



Fact Sheet

Business Benefits of Broadband

June 2007

Over the last few years, as Broadband Internet connectivity has become increasingly available, there has been a rapid take-up of this service amongst consumers and businesses.

Our E-Business Advisers discuss the benefits for your business:

1. What is Broadband?

Broadband is the method of sending and receiving data over high speed telecom networks, connecting businesses and consumers to the Internet.

There are several methods of connecting to the Internet via Broadband - (see "Broadband - ADSL & SDSL" Fact Sheet & "Broadband - Cable, Wireless and Satellite" Fact Sheet).

Some types are much faster than other Broadband types.

However, all methods provide a much faster way of connecting your computer or computer network to the Internet than is possible through the conventional dial up or ISDN line methods.

It can also be much cheaper than leased lines.

BT exchanges have been "enabled" i.e. they can connect subscribers to ADSL Broadband at least (see "Broadband - ADSL & SDSL" Fact Sheet).

There are still likely to be a few rural areas in the UK that won't be enabled though.

It is also possible that, although the exchange a subscriber is connected to is enabled, technical reasons (such as poor line quality), will not allow broadband connectivity to some premises.

By April 2005, BT had sold its 5 Millionth Broadband connectivity wholesale (this includes domestic users), so on average a customer was being connected every 10 seconds!

You are not restricted to BT as an Internet Service Provider (ISP) - there are many firms which offer Broadband connectivity, by using BT lines.

The "Useful Links" section below provides access to guides on choosing the right one for your business.

2. What are the business benefits of broadband?

- A Broadband connection for your business means there's greater capacity to send & receive data.

You can receive and send far more information to your computer in the same period of time than a conventional dial up connection - allowing you to access the Internet quicker, download files faster and send and receive emails without the long wait.

Typically, an ADSL (see "Broadband -ADSL & SDSL" Fact Sheet) Broadband connection is about 9 times faster than a dial-up connection at



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bringing data to you, and 3 or 4 times quicker at transmitting data from you.

There are other options such as SDSL (see "Broadband - ADSL & SDSL" Fact Sheet) available in some areas, which are even faster and would be more suitable for businesses that need to send large files: e.g. any firm that needs to send technical drawings, graphics etc, or that has more than just a few users.

- A Broadband connection is "always on" - no waiting for dial-up connectivity.
- An ADSL Broadband connection also frees up the telephone line that was previously used to connect to the Internet.
- As Broadband comes at a fixed price, this can be very effective for a business.
- It may well be possible to set up a "Virtual Private Network" (see VPN - Virtual Private Network" Fact Sheet in this series). This would allow home workers or other offices to directly access, in a secure manner, internal resources held on company servers.

3. What are the negatives?

- As your connection is "always on", the security risk from hackers rises, as your computer has a fixed identity known as an IP (Internet Protocol) address.

It can take only seconds to find out your computer's IP address and then your business may be open to possible attack. It is hence absolutely vital that you install a "firewall".

This is a piece of hardware and/or software that limits access to your computer from the Internet for unauthorized traffic

- Connecting several computers to an always-on connection means increased security risks. It becomes even more vital that you keep anti-viral software up to date
- If you want every computer/user to have their own email account, you may have to invest in extra hardware such as an email server and local area network
- If you decide to change ISP, perhaps because your existing one does not offer Broadband, you may have to change your email address.

4. Any other issues?

The issue of "Contention ratios" is important for business users.

"Contention ratios" are how many users "share" the circuit - typical is about 20:1 or better (i.e. a lesser number) for business users, 40 or 50:1 for domestic users.

If you have a high contention ratio, you might find the Internet slow to access at some times when many other users are trying to access the Internet at the same time as you.

You need to check this with whichever ISP you decide to use before committing yourself to a contract.

You may require a number of different services from your ISP, for example your email system will be determined by the size of your business, number of accounts required etc.

If you choose a broadband provider, "bandwidth" refers to the amount of data that you can send – and receive – in a given time.



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Some (usually consumer) services have a capped daily or monthly limit, then additional charges apply. Others are effectively unlimited.

Most ISPs will also offer web space as part of their package; however you may have specific needs for your business.

It is essential that you have access to web visitor statistics so that you can understand how your site is performing, (should you choose to host your web site on this space)

5. Useful Links:

www.samknows.com -
Independently run web site providing an invaluable list of exchange enablement dates etc, as well as a telephone number checker for availability

www.thinkbroadband.com -
Provides a comparative guide to different ISPs

www.broadbandchecker.co.uk
Another site providing comparisons of different broadband service providers.