapters. You plug one into the coax jack near your router and one into the coax jack in your office. It turns your home's existing TV wiring into a high-speed ethernet network. It is incredibly stable, much better than Powerline, and it gives you that "wired" backhaul without drilling a single hole.

Corn

That sounds like a game-changer for a renter. If Daniel has those jacks, he could use them to connect his mesh nodes together?

Herman

Yes! If he uses MoCA to connect the living room node to the kitchen node, he suddenly has a "wired" mesh. His speeds would jump back up to near-gigabit levels instantly because the wireless spectrum would be completely free for his devices.

Corn

So the advice is: first, check if you have coax jacks. If you do, buy MoCA adapters. If you don't, or if the wiring is too old, go for the high-end Wi-Fi seven mesh like the ASUS ZenWiFi.

Herman

That is the perfect hierarchy of solutions.

Corn

And what about the smart home devices? He mentioned he has a lot of them. Any tips for managing twenty-plus devices on a mesh system?

Herman

The biggest thing is to stop using the "Smart Connect" feature that combines two point four and five gigahertz into one SSID. Most people think it is convenient, but for smart home devices, it is a nightmare. They often get "stuck" trying to connect to the five gigahertz band when they only support two point four, and then they drop offline.

Corn

I have seen that happen with our own light bulbs. They just start blinking for no reason.

Herman

Exactly. Create a dedicated two point four gigahertz SSID just for the "dumb" smart devices. Keep your phones, laptops, and tablets on a separate five or six gigahertz SSID. This reduces the "handshake" overhead on the main network and keeps everything much more stable.

Corn

That is such a simple fix but I bet most people don't do it.

Herman

They don't because the setup wizards encourage the "one name for everything" approach. But for a "weird prompt" listener who wants a robust network, splitting the bands is step one.

Corn

Alright, we have covered a lot of ground. We have talked about the physics of mesh backhaul, the benefits of Wi-Fi seven and MLO, the prosumer options from ASUS and Ubiquiti, and the "stealth" wiring potential of MoCA.

Herman

And don't forget the Zigbee channel management. That is the "pro tip" that saves you from those mysterious lag spikes.

Corn

Right. So, looking ahead, where is this all going? We are in twenty twenty-six. Do you think we will eventually reach a point where mesh is so good that wiring a house becomes obsolete?

Herman

I think we are getting close for general consumer use. But for people like us, and for people like Daniel who are pushing the limits with cameras and high-bandwidth work, wires will always be king. There is a certain peace of mind that comes with a physical connection that radio waves can never quite match. Radio is shared. Wire is yours.

Corn

That is a very poetic way of putting it, Herman. Radio is a conversation in a crowded room; a wire is a private phone call.

Herman

Exactly.

Corn

Well, I think we have given Daniel plenty to chew on. Hopefully, this helps him get that kitchen table connection back up to speed so he can stop pacing the hallway.

Herman

And maybe he can finally get those baby monitors to stop lagging. There is nothing more stressful than a frozen video feed of a sleeping baby.

Corn

No kidding. Well, this has been a great deep dive. If you are listening and you have your own "weird prompt" about networking, or anything else for that matter, you can head over to myweirdprompts.com and use the contact form there.

Herman

Or if you want to be like Daniel, you can send us a voice memo. We love hearing your voices and the specific details of the problems you are trying to solve.

Corn

And hey, if you have been enjoying the show and you have been with us for a while—maybe since those early episodes about firewalls and OPNsense—we would really appreciate a quick review on your podcast app or on Spotify. It genuinely helps other curious people find us.

Herman

It really does. We see every review and it keeps us motivated to keep digging into these rabbit holes.

Corn

Alright, I think that is a wrap for episode two hundred and fifty-eight. Thanks to our housemate Daniel for the prompt, even if his networking woes kept us up a bit last night.

Herman

It was worth it for the intellectual exchange, Corn. Always is.

Corn

Thanks for listening to My Weird Prompts. You can find us on Spotify and at myweirdprompts.com. We will see you next week.

Herman

Until next time, keep your firmware updated and your channels non-overlapping!

Corn

Goodbye everyone.

Herman

Goodbye!