

THE SECRET TO FAST AND RELIABLE CONNECTIONS

eGuide for small to medium-sized businesses



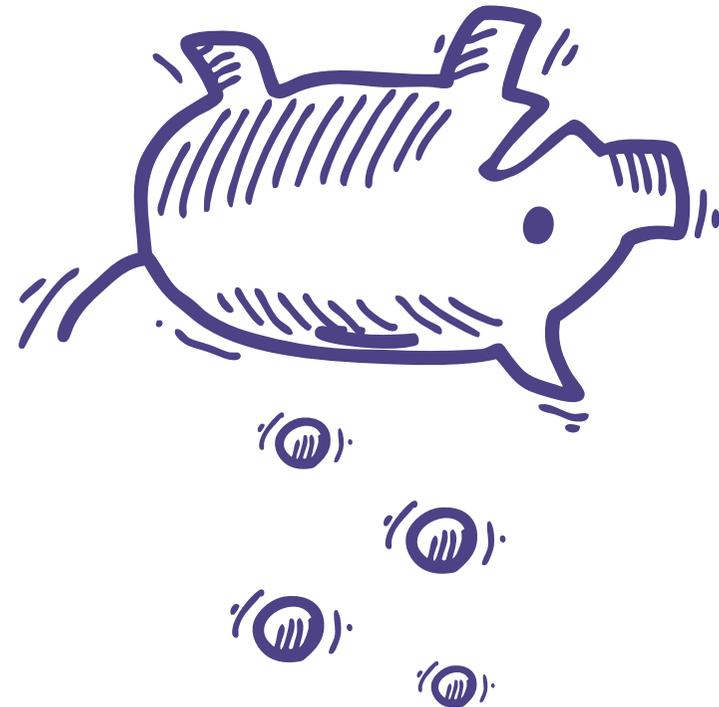
UNRELIABLE TELEPHONY COSTS BUSINESSES MONEY.

Missed incoming calls can lead to the loss of sales*. Badly connected satellite staff may be forced to work without the information they need to do their jobs effectively. And clunky, traditional on-site hardware creates unnecessary expense when it requires repair or upgrading.

What businesses need is fast, reliable telephony and data connectivity that enables them to get on with their core business. Instead of wasting time waiting for service providers to fix problems.

There are options for businesses looking to take advantage of the potential that super-connectivity offers. But choosing the correct system can be tricky. Not all service providers have access to the best infrastructure. So their solution might only be the best they can offer, rather than the best on the market.

This eGuide takes a look at the problems posed by slow and unreliable connections; the options open to businesses that want to make the change; and how to get super-connected.



*It is hard to precisely quantify the cost of a missed call for any given organisation.

But if, for example, a missed call costs a particular business £50 in lost sales, just two a week equates to a £3,600 annual loss. **Most experts agree that 75% of people will not leave a voicemail.** So most of that money will not be recovered.

WHAT CAUSES BAD CONNECTIVITY?

Twenty years ago, during the days of dial-up internet, a broadband connection was an aspiration for many businesses. The prospect of near uninterrupted access to the internet and data – and becoming better connected to customers than ever before – was tantalising. And it wasn't long before every company upgraded.

But broadband was never the perfect solution. Today, run-of-the-mill broadband is the dial-up internet of yesterday. Its connectivity and speed limitations are becoming increasingly apparent as the communications landscape changes with new solutions entering the market.

Even so, today most SMEs still rely on broadband for their data and even their telephony. In a broadband system, all data (be it voice or otherwise) is distributed down phone lines in "packets". For good connectivity each of these packets must be delivered on time and in order.

💡 TODAY, RUN-OF-THE-MILL BROADBAND IS THE DIAL-UP INTERNET OF YESTERDAY. ITS CONNECTIVITY AND SPEED LIMITATIONS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY APPARENT 💡



💡 41% OF SMALL AND 75% OF MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES CITE NETWORK PERFORMANCE AS THEIR BIGGEST COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGE. 💡

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While most of the calls turn out fine and the system works the majority of the time, it is a mistake to think that the status quo is acceptable.

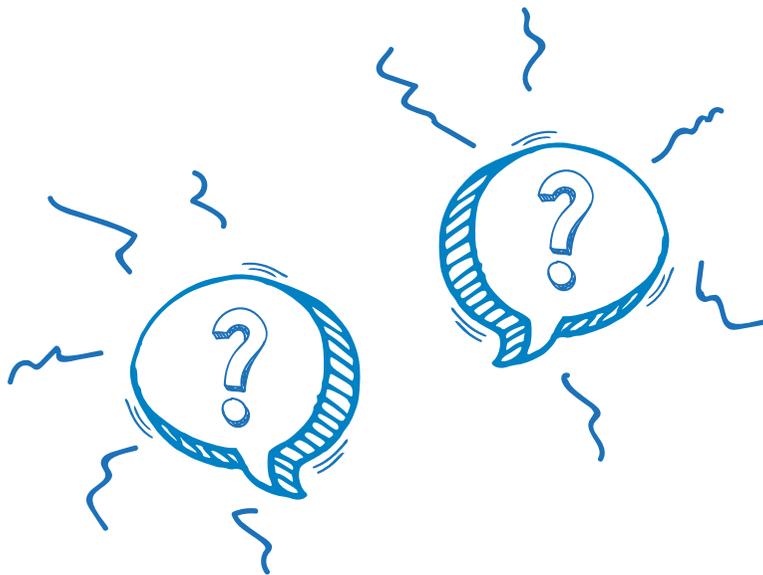
Many broadband providers that sell data and voice services don't own the lines they are using. Consequently they can't offer businesses a service-level agreement that governs data priority or connection speeds. Data packets can get mixed up and connections affected – leading to users experiencing frustrating line jitter and bad connectivity.

In addition, broadband downtime can be a huge problem for SMEs. If a single line, bank of desks or whole office loses connection, the line-renting provider has very little influence over repairs. So typically businesses are looking at 48 hours on average to get back up.

Despite this many SMEs are still relying on standard broadband for business voice as well as data, using consumer targeted, web-based calling services. Many of these services are also contended, meaning that businesses are sharing their bandwidth with others, causing the service to slow considerably at peak usage times. The system is good when it works, but when things go wrong the provider has virtually no back-up plan and the customer has little recourse. The fact that **41% of small and 75% of medium-sized businesses cite network performance as their biggest communications challenge** speaks for itself.

THE BUSINESS IMPACT

Knowing what causes downtime is one thing. Understanding its impact on a business is quite another.



As mentioned, unreliable telephony will lead to lost voice calls, connectivity problems and the kind of shaky conversations that are unbecoming of an efficient business. While broadband downtime can mean two days of no data, lost inbound calls and resorting to the use of mobiles, or viable workarounds, for outbound. During the time of the outage there is no onus on the provider to offer an alternative communications system. Unfortunately for many SMEs, the absence of a service-level agreement means repairs are often a low priority for providers.

👉 UNRELIABLE TELEPHONY WILL LEAD TO LOST VOICE CALLS, CONNECTIVITY PROBLEMS AND SHAKY CONVERSATIONS. 👉



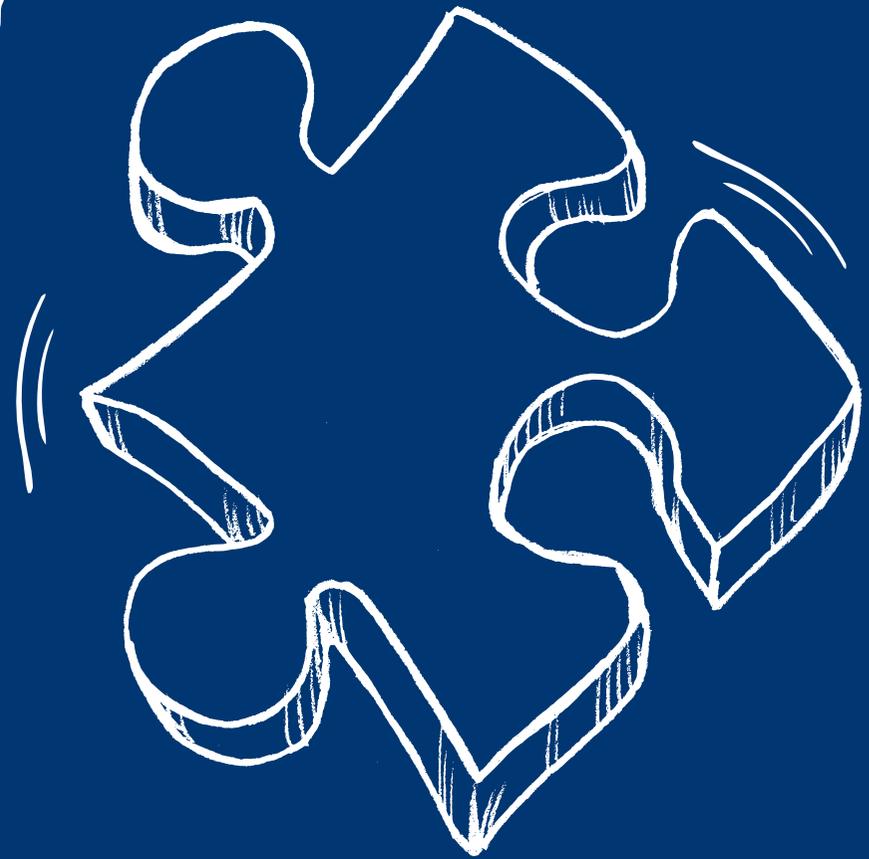
But there is another, deeper, business impact that is not felt operationally. SMEs relying on unreliable broadband for voice put themselves at risk of significant reputational damage. A sales prospect who makes an unanswered call to a business is likely to dismiss it as an unreliable partner – then move onto a contactable competitor.

With an effective, modern solution, the sales prospect would not even know if a business is suffering comms issues. And the business's reputation and sales function would experience no damage whatsoever.

👏 SMES RELYING ON UNRELIABLE BROADBAND FOR VOICE PUT THEMSELVES AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE. 👏

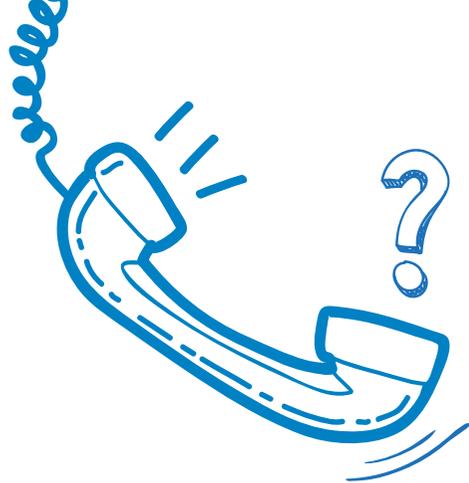
THE RELIABILITY PUZZLE

IF YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS RELIABLE AND FAST CONNECTIVITY, FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS TO FIRST-CLASS TELEPHONY SYSTEMS THAT FACILITATE (RATHER THAN OBSTRUCT) MOMENTUM AND GROWTH:



1

FIND THE RIGHT PROVIDER



Look for a voice provider that is also an internet service provider. In short, this means they'll own the network they are sending your data down. Taking on an end-to-end service such as hosted telephony means your data will be prioritised exactly as it is sent. So no jitter, bad connections and time wasted trying to get the phones to work.

Most network-owning ISPs will also offer a service-level agreement around the quality of voice calls. So you as a business can work safe in the knowledge your telephony will always be first class.

🔗 TAKING ON AN END-TO-END SERVICE SUCH AS HOSTED TELEPHONY MEANS YOUR DATA WILL BE PRIORITISED EXACTLY AS IT IS SENT. 🧠

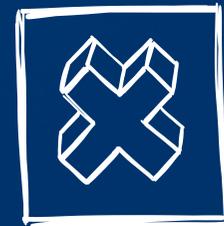
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PICK THE RIGHT PLAN



From high speed business broadband to fibre Ethernet, there are several options for businesses that want to ensure fast and reliable connection for data and voice. The decision of which to go for should be led by two factors – the size of the workforce and the intended use of the service.

One option that can offer the best of both is FTTC Ethernet. This is an entry-level service that closes the gap between high-speed broadband and high-availability Ethernet and offers SMEs a dedicated and un-contended service that can meet the demands for increased bandwidth with all the benefits of Ethernet at a more affordable price.



3

ASK ABOUT THE BACK-UP

According to **research**, 70% of all businesses rate downtime prevention and disaster recovery as a 'very important' aspect of their chosen communications solution. But 65% think that there is room for improvement in how it is managed.

So while downtime is never a telecommunications provider's favourite topic of conversation, it is a necessary one when they are taking on your business. The best back-up plan will include:

Automatic call redirection for all lines



Good providers will be able to instantly detect that a line, or a bank of lines, has gone down. And they'll immediately re-route all incoming calls down a secondary line, or redirect to a pre-determined secondary number for each affected line (such as a mobile or alternative office). Meaning no costly missed calls and a seamless experience for your clients.

Time-to-repair promise



Basically, how long before things are returned to normal. This should be around four hours, though in most cases will be much quicker. Even the worst-case scenario is nothing like the 48-hour turnaround offered by some providers.

A FAST ALTERNATIVE?

Ethernet is not the fastest connection available. But it can guarantee reliability and connectivity. For pure speed, businesses can consider Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) Broadband. Available for prices akin to those you might currently pay for broadband, FTTC offers much faster speeds than any available alternative.

However, FTTC is predominantly a residential service. So it may well be unavailable on large trading estates and out-of-town office complexes. FTTC will instead be more readily available to those who operate in residential areas, such as retail outlets and inner-city offices.

FTTC is subject to the same fluctuations and issues as standard broadband. But if your business needs fast more than it does reliable, it is an option worth considering.

4

TALK ABOUT THE COST



Some time ago it was the case that reliable fibre Ethernet technology was prohibitively expensive. Particularly for SMEs. Today, however, that is not the case. Provider competition and tech advances have seen to it that prices have dropped. Ethernet is now affordable, future-proof technology.

Your cost plan will be specific to your business. But the key thing to remember is soon enough the benefits will more than make up for the initial outlay and installation costs. **Over half (54%) of all IT directors think that they will feel a tension created by budget cuts and costs within two years.** Making the move to a long-term cost saving solution sooner rather than later will help your business to avoid that pinch when it comes.

THE VERDICT

Many SMEs rely on connectivity to power their voice services, as well as their data. For the most part the broadband lines they depend on work. But the inherent unreliability of the system means that it will eventually cost them time and money. SMEs that are serious about future growth prospects need a way to ensure reliability and speed of connection. And the only way to do that is to change to a system that will not let them down. The SMEs that gain a competitive edge will be the ones that switch now.

🧠 SMES THAT ARE SERIOUS ABOUT FUTURE GROWTH PROSPECTS NEED A WAY TO ENSURE RELIABILITY AND SPEED OF CONNECTION. 🧠



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