

## **Delivering Quality Internet Today – 27 November 2008**

### **Highlights from Easynet Connect's latest industry roundtable**

On a cold November's morning, Easynet Connect gathered a collection of customers, analysts, industry bodies and media to discuss the current state of the broadband industry. Once all the bacon rolls and coffee had been consumed, the group set about debating the pressing issues of the day.

### **Participants**

Glenn Powell, Chief Executive, Communications Management Association  
Gary Barton, Research Analyst, Current Analysis  
Richard Thurston, Analyst, Analysys Mason  
Timothy Francis, Head of IT & Online Marketing, Blue Index  
Mark Hardman, CEO, ZapText.com  
Nigel Southcombe, IT Manager, Maccaferri  
Chris Stening, MD, Easynet Connect  
Steve Minns, Sales Manager, Easynet Connect  
Ian Williams, Correspondent, VNUNet  
David Meyer, Comms Reporter, ZDNet  
Sara White, Editor, What-To-Buy-For-Business

### **Conversation Highlights**

#### **The longevity of copper**

"How long can we keep using copper? Forever." This was the view expressed by one of the participants. "Copper will keep us going until the limits of physics are reached. Besides, no one is going to have fibre optics plugged directly into the back of their iMac, so there will always be copper in the network at some point. Copper will always be somewhere in the chain, so we need to get over this misconception that it is bad."

The house then discussed the costs of the next-generation-network or national 'fibre-to-the-home' policy. The group concluded that, due to the high costs of re-cabling from local exchanges to every property in the UK, and the time this would take, fibre will not replace copper as the primary connection to most households and businesses for some considerable time.

#### **Copper vs. fibre – the last mile is all that matters**

Chris Stening, MD of Easynet Connect explained to the customers present that, in reality, fibre plays a much bigger role in their copper broadband connection than they might otherwise have thought. "While we deliver the majority of our broadband services directly to our business customers over copper cables, our core network – the backbone of our entire broadband service – consists of over 6,000km of fibre optic cable spanning the UK. When people talk of the relative merits of copper vs. fibre, they are only really referring to the 'last mile', the connection from the exchange to the business itself. We chose to deliver our broadband over copper because it is perfectly capable of delivering the speeds businesses need today and in the future, and since every business already has it, we can offer our services to as many businesses as possible."

#### **Delivering value from your 'Internet utility'**

The house then discussed the importance of Internet connectivity for their business, and agreed its importance as a utility matched that of their electricity supplier or telephone line. "It is the last thing to be switched off after the lights" It is therefore no longer the role of the Internet service providers to prove to that Internet access is important, but to show how they can get the most value from it.

One member of the media present explained that service providers must deliver tiered levels of services, beyond simply download speed and limits to differentiate. However, for this to really work,

consumers need to become more tech-savvy and aware of what different service qualities mean to them in reality.

### **Cloud computing or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) will be an attractive way for SMEs to save money in 2009**

The house agreed that cloud computing, particularly in recessionary times, is one way in which SMEs can gain better value from their Internet connection, and that service providers have a role to play in not only providing the level of service to support cloud computing, but in educating their customers as to the benefits.

According to one software-as-a-service (SaaS) provider present, businesses are increasingly turning to cloud computing solutions as a means to reducing costs. This view was shared by the other businesses present, who cited in particular the increasing attractiveness of video conferencing as a means to reduce expensive travel costs.

### **Is personal internet use becoming a problem at work?**

Following Easynet Connect's research into personal Internet use at work, the house shared their own experiences. Debating whether to restrict the use of websites such as YouTube, Facebook etc., the house concluded that while a complete ban on personal Internet use was counterproductive, policies were necessary for security reasons.

### **The increasing importance of wireless and mobile working**

The house finished by discussing the potential of wireless broadband to replace fixed lines (whether copper or fibre) as the primary means of delivering Internet connectivity in the UK. It was agreed that while wireless broadband was becoming more common, it is far too unreliable today to be a business's primary connection. As mobility becomes increasingly more important for small and medium businesses, wireless needs to be more reliable.

It was argued by some that wireless has a vital role to play in redundancy. One of the participants stated that having a physical line as a backup is great in most circumstances, but if a gas main explodes in the street outside, the chances are it will take out all the physical lines entering your building, destroying both your primary and backup line. In this regard, wireless should be considered as a viable backup.

## **Resulting media coverage**

Copper is here to stay

<http://www.vnUNET.com/vnUNET/news/2231518/copper-here-stay>

Mobile broadband is 'the only redundancy

<http://community.zdnet.co.uk/blog/0.1000000567.1r-1d-2000331761b-2.00.htm>