benchmark-it news

UK Enterprise
Issue 20, 2014

Headlines:

SIX DEGREES LAUNCHES UNIFIED CLOUD COMMS SERVICE
- Targeting the mid-market segment with hosted service based on the Avaya IP Office Platform;
- Offers voice, video and collaboration tools on virtually any device;
- Positioned as offering familiar functionality but using the cloud model.

CHESS ACQUIRES PARACHUTE IT TO FORM CHESS ICT
- Acquisition (Chess' eightieth) adds £2.2 million in revenues and 17 staff;
- Will be combined with earlier acquisitions ebillz and Chess Partner Services to form Chess ICT – a dedicated IT division;
- Underlines convergence of IT and comms, with more M&A anticipated.

'MOBILE WORKERS ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE' - AZZURRI RESEARCH
- Azzurri's Mobile Productivity Survey captures views of 188 customers;
- E-mail, file sharing and accessing customer and company data seen as today's top drivers of mobile productivity;
- Unified communications and collaboration tools will be the focus next year.

'SMES BELIEVE THE CLOUD WILL CUT IT COSTS' – VISTAGE
- Survey of CEOs, Managing Directors and business owners finds 49% have adopted cloud to make their business more flexible and to reduce capital costs;
- 36% say the main reason for using/planning cloud is their mobile workforce.

'MORE TO SERVICE THAN SLAS' - CLARANET
- Service providers could tailor SLAs to meet the particular priorities of individual customers or of groups of customers with similar needs.

HYPEROPTIC DOUBLES FOOTPRINT IN SIX MONTHS
- Hyperoptic focused only on property developers in the enterprise segment.

VIRTUAL1 TO MAKE MAJOR NETWORK INVESTMENT
- Upgraded core network enables delivery of fibre in multiples of 10Gbps.

O2 BUSINESS LAUNCHES NEW SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES
- Looking to target the 68% of small business owners who lack expertise in technology using 200 trained 'O2 Gurus' offering free advice;
- Move aims to facilitate sales of a range of new applications and services.

'FLEXIBLE WORKING TO DRIVE UP SME PHONE BILLS' – DAISY
- Laws such as the right to flexible working present market opportunities.

EUNETWORKS TO OFFER 'INSTANT BANDWIDTH' IN LONDON
- dc connect service offers high-bandwidth connectivity across 35 data centres in London and onward connectivity to 250 data centres across Europe.

VAIONI TEAMS WITH ITS TECHNOLOGY GROUP
- ITS to leverage Vaioni network to target Hammersmith and Fulham.

SIX DEGREES LAUNCHES UNIFIED CLOUD COMMS SERVICE

Six Degrees Group (6DG) and Avaya are to work together "to launch Europe's first cloud-based IP telephony and unified communications service for mid-market businesses powered by the Avaya IP Office Platform."

"6DG's mid-market unified communications service will enable UK-based small and mid-sized businesses to access voice, video and collaboration tools on virtually any device. The hosted service, which scales to 2,000 users, will help mid-market companies better manage costs by eliminating the need for large, up-front capital investments and upgrades. At the same time, it also provides the speed, flexibility and scalability that mid-market enterprises so frequently depend upon to differentiate themselves and grow.

The service will be delivered over 6DG's high-speed, high-quality, secure network, leveraging 6DG's SIP services and business continuity capabilities. Significantly, 6DG customers will benefit from the exact same capabilities they would receive with an on premises-based deployment of the Avaya IP Office Platform,

Now, combined with the flexibility and opex design only achievable with cloud, customers can have the advantage of a truly converged service with the scalability they have come to expect from cloud computing.

Avaya IP Office delivers enterprise-grade telephony and unified communications combined with an ease of install and an intelligent user interface. These features enable employees effortlessly to collaborate, improving response times and driving customer engagement, and business productivity for mid-market companies in any sector."

Ioan MacRae, Head of Mid-market, Europe at Avaya, said: "Cloud services deliver a new path to greater business agility - the lifeblood of any mid-sized enterprise. New and existing customers can now achieve a true pay-as-you-grow Unified Communications environment. The service will harness 6DG's highly secure, privately-owned network, giving mid-market businesses all the scalability and flexibility of the Avaya IP Office Platform combined with a robust level of service and security from our local channel partner."

Campbell Williams, Group Strategy and Marketing Director at 6DG, said: "When it comes to telephony and mission-critical technology, it has to work. Businesses are using cloud platforms to be more scalable and flexible in how they deploy IT and now we're bringing fully-featured enterprise-grade unified communication to the cloud. We are proud to be the first Avaya channel partner in the UK to build a cloud service around Avaya IP Office and to deliver it with geographical resilience using our own NGN, SIP trunks and IP softswitching estate. The offering we are providing with Avaya is truly unique and will deliver the best of on-premises infrastructure with all the business benefits of the cloud."

After years of talk about cloud-based services, a growing number of service providers are offerings and actively selling real propositions like this one from Six Degrees.

Issue 20	benchmark-it.co.uk	October 20th 2014

The approach to customers makes good sense – it is focused in terms of target customers and makes it clear that the offering is the same as the on-premises version, just offered using a cloud-based model which saves on management overhead and capital expenditure.

CHESS ACQUIRES PARACHUTE IT TO FORM CHESS ICT

Chess has acquired IT systems provider Parachute IT, "adding £2.2 million to its turnover and 17 additional staff to the Group."

"Parachute IT will be known as Chess ICT and joins earlier acquisitions ebillz and Chess Partner Services at one of the company's satellite offices in Borehamwood, Hertforshire. The acquisition bolsters Chess' ability to offer complete end-to-end solutions for businesses while extending its existing IT portfolio."

Chess CEO David Pollock sees the acquisition as a key strategic move for the future direction of the company: "Parachute IT has been a forward-thinking centre of excellence in design, delivery and support of business IT and communication systems for over 20 years. It makes sense to strengthen our expansion into being a one-stop-shop by bringing the best out of Parachute IT's knowledge and experience in the IT industry."

Managing Director of Parachute IT, Martin Bacon, added: "When Chess approached us I saw a great opportunity with a company intensely focused on quality and spirit, strategically driven, financially powered and with a highly evolved approach to creating robust success with acquisitions.

It is clear that the Chess Group is not just holding its own as a significant player in the industry but is setting a new standard. I am confident that our people will continue to stride from strength to strength working under the Chess brand as Chess ICT."

"Parachute IT joins ebillz, Integra ICT, Avenir Telecoms and The CRM business as companies acquired by Chess that will further extend the Chess Group's portfolio of services and takes Chess' acquisition total to over 80 companies to date."

This latest acquisition by Chess underlines the convergence of communications and IT services – and any service provider that has ambitions to be a one-stop-shop to business customers in the future needs to take this into account. There have already been plenty of examples of IT-communications combinations, but the process is likely to accelerate as momentum gathers and competition hots up.

'MOBILE WORKERS ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE' - AZZURRI RESEARCH

Azzurri Communications has announced the publication of its Mobile Productivity Survey 2014. "Based on research conducted with IT and telecoms leaders at 188 organisations across a range of sectors, the survey captures the mood of those are responsible for setting the mobile strategy for over 69,000 employees in the UK.

The key findings are:

Issue 20	benchmark-it.co.uk	October 20th 2014

- E-mail, file sharing and accessing customer and company data are the top drivers of mobile productivity today;
- Most businesses (83%) have seen an increase in the productivity of their workforce when using mobile devices out of the office, but most (71%) also believe that there are still further gains to be made;
- The majority of employees (62%) use their mobile device equally for consuming information and creating and editing content;
- Organisations are currently focusing on enabling access to corporate content when on the move;
- However, unified communications and collaboration tools will be the focus next year, with workflow management, video calls and video conferencing ranking as the top priorities for enabling productivity on mobile devices in 2015 - making video calls is expected to jump from ninth place to second in the space of a year.

Have smartphones and tablets actually improved the productivity of the mobile workforce? According to the research, the answer is a resounding yes. Almost all businesses (93%) have seen an increase in the productivity of their workforce when using mobile devices out of the office, with 47% rating the increase as significant or substantial. Yet, despite these gains, 71% still believe they could increase their productivity even further by using mobile devices and applications more effectively to enhance communications and collaboration between employees on the move.

So how can productivity be improved? When it comes to which applications have the biggest impact on the productivity of mobile workers, e-mail remains top of the charts. It is clear that all mobile applications have an important role to play in the productivity of mobile employees. IT Managers were asked to score different applications on the extent to which they affect employees' productivity, with e-mailing scoring 4.7 out of 5, then file sharing and access to company data (3.9), and CRM (3.5). Unified communications services such as video conferencing, IM and Web conferencing scored 2.9, 2.8 and 2.8 respectively."

Rufus Grig, CTO at Azzurri Communications, commented: "Smartphones and tablets have transformed mobile devices from being for consumption to being used for creation and editing - and so are changing the way we all work. The form factor shift towards devices with larger screens is enabling more meaningful work to be performed. Mobile productivity suites allowing proper editing of documents have made this a reality. Very importantly, these devices must be made secure, given the data and files that are now residing on millions of devices 'at large'."

"However, whilst most organisations are currently concentrating on enabling the essentials of mobile productivity (e-mail, file sharing and CRM), video conferencing and workflow management will be the focus for boosting productivity in 2015. Mobile video calls and video conferencing are among the lowest priorities this year, but when it comes to ranking priorities for mobile devices (ranking just ninth and tenth out of the 11 priorities listed), IT leaders expect them to jump up their list to be the second and third priorities next year. Collaboration apps, 'Enterprise-wide Instant Messaging' and 'Real-time Presence Status' are also expected to remain key priorities, remaining ranked as the fifth and sixth highest priorities respectively in 2014 and 2015."

| Issue 20 | benchmark-it.co.uk | October 20th 2014 |

Grig continued: "2015 will be the year when IT leaders want to make more from the unified communications and collaboration tools available for mobile devices - particularly as they seek to integrate mobile and remote workers in their business workflows. Presence, instant messaging, Web and video conferencing are all available on mobile devices and, given the right connectivity, security and environment, they all have a very valuable role to play. As connectivity continues to improve, with better 4G and Wi-Fi coverage, we expect to see take-up of these services continue apace."

"The Azzurri report also identified the following trends:

- 47% of IT leaders expressed that mobile security is a challenge for them;
- When it comes to managing their mobile devices and applications, most organisations are not fully in control. Only 42% of organisations use a Mobile Device Management (MDM) tool, although a further 17% plan to do so;
- The greatest interest in MDM came from the largest organisations, with 21% of organisations with over 1,000 employees and 26% of those with 201-1,000 employees planning to deploy it.

Respondents were asked about the security challenges traditionally associated with MDM services (security, data loss etc.) in addition to those that are not (such as protecting data with VPN and APNs). As this survey has demonstrated, accessing company content and systems is a top priority for businesses, so securing devices alone and providing access to e-mail is only the beginning. MDM, and the security strategy in general, must expand beyond the device."

"Mobile security is no longer just about remote lock and wipe. IT Managers want to manage access to applications and information across their mobile fleet - from access to internal line-of-business applications, to intranets, to files and to data - and then what happens to that information once it's on the device," Grig concluded.

The advantage of this survey by Azzurri is that its respondents are actually using the mobile services being researched. It is no surprise that e-mail remains the most useful productivity tool, alongside sharing files and information about customers. The move towards greater use of unified communications and collaboration is probably a result of the growing adoption of devices with larger screens – video is pretty pointless on a typical small mobile screen. Such incremental developments help facilitate the broader industry shift towards hosted UC&C services.

'SMES BELIEVE THE CLOUD WILL CUT IT COSTS' - VISTAGE

Research published by Vistage, which claims to be the UK's largest and oldest CEO membership organisation, claims to show that "almost half (49%) of SMEs in the UK have adopted the cloud to make their businesses more flexible and to reduce the capital cost of their IT functions."

"According to the research, the cloud has moved out of the realm of novelty in the SME segment. As a result, Vistage says that smaller businesses are using cloud

services not only for Web hosting but to assist their mobile flexible workforce, for CRM and contact management.

The survey - which was carried out in July and personally completed by 439 CEOs, MDs and business owners - found that 11 per cent of respondents are planning to invest in the cloud in the near future. However, nearly a quarter (24%) are not making use of or planning to make use of the cloud.

Delving into the research reveals that flexibility and easy access to company data are considered as key benefits of the cloud for SMEs. In both cases, Vistage says that 45 per cent of respondents consider them as main advantages of cloud systems. The third most important benefit of the cloud - for 28 per cent of respondents - is its superiority over the traditional systems in case of disaster recovery.

36 per cent of survey respondents say that the main reason for using or planning to move to the cloud is to assist their mobile flexible workforce. For 21%, the cloud is also a tool for accessing new systems. A fifth of respondents (20%) say that it enables access to new products and services and for 21% it is a tool for greater automation.

As might be expected, 22 per cent of smaller businesses said they expect the cloud to bring them cost savings, particularly capital expenditure savings in relation to the IT function. 34 per cent, meanwhile, use the cloud for CRM or for contact management. Almost the same percentage (32%) utilise it for Web hosting and a further 28 per cent use the cloud for storing work documents and standard office systems."

Steve Gilroy, CEO of Vistage, said that the organisation's research shows the cloud has clearly moved out of the realm of novelty in the mid-sized business segment: "Britain's 'Mittelstand' business owners have wholeheartedly adopted cloud services and use them not only for Web hosting but also for their CRM and contact management, and are now starting to use cloud-based systems to enable a more mobile and flexible workforce," he said.

"Dynamic and highly innovative smaller businesses take full advantage of the cloud's flexibility and its ability to offer financial savings. The safety benefits of the cloud are also of great importance to SMEs and mid-sized businesses which, unlike their larger counterparts, are not able to afford expensive IT support functions," he added.

According to Gilroy, many SMEs are now also experimenting with new solutions and giving departments and staff much more freedom to identify new tools and solutions that allow them to work faster, with increased flexibility: "In addition, many of the latest cloud-based solutions offer better visibility of work processes and results. Many solutions also allow organisations to try new things at lower cost and lower risk. Yes, there will no doubt be new risks and challenges to come, but at the minute there's a lot to be gained by using new cloud-based solutions," he concluded.

This research is further evidence of cloud adoption – and, importantly, this has been based on the responses not of CIOs and IT Managers, but of CEOs, Managing Directors and business owners, underlining that cloud is being understood in the broad context of enterprise, rather than just as a new technology. This speaks to the benefits

that cloud services offer in terms of cost management, improved productivity, improved customer relations, business agility and security.

'MORE TO SERVICE THAN SLAS' - CLARANET

"Too many managed services providers and end users are stuck in the SLA, where uptime and availability are the core metrics against which their services are evaluated," according to Claranet. "Service is far more dynamic and can change over the course of a contract, meaning it is important to develop new performance objectives that are meaningful to the customer with respect to their changing business needs."

Paul Marland, Director of Account Management at Claranet, said: "What's clear to us is that the vast majority of SLAs don't really get to the heart of what's important to customers, or, at the very least, fall short of guaranteeing what customers really need and expect, beyond uptime and availability. As businesses have come to rely more heavily on third parties to deliver their IT and as solutions have become more complex, 'good service' can't simply be reduced to the pure metrics of service availability.

That a provider is meeting the levels of uptime specified by their SLA will be of little solace to the CEO or FD who can't access their e-mails fast enough, or the on-line retailer missing out on sales because of slow page-loads. These performance-based issues have proven to be something of a bugbear for the service provider industry - a grey area that falls beyond the remit of the traditional SLA, but remains key to the overall customer experience," Marland continued.

Marland went on to say that the service provider industry must look beyond measures of uptime and availability to measures of service that are meaningful to end users and contract against them: "The industry tends to measure against technical metrics, but it's important to remember that it's the end user's actual experience that counts. End users can have a situation where their SLA is being met and exceeded by their provider but are still not seeing the levels of service that their business now requires. When this happens, it is often a sign that the SLA is too generic and objectives have not been set that reflect the specific performance needs of the end user.

The problem is that a standard SLA does not reflect the true dynamic nature of the relationship that now prevails between customer and cloud provider. The SLA is a traditional foundation for the contract, but it should not be used as the basis of how we work together.

The best MSPs understand this and are able to assess what they do in the context of the end user. An SLA is a good baseline contractual agreement but, as the relationship evolves, so too must the level of 'measurable' engagement to suit the performance and optimisation criteria of each customer. MSPs need to look at those things that are actually meaningful to businesses - in essence, bringing end-user performance objectives into the agreement," he concluded.

This is an interesting thought from Claranet. Often, SLAs are just a tick-box item which neither party hopes to have to get involved with, but of course very few

businesses are the same, so having a standard set of SLAs may well be a compromise for some customers. Developing more granular guarantees would take time and effort (and therefore cost), but for those customers for whom particular areas are vital for their core business (say keeping a Web site up and running for an on-line retailer), customers are likely to accept an additional premium, as well as being far more likely to stay loyal to a service provider that has gone the extra mile to meet their needs. Once such a proposition has been developed, it would then be easy and cost-effective to roll it out across customer groups with similar needs.

HYPEROPTIC DOUBLES FOOTPRINT IN SIX MONTHS

Hyperoptic is set soon to reach more than 75,000 homes spanning 480 sites, with a target of half a million homes by 2018.

"This rapid increase is largely due to a huge rise in demand from Brits, who have taken control over their need for speed at home and registered their interest via the Hyperoptic Web site. The growth of Hyperoptic has been further accelerated by an ever increasing group of hyper-champions, residents who campaign for Gigabit speeds within their development.

In London, Hyperoptic's Gigabit footprint now extends across the length and breadth of the city - from central riverside apartments, all the way to the developments situated near the M25. The service is also live in Cardiff and Bristol, and installations are under way in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Reading.

The latest cities are Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham and Nottingham - which join the recently announced hyper-city, Glasgow. All cities were chosen by demand and number of residential developments."

Dana Tobak, Managing Director at Hyperoptic, observed: "Our mission is to provide a true fibre infrastructure, which empowers residents to future-proof their on-line lives. In today's age, broadband should be an enabler, not a hindrance. A fast, consistent, dependable fibre connection is now essential for entertainment, socialising and work.

With symmetrical Gigabit speeds, you can be guaranteed that you can enjoy the best of what the Internet has to offer. As a result, the reception to our products and services has been phenomenal. We remain committed to expand our footprint and availability across the UK."

Communications Minister Ed Vaizey added: "Government is fully aware of the tremendous contribution that companies such as Hyperoptic are making to the UK's Internet industry. Cutting-edge technology is the foundation for growth and innovation, and today's announcement is fantastic news for Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham and Nottingham."

"Hyperoptic works in partnership with developers and building management companies to install its true fibre infrastructure directly into their buildings. Partnerships are in place with forward-thinking property developers, including Barratt

London, St. George and Regis Group, which is fuelling the rapid expansion of Hyperoptic's footprint across the UK."

Jim Anderson, Project Director, Barratt London, said: "Barratt London is committed to providing residents with world-class connectivity, and with fibre-to-the-premises from Hyperoptic on our development it shows our commitment to our customers, and the need continually to evolve."

Paul McFadyen, Director, Regis Group, added: "Broadband has become a key consideration that affects where people choose to live, alongside being close to friends, family and good transport links. It forms the foundation of the connected home. By partnering with Hyperoptic we can be guaranteed that our residents have a seamless broadband experience today, and that the connection is future-proofed for the next era of technology."

"Innovation has been a key contributor to the success of the business to date. When it first launched services, Hyperoptic targeted developments with 80 units or more. Today, Hyperoptic is able to install services to developments as small as 50 units, making Gigabit speeds a reality to many more residents."

Hyperoptic started out by targeting both the consumer and business segments but has increasingly been focused on property developers as a channel to market for its fibre-to-the premises core product. The heat is one as ever faster fibre-based offerings are becoming widely available from the likes of BT and Virgin Media – and with FTTP also starting to come to market from BT, which would be a direct competitor to Hyperoptic's core (and pretty much only) proposition.

VIRTUAL1 TO MAKE MAJOR NETWORK INVESTMENT

Virtual1 has announced the completion of a major phase in its network investments, "having invested millions across its core network with Juniper, improving the scalability, capacity and resilience of its primary asset."

"The upgraded network sees a massive increase in scalability using multiplex devices with the capability for software defined networking (SDN). The devices vastly improve system capacity with the ability to light dark fibre to multiples of 10Gbps. The total number of 10Gbps ports across the Virtual1 network now exceeds 450.

The phase also sees a significant increase in network capacity with the deployment of additional Juniper routers with total capacity of 15Tbps. Dual routing engines on core routers were installed to improve resilience and resulting in minimised customer impact during core router upgrades."

Virtual1 CTO, James Hickman, commented: "This project has been a huge phase in our network development - the work undertaken by our architects has resulted in one of the most robust networks in our space. As well as increasing the scalability, capacity and resiliency of our network, the work has seen our London network footprint doubled. The phase was expected to take over 18 months to complete with over 3,000 customer migrations taking place. Remarkably, the migration and upgrade was in fact completed in just three months."

Tom O'Hagan, MD at Virtual1, added: "The network underpins the core services our partners deliver to their customers. Strengthening our network by investing in large-scale upgrades is paramount to strengthening our relationship with our partners. I commend the work undertaken by our network architects in ensuring the large-scale work was completed so swiftly and seamlessly."

This investment announcement by Virtual1 comes after similar developments across a wide range of service providers, underlining the need for greater capacity across the industry, fuelled by broadband, hosted services and the proliferation of data centres across the country.

O2 BUSINESS LAUNCHES NEW SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

O2 Business has launched a new offering of "bespoke products and free expertise from O2 Gurus for small business owners, under a £20 million investment to help British business go digital. To mark the launch, O2 has also shown one of the country's best-known small businesses - the cheese business of Blur bassist Alex James - ways to help take the hassle out of technology."

"The launch follows new research from O2 Business which reveals that, while over two thirds (68%) of small business owners appreciate 'techpertise' can make their business more efficient and successful, the majority feel they lack the time, money and understanding to make the most of technology. With 60 per cent stating that tech solutions are often too expensive and present a barrier to business growth, more than half (52%) admitted to searching on-line for help."

"Like many SoHo (Small Office, Home Office) business owners, Alex James faces day-to-day challenges in keeping a small business running. Working with a small team who are based across the country, including his Oxfordshire farm, Alex has found keeping everyone continuously updated problematic. The O2 Guru helped him solve the issue with one of its newly launched products, Office 365, which allows employees to create and edit documents from any device, even when they are away from the office. As a result, Alex is now able to keep an eye on the balance sheet whether he's at his farm or on a tour bus on the other side of the world."

"Recognising that the availability of technology is only half the issue when it comes to small businesses benefitting from the digital world, O2 Business has introduced over 200 specifically-trained O2 Gurus and advisors to provide free, impartial tech advice. They are on hand from today in O2 stores across the country, on-line through Web chat and on the phone.

O2's £20 million investment over two years is the culmination of the global development of the digital platform - which allows customers to 'pick and mix' the devices, airtime plans and apps they want, all on one bill - as well as the recruitment and training of O2 Gurus and a marketing campaign to promote the launch."

Ben Dowd, O2's Business Director, added: "At O2, we know that no two small businesses are the same and the technology which will help each business fulfil their full potential varies widely. We want to treat each small business as an individual,

which is why we offer a 'pick and mix' approach to our entire new range of products and services.

We want to help more small businesses to grow and thrive in an increasingly digital Britain, and we believe a key step is to take the hassle out of technology. We see first-hand how the right tech can help any company work smarter, faster and more efficiently, and we are proud to be making such a significant investment in the cause."

"O2's offering is unique in that it allows small business customers to pick and choose from a range of products and services, to create a bespoke package that is most beneficial for them. Launching within the range is:

- Box - the cloud storage and file sharing service which allows small businesses to access their content on any device and from any location;
- McAfee Multi Access - helping protect small businesses against a range of threats such as malware, data loss, identity theft and other fraudulent activity across multiple devices;
- Microsoft Office 365 - giving small businesses access to the familiar Office desktop apps on any device, all based in the cloud;
- Just Call Me - a conference calling product, which turns a mobile number into an audio conference bridge (coming soon);
- TU Go for Business - allowing for Wi-Fi calls over smartphones, tablets and desktops (coming soon)."

O2 Gurus are a good strategy for the company to win business, especially amongst those many business owners and managers who consider themselves insufficiently technically literate to make the most of available opportunities. Offering advice free is a good move as it clears the main barrier to customers potentially seeking advice – assuming the advice is good, O2 then stands to make a return on its investment in terms of monthly recurring revenues, especially with its new range of services becoming available.

'FLEXIBLE WORKING TO DRIVE UP SME PHONE BILLS' - DAISY

Kate O'Brien, Marketing Director for Daisy Group, thinks that "small businesses are failing to plan for the increase in communications costs following new legislation on flexible working."

"The new legislation, which gives workers employed by a company for 26 weeks or more the ability to request flexible working, is likely to see some businesses' phone bills rocket over the next six months as employees increasingly need to call colleagues' mobile phones."

"Internal business calls to staff mobiles can mount up if people don't think ahead," warned O'Brien. "Unfortunately, there will be many businesses offering family-friendly working arrangements that get a nasty surprise when they open their next phone bill.

We have been bracing ourselves for a flurry of calls from businesses eager to manage their call costs as they receive requests from staff to spend more time off site during

the working week. But, although we've had a few enquiries, we've been genuinely surprised that the volume of enquiries we've had over the last few months hasn't been much higher.

There are a number of products on the market that can help SMEs reduce their internal call costs. However, as yet, many businesses still haven't realised the financial implications that staff working off-site will have on their call costs."

Service providers need to keep a track of evolving employment laws, such as flexible working, as they impact how customers' employees work. Being ready with a solution (in this case either a mobile calls bundle or a UC&C solution) presents a great opportunity to help customers deal with their changing operating environment, saving them time and money.

EUNETWORKS TO OFFER 'INSTANT BANDWIDTH' IN LONDON

Bandwidth provider euNetworks Group has announced its dc connect service, "providing near-instant, scalable high-bandwidth data centre connectivity across 35 directly connected data centres in London with onward connectivity to 250 data centres in Europe."

"euNetworks has invested £8 million in pre-deploying this high-bandwidth infrastructure in London to help retain the city's position as a leading technology hub. Today, the company works with both data centres and some of the largest technology businesses in the world, who have an ever-increasing demand for these services."

Brady Rafuse, CEO of euNetworks, said: "As a leading European bandwidth infrastructure provider, we invest in our network to provide high-bandwidth scalable connections. Data centre connectivity infrastructure is critically important to business today as it enables the agility and flexibility customers seek in response to dynamic market conditions and cost efficiencies."

"dc connect offers service turn-up within five days to 35 key data centres in London. euNetworks is one of the few providers in the London market who owns and operates its fibre-based network, meaning the company controls service level performance and is able to offer competitive rates. The solution delivers fibre, wavelengths and Ethernet service offerings between the 35 sites."

Commenting on the launch, Rafuse said: "As part of his London Infrastructure Plan 2025, the Mayor of London wants access to superfast broadband for 99 per cent of the capital's properties by 2018. By doing so, it's estimated that London's tech sector can deliver a $12 billon economic boost and 46,000 jobs over the next decade. We believe that, by connecting businesses to our own fibre network in London, dc connect will help to achieve this goal by delivering a reliable, scalable and efficient solution in a way that other providers cannot."

"Many businesses are benefitting from the cloud. Video games developers, for example, want to do collaborative rendering on projects stored remotely. Businesses are also increasingly offering cloud-based services, where all data is stored in a data

| Issue 20 | benchmark-it.co.uk | October 20th 2014 |

centre - not on the user's computer. In order for London to attract, grow and retain such businesses, it must have the bandwidth to support them."

Doug Loewe, UK MD at European data centre provider Interxion, added: "Trends such as virtualisation, big data and the cloud mean that data centres are seeing an unprecedented demand for bandwidth from their customers. At Interxion, our focus has always been about providing the best connectivity options to our customers. Having euNetworks' dc connect service in our sites allows us to build on this heritage and continue to offer our customers innovative connectivity services, so that they in turn can meet the rapidly changing needs of their customers."

Syed Kamall, MEP for London, welcomed the investment, saying: "For London to remain an attractive location for modern businesses, it is essential that we continue to see this sort of investment in London's communications infrastructure to provide bandwidth services."

James Cleverly, of the Greater London Authority, added: "High-speed digital connectivity has moved from being a 'nice to have' to being a core part of London's competitive advantage. It not only facilitates business, but also supports decentralised working, a healthier work/life balance and the chance to reduce pressure on our transport infrastructure. I am pleased that London continues to attract high-tech investment."

An ever greater range of data centre connectivity services is becoming available, especially as enterprises increasingly use hosted services and on-demand Infrastructure-as-a-Service, Software-as-a-Service, Storage-as-a-Service, etc. offerings. Direct, secure connections address potential concerns over reliability and security, with the market also looking like it will increasingly move to an on-demand model for computing power and communications bandwidth.

VAIONI TEAMS WITH ITS TECHNOLOGY GROUP

Vaioni has agreed a new partnership with ITS Technology Group to retail and wholesale its 'pure fibre network,' covering the Hammersmith and Fulham areas of London.

"Vaioni, the Ethernet connectivity and cloud services specialist to businesses and the channel has agreed a new partnership with ITS Technology Group to retail and wholesale its pure fibre network, covering Hammersmith and Fulham. The new network, plugged directly into the Vaioni Core, will deliver Ethernet Services ranging from 10Mbps up to 1Gbps and over at extremely competitive pricing."

Vaioni CEO Sachin Vaish commented: "We are delighted to introduce the new ITS network into our Ethernet Exchange. The Ethernet Exchange continues to grow from strength to strength offering our customers a comprehensive Ethernet Procurement Platform giving access to over 12 operators, delivering unparalleled choice, whilst delivering a single order, provisioning, support and reporting process."

Roy Shelton, CEO at ITS Technology Group, said: "We are looking forward to forging a successful partnership with Vaioni Wholesale. It is important to make

access as straightforward as possible for customers wanting to take advantage of the superfast fibre infrastructure we have deployed in Hammersmith and Fulham. With a number of customers already connected, this collaboration with Vaioni will make connection, choice and access even simpler due to its ISP partnerships."

It is important for wholesalers like Vaioni successfully to sign up the right partners as without them they would go out of business. Vaioni's Ethernet propositions are straightforward and ITS Technology is focused on a particular geography, so this looks like a partnership with clear benefits to both parties.