

Broadband for the Future

A central goal of the Communities of Eastern Ontario Network (CEONET) is improving access to broadband in our region. Towards this end, CEONET is administering a major Connect Ontario Broadband Regional Access (COBRA) project in Prescott-Russell and SD&G for completion by the end of March 2005.

Broadband internet access is a recent newcomer in this region. Four methods can be used to deliver high-speed Internet: Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), cable, wireless and satellite.

The COBRA broadband project will install DSL service on Bell copper telephone lines to nearly all communities in both Counties by early 2005. Intended primarily for public buildings, it will also bring DSL to businesses and residences within reach of the service. As well as Bell, some local Internet Service Providers will also be able to offer DSL when it becomes available. The distance limitation is roughly 4.5 km of line length from switch locations. Given the size of our region and the current limits on technology and funding, gaps in rural coverage can be expected to continue for some while.

By providing connectivity to communities that now lack access, this project will help contribute to improving the region's economic opportunity for growth. It has worked by aggregating demand for broadband access to make a stronger business case for accelerating the installation of broadband service to include our smaller communities.

The broadband project is funded through major contributions from the Government of Ontario and Bell Canada. Together with Bell Canada, our working partners are the United Counties of Prescott-Russell and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, as well as the Prescott-Russell Community Development Corporation and the SD&G Community Futures Development Corporation.

Cette brochure est aussi disponible en français.

Produced by

CEONET

Communities of Eastern Ontario Network

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Broadband for Business



*How Broadband Can Allow Your
Company to More Effectively
Communicate, Collaborate,
Market and Reduce Costs*

Communication

Video conferencing, file and application sharing, as well as virtual whiteboard sessions allow for effective telecommuting that can include meetings with people from around the world or just around your office building. Conducting business by these means has the potential for communicating and sharing ideas and proposals while saving the travel time and expense normally associated with face-to-face meetings.



Another exciting technology that is becoming more popular and commercially available is IP telephony or Voice over IP. VoIP allows businesses to save money on long distance calls by routing conversations over the internet instead of by traditional telephone.

Reducing Costs

Using a broadband connection not only makes working easier; it also makes online tasks more efficient and this advantage can translate into reduced operating costs. Many employees enjoy opportunities to work from home, because for some people, a home office is where they are most productive. They can often complete projects or operational tasks more quickly and appreciate the convenience of flexible hours.



Broadband access provides the bandwidth needed for businesses to take advantage of application services. What this means is that a company no longer needs to purchase software on its own. Application service providers (ASPs) are able, via the internet, to serve clients with copies of popular software such as office productivity suites. The client simply pays a monthly fee for this service. Gone are the worries of illegal internal duplication of software, keeping applications up to date, and negotiating licensing agreements with software vendors. The issues of license management and software upgrades are all handled by the ASP. In most practical applications of this service, the software is not run on the local machines within the office; but rather on remote servers that are usually better suited for the task. Since hardware upgrades need be done less frequently, the potential savings for offices are worth considering.

and Applications

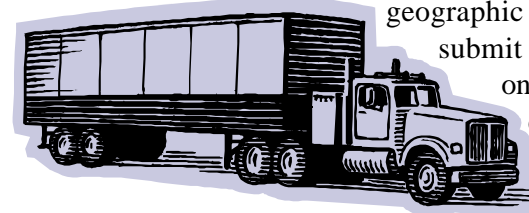
Agriculture



Larger farms and food-based industries increasingly use broadband for their operations. Internet access gives farmers access to agricultural web sites, online farm equipment suppliers, auctions, training, conferences and weather data. Dairy farmers use online services for their test results and to place Quota Exchange bids while cash crop farmers rely on market prices and trends as well as GPS services for real-time reporting of crop and fertiliser management. A connected farm is better equipped to manage safety and bio-security.

Transport Logistics

Transport businesses rely heavily on the use of GPS tracking information and contract availability data. Businesses of this type use broadband access together with proprietary transport applications that identify the locations of their trucks and cargos within a specified geographic region. From this information, they can submit competing bids for return loads through online agencies. Being able to find and agree contracts quickly is critical for the survival and growth of long-distance transport companies today.



Real Estate

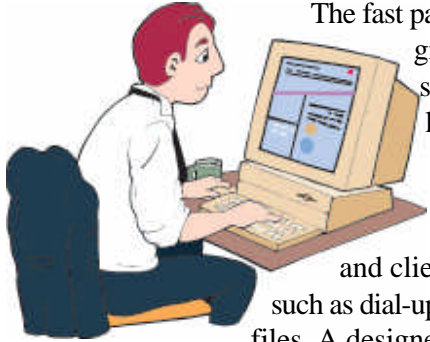
Real estate brokers rely on major database services of properties such as the Multiple Listing Services (MLS) that they routinely use for updating listings in their regions daily or even more frequently. As these databases are huge, and their numerous files include photographs and maps, the advantage of broadband technology far surpasses slower modes of internet access.

Actively engaging the internet for sales allows real estate agents to promote their listings by providing multiple pictures as well as descriptive data. This service can often save prospective buyers and their agents valuable "searching" time as well as minimising the travel and time costs of viewing properties. And, being equipped with up-to-date and accurate data enables realtors to help their clients make better, more informed decisions.



Business Broadband

Graphic Design & Advertising

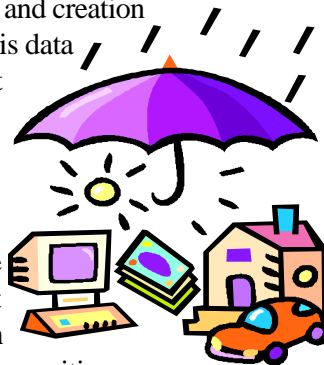


The fast paced business of graphic design centres on quality graphics which means only one thing: large file sizes. Having large graphic files on a designer's local hard drive is not the problem. The issue of file size becomes important when the designer attempts to send or receive work from their suppliers (commercial printers or service bureau) and client via the internet. Using narrowband services, such as dial-up, it is simply impossible to send and receive large files. A designer without broadband is forced to use overnight courier services thus losing valuable time as well as money especially when the cost of delivery as well as the media to which the files are stored is considered.

With broadband, local graphic designers can quickly send and receive files, keep their design software up-to-date, and remain competitive by being able to offer their services to anyone, anywhere.

Insurance

The insurance industry, by its very nature, involves the use and creation of data stored in centralised databases. Securely sharing this data between branch offices is important and has become reliant on broadband. High-speed internet allows insurance brokers to quickly receive and review online quotes, download documentation from insurers, modify policies, file claims, accept and submit electronic payments and look up information on specific policies and clients. The bottom line is that the brokerage receives all of the benefits of instant access without the common telephone delays associated with getting responses from large insurance companies in far-away cities.



Vehicle Sales & Service

Vehicle dealerships of all sizes and locations need broadband to streamline their services to customers. Ordering cars with custom options from manufacturers, searching for available vehicles from other dealers, and quickly obtaining spare parts are essential to customer satisfaction. Broadband has become a requisite for dealerships since manufacturers require them to report warranty claims, billing and sales in a timely manner.

Supply Chain Management

Supply chain management (SCM) is an essential component of business procedures that has been greatly altered by the adoption of modern information technology. Broadband access coupled with high-speed local area networks allows information relevant to the supply chain to be easily and quickly sent or received. Communication between raw materials facilities, manufacturing facilities, and distribution centres is a key method ("Just-in-time inventory") to increasing efficiency while reducing the expenditures needed along the way. Costs that can be effectively reduced when well-deployed SCM is put into effect include: Raw materials and other acquisition, in-bound transportation, facility investment, direct and indirect manufacturing, direct and indirect distribution centre, inventory holding, inter-facility transportation and out-bound transportation.



Cost, however, is not the sole concern to businesses that successfully employ this business strategy. Other concerns that drive the use of SCM are quality, time to produce goods, time taken to get a product into consumer hands, and product variety. When raw materials are more readily available due to SCM, it is easier for all involved to adjust to increased sales volume. To sum it up, the goal is, "Faster, Better, Cheaper".

Inter-Branch Connectivity



For industries such as real-estate or insurance, maintaining accurate and consistent databases of clients and relying on fast transactions has become essential to their operations. The difficulties in achieving this requirement aren't entirely appreciated until a company grows to include new branches that are separated by space. When using a broadband

connection, the staff of each company office, no matter where that office may be located, are capable working seamlessly with a single database hosted on a server. This means that all offices are linked to the same database, and thus they all share the same information in real time. Connecting branches using broadband also allows for internal teleconferencing between those connected branches with the benefits of participating in presentations and discussion.

Collaboration

Creating a virtual private network (VPN) is an excellent use of broadband since it enables employees to access files and resources remotely between offices within the local area network (LAN). VPN is a technology that tunnels data, using encryption and other security measures, to ensure that sensitive information being transmitted back and forth is not compromised.

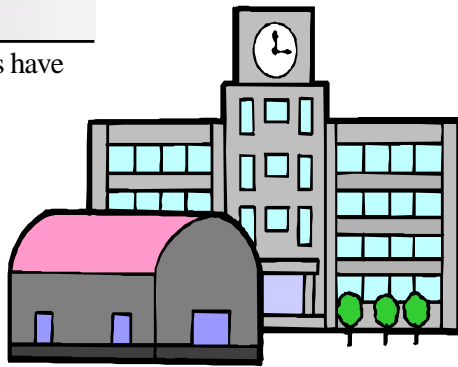


Here are the advantages: not only does a broadband VPN allow employees to stay in close contact when working from home or on the road, they can also access and work with the same files and database resources as their colleagues.

In the same vein as telecommuting, broadband offers greater access to distance training. Companies can now save money and broaden their options with online multimedia training materials. The benefits are greater choices and more flexible times that fit employees' work schedules.

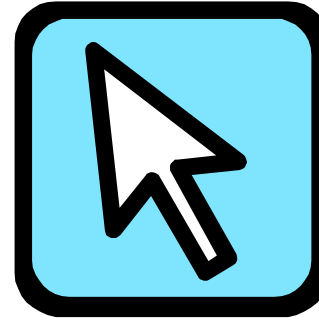
Marketing

When both a company and its prospective clients have a broadband connection, the possibilities for marketing products and/or services online become nearly limitless. With the increased bandwidth, web developers can create more attractive content with richer features. The result of this is a superior representation of even a small company in the global marketplace.



Through use of video, sound, Flash, and virtual environments, companies can design a remarkable showcase for their products and services. Not only can impressive media be created, it is now possible to turn static one-way communication tools, such as brochures, into interactive web sites with updatable catalogues for prospective and existing clients. Applications also exist online that allow clients to communicate with a live representative to provide additional information or answers to questions.

Online Sales



Many businesses make the transition from being a retailer in the real world to complementing their 'brick and mortar' store with an online retail presence. Larger retailers generally establish their own ecommerce site which involves an initial start-up cost and monthly maintenance and hosting charges.

More recently, smaller businesses have opened up their goods or services to a global market by using online auction sites such as eBay. These sites allow a business owner or individual to create a "virtual" storefront or offer individual auctions on specific items. The advantage of this is that the auction site is already marketed to interested groups willing to spend time searching for the commodities they want.

Online Purchasing

Whether a business deals in goods, services or both, chances are it can benefit from online purchasing. Using a broadband connection is much faster for finding needed items for use within the business or for selling to customers. Depending on the type of business, online auction sites can be helpful for locating and acquiring hard-to-find items such as older replacement parts or regular items at potentially lower prices than available elsewhere. It is when bidding on such important or simply desired items, that connection speed often makes the difference between winning and losing. The faster you can locate what your business needs, the faster you can continue doing what you do best. After all, as the old axiom goes, time is money.



Businesses in Canada with a broadband connection: 58.4%

Statistics Canada – 2003

*Businesses in Prescott-Russell and SD&G
with a broadband connection:*

11.7%

CEONET survey of 343 connected businesses – Summer 2003