

## Tips and tricks when using Dia for network diagramming

As stated before, Dia is an outstanding free alternative to Microsoft Visio. However, it lacks some fine icon sets that come with Visio. So should we really care?

Here are some real-life tips and tricks that I apply frequently.

### ***Tip #1 Just use existing images that you pick from the Internet , and adjust them with Gimp***

First, just Google Images for a corresponding example of what you want to use in your diagram. Let's look at the following example of an HP DL380 machine and a Brocade SAN switch. Both items belong to a SAN (not used in this example). Anyway, our goal is to have a DL 380 rear view connected to Brocade SAN switch. The DL 380 machine should have four extra network interfaces in one of the slots.

Okay, let's start working. First, find the image, shouldn't be too difficult. Next, adjust it in Gimp.

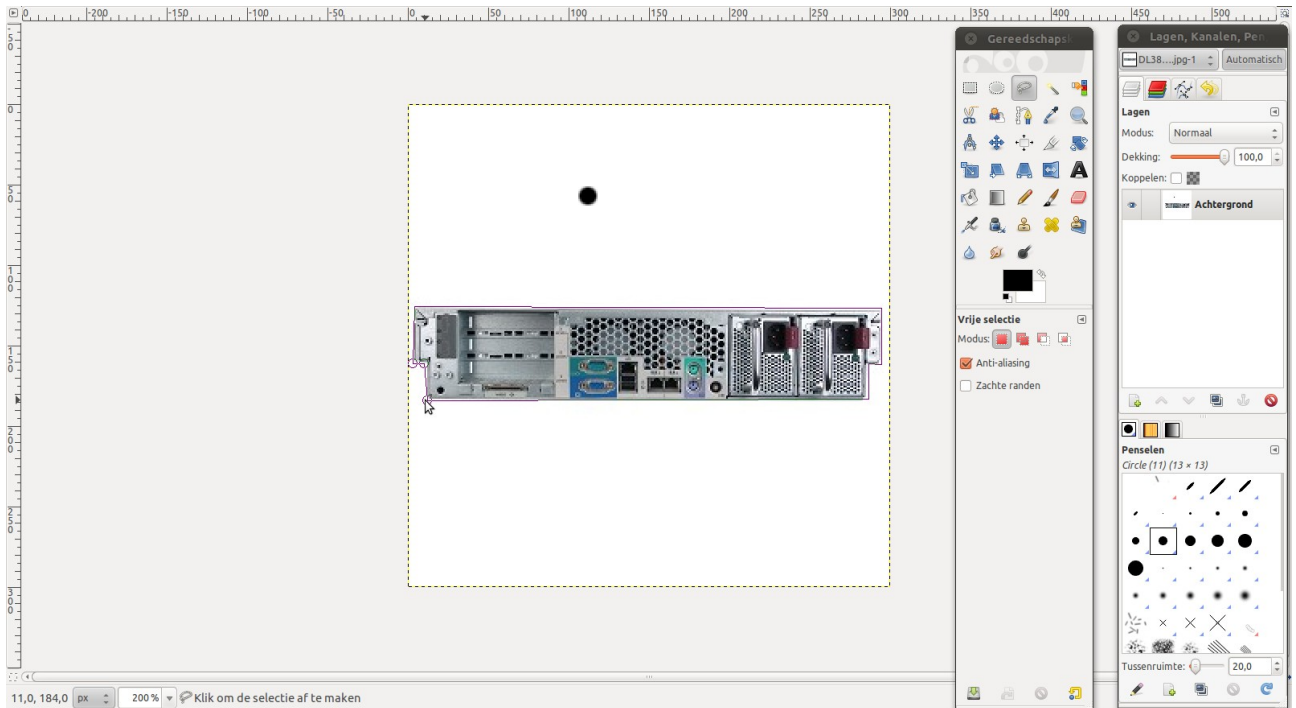
First, here is the original drawing.



*Just an image from the Internet*

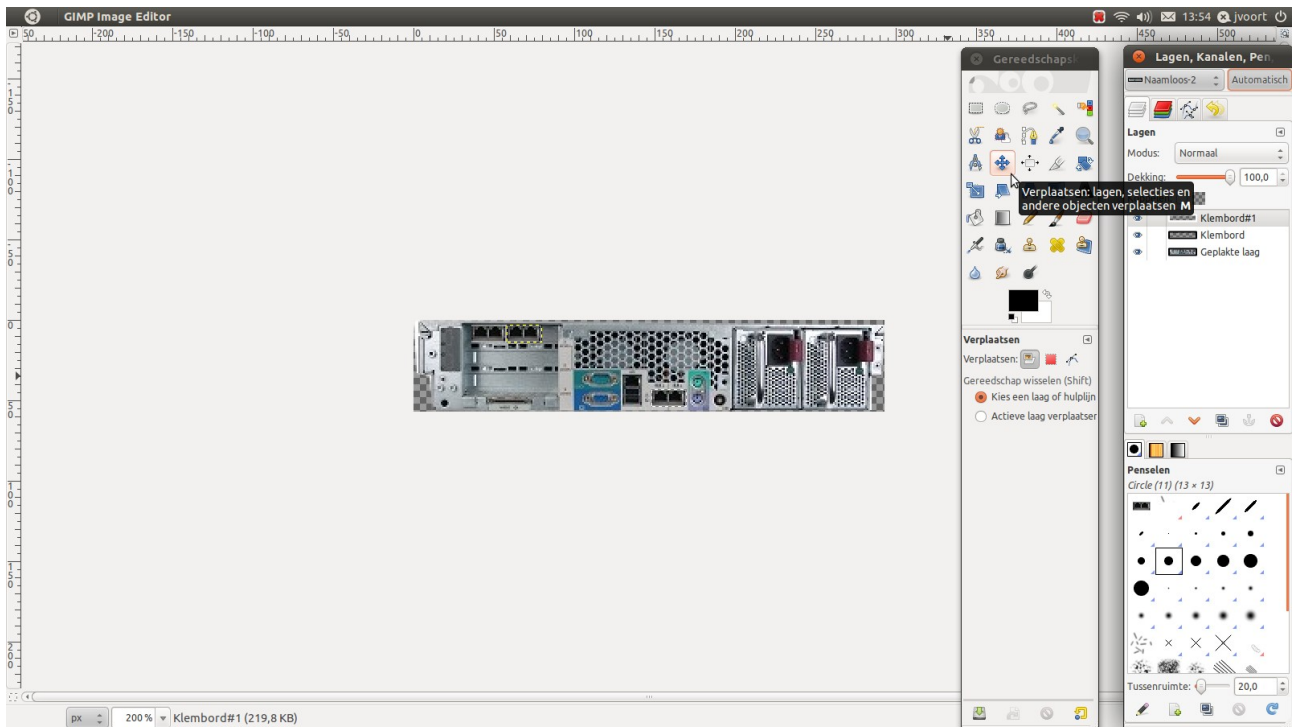
We first want to add four additional network interfaces to the upper left slot:

- Open the image in Gimp
- With the Free Selection Tool (the Lasso), click around the exact area that you want to have for your image.



*Use Lasso to select your area*

- Copy and paste the selection as a New Image
- Now in Gimp, we have the basis for the drawing. For this example, we'll want to add four network interfaces in the upper left corner, at the position of the first free slot
- Again with the Free Selection (or any other selection tool, as appropriate), select the two on-board network interfaces that are already visible
- Copy them, and paste them as **new layers**
- Move the layers to the appropriate position with the **Move Layer tool**



*Copy as new layer and move the layer with the move tool to the appropriate position. Note the four extra network interfaces in the upper left corner*

Save the file as \*.png file.

All right, our base image is ready for use in Dia.

A second item needs to be created in the same manner the Brocade switch (back side again). I'll just show the result here of the\*.png file.



Is it that simple to add new images to Dia? Yes it is.

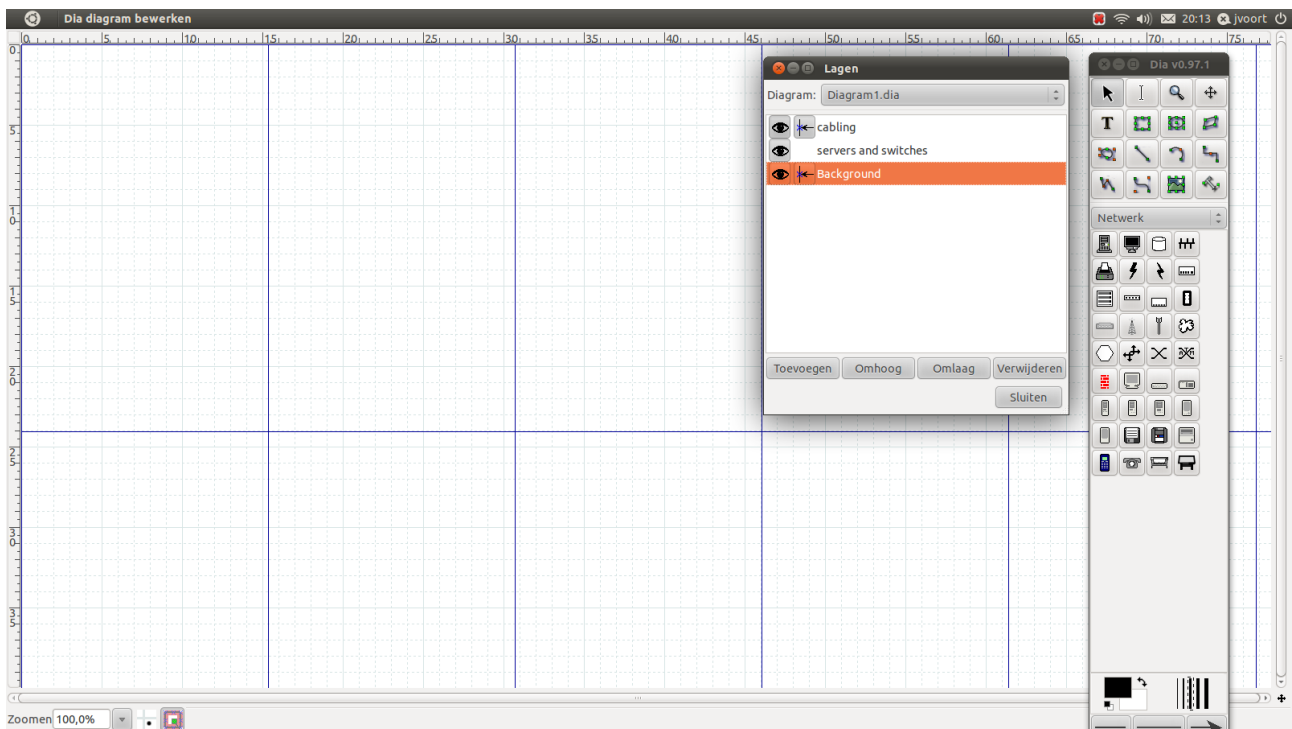
With our two images available, let's turn to Dia.

### **Tip #2 Use layers in Dia**

Our goal is to have a drawing of two devices, describing the cabling between the two devices. To

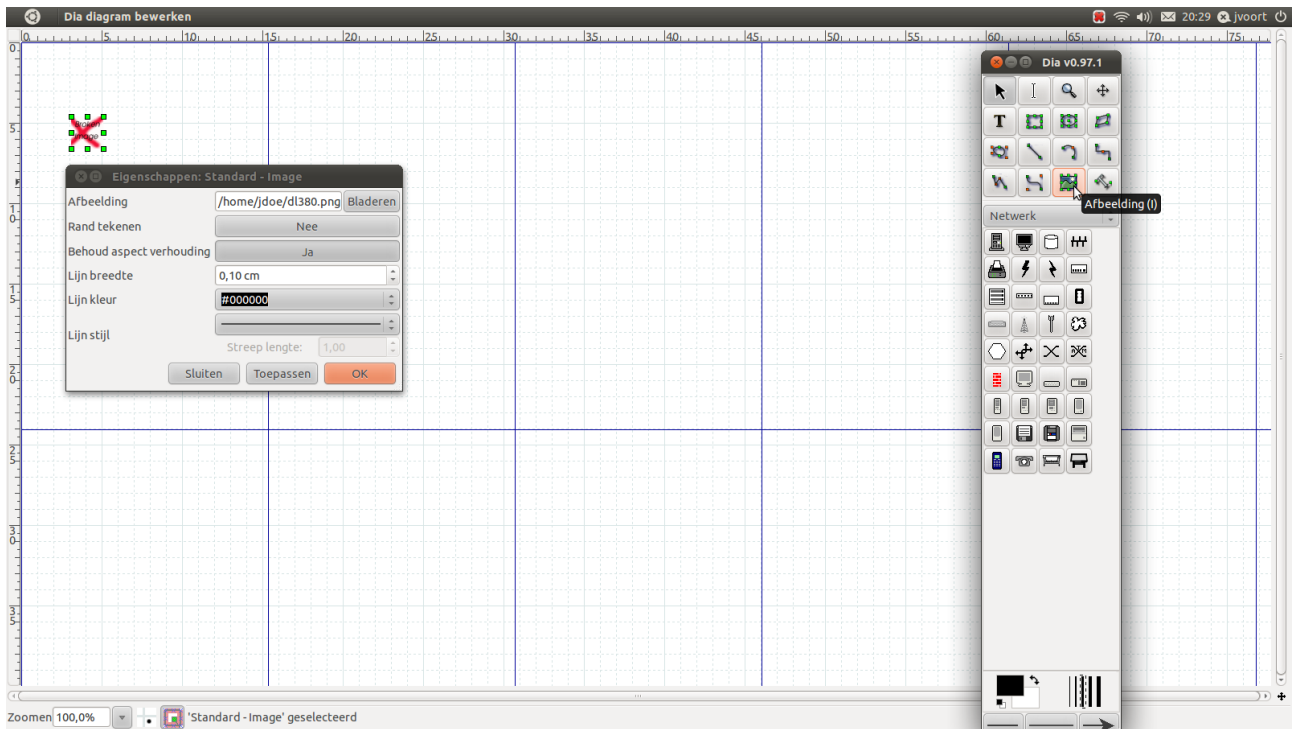
have the cabling visible at the top of the drawing. Here is where Dia Layers are needed: the cabling needs to be at the top of the drawing, the server and the switch underneath.

So in Dia, add layers to your drawing as necessary.



*Dia use layers*

### **Tip #3 Use the free image tool in in Dia**

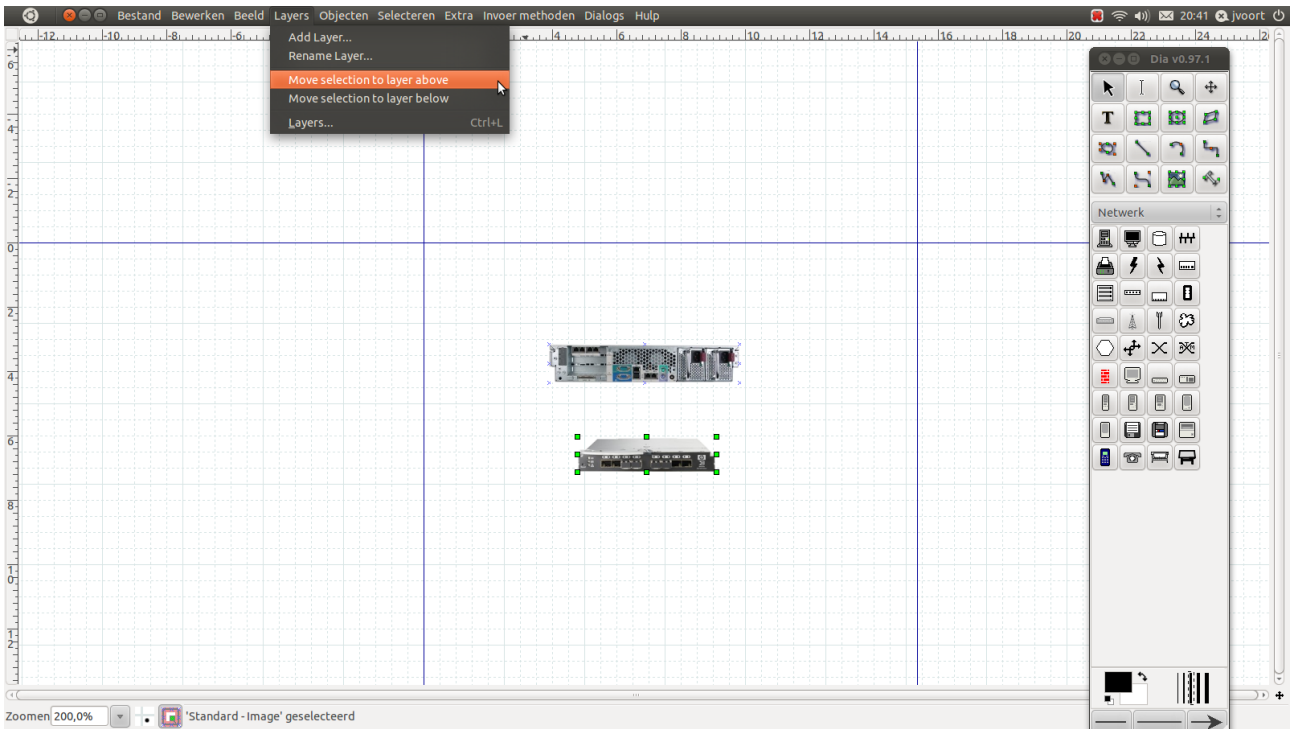


*Dia use free image*

In Dia, browse to the location that holds your .png image. Be careful to choose a default location: moving the \*.png file to another location after creating and saving the drawing will break your image!

### **Tip #4: Put your items in the correct layer, and save your upper layer for the cabling layout.**

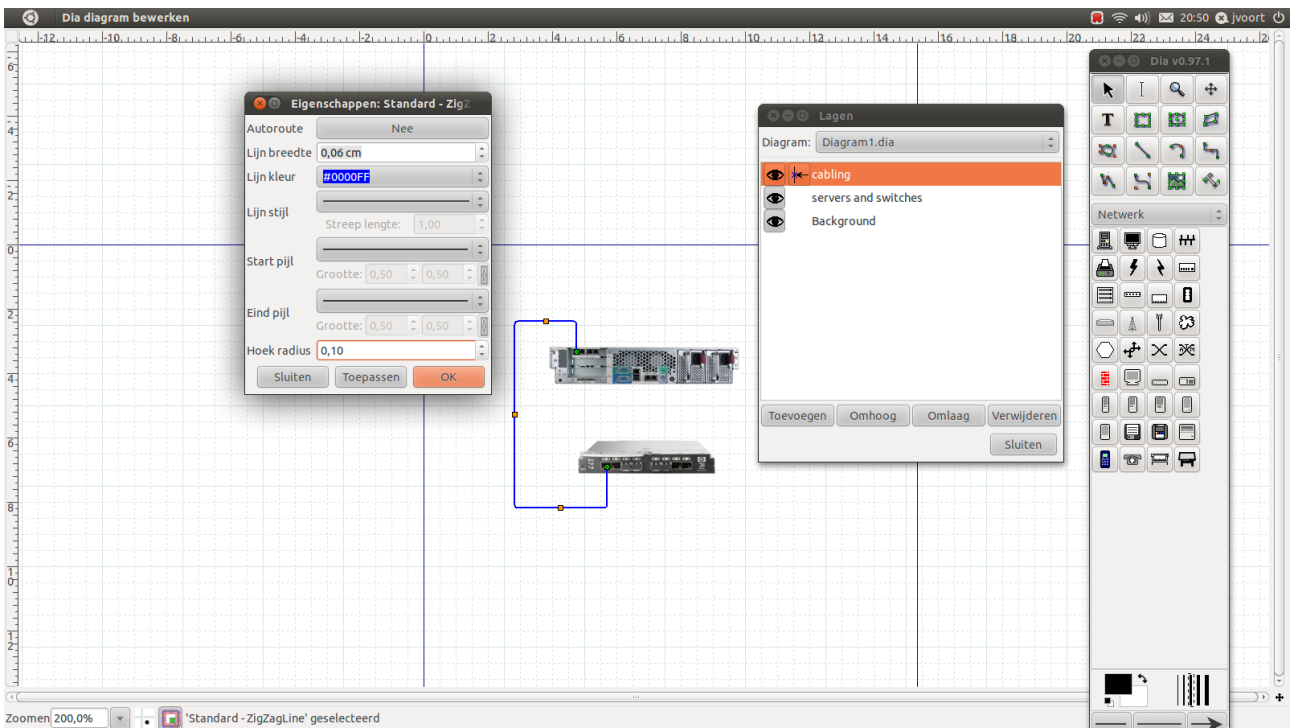
All right, now let's move both our DL380 and Brocade item to the appropriate layer.



*Move items to the appropriate layer*

So on layer 2, we have our DL380 and our Brocade switch.

Now let's move to our upper layer: the cabling layer. By putting the cabling layer at the top, we are sure to always have all cabling items totally visible.



Now let's add our cable on layer 3. Choose a zigzag line. Adjust:

- the end arrow (none)
- the color (pick your color)
- the angle radius. To obtain smooth angles, set the radius to 0.10 (instead of 0)

And voilà....we have our drawing,in a quality that at least can compete with Visio.

Have fun!

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