

INTRODUCTION

The way we access the internet is constantly evolving; every year new technology improves speeds, reliability, and coverage. Costs have also fallen to their lowest ever levels – often given away free, such is the saturation in the market. Connectivity is now at the heart of every business: the Internet is no longer a commodity but an absolute necessity.

This White Paper will explain the various options available in the UK, and share with you Ethical IT's experiences and lessons learnt in deploying internet connections of every type for our customers. Our goal is to give you a better understanding of the types of internet connections on offer, in non-technical terms, to help you make an informed decision for your organisation.

MAIN BENEFITS

Internet connection types:

The marketplace can seem very complex and confusing with so many providers and offers, however there really are only four main types of connection:

1. ADSL - traditional internet delivered over a copper phone line all the way from the nearest Exchange to your property; you probably have this sort of connection at home
2. FTTC – Fibre to the Cabinet. Fibre Optic cables deliver high speed internet up to your nearest green BT "street cabinet" on the pavement. From there, an ordinary copper phone line comes into your property delivering the connection
3. Fibre Lease Line – Fibre Optic cable comes all the way into your property
4. EFM – Ethernet First Mile – Up to 4 copper phone lines are "fused" together to deliver a business-grade high speed connection into your property. No fibre involved

CHOOSING THE BEST OPTION

The type of connection you choose is often driven by what is available in your area. Not every type of connection is available everywhere; for example FTTC is being rolled out to the UK over the next five years and already covers about 70% of the country, but this by no means guarantees your company can buy it, as we often find gaps in availability – especially in town and city centers as the rollout is prioritising rural areas.

EASE OF USE/STAFF EXPERIENCE

Most of your staff will use a computer outside of work, and will come to expect things like the latest version of Microsoft Office or Skype. Office 365 is exactly this, plus simple little things like the ability to send instant messages to one another, or see within Outlook if a colleague has their Out of Office on, helps save a few minutes trying to get hold of someone who you otherwise would not know is offline, and gives staff confidence in your company IT setup.

These small factors, as well as the major benefits such as the ability to say to your staff they can work from home sometimes and still access all their emails and shared files, gives them a lot more options on how to approach their work. Your company can allow staff to have their work emails and files on personal laptops / iPads / iPhones etc. if they wish (whilst you still maintain control over company data) and the integrated Instant Messaging / Video Conferencing allows staff and external customers or suppliers to meet and work together from multiple locations at no extra cost to you.

Type	Usage	Notes	Average cost
ADSL	Basic web browsing	Suffers from congestion, slow speeds and unreliability make this unsuitable for anything more than simple web browsing for up to ten people	£50 per month
FTTC	Web, videos, Voice calls for smaller companies	More reliable, higher speeds, very cost effective. Occasionally will go down, lacks proper business level support, but a good cheaper option for up to 20 employees	£70 per month
Fibre	All internet connectivity, remote access, Voice calls	Very robust, high performance, business-grade with 24x7x365 SLAs and full support. Installation can be expensive	From £400 a month
EFM	Internet, Voice calls	Same resilience and support / SLA as the Fiber Leased Line but fixed limit on maximum capacity so cannot expand	From £250 a month

COST VERSUS PERFORMANCE

As you can see, cost increases steeply when you move up to Leased Line or EFM options. However, your company's internet connection is going to be the foundation on which most of your business processes run, and it is a critical part of the organization. The cost to the business in the event of a failure is likely to be high – it may stop you working altogether; the internet connection is not something to cut corners on, and the old saying that “you get what you pay for” applies. We have assisted all too many charities in upgrading to an appropriate internet connection after they have lost time and money on cheaper options that proved unsuitable.

As a rule of thumb, if you employ more than 4 people and have a fixed office space, then the investment in EFM or Leased Line is a very wise one, and at the very least move to FTTC if you can. There are various government schemes available to charities to help with installation costs, and ongoing costs can be offset against tax as a business expenditure. Furthermore, these business grade internet lines will also be capable of running your organisations' telephony meaning the internet connection you invest in now will server multiple purposes in future.

OUR CONCLUSIONS

The market for internet connections for businesses is extremely cut-throat and full of tech jargon promising the world but often failing to deliver. The temptation can be to go with the cheapest vendor, but understanding what product you are actually paying for is important. The connection needs to be fit for purpose: it needs to provide enough bandwidth for now and future, and come with a sufficient up-time guarantee to satisfy your business needs.

Ethical IT have been working with a select number of Internet Service Provider partners in helping social change organizations implement the right product based on their own unique needs for many years, and we have extensive experience in this area - including integrating the connection with voice calls and providing the IT Support to match. We would welcome further discussion and questions to help you choose the right path for your organisation.

For more information on all of the above services please call [0845 337 2989](tel:08453372989) or email enquiries@ethicalit.net.

ethical IT
IT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Ethical IT
2nd Floor, Development House
56–64 Leonard Street
London
EC2A 4LT

Tel (UK): 0845 337 2989
Tel (non-UK) +44 (0) 20 7065 0780
General enquiries: enquires@ethicalit.net
Ethical IT support: support@ethicalit.net
Tech support: techsupport@ethicalit.net
ethicalit.net
www.ethicalit.net