



Companies need to manage their internet usage as they move into the Cloud: Research reveals

- 32% of SMBs have no policy on personal internet use at work
- SMBs in London most receptive to employees working from home
- Study reveals regional differences in internet use across the UK

London, 26 November 2008: A study commissioned by Easynet Connect reveals that, despite becoming more reliant on their internet connection, a large proportion of UK small-to-medium businesses (SMBs) are not implementing policies to manage non-essential, personal use of the internet at work. As SMBs adopt more bandwidth-hungry 'cloud computing' applications (such as Google Docs, salesforce.com etc.), internet bandwidth is becoming an increasingly precious business commodity. Yet without a policy on personal internet use at work, non-work related applications and web-browsing can limit the resources available to these core systems when they are needed most.

In its latest research, '*Soaring across the regions*', Easynet Connect sought to better understand how internet usage by SMBs differed across the UK. Overall, SMBs are relatively relaxed when it comes to employees using the internet for personal use at work. Only 18% impose a complete ban, with 49% employing a formal internet policy (such as limiting use to lunch or break time). A staggering 32% of SMBs still have no formal internet policy whatsoever, allowing completely unrestricted internet use by their employees, and severely compromising their increasingly-important internet bandwidth.

When looking at personal internet use at work, the connectivity and internet service provider found that attitudes vary considerably across the country. At 33%, SMBs in the North West are most likely to impose a complete ban on personal internet use, contrasting with just 6% in Wales. However, in terms of instigating a collaborative policy, Welsh SMBs are the most pragmatic, with 63% working with their employees to implement a formal internet policy, in which personal internet use is limited to specific times of the day. For those looking for the most freedom however, the South West and South East are the likeliest candidates, with 42% and 41% imposing no internet policy whatsoever.

When asked how they use the internet at work, 93% of employees simply use it for general web browsing, while 52% visit social networking sites, and 29% use instant messaging. General use of

the internet is fairly even across the UK, however interest in social networking differs across the regions, with employees in London and the North East the most likely to visit such sites (71% and 74% respectively), compared to just 31% in Wales.

“As a rising number of core business applications become web-based, it is important that personal internet use does not compromise the performance of these applications,” said Chris Stening, MD, Easynet Connect. “However, it is also important for SMBs to strike a balance with their employees. A complete ban is not the answer, because while some internet users can consume a lot of resources (by downloading movies or engaging in IP telephony), most simply wish to check their emails or do some online banking, which consumes less bandwidth. Businesses must analyse their internet connectivity requirements and develop a policy that doesn’t compromise their business’ core online applications, while accommodating for their employees legitimate internet needs.”

Rob Bamforth, principal analyst at Quocirca and author of the report stated “Most small and medium businesses do not measure personal use of the internet at work, potentially compromising their internet connection. As the internet has become a strategic business resource, companies need to identify suitable policy controls and protective measures to ensure they have sufficient bandwidth to cope with business needs. Those allowing personal use of the corporate internet connection by employees must understand its impact and plan their capacity and services to accommodate these requirements.”

About the study

Easynet Connect is a connectivity and internet service provider for small and medium businesses. It commissioned the analyst firm Quocirca to carry out the research to gain a better understanding of the degree to which small and medium businesses have taken advantage of the internet, in particular how attitudes differ across the UK.

PTO for additional regional statistics

Additional regional statistics

In addition to measuring personal internet use at home, Easynet Connect's extensive report covers a number of other key business issues for SMBs; such as the growing adoption of internet-based services, alignment of the internet with core business strategy, the continued reluctance to change internet service providers in spite of bad service, and the growing importance of internet to the core of the business. Some key findings below:

- **78% of SMBs consider IT as essential in helping the organisation to meet its business needs.** However this perspective is not shared equally across the regions. Only 42% of SMBs in Scotland consider IT as essential, compared to 94% in the South East.
- **87% of Scottish SMBs have incorporated the commercial use of the internet into their overall business strategy.** By contrast, only 13% of SMBs in the North West have done the same, with 60% having no strategy at all. The national average is 45%.
- **Reluctance to change service provider:** Reflecting the results from Easynet Connect's earlier report in May, SMBs are still more reluctant to change internet service providers than consumers. However, the regional analysis indicates the trend is strongest the further north you go. Just 14% in the North East, 18% in Liverpool, and 20% in Manchester have changed their provider in the last two years, compared to 56% in Wales and 46% in the South Coast.
- **London leads the way in the use of internet based services** such as remote backup, with 60% of SMBs in London already using such technology. This is nearly double the national average of 34%.
- **Wales leading the way in video conferencing.** While video conferencing is yet to achieve mass adoption amongst SMBs, businesses in Wales are leading the UK, with 38% already using video conferencing, well above the national average of just 16%.
- **100% of businesses in the North West** consider the reliability of their internet connection when evaluating their internet service provider (ISP). Surprisingly, only 13% of SMBs in Scotland agree. The national average is 71%.
- **Home working.** One way in which a company can reduce the strains on its internet connection is by encouraging employees to work from home. Only 35% of UK SMBs offered the option of home working to some of its employees. Employees in Wales have the least number of options, with only 6% being offered a formal option for home working. Londoners on the other hand have the most flexibility, with 61% of businesses offering remote working for some or all of their employees.
- **SMBs providing equipment for home working:** Employees in Liverpool are the most generously equipped with their employer, with 76% provided with laptops, and 71% paying for their home broadband connection. Employees in Wales are the most neglected, with 44% provided with laptops and only 25% a broadband connection.

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Editor's notes

About the research – 'Soaring across the regions'

The research, carried out by Quocirca and commissioned by Easynet Connect, is based on the result of 345 interviews with UK-based managers with operational or commercial responsibility for IT and data communications. Each organisation employs between 10 and 250 workers.

The research was completed in April 2008

About Easynet Connect

Easynet Connect is a leading provider of quality connectivity and internet access for small to medium size businesses.

Established in 1994 and part of BSkyB Group, Easynet Connect has the second largest network in the UK with 6030km of fibre and last mile access to more than 70% of UK businesses via a network of more than 1,200 unbundled exchanges.

Easynet Connect was the first provider in the UK to provide DSL services over an unbundled local loop and has pioneered managed LLU services for business. The services range from business class ADSL and SDSL through to high-quality, leased line equivalent and Ethernet based services. Our SDSL coverage is currently the most extensive in the UK.

For more information visit www.easynetconnect.net or call 0800 053 1777

About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With worldwide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insight into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations.

Sponsorship of specific studies allows much of Quocirca's research to be placed into the public domain at no cost. Quocirca's independent culture and the real-world experience of Quocirca's analysts ensure that its research and analysis is always objective, accurate, actionable and challenging.

Quocirca reports are freely available to everyone and may be requested via www.quocirca.com.