



Bringing it all together

Understanding... Broadband for Business

Enable your business to thrive



Understanding... Broadband for Business

Getting the basics right to save time and money

Welcome to 'Understanding Broadband for Business', one in our series of advisory publications designed to help businesses of all sizes discover how to get more from their IT and communications systems. We aim to demystify key topics by:

- Explaining the basic concepts so you can see how they apply to your business
- Outlining key opportunities and benefits so you can see what is possible
- Advising on the best approach to move forward, helping you to make the right decisions for your business and avoid common pitfalls
- Helping to save time and money, and to simplify the way you approach communications.

For further advice, and to find out more about how BT can help your business, visit our website at www.bt.com/businessbroadband



PART 1

GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

Broadband is a term that applies to a set of technologies that offer high-speed access to the internet. At its most basic, broadband makes the internet a more satisfying experience.

However, broadband is changing the way companies do business, helping them to save time and operate more efficiently while providing cost certainty every month. But for savvy businesses, broadband has the potential to do much more...

- **Improve communication**

If your business has more than one location, you can use broadband to connect your offices, allowing data sharing between sites. Similarly, broadband allows easy access to the company network for people who work from home.

- **Improve business processes**

Broadband makes it more practical for businesses to use a range of hosted services that allow you to make voice calls, access email, update security, access support and use collaborative tools over the internet at a fraction of the cost.

- **Protect vital information**

Rather than invest large sums in complex data storage equipment, online services enable firms to back up files securely and cheaply over the internet. If your PC is corrupted, or your laptop goes missing, any lost data can be restored effortlessly.

What is a hub?

The most straightforward way of integrating new services and making the most of them is to use a hub – effectively a wireless box which brings together broadband internet, voice calls, video, and security software, all powered by ultra-fast download speeds of up to 8Mb. Multiple services can be channelled through a single point, providing ease of management, and new services can be added as needed ensuring that businesses are ready for the future as well as the present.

Five myths about business broadband

1. **I don't need internet access that's any faster than dial-up**

Broadband users would never go back to dial-up services, as high-speed internet access improves business efficiency. This means that you and your staff have more time to get on with the important aspects of running a business.

2. **Broadband is too expensive**

One fixed monthly cost means that there are no unexpected charges like with dial-up. BT Business Broadband is available from as little as £19.99 per month for the first 3 months and you'll always have one single, consistent charge until you decide to change.

3. **It's too difficult to set up**

Many broadband packages are plug-and-play, only requiring a router to be plugged into your phone line and a CD-ROM being run in your computer.

4. **There are too many different options – it's impossible to decide**

There is a wide range of options to choose from, but Internet Service Providers can talk you through your requirements and help you select the correct package to best suit your business. Some now offer mobile, broadband and fixed line services from a single source; meaning one contact, one bill and less hassle.

5. **It will take too long to arrange, I just don't have the time**

Broadband can be ordered online, or with a simple phone call, and setting it up takes a matter of minutes.



Breaking through the jargon

Broadband opens up a world of possibilities. Here is a simple guide to help you understand what the terminology around broadband means:

ADSL: An Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line basically means fast internet access. It is a broadband technology that operates over a normal telephone line, transforming it into a high-speed digital line that can be used for downloading information from the internet or sharing information between offices. It is also an always-on service and is charged at a flat rate.

Bandwidth: The rate at which data can move over a connection. For example, a 512K broadband ADSL connection offers up to 10 times more bandwidth than a normal dial-up connection. This means that you can send and receive documents and files more quickly over broadband and web pages take less time to download.

Contention: The download speeds you get vary depending on the volume of traffic being carried at the time you are logged on. If a large number of people are sharing the available bandwidth with you, the contention ratio (or ratio to which the available bandwidth is shared between users) is higher and your connection will be slower. Less traffic means lower contention ratios and faster network speeds. Even with highly-contended services, broadband services are faster than dial-up.

Convergence: The delivery of voice, data and internet communication over the same broadband connection, which reduces costs and administration.

DSL Max: The latest broadband technology that increases the speed at which data can be transferred up to the internet, as well as offering faster download speeds. This means sending very large emails, making video calls or uploading content to a website is quicker and easier.

Hosting: A service where the hosting company stores data for you, typically a website, on an internet-connected server on their premises. This reduces the cost and removes the need for you to update the hardware and software. Suppliers can also provide a hosted server on a client site.

Internet Service Provider (ISP): A company offering access to the internet, typically over a dial-up modem or ISDN connection, broadband or leased line. ISPs often offer website hosting and other services, e.g. domain name management.

Local Area Network (LAN): A network of computers and other devices (including routers and printers) that are in the same geographical location, for example, a simple office. Connections are typically made over Ethernet, but can be made using wireless technologies.

Router: The device which links your computers and your broadband line and which directs data traffic around the internet to ensure it arrives at its intended destination.

SDSL: Symmetric Digital Subscriber Line is a high-speed broadband connection. Unlike ADSL, which only offers high-speed downloads, SDSL allows information to be uploaded to the internet as quickly as it is downloaded to your computer. This is ideal for companies that regularly transfer large files over the internet to clients or to other offices.

VPN (Virtual Private Network): A Virtual Private Network is a way to use a public telecommunication infrastructure, such as the internet, to provide remote offices or individual users with secure access to their organisation's network.

VoIP: Voice over Internet Protocol, which is the technology that allows you to make voice calls over the internet.

Web server: A computer permanently connected to the internet running software that allows information placed on it to be accessible on the web.

Wide Area Network (WAN): A network connecting two or more local area networks that are geographically separate, for example, company offices in two different cities.



Getting your business online

Getting your business set up with broadband couldn't be simpler.

The majority of UK businesses can access broadband, but it's worth using a broadband checker to ensure you can receive the service you require. You can do this at www.bt.com/businessbroadband – just enter your BT phone number in the availability checker. If you do not have a BT phone line you can check by using your address or postcode. This is only indicative, and a full line survey will be carried out when you place your order.

Next you need to choose an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and the type of service you need. Some providers supply the hardware you need to connect, for example, a broadband router, others don't. It's worth checking, as some hardware, such as routers, can be costly.

Business broadband products can at first appear more expensive than consumer packages, but they are specifically designed for the business user. You will generally have the option of services designed for a single user, multiple users or network, so it's worth considering which suits your current and future needs.

Most business broadband services come with unlimited access, a service level agreement and other business-related advantages, such as better support. Many ISPs also offer additional services to support businesses in formulating and delivering their online strategy, such as data storage, domain name registration and management, and advice. Having selected your ISP, there are generally two ways to order – either over the telephone or using the web.

The ISP will specify how long your order will take and give you a connection date.

Your ISP will also send you the software and, if applicable, hardware you will need to connect, along with instructions about how to set up the router and login details to initiate the broadband connection.



Creating a company network



What is a network?

Creating a network is basically joining two or more computers together in order to share information and resources, including internet connections, files and printers.

Does my business need a network?

Networks are not just for large businesses – they are for anybody who needs to share information or work together.

The benefits of having a network are wide reaching, and can be something as simple as sharing a printer between two computers in a small office. A network will also allow you to share files or information across the company and can offer an element of control over what individual machines are allowed to access and do.

How do I create a network?

There are two main methods of creating a network – by linking your computers and peripherals, such as printers and scanners, with cabling, or via a wireless network.

Each type of network shares several principles. In each, a hub or router will be necessary if you plan to link more than four PCs.

A traditional Local Area Network consists of the following simple components:

- Two or more computers linked together, or networked
- A network interface card (NIC) in each computer – this allows you to connect to the network (and with other users)
- An Ethernet cable connecting to each computer – the wires which connect the machines and form the physical network
- A networking switch or 'hub' – effectively a box through which network traffic flows, and which directs it to the appropriate machine
- Networking software – to provide the platform by which to communicate and share information.

Wireless networks

If your business has broadband or a number of computers connected to a network, then it may be worth considering a wireless (Wi-Fi) network. Wi-Fi is a technology that allows computers to connect to the network and the internet from anywhere within the wireless area, using a radio frequency, much like a cordless telephone.

Benefits of wireless

One of the main benefits of wireless networks is that it allows you to move around the office without having to plug in or change settings on your computer.

If you don't already have a network, it is also a quick and easy way to connect computers and share a single internet connection, as well as add new machines to the network.

A Wi-Fi network means that you don't need to have large numbers of cables connecting across your office. You can also allow shared access to printers and other devices, which further reduces the number of cables and wires needed.

Broadband calling!

You may have heard about how it's possible to use your broadband connection to make and receive phone calls which could even save you money. This isn't a future concept – broadband communications are with us now.

How does broadband telephony work?

Broadband communications use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology to allow you up make phone calls through your internet connection. It works by converting your voice into “packets” of digital information that are sent over the internet. The services generally come in two flavours:

- **PC-based**
PC-based services use software on your machine to allow you to dial and make calls through your computer. They generally require a headset or a special handset that connects to the PC using a standard USB cable.
- **Telephone-based**
Telephone-based services are more like using a traditional phone service, as they allow you to use a standard handset that is plugged into the broadband connection via a special adaptor.

Benefits

- **Cost savings**
The main benefit broadband communications offer is complete cost control, with a cap on the amount you spend each month to ensure that outgoings in this area are predictable. Broadband calling often offers savings over standard fixed-line phone services, both in terms of line rental and call charges. Many services have a monthly charge and often offer unlimited calls to most local and national numbers. It also offers a cost-effective second phone line for your business. If your business is beyond the startup phase, you can get larger VoIP systems to suit your needs, such as a VoIP telephone exchange (IP PBX). This could allow you to save money on internal and external phone calls.
- **Mobility**
Another advantage of broadband telephony is that it allows a call to be directed to a phone, not a location. This is ideal if you travel or work from home regularly, and offers many of the benefits of mobile phones, but for far less cost. These elements make internet phone systems a great idea for any business using broadband, no matter what the size.

BROADBAND TELEPHONE CUTS HOMEWORKING COSTS

Self-employed systems consultant Martin O'Donnelly works from home and provides remote support for his clients' computer networks across the UK. As a result, he receives a large number of telephone calls from customers who need immediate assistance.

“It is essential I don't miss calls from clients, as they tend to call me when they need urgent advice – that's why I need a second line at home,” explains O'Donnelly. **“One option I had looked at was VoIP. I thought it was a great technology, but felt there was no service on the market that would be reliable enough to use as a business line. That's when I heard about BT Broadband Voice.”**

Broadband Voice enables customers to utilise their broadband connection to make calls through a standard telephone handset over the internet. They simply plug the adapter box into the broadband router or cable modem and attach a telephone handset. The adapter box transforms the voice into a digital signal that can be sent over the internet so it is just like making a traditional telephone call.

“The set up was simple,” explained O'Donnelly. **“Once we had connected the adaptor box to the cable modem and plugged in the handset, we got a regular dial tone and could make calls. One of the advantages of Broadband Voice is that you don't need to turn on the computer to make or receive calls – just like a standard telephone.”**

BT Broadband Voice also offers the ability to fully customise the service from the customer's own portal. For O'Donnelly, one very useful feature is that he can set up his speed dials on the portal. Rather than manually adding speed dials to each handset in his home, he inputs them up to the web, which automatically updates them on any handset he uses with the service.

“I have seen real call charge savings using this service, but cost is just one of the benefits. It is a reliable virtual second line that offers me the ability to control and customise the service as I need to – it's almost like having my own telephone exchange at home.”

Getting the support you need

As IT becomes more complex, and smaller businesses become more reliant on digital information, you can't afford not to have specialist IT support to run systems and solve problems. Having no qualified IT support can have a real negative impact on business operations, which can easily affect customer service. As a result, it is an essential part of any business and cannot be ignored.

The trouble is that dedicated support is expensive and often small and medium-sized companies can't justify employing an IT manager. This means responsibility for the critical business systems falls to the owner-manager, or someone who has to move away from their business role to look after IT. This is putting companies at real risk of losing vital information or experiencing costly downtime, and often diverts attention away from core business issues and success.

Broadband, however, opens up a new world of support for businesses, no matter what size they are, offering an equivalent level of support to that enjoyed by large corporates.

Remote support allows specialist IT consultants to access and repair your computer over a broadband connection, whether it be something as simple as resetting a password or as complex as reconfiguring an entire system. As a result, there are benefits for all companies:



- **Configuration and setup**

Remote support takes the hassle out of setup and configuration, ensuring that the systems are set up by an expert from the start, saving you time and ensuring a seamless transition

- **Resource support**

Remote support ensures that you can run the high-performance hardware and software your business needs, without the worry of what happens when things go wrong

- **Flexible solutions**

Remote support is an efficient, flexible solution that helps you keep your PCs and software running, which frees up any IT staff to focus on strategic tasks

- **Ongoing management**

Remote support gives you access to qualified IT support, no matter where you are, whether you're at home, in a satellite office or at head office

- **Multi-site support**

Remote support means there's no need to wait for an IT consultant to be dispatched to your office, as IT experts can access your PC remotely to address issues and reduce downtime.

BUSINESS BLOOMING WITH VIRTUAL IT MANAGER

Large corporations can afford to have dedicated IT specialists in-house, but smaller companies cannot justify employing full time IT staff and consultants are often too expensive to have on call. This is exactly the situation that faced Whippy's World of Tulips.

As the managing director of a landscape and design business with an online store selling plants and bulbs, Chris Whippe is heavily reliant upon IT, both in the field and for ensuring customer orders are fulfilled.

He was very conscious that he needed a way of ensuring his systems were working well and that any problems are solved as quickly as possible, so he chose IT Support Manager from BT Business.

IT Support Manager provides customers with a dedicated support team that can talk customers through how to solve any problems they are experiencing or access their desktops remotely to change settings over a broadband connection to diagnose and solve problems. It also provides extra support in the form of an easy-to-use tool monitor the machine and allows users to fix simple problems themselves.

"IT is critical for the success of the business," explained Whippe. **"My laptop is an essential piece of kit for me when I'm working at customer sites and, for every minute we're offline, we're potentially losing customers. We don't have the IT skills in-house, as it's just not cost effective because of our size. IT Support Manager is the ideal solution."**

Since subscribing to the service, Whippe has used IT Support Manger to set up a number of applications, including his wireless network.



"The whole process only took 45 minutes, with the helpdesk engineer talking me through the exactly what I had to do, step by step. I just didn't have the knowledge to do it as quickly on my own, so it saved me time and I knew that it was working before I even put the phone down," said Whippe. **"I think we're now ahead of the game when it comes to IT support."**

Protecting what's valuable to your business

The rapid developments with IT have moved even the smallest companies away from traditional paper-based systems to their electronic equivalents. This has increased efficiency, but also prompts the question of how to protect your networks and data.

More than 80 per cent of smaller companies couldn't trade if they lost the electronic data stored in their systems, yet few take the necessary steps to protect themselves against the risks of operating online. It's now possible to infect a whole network with a virus from email, the web, a CD or even an MP3 player.

A hacker, or disgruntled ex-employee, can now access your data without even entering your office, by using the internet or wireless connection. There's also the risk of data being stolen using Trojans or a Phishing attack (see jargon buster).

It is essential to protect against the online threats, such as hacking and viruses, but it is also important to understand the effects an attack can have on your business: fixing the problems created by viruses can also take a considerable amount of time.

As a result, backup is also an essential part of any security plan and is simplified by broadband. There are a range of services available to remotely store data offsite, so the effects of any disaster, whether an online attack or a cup of coffee spilt on a computer can be minimised.

You don't need to go over the top or spend money unnecessarily. Look at what's important to your business and take the necessary precautions to protect your core assets.

Jargon buster

Firewall

Essentially an electronic barrier that sits on the edge of the network and protects the PCs hidden behind it. It serves as a defence against external threats by screening all incoming information to ensure it comes from a secure and trusted source.

Hackers

A commonly used term for people who gain illegal access to data held on IT systems either on the premises or via telephone connections

Trojan

A form of virus. Once on a computer, Trojan programs run in the background deleting files or scrambling their contents. Alternatively, they can allow the computer to be controlled remotely, giving someone else access to files and applications.

Spyware

Software that monitors how a computer is used and sends reports to another computer via the internet. Spyware programs have been created

that log credit card numbers or username and password entries, for example, enabling identity theft. Another example is rogue dialler software that causes a user's PC to call a premium rate phone line instead of their ISP's standard number. Ensure that anything you download is from a safe, secure, credible source to avoid downloading hidden spyware.

Virus

A piece of malicious code which may erase data, use up system resources and use a system to propagate copies of itself to other systems. Viruses are frequently loaded by accident or without the knowledge of the system owner. Users can protect themselves against viruses by installing anti-virus software.

Phishing

Phishing is the practice of tricking somebody into revealing personal details, such as bank account numbers or passwords, through the use of an official looking email, website or link.

➤ The five golden rules to online security

Here are five rules to help keep your business stay safe from both internal and external attacks:

1. Be aware – and make sure your team is too

Ensure all staff are aware of security threats, covering:

- Peer-to-peer (P2P) use in the office – P2P file sharing between multiple machines over the internet is often governed by copyright, because it usually involves music and video content, and businesses are often liable to prosecution for any transgressions on their network
- Personal use of company email
- Using the internet for activities not suitable for an office environment.

2. Enforce where necessary

Ensure that security compliance is contractually binding, which is especially relevant where staff take laptops home, or use them for personal business.

3. Keep everything up to date and back up!

Make sure all your systems are updated with the latest patches recommended by the software vendors. Make sure that you back up your business critical data.

4. Have guard dogs at the gate, and at the door

Ensure that all desktop and laptop computers are equipped with firewall and virus protection software at the very least and consider products which will allow you to monitor computer usage in the office.

5. The golden rule

This is the message that lies behind all these tips – put simply, don't ever let up or become complacent.

PART 2 FLEXIBILITY

Creating a better work/life balance

We've all seen the surveys about creating a better work-life balance and we all want to do it, yet very few of us do.

The reason is often the complexity and cost of setting up a system that gives secure access to everything you need to work effectively away from the office. This was true in the past, but no more! In today's broadband and mobile world, home workers can be virtually in the office and access the same systems and documents as they can from their desks.

These days you don't need to be a technical genius. Simply connecting to a broadband line gives you the ability to work remotely.

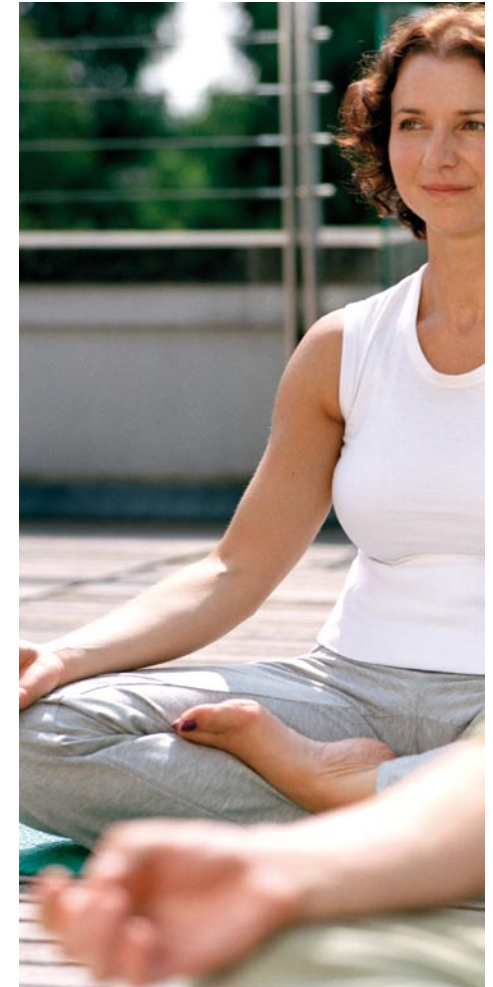
The first and most important consideration for any company should be around communications. Remote workers need to be contactable during their working day, through a range of media. As a result, they simply need a landline, mobile and internet connection. This will allow them to easily keep in touch with clients and colleagues, and continue to work as an integral part of the team.

Communication has become increasingly mobile, so a broadband internet connection is perhaps the most critical. It provides remote workers with more than just high-speed surfing and faster email. It also opens up a range of tools making the life of a home or remote worker easier.

High-speed internet allows users to securely access services, such as hosted email, and provides a secure link to the company's server or network. It also provides the opportunity to use services such as Voice over IP telephony and data backup services.

Services, such as BT Business Email, offer even the smallest company a choice of options, ranging from basic email access to tools that offer the ability to share information and services, such as company-wide calendars, address books and folders. Users can access these services wherever they are, via their desktop, a remote web browser or a mobile device.

One of the other benefits is that hosted services generally provide the latest anti-virus and anti-spam protection. They can also ensure information is fully backed up and provide 24/7 support.



Top five tips for home working

1. Get the technology right

Be clear about your technology requirements, so colleagues and clients can reach you, and you can access all the information you need.

2. Set up your home office properly

When you're working from home, it's particularly important to separate the 'office' from other aspects of your life.

3. Know how you work

You have much more flexibility when you work from home, which is great because you can work when you're most productive.

4. Keep in touch

One of the biggest shocks about working remotely is the lack of direct contact with colleagues, so make sure you're in regular contact with the office via telephone and email.

5. Optimise your work-life balance

Working from home allows you to work around your lifestyle so, because you don't tend to keep traditional hours, you need to be aware about how much work you're doing. This can work well for you if you are clear about the parameters, when you start and stop work, and how it fits with the other aspects of your life.

WEB ALLOWS WIZARD TO WORK FROM HOME

Home working used to mean taking reams of paper and files home, and only being in touch with the office by telephone and fax. But in today's broadband world, home workers can be in the office "virtually" and access the same systems and documents as they can from their desks.

This is exactly what James Cunningham, managing director at specialist multimedia agency Streaming Wizard, wanted to achieve, "**despite my commute to the office being relatively short, I still wanted to work remotely,**" explained Cunningham. "**I realised that there are very few things that I do in the office that I can't do from home – broadband has enabled me to make this a reality.**"

Streaming Wizard chose BT Business Broadband, which Cunningham installed himself. As a result, Cunningham now works from home up to three days per week and can cover all aspects of Streaming Wizard's business. He can access both emails and documents on the company's servers, just as though he's in the office. He can also keep in touch with colleagues using instant messaging (IM) and can videoconference when necessary.

"We use SDSL in the office, so that we can stream the content we produce to our servers, but the majority of my time is spent doing the usual office tasks. As a result, broadband service is ideal for my home office needs, and allows me to be in the office even when I'm working from home," concluded Cunningham.



Collaborating across the business

Broadband opens up a world of collaborative tools that offer the potential to save time and money by sharing information and services, such as company-wide calendars, address books and folders. Users can access these services wherever they are, via their desktop, a remote web browser or a mobile device ensuring that your employees can continue to work effectively wherever they need to be.

Until now, the cost of collaborative technology has been prohibitively high and, as a result, smaller businesses have not been able to take advantage of the benefits. However, the widespread adoption of broadband has led to the creation of cost-effective hosted collaboration tools. These allow small businesses to realise the benefits and efficiencies of collaboration.

As well as removing the upfront costs associated with large-scale collaboration tools, the latest hosted services allow smaller businesses to:

- **Share files and folders from wherever**
Important files, such as spreadsheets, reports and sales presentations can be stored in public folders and accessed from wherever you are over the internet. As a result, team members can no longer say that they had no access to the files or ask you to email another
- **Work as a team remotely**
No matter where you or your team is, you can readily access each other's calendars to schedule meetings and delegate or plan tasks. You can also collaborate on documents and be sure you are always looking at the most current version
- **Create a virtual workplace**
You can set up a workplace for everyone in your company or for a selected group of team members, in order to manage a project or share project-related messages, files, schedules, tasks and applications.

BT HELPS INVOCOM BECOME 'ALWAYS ON'

Running a team of consultants and contractors always has its challenges from a communications point of view. However, these challenges have become even greater over the last few years, with teams needing to collaborate on documents, as well as accessing mails in the office, at home, on a client site and being available on the phone.

This is the situation that faced telecoms consultancy Invocom, a professional services company. The company turned to BT to provide secure remote email access and collaboration tools with Business Email Plus Organise and Share.

Invocom supports telecommunications companies by designing new networks and helping to manage those that are already in place. Based in Reading, the company has a team of more than 30 people working with customers across Europe.

"Our employees often use email as their primary means of communication with customers and colleagues, so it's essential they can access their accounts securely from wherever they are – whether that be a client site, hotel room or home office," explained Nick Cherry-Robins at Invocom.

Business Email Plus Organise and Share uses the latest Microsoft Exchange technology to allow users to share information, including mailboxes, calendar, task lists and specified documents, across an organisation. It also offers a company-wide global address book and secure access to email via Outlook Web Access (OWA).

Invocom's consultants spend around 90 per cent of their time on site with clients, so often have to access email from outside the Invocom network. With BT Business Email, the team can access their email via Outlook Web Access in a web browser, making the task much simpler.

As well as a reliable and easy email access via a web browser, the ability to use all the advanced features included in Microsoft Outlook, such as shared calendar, was also crucial, as was spam filtering.

"For a team that is working in multiple locations, it's essential to know what their schedules look like," said Robins-Cherry. **"The shared calendar allows us to schedule meetings and calls without having to second guess people's availability."**

As a result, Invocom employees can always get hold of each other, ensuring a closer working relationship and more time to focus on clients.



Getting your team mobile

New ways of working are making us more mobile, and hence more productive. However, mobile technology isn't just for 'road warriors' and isn't just limited to the mobile phone. Most of us go out of the office for meetings and presentations, or would benefit from working from home on occasions. Some of us even spend a large proportion of our time on client sites.

As a result, no matter what size your company is or which sector you work in, mobile broadband and services can benefit your business.

Mobile email

Email is becoming an integral part of business communication for every company. The latest email tools provide a great starting point for companies looking to allow staff to work when they're not in the office. This can be something as simple as working from home, or a hotel room, to receiving an updated presentation as you go into an important meeting.

Wi-Fi hotspots

In the UK there are more than 10,000 cafés, hotels and even petrol stations where you can access the internet using a wireless-enabled device. That means that in most urban areas, you can check your email, surf the web or do almost anything you would expect to do on your office broadband connection. They are easy to use and generally cheaper and faster than using your mobile phone to connect to the internet.

Making calls on the move

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services also add to a company's mobility, as they allow you to use the same number, no matter where you are. All you have to do is ensure you have access to an internet connection and then you can make and receive calls from your computer as though you were in the office.

Equally, you could use a single phone to switch from mobile rates to fixed-line call rates once you enter the building. This ensures consistency of communications on a single number, but has the benefit of lower overall cost than a dual phone approach.

Bringing mobile and broadband together

With the challenge of getting a small business off the ground and building on its success, communication tools such as the mobile phone are essential. However, it can become a cause of worry when it comes to keeping costs under control – particularly now that we like to use them in the office rather than reaching for the landline. New converged fixed and mobile services, like BT Fusion, can bring the costs of mobiles down by offering cheaper rates on calls in the office.¹

¹ Cheaper call rates apply to calls made within range of the BT Hub. Range up to 10-25 metres in ideal conditions.

ACER MACHINERY GETS THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Based in Andover, Acer Machinery manufactures and repairs horticultural and agricultural machinery. Its site office and workshop are situated within the estate of its main client, a large landscape gardening company. Staff also travel to customers' premises to do repair work.

Mobile phones are an important business tool, yet the cost of calling and poor signal coverage in the office was holding them back from making the most of the technology. BT Fusion has helped solve these problems.

BT Fusion acts as a mobile phone, connecting to the BT mobile network when Acer Machinery employees are out of the office. However, when they are in the office, the Fusion handset automatically senses it's within range of the BT Fusion Hub and the phone routes the call down the BT Broadband connection to benefit from cheaper rates.

Owner, Mr Scott said: **"BT Fusion has improved the way we work. It means we can use our mobiles as usual when we are offsite with clients, but once we are back we don't have to rush back to make and receive calls from our desk. Mobile coverage is superb when the calls are made over the Broadband connection. What's more we are now setting up the BT Hub to create a wireless network, which means we can use laptops in the workshop to take orders without having to be in the office."**



PART 3

ENHANCING BUSINESS SUCCESS WITH BROADBAND

Extending your reach

Broadband doesn't just allow you to improve internal efficiencies; it also opens up a new market place to you – the world.

Broadband allows companies of any size to have a professional online presence. It allows you to compete with much larger companies. It creates new sales channels, provides access to different markets and new ways to communicate with both those customers and suppliers.

What about a website?

Over three quarters of companies in the UK have a website and 81 per cent of those that do, have increased their customer base as a result. A surprising 16 per cent also now bring in more than a fifth of their sales via the internet. These figures can't be ignored by any business with an ambition to thrive.

A website offers companies the opportunity to compete with much larger players on an equal footing, as size doesn't matter on the web. And, it doesn't cost the earth.

You can begin with a site that simply acts as an online company brochure, then add catalogues and even an online shop so that people can actually buy your products and services directly from your website.

The most cost-effective option is to start with a site that you develop yourself. This is easier than you might think and can be done with tools that are available off the shelf, or as part of a

broadband package from your Internet Service Provider (ISP). The latter provides an extremely simple route to marketing and selling online. It is cost effective, template-based and requires no technical skills or training.

The next option is to use a service where you supply the words and photography to the designers, and they use a series of pre-defined designs and pages to produce the site. This is great if you want added functionality and a more professional feel to the site.

The most flexible option is to have a bespoke site built just for you. This offers you the ability to choose the entire look and feel of the site, and add in advanced functionality to meet your needs.

Bringing it all together

There are many ways to buy the types of services outlined above, but the simplest and most straightforward way for small businesses is to limit the number of suppliers they deal with. This generally means lower costs, less supplier management, greater levels of support, and can even mean one bill for everything. Service providers have realised this, and some are merging offerings to make it easier for you to buy, manage and support your business communications.

MAKING MORTGAGES SIMPLER WITH THE WEB

Websites are increasingly becoming a necessity for all businesses, large or small.

However, the challenge is to develop an initial site that looks professional, gives you everything you need, but doesn't cost the earth. That's exactly the situation that Cheshire Mortgage Services found itself in.

Cheshire Mortgage Services is an independent mortgage advice company located in Altrincham, Cheshire. It has a nationwide client base and specialises in custom mortgage solutions for clients looking at standard purchases, remortgaging, additional borrowing and buy-to-let.

Within months of setting up the company, the husband and wife team realised that a website was an essential part of the business – both to attract and contact new customers – and looked around at the available options. After careful consideration, it chose Easyweb from BT, as it provided a simple-to-implement and high-quality website at a reasonable cost.

“The internet is an ideal tool for allowing us to compete on equal terms with much larger players, but a website has to look professional and do what it's suppose to – give customers information about the company and services, and enable them to contact you,” explained Mike Parker at Cheshire Mortgage Services. **“It also had to be cost effective, which is why we chose BT.”**

Easyweb websites are based on a range of design templates and allow customers to rapidly deploy a professional site of between two and five pages. Two pages can take just one week once BT's designers receive the initial information.

“The process was so simple – we met with our BT account manager, wrote the content and then forwarded it to BT along with our chosen photography,” said Parker. **“Then we worked with the team to make any final tweaks. It couldn't have been easier.”**

One of the other important considerations was the ability of the website to grow with the business. The initial site was three pages – a homepage, contact page and a partner page – but as the number of services offered by Cheshire Mortgage Services increases, the amount of pages and information on the website will also increase.

“We knew that a professional website would be an important part of our business, but we've been surprised by the impact it had in terms of attracting new customers. It is an essential part of our company's business model,” concluded Parker.

PART 4

CHOOSING THE RIGHT APPROACH

There are many ways of selecting a suitable broadband provider. A good supplier will address a number of issues to provide you with an effective solution:

- **Is it fit for purpose?** Products and services need to be tough enough for business use. Consumer versions, though sometimes cheaper, often don't usually offer the flexibility or reliability you depend upon
- **Is it secure?** You need to be able to monitor and control access to your computer and files to protect customer and company information, and to prevent fraud and abuse
- **Is it fast enough?** Bandwidth is important for most businesses. Contention ratios are also important for business-critical or high-usage applications
- **Will it support growth?** Small businesses grow at a rapid rate and it's important you have access to upgrades, extensions and new applications to achieve maximum success.

➤ Getting good advice

Every ISP can address one or more of your online business requirements, but it is important to assess the complete needs of your business.

This checklist suggests some of the information you should collate and consider to ensure you find the right provider:

- What are the upfront costs and do I have to pay for the hardware?
- What is the speed of the service and what is the maximum speed that I will receive?
- What kinds of services are included in the standard package?
- Is there a dedicated helpdesk for business users?
- Will I be offered cost effective and reliable assurance, repair and support services?
- Are there any fixed-price internet call plans?
- Is there a service level guarantee with fixed repair times?
- Is there a range of services that will allow me to grow my business online?
- Can they provide a range of services on a single bill?
- Will I be secure online? Can I back up my business data?
- Are there any packages that include fixed-line and mobile telephone services?



Offices worldwide

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